

**A PORTRAIT OF WAR:
A Psychosocial Analysis of the Impact of Wars
on Contemporary Visual Arts Displaying Conflicts in
Lebanon, Palestine and Syria**

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation looks at the impact of wars on contemporary visual arts in Lebanon, Palestine and Syria with a specific focus on the art genre which is characteristic of wars. By examining the relationship between the nature of wars and the artistic outcome, and by investigating the effects of wars on the artists' identities (collective and personal), I argue that the art scenes of those countries were affected differently according to the specificity of each crisis.

While many researchers addressed the issues of war, nation and identity in art, this study takes a psychosocial approach toward analyzing this art genre in the context of the combined influence of psychological factors and the surrounding social environment. This offers a new perspective in viewing this art and contributes in understanding it. I position artworks featuring the war of each country within historical trajectories to illustrate their tight relationship and reveal the diversity of this art among the three scenes. By providing an overview of the histories of the crises, I follow a contextualized method underscoring their role as an essential context that generated different artistic representations and phenomena. I elaborate the depictions of psychological and physical impacts of each war within its social context. I reveal how wars generated the display of national identity through inspecting its various dimensions among the scenes. Furthermore, I propose that artists (re)constructed distinct identities embodied in art as an outcome of war. I find that the nature of the conflict influenced the artist's aim, targeted audience, (re)constructed identities, portrayal of national identity and modes of representations, thus creating diversities among the scenes.

This dissertation demonstrates how the field of visual arts presented a platform for artists in Lebanon, Palestine and Syria to expose the ways in which they were affected by wars. It

documents the multi-faceted effects of different conflicts on visual arts and reveals the diverse artistic representations that were created in response.

DEDICATION

To Mama, Jamal and Marya

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INTRODUCTION

In 1988, the internationally renowned artist Mona Hatoum spoke about her exile, displacement, separation and loss as a result of war. She addressed these issues in her autobiographical video *Measures of Distance*. The video displays letters written by Hatoum's mother to her daughter in London which appear as scrolling Arabic script overlaying her mother's body in the shower. The artist reads these letters aloud in English while we can also hear taped dialogue in Arabic between the mother and her daughter. She reads: "Being born in exile [...] is not fun at all. And now [...], you're again living in another exile in a culture that is totally different than your own. So when you talk about a feeling of fragmentation and not knowing where you really belong, well, this has been a painful reality for all our people"¹. Hatoum was born in exile to Palestinian parents living in Beirut, and during the civil war in Lebanon she was forced to live another exile as she was visiting London and had to stay there. In the above narrative, Hatoum addressed her second exile. However, she also narrated her parents' exile expressing how hard life was when they first had to leave Palestine. She reads: "to be separated from all our loved ones, leaving everything behind and starting from scratch, our families scattered all over the world. I personally felt as if I was stripped naked of my very soul [...] our identity and sense of pride of who we are went out of the window". In addition to exposing her feeling of fragmentation, these words express the emotional distress and suffering endured not only by her parents, but rather by all Palestinians who were forced to leave their homeland. This underscores Hatoum's national identity which is further stressed through the term 'our people'.

¹ Dailymotion, (1988). *Measures of Distance* [video]. By Mona Hatoum [Viewed 5 June 2018]. Available from: <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x31gw4>

Almost two decades later in 2006, Lebanese artist Mounira Al Solh created her video *Rawane's Song* offering an explanation to why she is incapable to create a work about the Lebanese wars. However, she ended up addressing this issue. The video films Al Solh's footsteps as she walks, stands, and then walks faster in her studio, while the viewer reads her discourse on the screen. It says: "Nothing to say about the war. Don't feel that I am typical Lebanese. Nor typical Arab. Have nothing to do with Phoenicians. Not ready to defend the Palestinian cause. Know almost nothing about politics. Often contradict myself". This discourse reveals Al Solh's explicit confession and conception about herself and her sense of identity as Lebanese, Arab and of Phoenician origins. However, her refusal to talk about the Lebanese wars was reconsidered and "the avoided theme is finally not avoided"². Moreover, Al Solh's introduction about her failure to create a work about the wars inevitably addresses the crises and reveals a state of refusal to confront this theme. Despite the fact that the video frankly exposes a part of her identity, the discourse reads: "I got JEALOUS of those Artists who were able to do an artwork related to identity matters and I was particularly pissed off by the ones who came from a war background and knew how to talk about it"³. However, *Rawane's Song* reflects the artist's conflicted feelings about tackling the theme of the Lebanese wars and addresses her refusal to be stuck in stereotypes of national identity.

Another autobiographical video, but addressing the Syrian war, is Azza Hamwi's *A Day and a Button* created in 2015, a decade following Mounira Al Solh's *Rawane's Song*. The video's initial setting is at Hamwi's apartment filming from the window a military jet with the sounds of bullet in the background. Very soon the artist left her house and walked the streets of Damascus in the same place where the shooting took place. During her

² Al Solh, M., 2006. *Rawane's Song*. [Viewed 28 August 2019]. Available from: <https://vimeo.com/64128699>

³ Al Solh, M., 2019. Mounira Al Solh - The Website. [Viewed 2 August 2019]. Available from: <http://mouniraalsolh.com/works>

stroll, the artist filmed the streets and narrated some events to the viewer, passing through a demonstration against the regime and a house for children orphaned by the war. Then, the artist asked the viewer if he carries his identity card since it is obligatory to carry it, despite the fact that anyone can be detained either ways. After that, Hamwi confessed her state of not knowing who she is, she says: “I can’t figure out my identity anymore. I feel the need to justify and convince myself of an identity. But I do have an identity card”⁴. This self-discourse that developed from addressing the viewer reveals Hamwi’s sense of loss and fragmentation as a result of the war. She continued the discourse by suddenly shifting the subject concerning her identity saying: “I want to sleep. I want to go back to my bed and my cat”, disclosing her difficulty in confronting her identity issues. Hamwi exposes the uneasy task she faces upon talking about her identity as she suddenly ended the discourse and wanted to go back to her house to sleep.

The discussed narratives clearly highlight the diverse identity struggles these artists felt as a result of the different wars they experienced. Hatoum presents an open confession about fragmentation, loss and alienation she and other Palestinians suffered, Al Solh expresses her refusal to deal with the reality of the Lebanese wars and Hamwi confesses her feeling of not knowing who she is. While these artists experienced various wars, they each revealed the different affects in which the wars impacted them. Moreover, despite her feeling of fragmentation, Hatoum reveals her affiliation to Palestine and its people who share her tragedy, Al Solh expresses her refusal to being categorized as Lebanese or Arab, and Hamwi exposes her inability to figure out her identity. The three discussed works from different art scenes were all responses to the wars, however, I argue that each of them embodied diverse effects according to the specificity of the crisis.

⁴ Bidayyat Production, (2015). *A Day and a Button* [online]. Directed by Azza Hamwi. Bidayyat. [Viewed 5 March 2019]. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jB0HXHEnOZc>

In this dissertation, I investigate this diversification of effects that the wars had inflicted in art in Lebanon, Palestine and Syria. I concentrate on the affected psychological and social factors reflected in the arts of these countries. I conduct a psychosocial analysis which concentrates at the effects in the context of the combined influence of psychological factors and the surrounding social environment. I focus my readings on artworks displaying war or its effects, relating them to the nature of the experienced crisis which gave rise to this art genre. I examine how diverse conflicts contributed in shaping the art scenes in these countries respectively. I argue that the different wars in these countries generated diverse artistic representations in their respective art scenes. That is, the wars were reflected differently in the three art scenes and each revealed specific traits according to the ‘specificity’ of the crisis. These traits include, but are not limited to, the (re)construction of certain identities, representations of national identity in art, different roles performed by the artist, employment of art to serve non-artistic purposes and the reflection of certain phenomena that occurred in the society during conflicts. I highlight the appearance of these aspects in art in relation to the nature of each war, shedding light on the diversity these conflicts created among the scenes.

Therefore, my aim in this research is to investigate the effects of the different wars on the art scenes of Lebanon, Palestine and Syria, and analyze their relationship with the nature of the experienced crisis. To reach my aim, I first demonstrate the effects of war on a nation and on individuals in general, which requires an examination of identity aspects relevant to this theme, followed by a study of the different war histories of the countries in question. After that, an analysis of particular representations related to the wars is conducted. I investigate the reflection of the crises’ physical impact in art as well as their emotional and psychological effects. I investigate the appearance of national identity in images representing the wars and analyze the impact of war in (re)constructing the artist’s

identities. I elaborate how art was employed for political and national purposes. In addition, I examine all these aspects in relation to the experienced wars. Consequently, this research questions the effects of the diverse wars on the artistic output and on the artists' identities as embodied in art. To be more precise, it addresses two main questions: First, how did the wars in Lebanon, Palestine and Syria affect the artists' collective and personal identities as expressed in contemporary visual arts? Second, what is the relationship between the kinds of wars experienced and the artistic output in the three countries?

These questions inquire into the psychological and social effects of the wars; the psychological effects are addressed in examining consequences on identities and emotional aspects whereas the social are inspected through relating the artistic output to the social context. Therefore, to find the answers, I perform a psychosocial analysis of the effects of these wars on contemporary visual arts in Lebanon, Palestine and Syria. I refer to contemporary here as a chronological definition rather than what is known as contemporary methods in art. Moreover, since the conducted analysis is of psychosocial nature, it studies the psychological and social factors rather than the artistic media and the contemporary methods utilized in creating the artwork. The psychosocial approach acknowledges the social aspects of experiences and the psychological factors in responses to conflict, disasters and displacement, and the term implies a very close relationship between psychological and social factors ⁵. Consequently, due to the aim of this study to examine psychological and social responses as a result of conflict, a psychosocial analysis becomes the one requested. Furthermore, such approach sheds light on this art genre in an unprecedented way, fundamental to its understanding; without such an approach there will still be a gap in comprehending this art.

⁵ National Academy of Sciences, 2003. *Psychosocial Concepts in Humanitarian Work with Children: A Review of the Concepts and Related Literature*. [Viewed 30 October 2019]. Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK221604/>

A recurring topic in the discussion of contemporary art in the Arab world is the question of diversity. This goes back to the fact that many exhibitions and projects “are perceived as homogenizing the region's cultural production, highlighting a certain type of scene or art at the expense of diversity”⁶. In other words, because of the upheavals in the Middle East and the exhibitions under this theme, some consider that the art of this region lacks diversity. I argue against this notion. Despite the fact that this research examines a single art genre from only three Arab countries, the works I present and analyze show different representations of war and reveal a lot of diversity among the art scenes, thus denying such accusations. The focus of this research is to analyze the effects of the wars on art, which is more or less a single phenomenon, in addition to examining these effects in only three countries and not the Arab world, yet the works show various approaches, representations, media, methods and techniques. I show that art characteristic of war exhibits variety among the three scenes in accordance to the specificity of the war. I draw on Gary S. Gregg’s study in his book *Culture and identity in a Muslim Society* in which he believes that “each major widely shared influence generates variation between individuals”⁷. In this book, Gregg argues against the notion that Arabs, or non-Western peoples, lack individuality. He studied different people from the same Arabic background who shared the same cultural complex and concluded that every distinct experience that is assumed to produce homogeneity among individuals also differentiates them. Nevertheless, my study focuses on the art scenes as collective representations rather than individual artistic output. This means that I inspect similarities among artists of the same art scene and differences from those of the other two scenes. However, I consider Greg’s text here to support my perspective regarding the diversity of these art scenes; if a shared influence generates diversity among individuals,

⁶ Matar, D. and Harb, Z. eds., 2013. *Narrating conflict in the Middle East: discourse, image and communications practices in Lebanon and Palestine* (Vol. 121). IB Tauris. P. 71.

⁷ Gregg, G.S., 2007. *Culture and identity in a Muslim society*. Oxford University Press. USA. P. 330.

then it definitely generates diversity among scenes, knowing also that the shared influence is the ‘different’ wars. I argue that, the wars, although they might be considered as one artistic theme or influence, have created diversities among the art scenes.

By exposing the various effects of the different wars on the art scenes in Lebanon, Palestine and Syria, this study suggests a variation among these scenes in accordance to the experienced crises. A literature that argues against the concept of a homogenized cultural production in the Arab world is the book *New Vision: Arab Contemporary Art in the 21st Century* (2009). “It underscores the fact that the Arab world is not equal or uniform in the development of the arts”⁸. The book, edited by Hossein Amirsadeghi and Salwa Mikdadi, stresses the hybridity of Arab contemporary art and addresses the themes of diaspora and globalization and their influence on this art. It presents an overall general study of the contemporary arts in the Arab region, which included Lebanon, Syria, Algeria, Egypt, Palestine, Saudi Arabia and others. By doing so, the aim in proving the hybridity of this art is attained. However, due to the vast region it covers and its aim to view this art from a global perspective, the book overrides the importance of regional and local history in studying at least part of this art. Nonetheless, I benefit from the interpretation of some artworks and the conducted interviews which provide me with further insight into the artists’ aims and ideas.

*Contemporary Art in the Middle East*⁹ (2009) is another book that studies the art of the region and reveals its diversity, but, unlike *New Vision: Arab Contemporary Art in the 21st Century*, viewing it from political and local perspectives. Edited by Paul Sloman and chapters written by Nat Muller, Lindsey Moore, TJ Demos and Suzanne Cotter, the book explores some of the main issues that shaped the production and practice of many artists in

⁸ Amirsadeghi, H., Mikdadi, S. and Shabout, N. eds, 2009. *New Vision: Arab Contemporary Art in the 21st Century*. TransGlobe Publishing Limited. P. 13.

⁹ Sloman, P. ed., 2009. *Contemporary art in the Middle East*. Black Dog Publishing.

the region, such as wars, displacement and exile. While the book summarizes the art scenes of few countries, including Lebanon and Palestine, discussions about art in Syria are extremely limited and few countries included in the Middle East, according to the presented map in the opening pages, are excluded. Nat Muller, the author of the first chapter titled *Contemporary Art in the Middle East*, presents an overview of the art scenes in Lebanon and Palestine but ignores to introduce the arts in Syria for example. Muller also doesn't address many artists that contributed in shaping the Palestinian art scene today and whose work embody one of its core aims: Resistance. In studying Palestinian art, especially in relation to political circumstances, the issue of resistance should not be neglected. Ignoring to discuss many works that symbolize the idea of resistance in Palestinian art, which is, as I argue, one of its basic aspects and motivations for producing it, results in an incomplete reflection of this specific art scene. Nonetheless, I find her discussion of the works of renowned artists like Tarek Al Ghousein, Mounira Al Solh, Emily Jacir and Marwan Rechmaoui useful for my study. Another chapter, *Desire in Diaspora*, written by TJ Demos, highlights Emily Jacir's work, which indeed exemplifies the issue of diaspora, while Mona Hatoum's work which embodies the concept of dislocation and exile isn't addressed under this title. However, I find Suzanne Cotter's interpretation of Walid Raad and Akram Zaatari's works quite beneficial. She interprets their work in considering the war and the political circumstances and provides an understanding of the preoccupations of many contemporary artists working in Lebanon. While the book provides an overview of some of the region's art and links it to political circumstances, by neglecting to present major aspects and to address all art scenes of the region, it falls short of revealing Middle Eastern art. In spite of this, I find its interpretation of Lebanese artists useful for my research.

Contemporary Art in the Middle East and *New Vision: Arab Contemporary Art in the 21st Century* offer important accounts for understanding this sophisticated art. Yet, both books and others that examine this vast region's art, by ignoring some of its basic aspects, provide an incomplete reflection of the art they questioned.

Others in the field have turned their attention to the project of writing local art histories (rather than the regional focus of the previously discussed books) and have proven fruitful in reflecting the art scene of the country in question. Kamal Boullata's book *Palestinian Art: From 1850 to the Present*¹⁰ (2009) offers a national art history of Palestine by identifying several recurring themes: place, memory, and resistance. His discussions of the oppressive constraints under which Palestinian artists create their work, the themes of exile and resistance in art and Mona Hatoum's work in reflecting these issues are helpful in my interpretation of this art scene. In addition, I rely on Boullata to support my argument about the risk imposed on Palestinian national identity as a result of exile and long Israeli occupation. I find this book helpful for my study in providing further understanding of Palestinian art and reflecting its connection with the political circumstances of the country.

Similarly, *Syria Speaks: Art and Culture from the Frontline*¹¹ (2014), edited by Malu Halasa, Zaher Omareen, and Nawara Mahfoud, explores local art of Syria. But, different than Boullata who documented the history of Palestinian art, the book solely interprets art characteristic of the Syrian war and especially of the uprising. However, due to the focus of my research on the specific art genre that handles the theme of war, I find this book helpful. It introduces art collectives such as *Alshaab Alsori Aref Tareeko* and *Young Lens Homs* whose work is dedicated to reflect the revolution, and presents selected Syrian artists who were directly affected by the wars. I find Sulafa Hijazi's section in which she describes

¹⁰ Boullata, K., 2009. *Palestinian Art 1850-2005*. Saqi.

¹¹ Halasa, M., Omareen, Z. and Mahfoud, N. eds., 2014. *Syria speaks: Art and Culture from the Frontline*. Saqi.

the fear of Syrian artists from the oppressive regime quite informative, and the interpretation of her work in reflecting the war is interesting. I rely on this book in supporting my arguments about anti-regime art in Syria, especially in the artists' talks and political posters. The book examines works of selected artists who only exhibited the war through anti-regime themes while excluding many other works that reflected the other perspective, thus making it a subjective interpretation of this art genre. As a result, *Syria Speaks* cannot be considered a comprehensive study of art as a reflection of the Syrian war, but rather a selection of artworks that reflect one side of the story.

Although the presented books are helpful in inspecting certain aspects in my area of research, none presented a psychosocial analysis of the effects of wars on the arts of Lebanon, Palestine and Syria, or inspected their relationship with respect to the nature of the wars. Hence none filled a gap in understanding and analyzing this art. Yet, along with other resources, these books equip me with further knowledge to explore indispensable aspects in my study.

However, literature in the art field alone cannot provide me with the tools to thoroughly investigate the impact of war on art. Because my research conducts a psychosocial analysis, I also rely on books in the discipline of social science, psychology, history and culture to set my theoretical framework. In this regard is *The Discursive Construction of National Identity* (2009) written by Ruth Wodak, Rudolf de Cillia, Martin Reisigl, and Karin Liebhart. The book underscores the role of discourse in the construction of national identities and investigates important theories in this field. In addition to others (Bhabha, Hale, Leary and Tangney¹²), I rely on the book's consideration of the concept of identity,

¹² See: Bhabha H., 1994. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge. Hale, H.E., 2004. Divided we stand: Institutional sources of ethnofederal state survival and collapse. *World politics*, 56(2), pp.165-193. And Leary, M. R. and Tangney, J. P., 2012. *Handbook of Self and Identity*. Second ed. The Guilford Press.

social and personal, as ever changing and situated in the flow of time, never signifying anything static or unchanging¹³. The presentation of different connotations of nation and national identity presented in the book highly contributes to my knowledge in this field. I also rely on the book's account of the temporal aspects: present, past and future, necessary for constructing national identities. Another text helpful in this domain is Anthony D. Smith's *National Identity*¹⁴ (1991). I draw on Smith's definition of a nation and find his interpretation of the role of culture, including slogans and symbols, in the construction of nations and national identities helpful and quite convincing. Another text that facilitates my analysis of the diverse representations of national identity in chapter three is Monserrat Guibernau's text *Anthony D. Smith on nations and national identity: a critical assessment*¹⁵ (2004). In this paper, where Guibernau criticizes Smith's definition of a nation, she offers clear attributes required to construct national identities. She considers that national identity has five dimensions: psychological, cultural, territorial, historical, and political, and explained what each of them comprises. I find her interpretation of these dimensions very helpful, and rely on them in inspecting and analyzing the different representations of national identity in art. By considering the theories offered in the presented literature and additional relevant texts, as well as studying the arts of these countries through the discussed books and many others, and through extra resources, such as articles, exhibitions and artists' talks, I fulfill my analysis. I perform a psychosocial analysis to investigate and reveal the ways in which the different crises contributed in shaping the art scenes of Lebanon, Palestine and Syria.

In order to conduct a psychosocial analysis in this research and due to its artistic nature, the

¹³ Wodak, R. de Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., and Liebhart, K. 2009. *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*. Second edition. Edinberg University Press.

¹⁴ Smith, A. D., 1991. *National Identity*. Penguin Books

¹⁵ Guibernau, M., 2004. Anthony D. Smith on nations and national identity: a critical assessment. *Nations and Nationalism*, 10(1-2). P. 135.

most appropriate method has to be qualitative in its approach. This goes back to the fact that my study inquires into the effects of wars on art and qualitative research is mainly an “inquiry project”¹⁶ that inspects the subject or the phenomena instead of seeking to confirm a certain hypothesis as it is mostly the case with other research methods. Moreover, the qualitative approach is very suitable in this particular study because of its flexibility, ability to describe the human side and its open-ended nature that leaves room for the primarily collected data to develop its own path and guides strategies for what to do next. As for analyzing the collected data, it has to relate the social context with the artistic practices and representations. Knowing that the aim of the research is to find the effects of the different wars on the art scenes of these three countries, studying the social context in which artists performed is a fundamental aspect. Consequently, in underscoring the role of context as an essential component of causal explanation, that is studying the causes for such artistic representations, contextualization¹⁷ becomes an appropriate method to conduct my analysis. This serves to inspect the ways in which the artists were affected, on a personal and collective level, and how these affects were represented in art. By highlighting the uses these artists make of their various pasts and present circumstances in their art, this dissertation shows how wars affected the art scenes differently. In this regard, identity, history and the present crises emerge as networks of subjects and concerns from which they draw to create their work. Consequently, contextualization is an important aspect of my methodology, for it highlights the histories and approaches from which these artists produce their work.

The performed analysis within the context of the unstable circumstances provides a new perspective in viewing and criticizing art characteristic of war in Lebanon, Palestine and

¹⁶ Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. eds., 2011. *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*. 4th ed. Sage. p. xiii

¹⁷ Anderson, G.L., & Scott, J. (2012). Toward an Intersectional Understanding of Process Causality and Social Context. *Qualitative Inquiry* 18(8), 674-685.

Syria. In studying the circumstances which gave rise to this art and their different representation, reviewers now take another route and contextualize this art within political, historical and social frame. By doing so, this research facilitates the understanding of this complex art. It also analyzes the effects of the different wars on the artists' identities and the roles they performed, which is yet another valuable and unaddressed issue. The lack of inspecting the effects of wars on art from this mentioned perspective resulted in a gap in the history of this art genre in these countries. By analyzing these issues in a psychosocial approach, I intend to fill the gap and contribute in understanding this art. In addition, the work inspected in this research, with its various representations of war and diverse artistic approaches and media, as well as the performed analysis demonstrate the diversity of arts in this region, hence denying accusations of its uniformity. All these aspects contribute in the significance of my study and provide more knowledge in the field of art history.

Literatures concerned with questions of identity, war, and art are abundant, nonetheless, as far as I know, studying the effects of the specificity of the war on different art scenes hasn't been addressed. This research intends to fill this gap and relates the appearance of specific phenomena in art to the specificity of the war. In doing so, more will be known about this sophisticated art genre which is saturated with emotions and psychological content. This also contributes to the significance of this study.

In the broader field of contemporary art, this dissertation analyzes a history of art from within its historical and political shadows. It is of significant interest for academics and students alike, as well as being of great value to scholars interested in the fields of art, psychology, anthropology and cultural history. The research is concerned with a wider analysis of the overall context from a psychological, artistic and social viewpoint. The topics outlined draw attention for less researched region in the combined fields of art and psychology with an interest in the relationships between visual arts and specific socio-

cultural conflicts and peripheries. In addition, political and social influences and artistic production are investigated in this dissertation, making it particularly relevant to a variety of research fields in the humanities. This also contributes in adding valuable information not only to the history of arts in these countries, but rather to the vast body of knowledge.

Contributing to the body of knowledge is one of the basic reasons for the accomplishment of this research. In addition to my personal interest in studying this topic, I believe that wars have to be studied in the artistic field. The war, which causes major changes in a society, also cause changes in its arts, and the unavailability of studies devoted to investigate these changes in art from different dimensions results in a lack of historical information. In his introduction to *War in European History* (1976), military historian Michael Howard stated that war has to be studied “not only, [...] in the framework of political history, but in the framework of economic, social and cultural history as well”¹⁸. Well, I second that and since the arts are part of a nation’s culture, studying these wars in the framework of art history is of great importance.

However, studying the effects of wars in the framework of art history can be attained through performing different kinds of analyses and methods. These may be concerned in comparing pre-war and post-war arts of the same scene, or examining the quantity and quality of art production during specific war, the availability of exhibitions and galleries to show and promote this kind of art and many others. Nonetheless, out of my interest in psychology and the unavailability of studies devoted to examine this art from this perspective, I choose to analyze these effects in a psychosocial frame. This excludes other areas of analysis, which, in turn, provide a profound focused study and yields better results. Moreover, in order to conduct a psychosocial analysis of the impact of wars on art, my

¹⁸ Howard, M., 1976. *War in European history*. Oxford University Press. Introduction

study is directed towards examining a specific art genre; it exclusively inspects art characteristic of war. Consequently, it doesn't reflect the whole art scenes in the mentioned countries. This research is not intended to be a comprehensive study of the whole art scenes in question, but rather to highlight the effects of the diverse wars which played pivotal roles in shaping this art genre. The restriction of the performed analysis to this specific art genre and through a distinct psychosocial approach concentrates the investigation and opens the chance for a thorough examination in this dimension, and, in turn, results in more important findings.

Despite the concentration of this research to specific art genre and kind of analysis, it isn't accomplished without difficulties. Of the basic difficulties I encounter is the unavailability of details for specific artworks. However, to overcome this problem, whenever possible, I contact the artists or galleries to attain the information, or else, if still they can't be attained, I present the work with as much details as I can get. Another problem is my inability to visit Palestine because of my Lebanese nationality, and Syria due to its unstable circumstances. Visiting these countries serves my research as a field study to film graffiti, for it is an area I discuss in my text. Nevertheless, I detect some works on the internet and few in books, and after all my research is not mainly focused on graffiti. Yet, despite my preference for attaining these interests, the meticulousness of the analysis to investigate the various effects of wars on the art scenes in question is not affected.

I analyze these effects of the wars in two chapters while reserve chapter one to serve as the theoretical base for the following analysis. Therefore, I perform the whole study in three chapters outlined in the following.

In chapter one, I present and discuss issues concerned with identity, wars and nations related to the art world. I define what is meant by identities, personal and collective, their

aspects and nature. I discuss different theories and consider identities as unstable depending on the social context. I also demonstrate how art has been used to exhibit the artist's social and personal identities. Then, I present different connotations of nations and national identities, and explain the means for constructing them. I draw on Montserrat Guibernau's consideration of national identity as having five dimensions. After that, I discuss the consequences of wars on nations and individuals, and reveal their impact on the (re)construction of identities in general, and on national identities in particular. I argue that national identity is the mostly affected social identity during times of conflict. Last, relying on the presented theories, I analyze and demonstrate the representations of national identity in the international art scene, taking Francisco De Goya's *The Third of May 1808*, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's *Self-Portrait as a Soldier* and Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* as an exemplary study of artworks manifesting war, knowing that contemporary international history is not subjected to wars.

Chapter two inspects the different representations of war in contemporary art of Lebanon, Palestine and Syria. I start the chapter by presenting an overview of the histories of wars in these countries in order to understand the social context that impacted their art. I inspect the reflection of war incidents in the three scenes, linking them to the historical events presented in the beginning of the chapter. Then, I interpret the different representations of wars or their effects in art. The physical and emotional representations are analyzed. The physical representations of the wars exhibit the damage imposed on the nation, such as destruction, and on individuals, like violence and death, whereas the emotional are those manifesting the non-physical harm such as emotional distress and loss. In the final section of this chapter, I link these various representations to the nature of each war, comparing them among the scenes and analyzing the reasons for their display. I argue that the kind of each war created diverse representations among the three art scenes.

Finally, in chapter three, I reveal how art characteristic of war in the three countries was exploited to serve as a platform to promote national identity and transmit political messages. I analyze the different embodiments of national identity in this art genre in the three art scenes, relying on Montserrat Guibernau's argument of this identity as having five dimensions: Psychological, cultural, historical, political and territorial. Considering these dimensions as representations of national identity, I analytically compare their various representations among the three art scenes and relate them to the particular war experienced in each country. After that, I elaborate how artistic practices have been applied for political purposes. The transmission of political messages in art to serve extra-artistic purposes according to the nature of the war is examined. I inspect different messages reflecting the circumstance of the nation and transmitted through various media, such as graffiti, posters, slogans, or national speeches, and investigate their articulation in the three art scenes. Last, I analyze the personification of the artist's (re)constructed identities, as a result of each specific war, through the different roles expressed in art. I argue that, in accordance to each war, artists (re)constructed identities and personified extra-artistic roles serving different purposes. In addition, I argue that Palestinian artists personified a 'hero identity' and expressed it in their art.

Art characteristic of war in Lebanon, Palestine and Syria reflects the artists' responses to the diverse complexities of the region. Bearing in mind individual differences, each war created major traits in the art scene of its respective country while differentiating it from the other scenes. The goal is not to determine individual differences in the same art scene, but rather to inspect the effects of each war on its whole scene. According to the specificity of each encountered war, diverse representations and aspects were created in art. In the following chapters, I inspect and analyze these effects in relation to each crisis.

CHAPTER ONE: IDENTITY, NATIONS, WARS AND THE ART WORLD

1.1 Introduction

Analyzing the psychological and social effects of war on art compels the interpretation of social and personal identities. It is an indisputable certainty that wars affect the individual as well as the society, and to investigate these effects in art it is fundamental not to ignore the impact of war on certain identity aspects. Therefore, I start this chapter by defining identities, interpreting how they are categorized, constructed and related to the social context.

Very often, art can be referred to as a window to the artist's self and identity. When expressing personal, political or social issues, art can reveal considerable clues about the artist's self and identity. Art reflects the artist's views, perspectives, affiliations, and more precisely, what he or she is or isn't. I am not claiming that any kind of art reveals all the artist's identities, but rather that the art an artist chooses to produce reveals a lot about him or her. Of course, some approaches in art tell us more than others, but even the unexpressive kinds of art, such as formalism, reveal certain characteristics about the artist.

Art acts as a means to discover the artist's identities, experiences, perspectives in life, and, more or less, things about his/her society. Art can also inform us about the artist's biography and reflect the surrounding circumstances during the time of accomplishment of the work. Therefore, some artworks are not limited to expressing the artist's individuality and personal experiences, but rather reflect the society where he/she practiced art, thus reflecting wars and conflicts. From this approach, I analyze how art in Lebanon, Palestine and Syria was influenced by wars, inspecting the manifestations of social and psychological effects.

Knowing that war is a sociopolitical issue, I have to primarily study its impact on collective identities, in order to trace it in art. Also considering that “every work [an artist] creates, whatever its ostensible theme, is primarily an act of self-revelation and also of self-recognition”¹⁹, I use art to investigate and analyze the artist’s personal identities that are implied or revealed, as an effect of war. Therefore, in this chapter, I explain what is meant by personal and collective identities and show the ways they are affected by war, in order to analyze these issues in art displaying war.

Notably, I focus throughout this chapter on studying personal and collective identities, the ways they are affected by war and how they can be manifested in art. However, due to the mass literature on the topic of identity, it is unattainable to present in a single book a detailed discussion of all identity theories, as well as presenting all its aspects. Moreover, as an analytic category, identity is “riddled with ambiguity, riven with contradictory meanings, and encumbered by reifying connotations,” so much so that some scholars propose dropping the term altogether²⁰. Consequently, I present the most essential theories that contribute to my study and discuss identity aspects necessary to analyze the artworks exhibiting manifestations of war.

Therefore, basic identity theories and aspects are briefly explained throughout this chapter. This explanation is essential for analyzing the relationship between artworks characteristic of war and the unstable environment in which the artists performed and practiced, illustrating how ultimately this milieu contributed in shaping art production in Lebanon, Palestine and Syria. Whether these identities are personal or collective, they are nonetheless affected by the social circumstances and this compels the analysis of certain identity aspects as an integral part of this study.

¹⁹ Lucie-Smith, E. and Kelly, S., 1987, *The Self Portrait: A Modern View*, Sarema Press, London, p. 23.

²⁰ Brubaker, R. and Cooper, F., 2000. Beyond “identity”. *Theory and Society*, 29(1), pp.1-47. P. 34.

2.1. Identity and art

1.2.1. Defining identities

Identities are social categories that identify who we are. These can be titles, roles, memberships in groups, gender, social positions, and affiliations that distinguish and classify each and every individual. “Identities are the traits and characteristics, social relations, roles, and social group memberships that define who one is”²¹. They are the aspects by which we classify, identify and categorize ourselves, on the one hand, and others distinguish us according to them, on the other hand. Our identities affect the way we consider things around us, the actions we take, our mindsets and our perspectives in life, they “include content and readiness to act and employ mindsets to make meaning.”²². In other words, our identities are not solely titles given to us; rather they affect our conceptions and actions in life. Every individual possesses sets of identities that determine who he or she is and together they “make up one's self-concept”²³ and “what one believes is true of oneself”²⁴. They “are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past”²⁵.

An identity compares us to some and differentiates from others. A social status, gender, nationality and any other identification creates either sameness or differentiation with others. And this results in the fact that “identification is always a matter of relationships of similarity AND difference”²⁶. For example, by the phrase: ‘Palestinian artist Laila Shawa’,

²¹ Leary, M. R. and Tangney, J. P. eds., 2012. *Handbook of Self and Identity*. Second ed. The Guilford Press, New York, p. 69.

²² *Idem*. P. 94.

²³ *Idem*. P. 69.

²⁴ Baumeister, R. F., 1998. The self. In D. T. Gilbert, S. T. Fiske, & G. Lindzey (Eds.). (4th ed., pp. 680-740). *Handbook of social psychology*. McGraw-Hill. Forgas, J. P., & Williams, K. D., 2002. *The social self: Cognitive, interpersonal, and intergroup perspectives*. Psychology Press.

²⁵ Hall, S., 2014. Cultural identity and diaspora. In *Diaspora and visual culture*. Routledge. P.225.

²⁶ Jenkins, R., (2000). The limits of identity: ethnicity, conflict, and politics. *Sheffield Online Papers in Social Research*. [Viewed 13 December 2018]. Available from: <http://www.shef.ac.uk/uni/academic/R-Z/socst/Shop/2.html>. On 10/4/2018

we are referring to Shawa's identity, or role identity, as an artist and to her national identity as Palestinian, in addition, by her feminine name, we are introduced to her gender identity being herself a woman. By the title 'Palestinian artist' attributed to her, we are distinguishing her according to two identities; her artist identity differentiates her from doctors or engineers, for example, and identifies her with other artists, moreover, her national identity identifies with her Palestinians, while differentiating her from those of other nationalities. This differentiation is not essentially something negative, but rather a fundamental quality of identification since "identity politics is always and necessarily a politics of the creation of difference"²⁷. Without the differentiation criteria, there will be no similarities; we share similarities with some just because we are different from others, and vice versa. Therefore, the existence of similarities is not possible without the presence of differences which makes "the internal project of the construction of a sense of shared similarity is no less significant than the construction of a sense of difference from external Others"²⁸. And when talking about an identity, differentiation is a major issue of consideration since without it there will be no distinction between the identified and the other. This further asserts its nature as a relational category which identifies a thing in relation to another. "Formally and logically identity is a relational term. It defines the relationship between two or more related entities in a manner that asserts a sameness or equality"²⁹.

These categorizations or the identities that classify us are not only what we believe is true about ourselves, but it is also how others identify us. "A person is ascribed certain social characteristics (age, sex, class, and so on) and assigned role expectations and memberships

²⁷ Wodak, R. de Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., and Liebhart, K. 2009. *Op. Cit.*, P. 2.

²⁸ Jenkins, R., (2000). *OP.Cit.* P. 8.

²⁹ Wodak, R. de Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., and Liebhart, K. 2009. *Op. Cit.* P. 11.

from outside”³⁰. Therefore, an identity is not limited to what one feels is true about oneself; it is a classification driven from the social context as a whole. Identity is “a matter of internal definition and external definition: this suggests that identification can never be unilateral”³¹. Any identity a person possesses is not only classified from his/her own perspective, but rather it is a categorization extracted from the social context. “Identities are thus strategic social constructions created through interaction, with social and material consequences”³². Personal and collective identities are socially constructed; derived from the social context. “Henry Hale conceives of identity as a kind of “social radar” that provides individuals with a point of reference, allowing them to situate themselves within a wider group and understand how their membership affects them in the social world, including relations with other groups”³³. And Leary and Tangney consider that “identities are dynamically constructed in context”³⁴. Brubaker and Cooper define identity as a social category denoting “some fundamental and consequential sameness” in which an individual is eligible to be a member³⁵. The correlation between identities and the social structure suggests how conflicts and wars affect personal and collective identities. Therefore, to study the social and psychological effects of war on visual arts, it is necessary to study how identities are (re)constructed as a consequence of this conflict.

Our identities are not only who we are now, they “can be focused on the past-what used to be true of one, the present-what is true of one now, or the future-the person one expects or wishes to become, the person one feels obligated to try to become, or the person one fears

³⁰ *Idem*. P. 6.

³¹ Jenkins, R., (2000). *Op. Cit.* P. 6.

³² Howard, J.A., 2000. Social psychology of identities. *Annual review of sociology*, 26(1). P.371.

³³ Hale, H.E., 2004. *Op. Cit.*, Cited in Seymour, L.J. and Cunningham, K.G., 2016. Identity Issues and Civil war. *What do we know about civil wars*. P. 4

³⁴ Leary, M. R. and Tangney, J. P. eds., 2012. *Op. Cit.*, P. 94.

³⁵ Brubaker, R. and Cooper, F, 2000. *Op. Cit.* Cited in Seymour, L.J. and Cunningham, K.G., 2016. *Op. Cit.* P.4

one may become”³⁶. So our identities are not all stable and unchangeable; on the contrary, we frequently acquire new identities. “The concept of identity (apart from the formal sense of the term used in logic and mathematics) never signifies anything static, unchanging, or substantial, but rather always an element situated in the flow of time, ever changing, something involved in a process. This applies, of course, to all forms of personal and social identity as well as to ‘ego identities’”³⁷. We construct new identities and may conserve, reconstruct or deconstruct our old ones. They are not constant identifications that adhere to us all through our lives, they “are not the fixed markers people assume them to be but are instead dynamically constructed in the moment. Choices that feel identity congruent in one situation do not necessarily feel identity-congruent in another situation”³⁸. Therefore, identities are directly influenced by the social environment in which they are practiced, to the extent that “the possession of a developmentally susceptible identity [...is] an essential part of what it is to be an ordinary person”³⁹. “Identities are points of temporary attachments to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us”⁴⁰. Therefore, identities are ‘temporary attachment’ and thus we modify our identities according to the practices that surround us. And this concept is further demonstrated upon analyzing the impact of wars on identities as revealed in visual arts.

It is possible for an identity to remain stable for a period of time only if the context, which is the social surrounding, stays constant. However, the social context does not stay the same for a long period of time. There might be certain temporary stability in some contexts or social aspects, but definitely not all aspects, and this stability can never be permanent. “The idea of an individual or even a lifeless object staying the same would also be untenable”⁴¹.

³⁶ Leary, M. R. and Tangney, J. P. eds., 2012. *Op. Cit.*, P. 69.

³⁷ Wodak, R. de Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., and Liebhart, K. 2009. *Op. Cit.* P. 11.

³⁸ Leary, M. R. and Tangney, J. P. eds., 2012. *Op. Cit.*, P. 70.

³⁹ Shotter, J.E. and Gergen, K.J., 1989. *Texts of identity*. Sage Publications, Inc. P. 146

⁴⁰ Hall, S., 1996. Introduction: Who needs identity? *Questions of cultural identity*. P. 6.

⁴¹ Wodak, R. de Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., and Liebhart, K. 2009. *Op. Cit.*, P. 11.

Anyhow, I will not deepen this investigation about the extent of stability of social aspects and identities in general, because the point of interest and relevance to this research is analyzing identities during times of war, which are times of extreme social instabilities. Therefore, it is a solid fact that identities do not stay unaffected in an unstable social context, and what yet needs to be discussed concerning identities is: What are the kinds of identities affected by wars and how are they affected?

Identities are social constructs that are directly associated with the social context. They are subjected to modifications especially during social instabilities and conflicts. “Identity is never a priori, nor a finished product”¹; it might be (re)constructed or (de)constructed within the social context. Each individual has sets of identities that affect his or her perceptions, actions, mindsets, decisions, perspectives in life and feelings and expressions regarding certain circumstances. Identities “are predicted to influence what people are motivated to do, how they think and make sense of themselves and others, the actions they take, and their feelings and ability to control or regulate themselves”². However, every episode the individual encounters requires the manifestation of certain identity(s). “Identities locate a person in social space by virtue of the relationships that these identities imply, and are, themselves, symbols whose meanings vary across actors and situations”³. Different identities are selected in reference to various situations where “social identity theories predict that in each interaction, people take on a different identity”⁴. Moreover, the employment of these identities varies according to different persons (or actors), “bring[ing] order to the buzzing, blooming confusion of experience”⁵. Thus, different positions compel the action of different identities and “the cued identity carries with it a

¹ Bhabha H. 1994. *Op. Cit.*, P. 51.

² Leary, M. R. and Tangney, J. P. eds., 2012. *Op. Cit.*, P. 70.

³ Howard, J.A., 2000. *Op. Cit.*, P. 371

⁴ Leary, M. R. and Tangney, J. P. eds., 2012. *Op. Cit.*, P. 74.

⁵ Gregg, G.S., 2007. *Op. Cit.*, P. 298

general readiness to act and make sense of the world in identity-congruent terms, including the norms, values, strategies, and goals associated with that identity, as well as the cognitive procedures relevant to it”¹. Therefore, a person chooses an identity he or she possesses and has constructed during his life, or as Stuart Hall termed it “within the narratives of the past”² in order to face specific encounters. And this further proves the nature of identities as unstable and dependent on context.

2.2.1. Different aspects of identity

Every individual acquires sets of identities that help him/her conceptualize who they are and allow others to classify them accordingly. Since identities affect our actions, mindsets, behaviors, morals and many other aspects in our lives, they also affect the way we perceive ourselves or our self-concept. “Erikson used the term identity in ways synonymous with what others have termed self-concept”³. And other scholars proposed that “the term identity can also be conceptualized as a way of making sense of some aspect or part of self-concept”⁴. However, the “array of identities” that each individual possesses comprises “some personal "me" self-concepts and others social "us" self-concepts”⁵. These ‘personal "me" self-concepts’ are our individual personal identities, whereas the ‘social "us" self-concepts’ are our collective, or social identities.

Together, our individual and collective identities shape who we are, how we identify ourselves and how others perceive us. “Individuals define their identities along two dimensions: social, defined by membership in various social groups; and personal, the idiosyncratic attributes that distinguish an individual from others”⁶.

¹ Leary, M. R. and Tangney, J. P. eds., 2012. *Op. Cit.*, P. 93.

² Hall, S., 2014. P. 225.

³ Leary, M. R. and Tangney, J. P., 2012. *Op. Cit.*, P. 73.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Idem.*, P. 91.

⁶ Howard, J.A., 2000. *Op.Cit.* P. 369.

Our personal or individual identity includes our characteristics that differ us from others, our personal goals and aims in life, our own experiences that further shapes who we are and the traits that solely define each individual of us separately and differentiate him\her from the collective. “Personal identities are a person's traits, characteristics and attributes, goals and values, and ways of being”¹. “Personal identity is ‘forged out of individual experience’ and enables individuals to ‘give accounts of themselves’”². Walter Truett Anderson claims that personal identities would be hard to locate without the network of symbols within which we are defined and the internal monologue with which we continually remind ourselves who we think we are³. Therefore, considered socially constructed, personal identities are the individual’s personal traits but are still hard to locate without the social aspect.

Whereas personal identities reflect the person’s individual characteristics, collective identities refer to the common identity of a group and the people belonging to it. Collective identities are also referred to as social identities and are the identifications of a group which differentiate it from other groups. This group sets out a collective identity which distinguishes its members and provides among them a sense of solidarity and affiliation. The concept of a collective identity highly depends on the set of individuals' sense of belonging to the group. In addition, this act of belonging to a group fosters among its members a further sense of collective identity which also characterizes the group as a whole.

Although collective and personal identities might appear on different ends of the spectrum, they are often interrelated in a person’s life. “Personal identities reflect traits or

¹ Leary, M. R. and Tangney, J. P., 2012. *Op. Cit.*, P. 94.

² Kennedy, P. and Danks, C., 2001. *Globalization and national identities: crisis or opportunity?* Palgrave Publishers. P. 6.

³ Anderson, W., 1997. *The future of the self: Inventing the postmodern person.* Tarcher.

characteristics that may feel separate from one's social and role identities or linked to some or all of these identities"¹. So it can be said that personal identities are not always independent from other collective identities possessed by the same individual. Both socially constructed, "Anderson considers individual-related and system-related identities overlap a great deal in the identity of an individual. To a certain extent, individuals bear the characteristics of one or more collective group or system to which they belong"². Therefore, when a person belongs to a group and feels a certain attachment to it, his/her personal identities are definitely influenced by the collective identity derived from belonging to that group. "Individual and social identity are 'entangled' with each other, they are produced by 'analogous' processes and they are both 'intrinsically social'"³. Moreover, there exists "an interplay between the two, suggesting they are not easily separable"⁴. Whether personal and collective identities are "overlapping", "entangled", "not easily separable" or "lie at opposite ends of a continuum", they are definitely related and are both linked to the social context. This, however, proves that wars, that intensely influence people's individual experiences, their social surroundings and their wellbeing, affect the individual's personal and collective identities, and the manifestation of this effect in visual arts is the subject of my study.

For an individual, the identity derived from the collective shapes at least part of his or her personal identity. Moreover, a person's sense of belonging to a particular group might be intense to the extent that it trumps other aspects of his/her personal identity. Although "the social psychological and sociological identity literatures contrast personal and social identities, also termed collective identities"⁵, we cannot deny the link between the two. Erik

¹ Leary, M. R. and Tangney, J. P., 2012. *Op. Cit.*, P. 74.

² Wodak, R. de Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., and Liebhart, K. 2009. *Op. Cit.*, P. 16.

³ Jenkins, R., 1996. *Social identity*. Routledge. P. 19.

⁴ Howard, J.A., 2000. *OP.Cit.* P.369.

⁵ Leary, M. R. and Tangney, J. P., 2012. *OP.Cit.* P. 74.

Erickson views “the process of identity development as one in which the two identities—of the individual and of the group—are merged and integrated into one”¹. Martin Albrows claims that “what is expressed by social identity is not membership of particular social groups but the ‘unique identifier’ to which everyone is entitled’ namely, ‘the universality of the right to be a distinct human being’”². To put it another way, collective identity is the idea that through being part of social groups, individuals can gain an "identity" that gives them a further sense of existence and belonging to the world which they are entitled to. Henri Tajfel developed his ‘Social Identity Theory’ which “begins with the premise that individuals define their own identities with regard to social groups and that such identifications work to protect and bolster self-identity”³. So according to Tajfel, social identification with groups boosts the person’s individual identity, thus clearly drawing a direct link between social and individual identities.

What follows in this section demonstrates the way collective identities are shaped within a group and how they are acquired by individuals. It simplifies the concept of collective identities so that it is clearer and more comprehensible when applied to studying the effects of war on national identity. I initially show how groups of people are formed and how they are classified in order to move forward into explaining how wars have shaped the contemporary collective identities in Lebanon, Palestine and Syria.

Logically speaking, for individuals to form a group they are supposed to have certain goals, interests, objectives or any other qualities in common. Even when sorting inanimate objects into groups, we perform that according to their shared qualities: color, form, purpose, material, texture or others, but always seeking common qualities among the objects to

¹ Kim, Y.Y., 1994. Beyond cultural identity. *Intercultural Communication Studies*, 4(1). P. 4.

² Kennedy, P. and Danks, C., 2001. *Op. Cit.* P. 6.

³ Islam, G., 2014. Social Identity Theory. *Research Gate*. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281208338_Social_Identity_Theory P. 1781.

group them. Consequently, we may have a collection of red objects where the basic shared quality of the group is the color. Objects of this group probably possess different shapes, purposes, sizes... but they share a specific characteristic among each other. This shared characteristic is the collective attribute of the group which becomes its binding aspect, as well as its apparent feature. In addition, we may perform more divisions and decide that the collection's criteria are color and purpose, then each item of the group has to share the same color and purpose as others of the same group. However, once we make a collection of similarities, we are automatically sorting out differences. As a result, this example simplifies that for a group to exist it has to be constructed according to similarities, which, in turn, sorts out differences from others.

To a certain extent the previous example may be applied to people's memberships in groups; they have qualities in common that differentiate them from others. They are supposed to share specific qualities, interests, goals or other aspects to be grouped together. However, some of these aspects can be chosen by an individual while others are rather imposed. For example, a person may choose any field of education, career, political party or club, but cannot choose his/her original gender, color, race or country of birth, nonetheless the result is a collective identity based on shared characteristics, whether inherent or acquired later in life.

In addition to the criteria explained in grouping, humans' natural inclination 'to belong' plays an important role in constructing collective identities. "All claims to collective identities rest on the specific ideological and organizational scaffoldings that frame, integrate and ultimately control human feelings of attachment"¹. People, whatever personal differences they possess, tend for attachments and belonging rather than being alienated.

¹ Malešević, S., (2016). Do national identities exist? *Social Space Journal*. P. 17.

“According to Harre, finding a place for oneself in the world involves two projects. One must find a *social identity*- an honored place in the social order- yet also attempt to maintain a *personal identity*, in the sense of a biographical uniqueness”¹. Therefore, in addition to the personal identity that an individual possesses, he\she still has to acquire a social identity to “find a place in the world”, as Harre claims.

Whether the individual’s tendency to belong is oriented towards a group of people from a neighborhood, state or religious sect, it is still considered for most as a required relation. “As micro-sociological and socio psychological studies demonstrate an overwhelming majority of human beings derive their emotional fulfilment, comfort and sense of ontological security from such small scale groups”². Once an individual is affiliated with a collection, he/she automatically forms a bond with it and its members, moreover, he/she acquires a collective identity which describes the whole set. In other words, for persons to belong to a group and become members of an asset they have to share at least few interests and orientations which would create a relation between the two. For example, if a person works as a lecturer in a university he would be sharing many interests, personal inclinations and characteristics with other lecturers of the same institution. Clearly, those lecturers would be concerned about the wellbeing of the employing institution, being their source of income, about the reactions and achievements of their students, and about their own performance and accomplishments as teachers, in order for their positions to persist. Knowing also that “individuals bear the characteristics of one or more collective group or system to which they belong,”³ these instructors will share a social identity constructed by belonging to this specific group, which also affects their personal identity. Therefore, a person’s sense of belonging to a group inspires a social or collective identity shared by the

¹ Shotter, J.E. and Gergen, K.J., 1989. *Op. Cit.*, P. 179.

² Malešević, S., (2016). *Op. Cit.*, P. 14.

³ Wodak, R. de Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., and Liebhart, K. 2009. *Op. Cit.*, P. 16.

group's 'set of individuals' and at the same time, affecting the person's characteristics and individual identity.

An individual can belong to many different groups and each provides him/her with a specific social identity. "There are number of social identities; they answer to many, many of the lines of action (processes) in a society. These social identities are postulated to constitute the major link between self and society"¹. And the more qualities a person shares with a group, the more is the feeling of belonging to it and the greater is his/her sense of that collective identity. Therefore, belonging to a group grants individuals a sense of social identity which imposes a sense of belonging to the social world. "A dominant feature of the social identity theory is the presumed value and emotional significance attached to group identity and its close relationship to self-identity, self-esteem, and outgroup behavior"².

Social scientists have determined different definitions of collective identities, nonetheless, they all have considered them in relation to group memberships and people's attachment to the group. Leary and Tangney defined collective identities as "a person's roles, interpersonal relationships and group memberships, and the traits, characteristics, attributes, goals, and values congruent with these roles, relationships, and memberships"³. And Richard Jenkins claimed that "social identity is simply - and complexly - a process of identification, it is no more, and no less, than how we know who we are and who other people are"⁴.

People adopt the social identity of the group they have categorized themselves as belonging to it, which makes them feel related to their group members and distinct from others who

¹ Young, T.R., 1972. *New Sources of Self*. Pergamon press. P. 22.

² Kim, Y.Y., 1994. *OP.Cit.* p. 4.

³ Idem. P.95

⁴ Jenkins, R., (2000). *OP.Cit.*

don't belong to it. Henri Tajfel's "social identity theory focuses on the extent to which individuals identify themselves in terms of group memberships"¹. And this identification is primarily achieved by finding similarities within the same group and differences among others. Differentiating members of a certain group from others, not belonging to the group, is a fundamental aspect in constructing a collective identity. This goes back to the fact that "every search for identity includes differentiating oneself from what one is not: identity politics is always and necessarily a politics of the creation of difference"². Tajfel used the term 'in-group' to refer to members of the same group and 'out-group' to those not belonging to it, and developed his theory to study in-group and out-group behavior. To him "the creation of group identities involves both the categorization of one's "in-group" with regard to an "out-group" and the tendency to view one's own group with a positive bias vis-a-vis the out-group"³. The differentiation criterion suggests a comparison between in-group members with respect to the out-group, where members of an in-group often seek to find negative aspects of an out-group in order to enhance their self-image. Because people are motivated to evaluate themselves positively, they tend to evaluate positively those groups to which they belong and to discriminate against groups which are perceived to pose a threat on their social identity. And this results, agreeing with Tajfel's statement, in viewing "one's own group with a positive bias vis-a-vis the out-group"⁴. Moreover, this biased perspective often adopted by the in-group members characterizes most social or collective identities, especially national and cultural identities which are discussed later in this chapter.

¹ Howard, J.A., 2000. P. 368

² Benhabib, S. ed., 1996. *Democracy and difference: Contesting the boundaries of the political*. Princeton University Press. P.2.

³ Tajfel, H., 1974. Social identity and intergroup behaviour. *Information (International Social Science Council)*, 13(2), pp.65-93. Cited in Islam, G., 2014, *Op. Cit.* P. 1781

⁴ Howard, J.A., 2000, *Op. Cit.* P. 369

As a conclusion, with the asserted qualities of identities as being fluid, socially constructed and dependent on context, it is undoubtedly confirmed that identities are prone to change with intense social conflicts such as wars. However, due to the vast discussions and controversy debates published on the topic of identity, it is not possible to present here a detailed discussion of all the important identity aspects and theories. Therefore, I concentrate on few important theories and discuss only those aspects of identity that seem necessary to analyze the artists' work that exhibit manifestations of war. Principally, I focus in this dissertation on investigating the effects of war on the artist's identity as manifested in his/her work, hence analyzing aspects of identity and examining theories that are necessary for my topic.

3.2.1. Art as a means of exhibiting identities

I have so far discussed identity apart from art so that, when inspected in art, the analysis becomes more comprehensible. Art and identity have an intrinsic relationship, and I intend to study this relationship with respect to wars experienced. In this section, I interpret how artistic practices have been applied to exhibit individual and collective identities, investigating their different artistic manifestations.

Art has been considered a form of expression and artists have repeatedly used their work as a means to exhibit certain identities. They have either displayed their own identities or others' depending on what they aimed to reveal. Artists have occasionally used their art to manifest their role identities as artists, as well as their national, religious, political, social and other identities. In addition, they have also created works that exhibit other people's identities to benefit financially or pay compliments for famous, rich, political or religious figures.

Throughout history, art has been employed to serve individual and social purposes. It has always been one of the basic means to manifest identities and assert the authority of certain figures. In Ancient Egypt, art served in presenting the identities of Pharaohs emphasizing, what they believed, their superiority with respect to the working class. Each of these figures were displayed showing their role and social identities. In Ancient Rome and Greece, artists aimed to present the identities of what they believed were their gods, in addition, during the process, those artists were revealing their own religious identities. Many artists who came afterwards also exhibited their identities and utilized numerous means to manifest them. Symbols, icons, portraits, specific colors, and many other representations were utilized to exhibit collective identities in art.

As for exhibiting personal or individual identities, artists identify with their work regardless of their intention to exhibit any identity. In other words, even if an artist didn't deliberately exhibit a specific identity in the created artwork, he/she certainly identifies with it. An artist is intrinsically connected to his/her work, which is considered a reflection of his/her identity into the world. The work an artist creates can never be completely detached from his/her personal identity. A work of art may be inspired from the artist's experiences, views, feelings, community, surroundings or any other aspect of his/her life. And knowing that these aspects play the essential part in constructing individual identities, we can deduce that art reflects the artist's individual identity whether intentionally or not. An artist observes his/her work of art and identifies with it, albeit others didn't notice this identity by solely observing the work. At the moment of creating art, artists do not put their emotions, mindset, thoughts, views and history aside, but rather these aspects become inseparable parts of them. And since "identities are predicted to include not only content but also a mindset or way of making sense of the world"¹, when artists express these mindsets,

¹ Leary, M. R. and Tangney, J. P., 2012. *OP.Cit.* P. 91.

emotions, or views in their work, they are displaying aspects of their identity. Each work of art created by an individual artist reflects a state, a time period, an experience, a context, or a stage in his/her life, which all construct part of his/her personal identity. The process of creating art takes place between the artist and the artwork through an individual experience which cannot be separated from his/her identity.

When artists create works of art, they are inspired by things, ideas, topics, circumstances or any other personal or social matters they had encountered, thus reflecting certain identities. According to Gary S. Gregg, “many [people] create semiritualized periods- be they daydreams, self-care practices, shopping, prayer, leisure activities, [art] or whatever- in which they evoke and perform their primary discourse of identity in its most fuguelike form”². Therefore, the process of making art can be considered as a period in which artists “evoke and perform their primary discourse of identity”.

In addition to exhibiting personal identities, artists have repeatedly used their art to manifest certain collective identities and some have gone beyond mere representations of them to reach specific social aims. They designed powerful representations of their collective identities to inspire other members of the collective and remind them of their group affiliation. However, the reasons for exhibiting collective identities in art is discussed in a later stage in this book, in this section I only intend to show how art exhibits identities and not study the reasons for it.

So returning to the topic of this section, I declare that it is not only the artist who identifies with an artwork he/she created, others can do so as well. Here, I must determine how someone, other than the artist, identifies himself/herself with a work of art. To identify oneself with a work of art doesn't necessarily mean that the person must be fond of it, or

² Gregg, G.S., 2007. *Op.Cit.* P. 298.

that, in case it was a portrait, it has to resemble his/her image or must reflect that person's sentiments, views and mindset. People can identify with an artwork for many other reasons; they might identify with specific experiences displayed, as well as implied cultural, political or national aspects. For example, a Syrian national identifies himself/herself with an artwork that presents the war circumstances in Syria. Regardless if the work is admired or not, it exhibits the circumstances that this individual had undergone, and this creates a certain connection or identification with it. People identify with an artwork if it exhibits aspects of their culture or indications of their political, national, religious and other collective identities. Therefore, people can identify with any artwork which exhibits a collective identity they belong to, experiences they encountered, events they shared and so on.

Artists express and reflect aspects of their own society in their artworks hence representing its collective identity. Like any other social beings, artists undergo experiences in their society and are affected by their surrounding circumstances. When they reflect these issues in their work, they are exhibiting a collective identity shared by the people who had undergone these circumstances. If artists reflect a political conflict in their society, for example, they are not only expressing a personal response, but rather exhibiting the collective identity of that society through displaying a shared experience. Similar to any political conflict, war is a state that affects a country in every single aspect; it affects people individually, as well as the society as a whole. Artists, being part of the society, are also affected. As a response, many exhibit this effect in their art, thus manifesting their individual and collective identities. John Dewey declared that "artist's and culture's identity flow into the art that is produced"³. Therefore, by exposing elements and experiences of their social or cultural surrounding, artists exhibit the collective identity of their society. In

³ Dewey, J., 1934. *Art as Experience*. Minton. Balch and Co. P. 330

addition to representing a specific experience, artists use many aspects to display collective identities. Clothing, jewelry, adornments, symbols, icons, colors and many other aspects have been used in art to symbolize specific identities. Stuart Hall said that we should understand “‘identity as a ‘production’ [...] constituted within, not outside, representation”⁴, and since art is a means of representation, it is employed to represent identities.

3.1. Theories of nation and national identity

It is essential to elucidate what is meant by a ‘nation’ in order to explain what is national identity and analyze how it is effected by wars. Therefore, the following subsection presents different connotations of a nation and the second demonstrates theories about ‘national identity’, how it is constructed and perceived and what are its basic aspects. Being one of the most influenced collective identities during wars, I explain what is meant by national identity in order to move forward and analyze its appearance in visual arts during times of conflicts. However, I briefly address concepts that are not related directly to our topic but cannot be skipped in order for the important issues to be explained. In this regard, the concept of a nation is explained and different definitions are exemplified in order to explain what national identity is.

1.3.1. Different connotations of a nation

Researchers have developed different definitions and connotations of a nation. However, it has “no generally accepted definition”⁵ to the extent that Peter Alter questions the very possibility of a systematic definition of the term⁶. And Benedict Anderson considered that “nation, nationality, nationalism – all have proved notoriously hard to define, let alone to

⁴ Hall, S., 1998. Cultural Identity and Diaspora. In *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* edited by Jonathan Rutherford. Lawrence & Wishart. P. 222.

⁵ Wodak, R. de Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., and Liebhart, K. 2009. *Op. Cit.*

⁶ Alter, P., 1985. *Nationalismus*: Edition Suhrkamp

analyse”⁷. Anyhow, I will present the basic and most prominent definitions proposed, in order to clarify the term as much as possible for a later analysis of national identity. It might be that the primal concept a person might consider when asked ‘what is a nation?’ is the homeland or land of origin and descent. Nonetheless, the concept of a nation is much more complicated than just a land of origin, and social scientists had interpreted it differently within social, political and cultural frameworks and analyses.

According to Anthony D. Smith,

behind the rival models of the nation stand certain common beliefs about what constitutes a nation as opposed to any other kind of collective, cultural identity. They include the idea that nations are territorially bounded units of population and that they must have their own homelands; that their members share a common mass culture and common historical myths and memories; that members have reciprocal legal rights and duties under a common legal system; and that nations possess a common division of labour and system of production with mobility across the territory for members⁸.

And Philosophes defined a nation “as a community of people obeying the same laws and institutions within a given territory”⁹. Another definition, which is one of the most notable definitions of a nation, is Anderson’s argument that it is “an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion”¹⁰.

⁷ Anderson, B., 2006. *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. Verso Books. P.3.

⁸ Smith, A. D. 1991. *Op. Cit.*, P. 75.

⁹ Idem., P. 74.

¹⁰ Anderson, B., 2006. *Op. Cit.*, P. 6

Rudolf Burger states: “Every nation is the [contrived] construction of certain pathos performed by selectively historiographic means in the service of [identifiable] interests and the emotive charging of an existing or targeted sovereign, political large-scale organization, a mythifying formula of pathos for the state itself”¹¹. Connor defines the term “nation” as a “mass-based community of belonging and interest, whose members share a back-ward looking sense of common genealogical and geographic roots, as well as forward-looking sense of destiny”¹². And by nation, Guibernau refers “to a human group conscious of forming a community, sharing a common culture, attached to a clearly demarcated territory, having a common past and a common project for the future and claiming the right to rule itself”¹³.

As presented, and knowing that there are still abundant definitions of a nation, social scientist didn’t reconcile on a specific definition. On the contrary, many of them induced more debates concerning the term. “While Halbwachs¹⁴ focuses on the concept of memory, Stuart Hall emphasizes the role culture plays in the construction of nations and national identities”¹⁵. Montserrat Guibernau, on the other hand, criticized Smith’s definition and concept of a nation and claimed that he has given more credit to the cultural dimension of a nation’s formation than other aspects, and that he didn’t make a clear distinction between nations, states and nation-states, in addition to giving a different definition of the nation in his article ‘When is a Nation?’ (2002) than the previous one in his book *National Identity*

¹¹ Burger, R. 1996. ‘Patriotismus und Nation’, in R. Burger, H.-D. Klein and W.H. Schrader (eds) *Gesellschaft, Staat, Nation*, pp. 35–46. Wien: Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. P. 168. Cited in Wodak, R. de Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., and Liebhart, K. 2009. *Op. Cit.* P. 20.

¹² Connor, W., 1978. A nation is a nation, is a state, is an ethnic group is a.... *Ethnic and racial studies*, 1(4). Cited in İnaç, H. and Ünal, F., 2013. The construction of national identity in modern times: Theoretical perspective. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 3(11). P. 231.

¹³ Guibernau, M., 2004. *Op. Cit.*, P. 132.

¹⁴ Halbwachs, M., 1985, *Das kollektive Gedächtnis*. Fischer. Cited in Wodak, R. de Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., and Liebhart, K. 2009. *Op. Cit.*, P. 20.

¹⁵ Hall, S., 1994. Cultural identity and diasporas. *Colonial discourse and post-colonial theory*, pp.392-403. Cited in Wodak, R. de Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., and Liebhart, K. 2009. *Op. Cit.* P. 155.

(1991). Anderson's definition of a nation as 'an imagined community' was also criticized by many¹⁶ and so on.

These definitions of nation and their controversies further prove the complexity of defining the term. Just as Antony D. Smith characterizes his definition as "just one of many that have been proffered for the concept of the 'nation'. But, like most others, it reveals the highly complex and abstract nature of the concept"¹⁷. However, Smith's definition elucidates the concept, and, as much as this research is concerned, it is beneficial for later analysis; it clarifies what is meant by a nation, and serves in moving forward to explain the necessities for a nation to exist and for national identities to be constructed.

In his article 'When is a Nation?', Smith defines the nation as "a named community possessing an historic territory, shared myths and memories, a common public culture and common laws and customs"¹⁸. Whereas, in his book *National Identity* he states that "a nation can therefore be defined as a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members"¹⁹. In the recent one he eliminated the 'mass' character of public culture, removed a 'common economy' and replaced 'common legal rights and duties for all members' by 'common laws and customs'. Nonetheless, these alterations neither affect our comprehension of the term nor the analysis of national identity as exhibited in art.

One of the basic aspects for a nation to exist is its differentiation from other nations. Apart from the necessary aspects mentioned in its diverse definitions, a nation has to possess

¹⁶ Chatterjee, P. and Caṭṭopādhyāya, P., 1993. *The nation and its fragments: Colonial and postcolonial histories*. Princeton University Press.

¹⁷ Smith, A.D., 1992. National identity and the idea of European unity. *International affairs*, 68(1). P. 60.

¹⁸ Smith, A. D. 2002. *Op. Cit.*, P. 15.

¹⁹ Smith, A. D., 1991. *Op. Cit.*, p. 75.

certain qualities to be distinctive from others. However, for this distinctiveness to be acquired, creating differences is extremely fundamental, since “every nation is to be thought of as a socially constructed pattern of interpretations with which the world is seen from the standpoint of the difference between ‘us’ and ‘them’”²⁰. Therefore, there is no conception of a nation without the existence of ‘the other’, which possesses different territorial boundaries, different culture, laws, traditions, history and more. To exemplify this issue, let us consider a European nation such as Italy. By mentioning it, we are actually referring to Italy with its distinct features which exclude any other nation. Whether the distinct features are cultural, political, territorial or any other aspect, by referring to a specific country, we automatically differentiate it from others. Moreover, a person who belongs to Italy, may refer to his/her country’s geographical aspect as European when wanted to be differentiated from Americans, Asians, or Australians and identifies himself/herself as an Italian to be distinguished from French, Russians or English, and this same person is classified as a Roman when differentiations from Sardinians, Milanese or Sicilians are required. This same criterion is used when referring to any other nation or ethnic group; Arabs are referred to as such among non-Arabs, but among themselves they are classified as Lebanese, Syrians or others, and within each nation there are more and more assortments. Therefore, and knowing that “identity politics is always and necessarily a politics of the creation of difference”²¹, the differentiating aspect adopted by a nation is principally important for its existence.

Therefore, belonging to any nation provides specific classifications shared by its members and, at the same time, imposes differentiations. However, without these differentiations between members of one nation and others, the nation’s existence is questionable. I

²⁰ Wodak, R. de Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., and Liebhart, K. 2009. *Op. Cit.* P. 20.

²¹ *Idem.*, P. 2.

addition, nations aim at creating solidarity among their members and this solidarity is unattainable without differentiating it from others. This differentiation is also an important component that aids in creating the image of an enemy of a nation when needed. Confirming my statement, Richter said that “even the ‘good’ nation of citizens needs its image of an enemy in order to conceive itself as a nation”²².

After explaining the significance of ‘creating sameness and differences’ for a nation’s formation, I move on to handle the essential aspects that nations have to acquire to be labelled as such. The differentiations created by each nation are applied on the aspects necessary for its formation. Taking into account Smith’s definition of a nation as “a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members”²³, I demonstrate the basic aspects for the formation of a nation.

Starting with the historical aspect, it is believed that a nation has to possess a distinct history to be conceived as such. This history differentiates a nation from others, proves its origin, confirms its continuity and claims its right to exist. Smith (1991, 1992) has proven throughout his work that nations have ethnic origins and Guibernau claims that “it is essential to acknowledge that nations have an ethnic origin”²⁴. This correlation between the invention of nations and ethnic origins reveals how nations are linked to ancient descents. Smith differentiates between two models of a nation; the western model, where “an individual had to belong to some nation but could choose to which he or she belonged”²⁵, and the non-Western model which he called an “‘ethnic’ conception of the nation” whose

²² Richter, D. 1994. Ethnic Nationalism: Social Science Paradigma. *International Social Science Journal* 11, pp.3-18. Cited in Wodak, R. de Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., and Liebhart, K. 2009. *Op. Cit.* P. 20.

²³ Smith, A. D., 1991. *Op. Cit.*, P. 75.

²⁴ Guibernau, M., 2004. *Op. Cit.*, P. 139.

²⁵ Smith, A. D. 1991. *Op. Cit.*, P. 75.

“distinguishing feature is its emphasis on a community of birth and native culture”²⁶. However, both models that Smith identified need to invent an history to be visualized as nations.

For a nation to exist, it’s essential to acquire a certain history to confirm its presence and continuity, for once it is believed to be inveterate and deeply rooted, one might say that it will be lasting and infinite. The thing which enabled Regis Debray to state his famous saying, “Yes, it is quite accidental that I am born French; but after all, France is eternal”²⁷. The history of a nation reports its accomplishments, achievements, wars, heroes, sufferings, victories and all other elements that make its ancient presence more tangible and creates the concept that its existence is permanent. Smith declares that ‘there is a felt filiation, as well as a cultural affinity, with a remote past in which a community was formed, a community that despite all the changes it has undergone, is still in some sense recognized as the “same” community’²⁸. This history differentiates a nation from others and frames it in an image of survival, continuity and consistent existence.

In addition to asserting the presence and subsistence of a nation, its history reinforces the sense of belonging that relates it to its people. As Smith emphasizes, “nations, for nationalists, are special kinds of spatial nations and national identity communities, those that can trace their origins or “roots” to specific ancestral landscapes”²⁹. By spreading a nation’s history, people belonging to it “can trace their origins”, as Smith phrased it, and they come to believe that their nation’s history counterparts with their own. This personal linkage between a nation and its people further strengthens the members’ connection with

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Anderson, B., 2006. P. 12.

²⁸ Smith, A. D. 1991. *Op. Cit.*, P. 33.

²⁹ Smith, A. D. 2002. *Op. Cit.*, P. 22. Cited in Guibernau, M., 2004. *Op. Cit.*, Pp. 137-138.

it. According to this history, people feel that they are part of their land as their ancestors had took part in its history, and so will their children and grandchildren after them.

The idea that a specific nation has originated in the distant past, it is still surviving and will keep on standing is a fundamental issue for its existence. Anderson argues that “the nations to which they give political expression always loom out of an immemorial past, and, still more important, glide into a limitless future”³⁰. Therefore, one of the essential elements for a nation to exist is its own history, which provides it with the concept of prolonged presence and continuity. Moreover, history creates a further sense of solidarity among members of the same nation since they experience shared emotions of pride about their nation’s past victories and accomplishments. As Guibernau expressed, “members of a nation tend to feel proud of their ancient roots and generally interpret them as a sign of resilience, strength and even superiority when compared with other nations unable to display a rich past during which the nation became prominent”³¹. A nation’s history, especially what is considered as antique and glorious, provides its members with a greater feeling of affiliation and sense of pride.

The history of a nation is often regarded with respect to its historic land or as Smith mentioned in his definition “historic territory”³². However, the continuous possession of the ‘exact specific historic territory’ is not unanimously considered as a fundamental aspect for a nation’s continuity where Guibernau considered “several examples of nations that have had their own state in the past and which, for various reasons, have become nations without states”³³ or others who had part of their land occupied and still consider themselves as a nation. However, Smith emphasizes that “nations, for nationalists, are special kinds of

³⁰ Anderson, B., 2006. *Op. Cit.*, Pp. 11-12.

³¹ Guibernau, M., 2004. *Op. Cit.*, P. 137.

³² Smith, A. D. 1991. *Op. Cit.*, P. 75.

³³ Guibernau, M., 2004. *Op. Cit.*, P. 132.

spatial Nations and national identity communities, those that can trace their origins or “roots” to specific ancestral landscapes”³⁴. Therefore, the possession of an ancient territory is an important aspect for the existence of a nation.

The political aspect is also fundamental in a nation’s formation. The process of nation-building and of national identity formation is a political product³⁵. This political aspect distributes the power among the elites, assigns people to be responsible for the wellbeing of the nation, sets the laws and rules that have to be followed, draws the political borders of the nation and its dimensions and so on. As much as a nation needs a community of people to exist, it also requires the political establishment of rules and laws. Smith insisted that other than the shared land there is a second element which is “the idea of a patria, a community of laws and institutions with a single political will”³⁶. This political aspect binds members of the same nation together under sets of established rules and laws that are essential to preserve the nation and sometimes protect it from others. Moreover, the above definitions of a nation, as well as others, insist on adding a political perspective for a nation to exist. Although the political circumstances of a nation are frequently represented in visual arts displaying war, this political aspect in the formation of a nation is not directly related to my topic. As a result, I will not address the political aspect of a nation’s formation further, whereas the political circumstances that occur in a nation and are displayed in art are profoundly explained and inspected in the political dimension of national identity and in addressing political issues. In addition, this is also applicable for the economic aspect of a nation’s formation which is an issue irrelevant to my topic since usually it isn’t represented in art.

³⁴ Smith, A. D. 2002. *Op. Cit.*, P. 22. Cited in Guibernau, M., 2004. *Op. Cit.*, Pp. 137-138.

³⁵ Breuilly, J., 1993. *Nationalism and the State*. Manchester University Press.

³⁶ Smith, A. D. 1991. *Op. Cit.*, P. 74.

Moving forward to one of the most important aspects in the formation of a nation: the cultural aspect. The possession of a unique distinguished culture is never undermined in the discussion of nations and national identities. This aspect holds valued power in strengthening the individual's feeling of belonging to a nation. In addition, it provides the nation with unique characteristics that differentiate it from others and grants it a valuable position in the world. "The characteristics of a particular culture, created over time and within certain historical circumstances, indicates certain specificities which differ from nation to nation"³⁷. Stuart Hall describes nations not only as political formations but also as 'systems of cultural representations'³⁸. And Anderson considered that "nationality[...], as well as nationalism, are cultural artefacts of a particular kind"³⁹. Guibernau claims that "[c]ulture is perceived as the particular way of being in the world adopted by each nation"⁴⁰. And Smith describes nations as "cultural units"⁴¹. Jelena Petković declares that "cultural theories of nation adopt the stand that a nation is formed through cultural continuity, that it is a community of culture"⁴². As shown through these declarations, the concept of a nation cannot be separated from its culture.

A nation's culture comprises the nation's traditions, myths, customs, beliefs, language, artefacts and other elements that are engaged in its people's way of living. "In the construction of a common culture we distinguish the topics of language, religion, art (music, literature, theatre, architecture, painting, and so on), science and technology [...] as well as everyday culture (sport, eating and drinking habits, clothing, and so on)"⁴³.

³⁷ Petković, J., 2011. *Op. Cit.*, P. 144.

³⁸ Hall, S., 1996. *Op. Cit.*, P. 612. Cited in Wodak, R. de Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., and Liebhart, K. 2009. *Op. Cit.* P. 20.

³⁹ Anderson, B., 2006. *Op. Cit.*, P. 4.

⁴⁰ Guibernau, M., 2004. *Op. Cit.*, P. 137.

⁴¹ Smith, A.D., 1983. *Theories of Nationalism: Anthony D. Smith.* Holmes & Meier Pub. Cited in Wodak, R. de Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., and Liebhart, K. 2009. *Op. Cit.* P. 20.

⁴² Petković, J., 2011. *Op. Cit.*, P. 144.

⁴³ Wodak, R. de Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., and Liebhart, K. 2009. *Op. Cit.* P. 31.

Culture, however, comprises two aspects: the physical and non-physical. The physical part includes all that is tangible such as monuments, buildings, historical places, works of art, books, documents and all scientific, archeological and architectural artifacts that are significant to a country's culture. Whereas the non-physical aspects are the language, traditions, customs, beliefs, myths, social values, artistic expression, folklore and so on. This is the general connotation conceptualized concerning culture. Stuart Hall considered that a "national culture is a discourse - a way of constructing meanings which influences and organizes both our actions and our conception of ourselves"⁴⁴. Therefore, a nation's culture is not exclusively cultural artefacts, but rather it affects the individual's actions and conceptions.

The cultural aspect of a nation strengthens its members' attachment to their homeland. This aspect provides narratives and elements which members of a nation identify with and bond with sentimentally, thus augmenting the emotional attachment to the homeland and its history. Speaking of Italy, for example, it is not just any nation for its nationals; it is the land of massive historical monuments, the land of Leonardo Da Vinci, Bernini, Dante, Vivaldi and many others. So is Palestine for Palestinians; it is the land of history, of the Anthedon, of Jerusalem, of Mohammad Darwish and others. And Lebanon is the land of Baalbek, Gibran Khalil Gibran, Feyrouz, etc. and Syria is Palmyra, Bosra, Nizar Kabbani and others. Members of a nation identify with its culture on a deep level which augments their feeling of belonging to it. Hall considered that "national cultures construct identities by creating meanings of 'the nation', with which we can identify; these are contained in stories that are told about the nation, in memories which link its present to its past and in the perceptions of it that are constructed"⁴⁵. Indeed, it is irrational to deny the effects of the

⁴⁴ Hall, S., 1996. *Op. Cit.*, P. 613.

⁴⁵ Hall, S., 1994. *Op. Cit.*, Cited in Wodak, R. de Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., and Liebhart, K. 2009. *Op. Cit.* P. 155.

cultural aspect in intensifying people's attachment to their nation and certainly augmenting an emotional value to a land.

In addition to strengthening the member's feeling of belonging to a nation, the cultural aspect intensifies the solidarity among its people. People of the same nation take part of its cultural achievements and perform its cultural traditions. "People are not only legal citizens of a nation; they participate in the idea of the nation as presented in its national culture"⁴⁶. By sharing traditions, history, language, way of living, social values, and other cultural elements, people of the same nation feel that they belong together. As a result, the nation "provide[s] a social bond between individuals and classes by providing repertoires of shared values, symbols and traditions"⁴⁷. A nation's culture is something inherited from its members' ancestors and is expected to be preserved for successive generations. According to Smith, the nation "signifies a cultural and political bond, uniting in a single political community all who share an historic culture and homeland"⁴⁸. This historical culture imposes a great influence on the people's conception of their nation. It further arouses sentimental attachments, triggers collective and personal memories and increases the people's bonds with each other, in addition to providing another tangible proof for the existence and subsistence of the nation.

Finally, as a summary of the basic characteristics of a nation and relying on Smith's theory, it can be simplified as a joint community where individuals share a specific territory, possessing a distinct culture, including language, values, traditions, and history in addition to political and economic systems. This joint community where members share common aspects and perform similar observances and practices sets out shared collective identities

⁴⁶ Hall, S., 1996. *Op. Cit.*, P. 612.

⁴⁷ Smith, A. D. 1991. *Op. Cit.*, P. 77.

⁴⁸ *Idem.*, P. 76.

which influence the community as a whole and the individuals belonging to it. I move forward to the following sections in order to demonstrate how nations construct certain collective identities and show how these, in turn, are affected by wars.

2.3.1. The construction of national identity

While being part of any community imposes certain collective identities, so does belonging to a nation. Communication, socialization and any other kind of connection with someone's surrounding reinforces the feeling of belonging to the place where these social bonds exist. Therefore, individuals usually tend to cultivate a feeling of belonging to their nation and its people, and this, in turn, draws a set of collective identities. As Smith declares, "the nation, in fact, draws on elements of other kinds of collective identity"⁴⁹. One of the most notable identities constructed as a result of belonging to a nation is the national identity.

The nation, being primarily a "joint community"⁵⁰, is a place where individuals interact, socialize, share, grow, develop, experience and operate. It is the place where they accumulate their memories and values, practice their beliefs and develop their sense of self. For A. D. Smith national identities "fulfill more intimate, internal functions for individuals in communities [...; they are] called upon to provide a social bond between individuals and classes by providing repertoires of shared values, symbols and traditions... members are reminded of their common heritage and cultural kinship and feel strengthened and exalted by their sense of common identity and belonging"⁵¹. The experiences, memories and social bonds that individuals develop in living within a community exert a feeling of belonging to it and provides them with a sense of security and strength.

⁴⁹ Smith, A.D., 1991. *Op. Cit.* Pp. 75-76.

⁵⁰ Petković, J., 2011. *Op. Cit.* P. 143.

⁵¹ Smith, A.D., 1991. *Op. Cit.* P. 16.

Similar to other social categorizations with social, political and psychological indications, national identity is a complex matter holding many controversies and debates. Considered “as special form of social identity”⁵², according to Anthony D. Smith “national identity and the nation are complex constructs composed of a number of interrelated components ethnic, cultural, territorial, economic and legal-political”⁵³. Although scientists haven’t reconciled on a united definition of national identity, many have agreed on its complexity and that it comprises multi-dimensions. Smith declared, “the concept of national identity is both complex and highly abstract”⁵⁴. And that it “is fundamentally multidimensional; it can never be reduced to a single element”⁵⁵. According to him, it “involves some sense of political community, history, territory, patria, citizenship, common values and traditions”⁵⁶. And Guibernau also considered that national identity is multidimensional and that it “has five dimensions: psychological, cultural, territorial, historical, and political”⁵⁷. These dimensions of national identity that Guibernau and Smith deduced are compatible with each other, moreover they do not contradict what had been presented by other theorists. The controversies were in giving more account to some of these dimensions over the others, and, in this regard, Smith was criticized for giving more credit to the cultural dimension. However, going through these controversies requires a study on its own and since interpreting these debates adds nothing to my topic, I rely on Guibernau’s dimensions in analyzing the representation of national identity in art.

After explaining what is meant by nation and national identity, I move forward to demonstrate how is national identity constructed. National identity is not created by default as soon as a nation is born; indeed, many aspects aid in its construction. Massimo

⁵² *Idem.*, P. 3.

⁵³ Smith, A.D., 1991. *Op. Cit.* P. 76.

⁵⁴ Smith, A.D., 1991. *Op. Cit.* P. 60.

⁵⁵ *Idem.*, Pp. 75-76.

⁵⁶ *Idem.*, P.9.

⁵⁷ Guibernau, M., 2004. *Op. Cit.*, P. 135.

d’Azeglio’s famous statement explains this issue, he said: “We established Italy and now it is time to create the Italians”¹. The issue in creating nationals is not as simple as giving some people specific land and with time an emotional attachment thrives, it is rather a complex process that holds many theories. Ernest Gellner states that “[n]ationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist”². According to him, nationalism invents nations and not the other way around, referring to the essentiality of nationalism for the existence of nations. Yurdusev argues that the process of nation building or the construction of a nation can be comprehended within two levels. First of all, the rise of nation-state and second one is the dominance of the national ideology³. Here also Yurdusev insists on another aspect for building a nation: the national ideology attained through the invention of a national character or identity.

In order to construct a national identity many aspects have to be realized. In his essay *Rethinking the State*, Bourdieu describes the contribution of the state, or, more precisely, of its political agents and representatives to the creation of national identities as follows: “Through classificational systems (especially according to sex and age) inscribed in law, through bureaucratic procedures, educational structures and social rituals [...], the state moulds mental structures and imposes common principles of vision and division [...]. And it thereby contributes to the construction of what is commonly designated as national identity”⁴. Taking Bourdieu’s model for constructing national identities, I elucidate the fundamental aspects employed to accomplish this task. First, I’d like to mention that

¹ Hobsbawm, E. 1991. *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. P. 44.

² Gellner, E. 1983. *Nations and Nationalism*. Basil Blackwell. P. 169. Cited in Anderson, B., 2006. *Op. Cit.*, P. 6.

³ Yurdusev, A.N. 1997. *Avrupa Kimliğinin Oluşumu ve Türk Kimliği*. Türkiye ve Avrupa: Batılılaşma, Kalkınma, Demokrasi, ed. A. Eralp, İstanbul: İmge. P. 27. Cited in İnaç, H. and Ünal, F., 2013. *Op. Cit.* P. 230.

⁴ Bourdieu, P., 1994b. *Rethinking the State: Genesis and Structure of the Bureaucratic Field*. *Sociological Theory*, 12(1). P.7 ff. Cited in Wodak, R. de Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., and Liebhart, K. 2009. *Op. Cit.*, P. 156.

Bourdieu's model is, more or less, parallel to the dimensions of national identity set by Guibernau which are the: "psychological, cultural, territorial, historical, and political"¹ and Smith's conception of national identity which he considered "involves some sense of political community, history, territory, patria, citizenship, common values and traditions"². Starting by the "classificational systems inscribed in law and bureaucratic procedures" mentioned by Bourdieu, these are the political dimension, political community, citizenship and patria mentioned by Guibernau and Smith. This dimension is the political which includes laws and rules set by the nation-state. As for the "educational structures", they comprise the historical aspect or more precisely the way it is articulated and passed from a generation to the other, and may also include the diffusion of the cultural aspect. Whereas "social rituals" are the cultural aspect which includes common values and traditions. In addition, there is the territorial aspect, which is the land where these practices are performed. Through these aspects, using Bourdieu's words, "the state moulds mental structures and imposes common principles of vision and division". In other words, the nation employs these aspects to induce similar mental structures among its members and generate divisions or differences with other nations. However, creating similarities and differences, as mentioned in the previous section, is basic in constructing any identity.

The national identity categorizes members of the nation and distinguishes them from others. Knowing that every search for an identity involves sorting out similarities and differences, this criterion is also basic and essential in constructing national identities. The 'uniqueness' of any identity is fundamental for its construction, and it is achieved through division and differentiation from the 'other'. "The discursive construction of nations and national identities always runs hand in hand with the construction of difference/distinctiveness and

¹ Guibernau, M., 2004. *Op. Cit.*, P. 135.

² Smith, A.D., 1991. *Op. Cit.* P.9.

uniqueness”¹. This uniqueness is what differentiates specific national identity from another and augments solidarity among members of the same nation by evoking shared similarities. “The process of national identification is promoted by the emphasis on ‘national uniqueness’”². By creating differences from others, sameness among nationals is increased and, as Sheffield claimed “the internal project of the construction of a sense of shared similarity is no less significant than the construction of a sense of difference from external Others”³. This sameness binds the population together and makes them feel more attached to their nation and fellow nationals. According to Ruth Wodak and others, “the discursive construction of 'national' identity [...] is based on the formation of sameness and difference”⁴. Moreover, sameness and difference are aimed for in every dimension of the national identity to elevate it to a unique national character.

Of the most important dimensions in constructing a national identity is the cultural. Belonging to a nation imposes an attachment to its culture. In an attempt to answer the question of how a nation reaches the minds of those who are convinced, it is claimed that this aspect is attained “predominantly in narratives of national culture”⁵. Margaret Mead, taking part in studies of the "national character" reached the conclusion that culture, in the sense of common tradition, myths, symbols, and values is of significant importance in the integration of people belonging to a particular nation.⁶ And Smith gave a fundamental role to culture in the process of a person’s identification by considering that “it is through a shared, unique culture that we are enabled to know ‘who we are’ in the contemporary world. By rediscovering that culture we ‘rediscover’ ourselves, the ‘authentic self’”⁷. Smith

¹ Wodak, R. de Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., and Liebhart, K. 2009. *Op. Cit.*, P. 3.

² *Idem.*, P. 27.

³ Jenkins, R., (2000)., *Op. Cit.*, P. 8.

⁴ Wodak, R. de Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., and Liebhart, K. 2009. *Op. Cit.*, P. 31.

⁵ *Idem.*, P. 22.

⁶ Mead, M., 1972. National Character. *Anthropology Today (Proceedings)*. Vuk Karadzic. Belgrade.

⁷ Smith, A.D., 1991. *Op. Cit.* P. 77.

explores the origins of nations and national identity and finds them in ethnic identity as a “pre-modern form of collective cultural identity”¹. Jelena Petković discusses that “cultural theories of nation adopt the stand that a nation is formed through cultural continuity, that it is a community of culture, and thus that the issue of national identity is almost inseparable from the issue of the cultural identity of a people.” She continues that “the cultural national identity reveals itself as an attachment to one's own culture, which affirms the specific nature of a nation”². Although some theorists gave similar credit to elements, other than the cultural, important for the construction of national identity, none has denied its fundamental contribution.

The cultural aspect of national identity augments solidarity among members of the same nation. Distinct traditions, values, myths and other cultural elements are essentials in constructing national identity. These are habits that accumulate the person's memories and conception of who she/he is. They are experiences that augment the individual's sense of belonging to a specific community surrounded by people who share these experiences. “National cultures construct identities by producing meanings about ‘the nation’ with which we can identify; these are contained in the stories are told about it, memories which connect with its past and imagines which are constructed of it”³. The shared cultural characteristics of a nation, such as habits, values, language, memories, history and others, boost the individual's sense of national identity. Insisting on the importance of the cultural aspect, Smith declared that nations and national identities “signify bonds of solidarity among members of communities united by shared memories, myths and traditions”⁴. Consequently, the attachment to a nation's culture binds members of a nation together and

¹ Guibernau, M., 2004. *Op. Cit.*, P. 126.

² Petković, J., 2011., *Op. Cit.*, P. 144.

³ Hall, S., 1996. *Op. Cit.*, P. 613. Cited in Wodak, R. de Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., and Liebhart, K. 2009. *Op. Cit.*, Pp. 22-23.

⁴ Smith, A.D., 1991. *Op. Cit.* P. 76.

aid in constructing a national identity, which, also develops further feelings of belonging and bonding sensed among its members

In addition to the cultural aspect, for the construction of a strong and persistent national identity, a nation has to possess distinct history in an historic homeland. Members of a nation need to identify with their nation's history. Hall highlighted this aspect as the "emphasis on origins, continuity, tradition and timelessness"¹ where one's belonging to a nation has to be underpinned by its historical aspect and its continuity; he/she has to believe that this nation is old and will continue to exist in the future. Once members of a nation identify with its history and are convinced that they belong to its historic land, it becomes something they have to protect. Smith also stressed the importance of this aspect, to him, "a nation can therefore be defined as a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories"². He also talks about the "invention of tradition" and how it adds to the historical concept of a nation. Guibernau considers the importance of the "historical dimension" in constructing national identity "so that when individuals look back in time they are not confronted with a blank picture about their own collective origin, but reassured by the deeds of their ancestors"³. Stressing the importance of history, or "antiquity", in the formation and preservation of national identity, she says: "It binds individuals to a past stretching over their life spans and those of their recent ancestors. Antiquity stresses one of the key elements of identity, that is continuity, and, in so doing, it contributes to the preservation of the collective self"⁴. Therefore, the antiquity of a nation provides proof of its consistent being and existence, preserves its collective identity and gives rise to further bonds between the nation and its members.

¹ Hall, S., 1996. *Op. Cit.*, Pp. 613-615. Cited in Wodak, R. de Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., and Liebhart, K. 2009. *Op. Cit.*, P. 24.

² Smith, A.D., 1991. *Op. Cit.* P. 76.

³ Guibernau, M., 2004. *Op. Cit.*, P. 136.

⁴ *Ibid.*

As for the political aspect, it is also an important dimension in constructing national identities. This aspect is principally employed to build a nation and construct a national identity, whose formation is a political product:¹ Moreover, the construction of sameness and difference is a political procedure with political purposes. Solidarity among members of a nation is politically aimed so that these members may act and protect the nation as a unit. And differences with others are politically exploited so that members defend their nation when threatened. The importance of this aspect in the formation of a nation and the construction of its identity was never denied by theorists and social scientists. According to Smith, “what is meant by ‘national’ identity involves some sense of political community, however tenuous”². And according to Guibernau, “the political aspect of national identity, when applied to the nation-state, focuses upon [...some] strategies – often referred to as ‘nationbuilding’- destined to foster a cohesive, loyal and, up to a point, homogeneous citizenry”³. She also considers that political strategy employed by a state, such as citizenship and legal rights upon its members, “favours the rise of sentiments of loyalty towards itself”⁴. Consequently, the political aspect is employed in constructing national identities, and like other dimensions, to sort differences with other nations and create solidarity among its members.

Moving on to the emotional aspect, it is the feeling of belonging and attachment sensed by individuals towards their nation. It suggests a sentimental bond with the nation and offers a further sense of identification and attachment with its identity. For the members of a nation to sense their national identity, one of the aspects they have to possess is a sort of sentimental belonging to it. Guibernau indicates this emotional aspect as the psychological

¹ Breuilly, J., 1993. *Op. Cit.*, P. 2.

² Smith, A.D., 1991. *Op. Cit.* Pp. 74-75.

³ Guibernau, M., 2004. *Op. Cit.*, P. 140.

⁴ *Ibid.*

dimension and considers it one of the five dimensions necessary for the construction of national identity. She also declares that “national identity reflects the sentiment of belonging to the nation”¹. For A. D. Smith national identities “fulfil more intimate, internal functions for individuals in communities”². However, the construction of national identity does not solely rely on a sentimental attachment, as Malešević suggests: it is “a wrong premise that nationhood by itself automatically generates affection and meaning” and he argued that if this was the case “there would be no need to invest enormous energy and resources in making and keeping ordinary individuals loyal to their nation-states”³. Indeed, the emotional attachment isn’t the only accountable aspect in constructing a national identity, but it plays an essential role in that area. Consequently, we can say that the feeling of belonging to a nation imposes a sentimental attachment to it and aids in constructing the individual’s national identity. This identity becomes not only a categorization according to the place of birth, but rather a subjective feeling of belonging to this country. In other words, at least part of the individual’s construction of a national identity is a result of “the subjective feeling of belonging to one's country and one's people, identification with one's own nation and its cultural tradition”⁴. “Anthony D. Smith (1991, 2010) and other theorists of nationhood insist that national identities “provide intense meanings and emotional attachments to individuals”⁵. Smith repeatedly insisted on the subjective nature of national identity’s components. He argues that “nations must have a measure of common culture and a civic ideology, a set of common understandings and aspirations, sentiments and ideas, that bind the population together in their homeland”⁶. The sentiments felt by members of a nation, in addition to other aspects, according to Smith, connect these members together

¹ *Ibid.*

² Smith, A.D., 1991. *Op. Cit.* P. 16.

³ Malešević, S., (2016). *Op. Cit.*, Pp. 13-14.

⁴ Petkovic, J., 2011. *Op. Cit.*, P. 143.

⁵ Malešević, S., (2016). *Op. Cit.*, P. 13.

⁶ Smith, A.D., 1991. *Op. Cit.* P. 11.

and to their nation. Gellner also gave similar credit to the sentimental attachment; he confirms that the process of identification with a specific culture implies a strong emotional investment able to foster solidarity bonds among the members of a given community who come to recognize one another as fellow nationals¹. Guibernau also explains that “the psychological dimension of national identity arises from the consciousness of forming a group based on the ‘felt’ closeness uniting those who belong to the nation”². The emotional attachment and this ‘felt closeness’ individuals experience with their nation and fellow nationals boost the sense of national identity. Smith also argues that “a sense of national identity provides a powerful means of defining and locating individual selves in the world, through the prism of the collective personality and its distinctive culture”³. Besides creating ‘solidarity bond’, ‘binding the population of a nation’ and ‘uniting those who belong it’, the emotional attachment to a nation provides individuals with ‘defining and locating themselves in the world’. According to Smith, the ‘locating’ of one’s self in the world is attained when the individual knows where he/she belongs, and this is the reason why he said that possessing a national identity provides a means for this accomplishment. When people possess a sense of national identity, this ‘sense’ becomes a source for locating themselves. As a result, it can be said that the feeling of belonging to a nation imposes a further sense of national identity which enhances solidarity among its members and provides individuals with a sense of security in defining and locating themselves in the world.

However, the emotional attachment to a nation and the sense of national identity highly varies among individuals. In other words, neither do members of the same nation feel this emotional attachment alike, nor do they share the same intensified sense of national

¹ Gellner, E., 1983. *Op. Cit.*

² Guibernau, M., 2004. *Op. Cit.*, P. 135.

³ Smith, A.D., 1991. *Op. Cit.* P. 77.

identity. Although there are many aspects employed to construct national identity, “such an absolute sameness criterion is highly questionable when referring to members of a group”¹. Moreover, national identities are considered as “granted identities”²; people usually do not get to choose them as they please. A granted identity is not always parallel with a personal sense of it, on the contrary there might be a sense opposing it. And this results in greater variation among members in embracing and sensing their national identity. *Siniša Malešević*, in his article titled *Do National Identities Exist?*, claimed that “in the contemporary world most expressions of national identifications are sincere and genuine and an overwhelming majority of individuals perceive their national identities as real, tangible and meaningful pillars of one’s selfhood”³. We can read that “an overwhelming majority of individuals” and I stress on “majority” and not all individuals perceive their national identity as such. Sometimes, a person’s national identity is embraced and praised, it is worn with pride, it identifies him/her, meets with his/her personal self and doesn’t contradict his/her beliefs, but there are also cases where people do not feel as such. In our modern world, a person possesses his/her national identity whether he/ she senses it or not; it is granted and we ought to have it in order to live a normal life. Owning certain characteristics and criteria, such as place of birth, parents’ national identities and others, makes someone acquire this identity, regardless of his/her feeling of belonging to the nation. And this is one of the reasons why politicians, schooling, media and others employ such a potential in constructing national identities. Nonetheless, despite all the effort employed and due to individual variation, we can never assume that national identity is intensely felt among all individuals.

¹ Wodak, R. de Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., and Liebhart, K. 2009. *Op. Cit.*, P. 11.

² Yurdusev, A.N. 1997. Avrupa Kimliğinin Oluşumu ve Türk Kimliği. *Türkiye ve Avrupa: Batılılaşma, Kalkınma, Demokrasi*, ed. A. Eralp, İstanbul: İmge. P. 27. Cited in İnaç, H. and Ünal, F., 2013. *Op. Cit.*

³ Malešević, S., (2016). *Op. Cit.*, P. 16.

Like other collective and personal identities, with the exception of rather few such as gender identity, national identities are not absolutely constant; they are prone to change. “The concept of identity [...] never signifies anything static, unchanging, or substantial, but rather always an element situated in the flow of time, ever changing, something involved in a process. This applies, of course, to all forms of personal and social identity as well as to ‘ego identities’”¹. And Montserrat Guibernau argues “that national identity is a modern phenomenon of a fluid and dynamic nature”². And Ruth Wodak and others declared in their book that “discursive national identities should not be perceived as static, but rather as dynamic, vulnerable and rather ambivalent entities”³. However, due to its multi dimensions and to the many aspects responsible for its construction, national identity usually does not alter overnight and is naturally less prone to change than other identities. While most theorists agreed that national identities are fluid and dynamic, Antony D. Smith considered that “collective identities [...] tend to be pervasive and persistent. They are less subject to rapid changes and tend to be more intense and durable, even when quite large numbers of individuals no longer feel their power. [...] And this] is particularly true of national identities today”⁴. Nonetheless, I consider Smith’s statement rather ambiguous since first he said that collective identities are “persistent” which means that they are unchangeable, and then in the following sentence, he considered them “less subject to rapid changes” without denying the possibility of change. By stressing on the second statement, and taking into consideration the theories on this issue, I consider that national identity is prone to change depending on the social context, such as any other identity of its category.

¹ Wodak, R. de Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., and Liebhart, K. 2009. *Op. Cit.*, P. 11.

² Guibernau, M., 2004. *Op. Cit.*, P. 134.

³ Wodak, R. de Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., and Liebhart, K. 2009. *Op. Cit.*, P. 187.

⁴ Smith, A.D., 1992. *Op. Cit.* P. 59.

The construction of national identity, similar to all collective identities, is based on sorting out differentiations and sameness. It emphasizes origins, persistence and continuity, and it is not considered ultimately static and persistent. Media, historical narrative, political discourse, and many other elements are employed to augment the feeling of belonging to a nation and to intensify the sense of national identity among its members. Moreover, its dimensions, considering Guibernau's argument, are psychological, cultural, territorial, historical, and political, and are all employed to construct a unique national identity capable of creating solidarity among members of the same nation.

4.1. War and its consequences

1.4.1. The consequences of war on the nation

War is a calamity that affects both individuals and society. Its impact is visible on personal, social, cultural, political and economic levels. Characterized as “a disease”¹, war occurs as a conflict between two or more groups and involves hostilities, fatalities, destruction, violence, sufferings, displacement of people and so on. Its consequences cannot be ignored since they “are evident at all levels of analysis; war affects individuals, groups, nations, and international systems”². Nonetheless, some of these consequences are apparent during wartime, such as the killings and destruction, while others become more tangible afterwards; it might be that the effects on the psychological, economic or cultural level won't be visible during wartime itself, but rather later. “At each level of analysis, however, war's consequences vary [...]. Some consequences [...] may be felt immediately, whereas

¹ Richardson, L.F., 1960. Statistics of deadly quarrels. Boxwood Press. P. 232-236. Cited in Stein, A.A. and Russett, B.M., 1980. Evaluating war: Outcomes and consequences. *Handbook of political conflict: theory and research*. P. 406.

² Stein, A.A. and Russett, B.M., 1980. *Op. Cit.* P. 400.

others may not be felt until long after a conflict is over; [... they] may not be fully felt until generations after the war is over”¹.

The outcomes of war differ depending on many factors. The kind of war fought, its duration, timing, reasons for conflict, social circumstances, mentalities of fighting parties and many other factors are associated with the consequences of war. As an example, we may consider the kind of war fought; while external invasion or war with different nations likely causes solidarity among members of the same nation in order to fight the opponent, civil war divides a nation and causes disintegration among its members. Similarly, the duration of war affects its consequences; while destruction and killing are prevalent in any war, the longer it lasts, the greater is the number of fatalities and destruction. Although there are many common outcomes of war, whatever were its characteristics, such as killing and destruction, if we intend to analyze the effects of a specific war profoundly it is important to take into consideration the factors that characterize it. Consequently, in the following chapter, I present the history and characteristics of the wars in Lebanon, Palestine and Syria in order to thoroughly analyze their consequences exhibited in art. As for this section, I interpret the major effects of war on nations in general.

Despite the various outcomes it causes, change is an inevitable consequence of any war. War kills people, damages the land, causes suffering, it can also destroy political and economic institutions, paralyzes societal activities and a lot more. Some of these consequences are likely certain for both opponents in any war, though in different intensities, but others are uncertain, such as the destruction of the political and economic institutions. However, regardless of the many certain and uncertain ramifications of war depending on its type and the opponents’ strengths, change is an inevitable consequence of

¹ *Idem.* P. 401.

any war. Therefore, it is indisputable that “war is a major agent of change”¹. This change, although its severity and nature vary, is unavoidable and certain as a consequence of any war and in any case.

In some cases, the social change imposed by war can be radical as to build or destroy nations. George Modelski declared that “the ‘births’ and ‘deaths’ of states are themselves an effect of war”². However, this depends on the kind of war, its intensity, purpose and duration. Sometimes, the purpose of a war is building a state where “historical or archeological evidence of war is found in the early stages of [many] state formation”³. An example of this is building the State of Israel in 1948 as a result of the Palestinian war (this is thoroughly discussed later in the history of Palestine). This corresponds with what Charles Tilly suggests in his introduction to a collection of essays on *The Formation of States in Western Europe*, “war made the state, and the state made war”⁴. In addition, states and nations sometimes declare war as a part of their own being since “preparation for war has been the great state building activity”⁵. Nations are usually built as a result of war, likewise others are destroyed; “for many states, a defeat in war has meant their complete disappearance”⁶. Throughout history, there are many examples of nations which were destroyed after war. An example of this, is also the 1948 Palestinian war when the Israeli invasion destroyed the Palestinian State. Wars serve aims and purposes causing social changes which, at times, are so massive as to build or destroy a whole nation.

No matter the intensity of a war, it causes a change. The change might not be as radical as building or destroying a nation, but it transforms the social aspect of a nation, which can

¹ *Idem*. P. 399.

² Modelski, G., 1972. *Principles of world politics*. Free Pr. Cited in Stein, A.A. and Russett, B.M., 1980. *Op. Cit.* P. 417.

³ Stein, A.A. and Russett, B.M., 1980. *Op. Cit.* P. 408.

⁴ Tilly, C., 1977. Getting it together in Burgundy, 1675–1975. *Theory and society*, 4(4). P. 42.

⁵ *Idem*. P. 74.

⁶ Stein, A.A. and Russett, B.M., 1980. *Op. Cit.* P. 410.

comprise economic, cultural and political aspects. Destruction, which is one of war's main features, changes the economy of a nation and might even damage some of its material culture, such as monuments, artefacts and natural landscapes. War also interferes in affecting the non-material culture of a nation such as values and behavioral patterns. Similarly, the political dimension of the nation is affected by war. Being itself a political issue, as Clausewitz suggested, "war is nothing but a continuation of political intercourse with a mixture of other means"¹, war affects the political aspect of a country. Since it involves political decisions taken and proclaimed by political figures, war gives birth to new political organizations and might change or demolish old ones, thus changing the political structure of a nation. In addition, sometimes during wars, new laws and rules are established or old ones are modified to serve the unstable circumstances. Wars also shape the history of a nation; victories and defeats play an important role in a country's history. Moreover, depending on the kind of conflict, the territorial dimension of a nation is sometimes altered as a result of war; a state expands its land if it wins an invasion whilst reducing the defeated nation's territorial boundaries. As presented, the nation's aspects, the territorial, cultural, historical, political and economic, are prone to change as a result of war. Nonetheless, I did not claim that every war changes all these aspects, but rather it causes a major change which might affect them all or a few. Therefore, it can be said that, in addition to its capacity to destroy and build states, war is potent to change the whole aspects of a nation.

It is unquestionable that war also affects individuals. The effect might be physical, emotional, or psychological. Because "people change constantly in the course of their lives, be it physically, psychologically or socially"², under changing social circumstances such

¹ Idem. P. 400.

² Wodak, R. de Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., and Liebhart, K. 2009. *Op. Cit.* P. 11.

as wars, this change is prominent. Some individuals die in the war, others suffer from injuries, loss or trauma and others may develop mental or psychological illnesses. Most experience fear, loss, suffering and other emotions depending on each individual case. However, it is not possible to determine how each individual is affected by war. “Although it is possible to illustrate the impact of historical conflicts, it is much more difficult to validate the causal propositions concerning the effects of war on individuals’ images and attitudes”¹. We can only deduce that a major social change affects people’s experiences and knowing that personal identity is “forged out of individual experience”², it is affected as well. Nonetheless, the change of personal identity differs among individuals since “every [...] shared experience that might be assumed to produce homogeneity among individuals [...] also differentiates them and directs them along divergent developmental trajectories”³. We cannot formulate an applicable theory about the way each individual gets affected in wars. “A handful of life studies cannot provide appropriate data for evaluating hypotheses about group psychological differences”⁴. Consequently, taking into consideration individual diversities in understanding and conceptualizing the same situation, we can just assume that an individual’s relationship with the surroundings proposes various (re)constructions of his/her identities.

2.4.1. Interpreting the role of war on identity (re)construction

Being socially constructed and qualified as a kind of “social radar”⁵, identity is highly impacted by war. As said previously, people possess sets of socially constructed individual and collective identities that are not static and stable, but rather fluid and prone to change. Different identities define individuals throughout their many phases in life and are highly

¹ Stein, A.A. and Russett, B.M., 1980. *Op. Cit.* P. 405.

² Kennedy, P. and Danks, C., 2001. *Op. Cit.*, P. 6.

³ Gregg, G.S., 2007. *Op. Cit.* P. 330.

⁴ *Idem.* P. 299

⁵ Hale, H.E., 2004. *Op. Cit.*

dependent on the social context. Identities are affected by subjective experiences, as well as social circumstances surrounding the individual, therefore, new identities are constructed and old ones can be deconstructed or reconstructed. Identity formation involves construction and reconstruction throughout the life-course of individuals and groups and through their different faces, roles and circumstances¹. Emphasizing their malleable nature, dramatic social changes and calamities may result in constructing new identities, and even deconstructing or reconstructing older ones.

As mentioned, “war is a major agent of social change”² and identities, being dependent on the social context are impacted by social changes imposed by war. Because war compels social change in a nation, it requires and promotes the construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of certain identity aspects. Moreover, as a result of the social change, social interactions, both among individuals and with the collective, also alter. And knowing “that identities are constituted and validated through ongoing interactions”³, provides additional proof that they are affected by war.

Change caused by war does not only jeopardize the materialistic existence of a nation, it also gives rise to identification issues. This change affects social interactions, imposes new individual and collective experiences derived from the transformed situation and requires different behavioral patterns, which all affect personal and collective identities. The change also affects the nation’s social order. In addition, knowing that “the development of identity begins in the appropriation of ‘theories’ from the social order”⁴, identity’s development is

¹ Melucci, A., 1996. *Challenging codes: Collective action in the information age*. Cambridge University Press.

² Stein, A.A. and Russett, B.M., 1980. *Op. Cit.* P. 401.

³ Kennedy, P. and Danks, C. 2001. *Op. Cit.* P. 2.

⁴ Shotter, J.E. and Gergen, K.J., 1989. *Op. Cit.*, P. 179.

affected. Therefore, identities, their developmental process or (re)construction and their representations, are all dependent on the social context which makes them affected by war.

War affects a nation and some of the social identities of its people. These “[s]ocial identities are embedded in sociopolitical contexts”¹, and when sociopolitical contexts are altered, such as in the case of war, they are inevitably affected. Moreover, since they “are situated, pragmatic, and attuned to the affordances and constraints of the immediate context”², knowing that the “immediate context” is precarious during war, their likelihood to be altered increases. In addition, “the groups ([...] nationality, race/ethnicity, religious heritage groups, [...]) on which identities are based are likely to differ in their longevity and how psychologically meaningful they feel across time and situations”³. Therefore, with an unstable situation during war, the psychological meanings implied by national and cultural identities are felt differently and so is their longevity. By now, it is proven that personal, cultural and national identities are influenced by war and so are their developmental process, their felt psychological meanings, longevity, practice and representations. However, in the following I show the ways in which these identities are affected and performed during wars.

As said, a basic mechanism for constructing identities is sorting out differences and sameness. During wars, this mechanism is highly exploited. Sameness is celebrated to create a sense of continuity and solidarity among members of the same nation, and differences are aroused so that these members oppose the proclaimed different and dangerous “Other”. However, this is the case when the warring opponents are different nations, but in the case of civil wars this mechanism is exploited to sort out differences and

¹ Howard, J.A., 2000. P. 368

² Leary, M. R. and Tangney, J. P., 2012. *OP.Cit.* P. 70.

³ *Idem.* P. 74

sameness among the opposing groups, which may be different religious or ethnic groups living in the same nation. After all, “the questions of identity only become relevant when “factors that underpinned a sense of continuity (geography, community, employment, class etc.) were destabilised [while at the same time the factors] that provided a sense of differentiation (ancestry, social rank, gender, moral virtue, religion, etc.) were delegitimized”¹. By employing this mechanism on national identities, the ‘unique’ characteristics of the nation are set forth, and its members’ feeling of unity to protect it from the outside threat becomes intensely sensed. “Calls for action and sacrifice in the face of threats to the nation are accompanied by appeals to the ‘unique character’ and ‘qualities’ of those who belong”². By then, members feel that it is their duty to protect what the ‘Other’ wants to destroy. Guibernau considered that “this [unique character] has the capacity to elevate people beyond their daily lives and routines, to transport them to a higher level in which their actions gain meaning and are qualified as crucial for the survival and prosperity of the nation”³. Moreover, Brubaker and Cooper declared that “sameness is expected to manifest itself in solidarity, in shared dispositions or consciousness, or in collective action [such as the call for war. And they continued that] this usage is found especially in the literature on social movements; [such as...] nationalism”⁴. Therefore, the sameness and differentiation criterion of national identity is extremely employed in wars, during which unified members sense their crucial role to protect their nation from any imposed threat.

War imposes threat to the nation, its physical being, its members and to its identity, which gives rise to specific actions and behavioral patterns employed to protect the threatened identity. Social identity researchers demonstrate that whether one takes a "me" or an "us"

¹ Bendle, M.F., 2002. The crisis of ‘identity’ in high modernity. *The British journal of sociology*, 53(1). P. 16.

² Guibernau, M., 2004. *Op. Cit.*, P. 135.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Brubaker, R. and Cooper, F., 2000. *Op. Cit.* P. 7.

perspective is [...] influenced by context¹, and when the nation is at war, the context demands an ‘us’ perspective to compel collective action. National identity, comprising its dimensions along with its ‘sameness and differentiation’ criterion, has been employed to initiate wars and revolutions, to defend the nation and to serve other political and social movements. “In the name of ‘national identity’ people have allegedly been willing to surrender their own liberties and curtail those of others”², in addition to defend their nation when threatened. National identity provides members of the same nation with a sense of responsibility and duty to protect it, albeit they jeopardize their own lives. “The vague, substantialising idea of a National spirit [...] expresses itself in certain cultural forms of life and particular collective manners of behavior, especially in moments of crisis”³. When a nation is at war, dimensions of national identity are exploited to induce collective action; nationals have to protect their historical land, the land of their ancestors, their culture, their economy and political institutions, they can shape the history of their nation just as their ancestors did before them. The similarities among members of the same nation are highlighted to act together as one, and so is their origin which allows them to bond more and feel that they are ancestrally related to each other and to their land. Anthony D. Smith believed that “nations always acquire ‘ethnic elements’⁴. These ‘ethnic elements’ extremely motivate individuals to protect their nation, providing them with the idea that what they are fighting for is not any land, but rather the land of their ancestors that has to be preserved for future generations. Moreover, when members of the same nation believe that they are ancestrally related, they further consider it as their duty to protect each other. As Horowitz writes, “if group members are potential kinsmen, a threat to any member of

¹ Brewer, M.B. and Gardner, W., 1996. Who is this "We"? Levels of collective identity and self representations. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 71(1). P.83.

² Smith, A. D., 1991. *Op. Cit.*, P. 77.

³ Wodak, R. de Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., and Liebhart, K. 2009. *Op. Cit.* P. 25.

⁴ Smith, A. D., 1991. *Op. Cit.* P.39f. Cited in Wodak, R. de Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., and Liebhart, K. 2009. *Op. Cit.* P.20.

the group may be seen in somewhat the same light as a threat to the family”¹. Therefore, during times of conflicts, dimensions of national identity are exploited to provide individuals with a sense of unity and motivate collective action.

An attachment to a nation also refers to an attachment to its culture, and when the nation is threatened, so is its culture and cultural identity. As mentioned, every nation possesses a unique culture that strengthens the feeling of belonging sensed by its members, and this aspect is never undermined. Individuals bond with their nation’s culture; they feel attached to its traditions, values, history, language and other cultural elements. It is something they bond with emotionally and feel that they have to preserve and protect from any threat. War imposes threat on the nation’s material and non-material culture. It might damage material culture, such as historical monuments, artefacts and natural landscapes. It can also interfere in affecting the non-material culture of a nation. Since there is a transformed social structure during war, cultural aspects, such as values and behavioral patterns, might be adjusted to adapt to the new situation. However, some traditions are also invented as a result of war, such as habits which serve as memorials of the war, songs written to glorify war heroes and mourn the death and so on. During such circumstances, cultural expressions are employed to boost the “national spirit” which “expresses itself in certain cultural forms of life and particular collective manners of behavior especially in moments of crisis”². These cultural expressions or representations can take many forms, such as symbols, emblems, flags, traditions and many others, each playing its role in creating further sense of national identity. Moreover, “[c]ultural achievements can stir national pride”³ which is yet another factor that triggers the employment of the cultural aspect during times of conflicts, aiming

¹ Horowitz, D. L., 1985. *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. University of California Press. P. 64.

² Wodak, R. de Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., and Liebhart, K. 2009. *Op. Cit.* P.25.

³ Evans, G., 2011. *War, Peace and National Identity*. [Viewed 5 June 2018]. Available from: <http://www.gevans.org/speeches/speech440.html>

to augment the attachment to the nation and the urge to protect it. Being such a reinforcement of national identity, the cultural dimension, its representations and expressions increase during wars to create further sense of solidarity, stir national pride and motivate members to protect their country.

As said, identities “make up one's self-concept”¹ so a threat to one’s social or collective identity, such as national identity, can trouble one’s self-concept. However, it is important to note that in the following we are not referring to national identity solely as ‘granted’ without the consent of a person, but rather as an identification felt and acquired by a person’s attachment to the nation. As Ruth Wodak and others claim: “Insofar as this [national identity...] is internalized, that is individually acquired, it is also, depending on the degree of identification, more or less a part of the individual's identity complex”². And it is exactly in this sense that national identity can make up part of one’s self concept; it has to comprise a feeling of belonging rather than being only a necessarily obtained legal documentation. In this regard, “Tajfel (Tajfel and Forgas 1981) considered that identification with groups can become a source of positive sense of self”³. Moreover, a dominant feature of the social identity theory is the presumed value and emotional significance attached to group identity and its close relationship to self-identity, self-esteem, and outgroup behavior⁴. Then, a threat to a person’s national identity becomes a threat to his/her self-concept and to the ‘source of positive sense of self’, which might also affect his/her self-identity, self-esteem and behavior. The threat will not be solely conceived as affecting the nation and its collective, but also the individual’s self since

¹ Leary, M. R. and Tangney, J. P., 2012. *OP.Cit.* P.69.

² Wodak, R. de Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., and Liebhart, K. 2009. *Op. Cit.* P.28.

³ Forgas, J. P., & Williams, K. D., 2002. *The social self: Cognitive, interpersonal, and intergroup perspectives.* Psychology Press. P. 9.

⁴ Turner, J.C. and Giles, H., 1981. Introduction: The social psychology of intergroup behaviour. *Intergroup behavior*, pp.1-32.

“group threats [are] interpreted as threats to the self”¹. Individuals become motivated to protect their threatened national identity as an act of protecting themselves and their self-concepts. With this accomplished, and “because social identity effects are based on protection and enhancement of self-concepts, threat to the self-concept would intuitively be related to the strongest identity effects”². As a result, it can be said that a threat to national identity imposes a threat on the individual’s self-concept, generating further motivation to protect the threatened identity as an act of protecting one’s self-concept, and this, in turn, leads to a stronger national identification.

During times of conflicts, strategies to increase the sense of national identity are employed, thus creating among individuals the will to jeopardize themselves for their nation’s advantage. However, this isn’t an easily accomplished task. Many procedures are employed to intensify the sense of national identity in order to motivate people to protect their nation and fight for it, albeit they have to sacrifice themselves during the mission. I have already explained how the dimensions of national identity along with its ‘differentiation and sameness’ criterion are exploited during times of conflicts. Ruth Wodak explained different strategies employed by nations during times of conflicts. These aim to construct an intensified sense of national identity intended to motivate people for collective action and behavior, such as fighting, self-sacrifice, killing, protecting the nation and much more. Among those mentioned by Wodak, are the “constructive strategies [which...] attempt to construct and to establish a certain national identity by promoting unification, identification and solidarity, as well as differentiation”³. These promoting elements are employed to construct any national identity, and during wars they are extremely exploited and

¹Smith, A.D., 1999. *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Vol. 288). Oxford: Oxford University Press. Cited in Islam, G., July 2014. *Op. Cit.*, P.1781.

² Islam, G., 2014. *Op. Cit.*, P.1782.

³ Wodak, R. de Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., and Liebhart, K. 2009. *Op. Cit.* P.33.

highlighted. Another kind are “strategies of perpetuation [which] attempt to maintain and to reproduce a threatened national identity, i.e. to preserve, support and protect it”¹ and these are usually employed during and after wars. Wodak continued that a special subgroup of these strategies is concerned to “restore, maintain and defend a common 'national self-perception' which has been 'tainted' in one way or another”². However, “[s]trong identification with a group need not, in principle, be correlated with out-group hostility. Only under conditions of intergroup threat and competition are in-group identification and out-group discrimination correlated”³. Therefore, national identity isn’t always exploited for out-group hostility. Nonetheless, during times of conflicts, strategies are employed to intensify it in order to accomplish the nation’s goals, and under these circumstances out-group bias and hostilities are likely to arise.

An intense feeling of national identity is requested during wars to motivate collective action. When this intense identification is achieved, members nearly respond to any call made in the name of their nation. Individuals then, with their intensified sense of national identity, feel that it is their duty to protect their nation or even violate ‘others’ freedom for its well-being and prosperity. With this exaggerated feeling of nationalism, people are willing to sacrifice their lives and those of others if their country calls for good or ill. Ruth Wodak argues that "by means of dispositions such as the willingness to take sides with the nation to which one has a feeling of belonging and to protect it when one feels threatened-right in line with the saying: 'Right or wrong my country!'"⁴. Then, individuals’ emotional attachment to their nation is intensified to the extent of ignoring what is ‘right’ for its sake. In this regard, Montserrat Guibernau declares that “the strength of emotions overrides

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*

³ Howard, J.A., 2000. *Op. Cit.*, P. 370.

⁴ Wodak, R. de Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., and Liebhart, K. 2009. *Op. Cit.* P.29.

reason, because it is through a sentimental identification with the nation that individuals transcend their finite and, at least for some, meaningless lives”¹. At that point, those individuals feel that they are valuable and it is their responsibility to reply to their nation’s orders, even if they are wrong. Guibernau continues that “their efforts and sacrifices become worthwhile, even heroic, and the conviction of having contributed to a higher aim, that of preserving and enhancing the nation, increases the individuals’ self-esteem”². Therefore, with this emotional attachment and intensified sense of national identities, reached by specific strategies, individuals sacrifice their lives and curtail their freedom and those of others in the name of their nation.

As we can see, during times of conflict, a strengthened national identity is (re)constructed. “The criteria of the strength for the identity preponderance are necessity, urgency, external threat and relative capability as well as its internalization by the given society”³. Through this strengthened identity, members feel more attached to their nation and fellow nationals, making it their duty to defend them and sacrifice for their sake. Subsequently, it becomes clear that “the sense of national identity is never stronger than when countries are at war with each other, at imminent risk of war, or remembering war”⁴. During those times, solidarity is targeted, differentiation strategies against the ‘other’ are employed, the dimensions of national identity are exploited, cultural achievements are remembered as a source of pride and members are reminded of their common history and myths to spread national unity. These tactics are transmitted to people in many methods and strategies, such as political speeches, national discourse, media, art, news, posters and any other way that ensures their efficiency and circulation. Therefore, we can say that “nationalism rises in

¹ Guibernau, M., 2004. *Op. Cit.*, Pp. 135-136.

² *Ibid.*

³ İnaç, H. and Ünal, F., 2013. *Op. Cit.*, P. 225.

⁴ Evans, G., 2011. *Op. Cit.*

times of war as a by-product of radically changed social conditions”¹. However, there have been many arguments regarding the onset of nationalism. “The neo-Durkheimian approaches [...] view nationalism as a product of war experience but their focus shifts from the direct experiences of warfare toward the emotional significance of previous violent conflicts”². In other words, they view nationalism as an emotional consequence of previous wars. “Naturalists [...] see nationalism as the primary cause of interstate wars, [on the contrary] the formativist perspectives argue that this relationship is actually inverse: it is the war experience that engenders intense nationalist feelings, not the other way around”³. Whereas, “the gradualists maintain that war experience can trigger nationalist reactions only if nationalism is there in the first place”⁴. Whether nationalism is a cause of war, a consequence, or as Malsevic argued, they “emerge in parallel”⁵, there is no doubt that “nationalism and war are profoundly interrelated”⁶ and that a strengthened national identity is sensed during conflicts.

When war is fought between nations, an intensified sense of national identity prevails, but in the case of civil war, these intensified feelings are directed to strengthen other kinds of identities. Depending on the kind of war, specific collective identities are strengthened and (re)constructed. For example, if the civil war is religious by nature, then different religious identities of the opponents are strengthened and (re)constructed to trigger collective action. To do so, certain procedures analogous to the ones employed in enforcing national identities are followed, especially the utilization of ‘similarities and differentiation’ criterion. Consequently, in case of the given example, religious differences are set forth to

¹ Laitin, David D. 2007. *Nations, States, and Violence*. Oxford University Press.

² Malesevic, S., 2016. War and Nationalism. Stone, J., Dennis, R.M., Rizova, P.S., Smith, A.D. and Hou, X. eds., 2016. *The Wiley Blackwell encyclopedia of race, ethnicity, and nationalism* (Vol. 1). John Wiley & Sons. P. 3.

³ *Idem.*, P. 2.

⁴ *Idem.*, P. 4.

⁵ *Idem.*, P. 5.

⁶ *Idem.*, P. 1.

oppose the ‘other’, and similarities within the same collective are highlighted to ensure its unity. Moreover, also similar to the followed procedures used to intensify national identity, religious groups, through discourse, media, slogans and other modes, exploit aspects of their identity to strengthen it. They display myths, traditions, values, histories of achievements and suffering, common origin and any other aspect, whether real, fiction, historic or invented, to intensify their religious identity. Identically, these procedures are followed in ethnic, political and other kinds of civil wars. Nonetheless, occasionally during civil wars, depending on the case, we notice that opposing collectives compete with their sense of national identity to reach specific aims, such as the right to stay in the land or deport others. In this regard, Sinisa Malesevic claimed that “the likelihood of war automatically increases with any pronounced expression of competing nationalisms”¹. However, due to diverse aims, reasons, circumstances and other factors shaping and originating civil wars, I cannot go deeper in analyzing their effects in general, since they vary according to different factors, or as said, "the net effect of a war [...] depends on the character of that war"².

Therefore, war causes a major social change, and since identities are socially constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed, they are affected by this change. National identities are usually (re)constructed, crystallized and strengthened during wars to respond to the threat. Whereas, the effects of civil war cannot be analyzed in general, since they depend on the kind of war. In any case, the aspects of collective identities, including the criterion of ‘sameness’ and ‘differentiations’, are utilized during wars for creating solidarity and opposing the ‘other’. However, my aim is to inspect and analyze the appearance of these

¹ *Ibid.*

² Stein, A.A. and Russett, B.M., 1980. *Op.Cit.*, P. 414.

phenomena in artworks characteristics of war, while exploring the question of identity which emanated from the imposed change.

5.1. Displaying war and national identity in the international art scene

War, as said, causes a major change affecting the nation and its members. In the previous sections, I present a study of the general effects of war on a nation and its people in order to inspect the representation of these effects in art. As discussed, war gives rise to identification issues. It impacts the nation socially, politically, economically and culturally and can also affect its members in likewise aspects, in addition to the probability of affecting them mentally, emotionally, and psychologically. In this section, I exemplify how the theories discussed in this chapter are applied to analyze art. I present a general demonstration of few artworks characteristic of war from the international art scene and inspect in them representations of nations and relevant identity issues.

Throughout history artists depicted images of war and its manifestations. In ancient times, artists were either assigned for this purpose to document historical events or personally inspired by the horrors of war. Moreover, war was depicted through the genre of history painting, which were paintings based on historical, mythological, or biblical narratives. Later, after the industrial revolution, along with the invention of typewriting and photography, the purpose of art for recording history was diminished, and afterwards, following the birth of modern art, that purpose was almost completely abolished. Nonetheless, each artwork depicting war is inherently an historical documentation, albeit it's not its aim. In modern times, artists represent war as a personal choice to express certain issues. In the following, I present few artworks that depict war, revealing identity aspects implied by their corresponding artists. However, since my aim is presenting famous artworks from the international art scene as an introductory interpretation for the later analysis, I couldn't choose them as contemporary as the other works of this book, knowing

that they were created as reactions to wars that occurred during periods prior to be the ones experienced in my three countries of research. I have selected each of these artworks for various reasons. First, due to their psychological implications approaching questions of identity. Second, some of them were iconic and many artists were inspired to produce other versions of them. Third, they clearly elucidate the topic since they include aspects I have mentioned earlier.

I start this interpretation with the iconic painting *The Third of May 1808* by the Spanish Artist Francisco De Goya (1746–1828). Goya painted this masterpiece in 1814 as a reaction to the war between France and Spain in 1808, during which Napoleon Bonaparte invaded Spain. It depicts the Spanish resistance to Napoleon's armies during the occupation, displaying a Spanish crowd about to get shot by French soldiers.



Francisco de Goya, *The Third of May 1808*, Oil on canvas, 1815, Prado Museum, Madrid

In the painting, we see French soldiers standing in a straight line and aiming their weapons at the frightened Spanish crowd. The faces of the soldiers are not visible, but the terrified faces of the Spanish can be clearly seen. Our attention is drawn to the man in white, on his

knees with his hands up, and painted with the brightest brushstrokes to emphasize his presence, whereas the other men are painted in darker colors. We see few dead men on the ground with their dark red blood spilled to magnify the horrors of the act. Obviously, Goya revealed his resentment towards the armed French soldiers in the streets of Spain. The painting can be clearly understood without any concealed messages or ambiguities. Nonetheless, Goya displayed some identification aspects that have to be interpreted.

In his work, *The Third of May 1808*, Goya employed the differentiation criterion utilized for the construction of national identity. He uses powerful symbols to show the difference between the French soldiers and the Spanish crowd. The soldiers are presented with concealed faces aiming to execute the crowd, revealing them as brutal and emotionless beings shooting the terrified masses in cold blood. On the other hand, these emotionless soldiers are juxtaposed by the contrasting depiction of the Spanish crowd with emotions of fear, but bravery. The Spanish men standing in a death row waiting to be executed as a result of their resistance; as if declaring them the martyrs who died and are about to die for their nation. While the painting depicts no real hero who came to save the people from the executions, the emphasis on the figure in white provides an example of the acceptance of ordinary men to offer their lives in the name of their nation. What is presented in this painting as a differentiation criterion exemplifies the ‘out-group’ behavior where “the in-group must be perceived as positively differentiated or distinct from the relevant out-groups”¹. And this is clearly exhibited in the work, showing the positive humane expressions of the Spanish crowd in contrast with the brutal act of the French soldiers.

The Third of May 1808 exhibits Goya’s national identity. It clearly reveals Goya’s support to his own country and his empathy with his fellow nationals. Although he didn’t display

¹ Tajfel, H., 1974. *Op. Cit.*, P. 284.

the Spanish flag or any other national icon, his depiction of the Spanish men as such reveals his praise to his fellow nationals who died for their country. By this, his emotional attachment to his nation is sensed. The Spanish men are the brave fellow nationals who have accepted their fate and are ready to die for the cause, whereas the soldiers are the dangerous ‘Other’, the executioners devoid of feelings or sympathy towards the helpless people. By this presentation, Goya exhibits his national identity as a Spanish sympathizing with his own people and condemning the actions of the ‘Other’.

This painting exhibits the horrors of war and has become one of the most famous paintings to show the realistic nature of war. Moreover, it is a witness of the bloodshed and executions that took place in Spain during that time, making it an historical evidence of the conflicts. *The Third of May 1808* is considered an icon of art characteristic of war. It has been repeatedly analyzed by art historians and critics and was an inspiration for many artworks of this genre, including Eduard Manet’s *The Execution of Maximilian*, which reveals his disapproval to the French intervention in Mexico. Moreover, Syrian contemporary artist

Tammam Azzam has digitally reproduced this image to exhibit war in Syria. Azzam juxtaposed Goya’s painting against a destroyed site in Syria. While the work doesn’t expose the warring factions in Syria, it



Tammam Azzam, Goya. Syrian Museum series. Digital work

addresses the horrors of its war and the artist’s condemnation of it.

Another iconic artwork featuring war is Pablo Picasso's *Guernica*. The title refers to the city that was bombed by the Nazis during the Spanish Civil War, which was the reason for creating this artwork. Picasso painted this masterpiece using black, gray and white shades, thus further evoking the horrors of the war and intensifying the drama. The work offers an anti-war message implied by highlighting the chaos and suffering that the war had inflicted on people



Pablo Picasso, *Guernica*, 1937, Oil on canvas, 349.3 cm × 776.6 cm, Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid, Spain.

Guernica has been repeatedly analyzed by critics, artists and art historians, however, the interpretations varied widely and often contradicted each other and the precise significance of its imagery remains debatable. Picasso employed in this work clear as well as hidden symbols to emphasize the tragedies of war. There are various elements in the painting: The bull, the wounded horse, mother with her dead child, the head, the dead soldier, and three women.

Starting with the interpretation of the bull, some claimed that it represented Picasso himself since “it is understood that he loved to depict himself as a bull as the bull is the greatest

symbol to represent Spain”² and Art historian Patricia Failing said, "The bull and the horse are important characters in Spanish culture [and] Picasso himself certainly used these characters to play many different roles over time. [... However,] Picasso never committed to a specific explanation of his symbolism”³ leaving the interpretations more contradictory and ambiguous. Failing said, “the bull can be the good guy, or the bull can be the bad guy, depending on which interpretation you happen to dig up in your survey of reactions to Guernica”⁴. Nonetheless, the certain issue is that the bull is an important icon of Spain; it is “ a symbol of the virtues and the values of Spain and Spanish culture,”⁵ says Failing. Therefore, Picasso displayed it under the influence of his own culture, thus referring to his national identity through its cultural dimension.

In addition, there has also been debates about the symbolic meaning of the horse, but not as contradictory as the ones concerning the bull. In most literatures written to analyze Guernica, it is believed that the horse symbolized the Spanish people. And this is the most convincing interpretation, knowing that the horse is wounded by a spear and crying in agony like the Spanish civilians who were attacked in Guernica. In this regard, the horse becomes a symbol of Picasso’s people, his fellow nationals, to whom he felt this emotional attachment which drew the innovation of this work. Therefore, the horse can be also viewed as representing the artist’s Spanish identity.

As for the woman with child, the three other women and the dismembered soldier, they all depict the horrors and sufferings of war. The woman with a child is screaming and holding her dead child, the dead soldier lying lifeless on the ground with a scattered sword, a woman

² Classical Arts Universe. Pablo Picasso Guernica [The horrors of war]- Surrealism art. *Classical Arts Universe* [online]. [Viewed 25 April 2019]. Available from: <https://classicalartsuniverse.com/pablo-picasso-guernica-surrealism-art/>

³ *Guernica... questions and meanings*. [Viewed 8 October 2019]. Available from: https://www.pbs.org/treasuresoftheworld/guernica/glevel_1/5_meaning.html

⁴ *Ibid.*

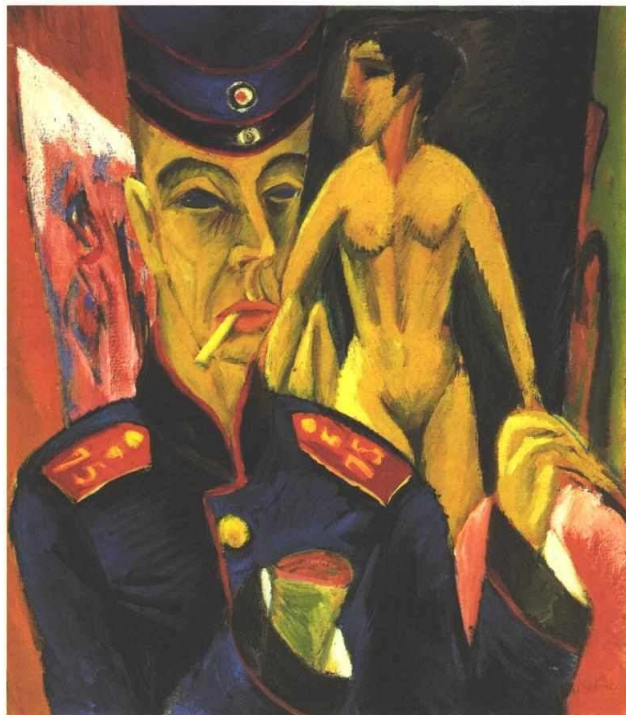
⁵ *Ibid.*

is holding a candle and another one is screaming, and others revealing the tragedies endured in Picasso's country due to war. All these elements expose the war as a brutal act of destruction, chaos and suffering.

Picasso didn't only reveal the horrors of the war in his work, but rather implied messages of hope and peace to his people. He didn't leave the horse which symbolizes the people to die along with the warrior, instead he created hope amidst all horror signified by a flower between the hand of the warrior and the feet of the horse. Perhaps, this can be interpreted as a trial to confront his people with hope and peace. There are also messages of peace signified by the bird and the candle held by a woman. This as well can be interpreted as an anti-war message revealing Picasso's political opposition to the Nazis.

However, since interpreting these artworks here serves solely as an example, I do not intend to dig deeper in this analysis. My aim here is accomplished in presenting how the artist's national and political identities are revealed.

I move on to interpret another famous artwork, *Self-Portrait as a Soldier*, created by the German artist Ernst Ludwig Kirchner. The painting handles the theme of war in a subjective manner different than the couple of works discussed above and proposes deep psychological implications.



Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Self-Portrait as a Soldier*, 1915, Oil on canvas, 69 x 61 cm, Allen Memorial Art Museum, Ohio

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's *Self-Portrait as a Soldier* is a distinct masterpiece associated with complex psychological significations. It is a self-portrait of the artist dressed in soldier's uniform with an amputated arm, standing in his studio and behind him stands a nude model. Upon contemplating this work, we feel puzzled by the state of Kirchner: he appears as a wounded soldier who was fighting in a war but instead of being in the battlefield, he is standing in his studio with a model behind him. He is intentionally exposing his imputed arm to the viewer, perhaps complaining about his state. Kirchner is gazing at the viewer in cold blue eyes with a cigarette between his lips whilst the nude is looking away from him. We can clearly see that the two of them are conceptually unrelated as an artist and his model. Since both of them are looking in different directions, not the way it is supposed to be when an artist depicts his model, their positioning together implies that her presence is not for painting processes. Moreover, his standing position, his gaze towards the viewer and, even more odd, his uniform do not hint that he is an artist who is, or was, or will be painting in that setting. If Kirchner's features and the title of the artwork are disregarded, someone might think that the painting depicted a wounded soldier with his partner. All these issues increase the viewer's confusion and give rise to many inquiries.

The bizarre impression that we receive upon looking at the painting is yet intensified upon knowing the story behind its execution. Besides the unfamiliar listed aspects is the fact that Kirchner was not wounded and didn't even fight during the war. He never saw any fighting. Nor, in any event, is this a war wound⁶. Therefore, this image of himself is an imaginative fabrication and embodiment of his own fears. Obviously he wasn't exposed to seeing battles and imputed soldiers in action and neither was his life endangered in battlefields, so what he expressed in his masterpiece was his fears. Knowing also that Kirchner created this

⁶ Springer, P., 2002. *Hand and head: Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's Self-portrait as soldier* (Vol. 10). University of California Press. Pp. 22-24, 57-62, 83.

artwork in 1915, meaning one year after the start of World War One, hints how deeply distressed and frightened he was. Therefore, Kirchner depicted the horrors and consequences of the war on his personal identity embodied in his wounded figure and representing his fears.

By further analyzing Kirchner's *Self-portrait as Soldier*, more identification issues are revealed. Instead of portraying his image in any soldier's uniform, Kirchner was keen to illustrate the uniform worn by his nation's soldiers. "He wears the uniform of Field Artillery Regiment No. 75, depicted with historical accuracy: dark blue uniform, trimmed with red, with red epaulets; matching cap embossed with two cockades representing Prussia and the German Reich"⁷. In addition, "his letters show that he continued to support the German cause"⁸. Consequently, we can deduce that by painting himself in this specific uniform, he also displayed his political identity as supporting the German politics and his national identity as a German.

In addition to displaying his political and national identities, Kirchner represented his role identity as an artist, albeit in a strange manner. It is exactly under this respect that the nude's presence is justified: She is there to reveal his identity as an artist rather than performing her role as a model. Nonetheless, their unrelated positioning as an artist and his model as well as the mutilation of his right hand hinder this identity. His right hand is the part of his body that executes his art and sort him as an artist. By this amputation, his identity as an artist is jeopardized. Kirchner's fear of becoming an incapable artist, as a consequence of war, is personified in the artwork. The painting exemplifies Paul Gough's argument in which he declared that art and war became "a tussle between the world of the imagination

⁷ Andrew Graham-Dixon, (2003). *Self-Portrait as a Soldier by Ernst Ludwig Kirchner*. *Andrew's Archives* [online]. [Viewed 5 April 2019]. Available from: <https://www.andrewgrahamdixon.com/archive/itp-166-self-portrait-as-a-soldier-by-ernst-ludwig-kirchner.html>

⁸ EPPH. Kirchner's Self-Portrait as Soldier (1915). *EPPH* [online]. [Viewed 5 April 2019]. Available from: http://www.everypainterpaintshimself.com/article/kirchners_self_portrait_as_soldier_1915

and the world of action" — a constant tension between the factual representation of events and an artist's interpretation of those events⁹. Kirshner's representation of war in his artwork is far from displaying actual events, but rather an imaginative representation of his own interpretation of war, or more precisely an introspection of his deep psychological fears.

These artworks exemplify the ways in which war affected the practices of artists, their work and identities. Goya, in his *The Third of May 1808*, depicted realistic scenes encountered in his nation during the French invasion and utilized the differentiation and sameness criterion to represent his national identity. Picasso employed the bull to symbolize his national identity and revealed the sufferings of his people as a consequence of war. Unlike both artists, Kirchner embodied his subjective fears in an imaginative state and revealed his personal, national and political identities, as well as his threatened role identity as an artist. However, all these artworks express the artists' responses towards the wars and have become perpetual reminders of these tragedies.

This section offers a brief interpretation of few artworks displaying war in the international art scene. It shows how artists responded differently to the wars and social turmoil of their times and how their representations of identity varied accordingly. Despite the fact that these masterpieces were inspired by wars that happened before the birth of contemporary art, their fundamental role in their genre and their exemplary aspects in elucidating my topic made me unhesitant to include them.

⁹ Gough, P., 2010. *A terrible beauty: British artists in the First World War*. Sansom and Company. P. 3.

CHAPTER TWO: THE MULTIFACETED REPRESENTATIONS OF WAR

As seen in the interpretation of artworks characteristic of war in the international art scene, it is fundamental to know about the conflicts that inspired their production. We won't be able to analyze Picasso's *Guernica* if we didn't know that it was inspired by the city which was bombed by the Nazis, and, indeed, this applies to the rest of the artworks. In addition, upon analyzing specific artworks we notice that it is not sufficient to know only about the war, but rather it is also essential to know about the artist's life and experiences, and this is especially perceptible in Kirchner's *Self-Portrait as a Soldier*. Therefore, I start this chapter by an historical overview of the wars fought in Palestine, Lebanon and Syria in order to analyze the art inspired by them. Then, I inspect the reflection of this history in art as physical representations of the wars. Consequently, I demonstrate how war incidents were translated in the three art scenes. After that, I analyze the display of the effects of the different wars in visual arts. I inspect the depictions of the wars' physical impact in artworks exhibiting violence and destruction, as well as the reflection of emotional and psychological effects of the wars in artworks exhibiting loss, trauma and emotional distress. I investigate these representations in relation to the kinds of wars experienced. Last in this chapter, I analyze the reasons for the accomplishment of these artworks and their relationship to the wars. I show how the different wars generated diverse artistic representations and phenomena in accordance with the specificity of the experience crisis. As a result, this chapter contributes in reaching my aim in investigating the effects of the specificity of war on each art scene and drawing the relationship between them.

1.2. Overview of the wars in Palestine, Lebanon and Syria

The geographical area of this research is comprised of the three countries: Lebanon, Palestine and Syria. These countries have been prone to conflict and unrest during the last decades and this is highly reflected in their artistic production. As William Cleveland and Martin Bunton declare, “the concept of “upheaval and renewal” conveys the disruptiveness of the late-twentieth-century Middle East”¹⁰.

A proper psychosocial analysis of art characteristic of war in these countries is unattainable without studying the history and background that triggered its production. To do so, I reserve this section to present a preview of the wars experienced. Starting with the Israeli occupation of Palestine and the subsequent conflicts, followed by an historical overview of the civil war in Lebanon and other turmoil, and last, the revolution in Syria and its civil war.

1.1.2. The Israeli Occupation of Palestine

The conflicts and wars in Palestine are not born in a moment, but rather has their roots instilled since the late nineteenth century. Therefore, I start this historical overview since that time to be able to explain what follows.

The conflict between Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs has endured for decades. During the late 19th century and the early 20th century, massive number of Jews immigrated from Russia and other parts of Europe to Palestine¹¹. “Jewish immigration to Palestine occurred

¹⁰ Cleveland, W. L. and Bunton, M., 2009. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. 4th ed. Westview press. P. 369.

¹¹ Kapitan, T., 2019. The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Its History, and Some Philosophical Questions it Raises. *Research Gate*. [Viewed 21 January 2019] Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/237246313_The_Israeli-Palestinian_Conflict_Its_History_and_Some_Philosophical_Questions_it_Raises P. 3.

in a series of waves” and it lies, along with the land acquisition, “at the heart of the communal tension in Palestine”¹².

In an attempt to provide a homeland for the Jews, Zionism emerged in the late nineteenth century calling for the establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine claiming that Palestine is the Jews’ promised homeland which holds their ancient roots¹³. Zionists’ efforts oriented towards the creation of a Jewish home, its “strategy included strengthening Jewish national sentiment, stimulating Jewish investment in Palestine, promoting immigration to assure a Jewish majority, and obtaining the assistance of foreign powers¹⁴.

Intending to impose military strength to achieve its goals, according to its founders, "Zionism is a colonizing adventure and therefore it stands or falls by the question of armed force. [for them] It is important to build, it is important to speak Hebrew, but, unfortunately, it is even more important to be able to shoot"¹⁵. In addition, a more radical brand of Zionism advocated the expulsion of Arabs¹⁶.

The Arabs of Palestine recognized that the goals of Zionism represented a threat to their existence, even though, during that time, Palestine contained 95% Arabs and 5% Jews. However, with the rise of Hitler and the Nazi Party, thousands of Jews immigrated from Germany and central Europe to seek refuge in Palestine, and, in 1918, the percentage of Jews rose to approximately 10% ¹⁷.

In 1920, after World War One, Britain was accorded mandatory powers in Palestine which facilitated the “Zionist objective [...] to build up the Jewish population of the mandate through unrestricted immigration so as to have a credible claim to the existence of a national

¹² Cleveland, W. L. and Bunton, M., 2009. *Op. Cit.*, P. 254.

¹³ Kapitan, T., 2019. *Op. Cit.*, P. 3.

¹⁴ *Idem.*, P.4.

¹⁵ Brenner, L., 1984. *The Iron Wall: Zionist Revisionism from Jabotinsky to Shamir*. Zed Books. P. 78.

¹⁶ *Idem.*, P.7.

¹⁷ *Idem.*, Pp. 4-5.

home”¹⁸. The British entry into Jerusalem coincided with a statement of policy, known as Balfour Declaration, set forth in a letter from the British Foreign Minister, Arthur Balfour, to the Zionist financier, Baron Edmund de Rothschild, stating that the British “Government view with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object¹⁹”. Moreover, the terms of the Balfour Declaration, were incorporated into the terms of the British Mandate²⁰.

During the period of British Mandate, Jewish immigration jumped dramatically. Britain opened the doors of Palestine to Jewish immigration increasing their presence to 17% of the population by the end of the 1920s. And in the years between 1933 and 1936, about 170,000 Jews immigrated to Palestine, doubling the size of the Jews in Palestine and creating widespread alarm within the Arab community²¹. However, by 1939, the percentage of Jews was raised to 31% of the population²² making it more feasible for Zionists to achieve their target.

In addition to the increased number of Jews in Palestine during that period, “The Nazi genocide of the Jews strengthened the case for the Zionist insistence that Jews be allowed into Palestine and considering it as the natural place for a sovereign Jewish state²³. However, the Arabs argued that it was their right to stay in Palestine and possess dominion over its territory, since they didn’t only constitute the majority of its inhabitants but had maintained this majority for thirteen centuries. “Even if Jews have a ‘historical connection’ to Palestine, the inference that they have an exclusive ‘historic title’ which gives them the

¹⁸ Cleveland, W. L. and Bunton, M., 2009. *Op. Cit.*, P. 254.

¹⁹ Kapitan, T., 2019. *Op. Cit.*, P. 8.

²⁰ *Idem.*, P. 15.

²¹ Cleveland, W. L. and Bunton, M., 2009. *Op. Cit.*, P. 254.

²² Kapitan, T., 2019. *Op. Cit.*, P. 16.

²³ *Idem.*, P. 19.

right to return, establish a state, and possess it forever ‘contains more of poetry in it than logic’”²⁴. Nonetheless, the Arabs’ claim was not acknowledged.

During the mandate major eruptions of communal violence took place in Palestine and were directly related to the dislocations caused by immigration and land transfers²⁵. Later, Britain announced that it would end its administration of Palestine by May 1948, and in 1947 the problem of Palestine was taken up by the United Nations which created a special committee (UNSCOP) to handle the Palestinian issue. The United Nations favored the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine²⁶, taking into consideration many factors. The argument from "historical connection" had been already mentioned, in addition to the genocides of the Jews, and “of central importance was their contention that the Palestine Mandate constituted legal recognition of Jewish national rights in Palestine: The Balfour Declaration became a binding and unchallengeable international obligation from the moment when it was embodied in the Palestine Mandate”²⁷. This paved the road for Zionists to formally declare their state.

On May 14, 1948, with authority from the United Nations, Israel formally declared its independence. “While its Declaration of Independence asserts that it is "the natural right of the Jewish people to lead, as do all other nations, an independent existence in its sovereign State," it also proclaims that Israel "will uphold the full social and political equality of all its citizens, without distinction of religion, race, or sex." But Israel has fallen short of this latter proclamation. Though one-sixth of its citizens are non-Jews, it remains a Jewish state. Its official symbols are Jewish religious symbols, and statutes governing land ownership and the Law of Return explicitly favor Jews over non-Jews. Successive Israeli governments

²⁴ *Idem.*, p. 10.

²⁵ Cleveland, W. L. and Bunton, M., 2009. *Op. Cit.*, P. 256.

²⁶ Kapitan, T., 2019. *Op. Cit.*, Pp. 19-20.

²⁷ Feinberg, N., 1974. *The Recognition of the Jewish People in International Law*. Moore, 1. P. 242. Cited in Kapitan, T., 2019. *Op. Cit.*, P. 19.

have discriminated against Arabs in areas of education, municipal funding, and economic development ¹.

The Arabs rejected the declaration of 'The State of Israel' arguing that the United Nations had no right to grant any portion of Arab territory to Zionists, and that the Western world was making them pay for the suffering of Jews. However, the Arabs' claim was not taken into consideration and the invention of a State of Israel became official. There were no negotiations between the two communities, neither Jews nor Arabs acknowledged the existence of the other and fighting immediately broke out. "On May 15, 1948, [the day after Israel declared its independence] units from the armies of Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Transjordan, and Iraq invaded Israel, launching a regional war, interspersed with several truces, that lasted until December 1948 and resulted in the defeat of the Arab forces, the enlargement of Israeli territory, and the collapse of the UN proposal for a Palestinian Arab state"².

By April 1948 the better-equipped and more numerous Jewish forces established a clear superiority, securing their recommended allotment while capturing territory assigned to the proposed Arab state. Civilians on both sides were targeted, and massacres by Israeli forces precipitated a wide-scale exodus of Arabs from their homes and villages³. This "provided for the conquest and permanent occupation, or leveling, of Arab villages and towns," giving Israeli Forces authority to undertake the systematic expulsion of the Palestinian Arabs living within the area allocated to the Jewish state as well as those whose villages were destroyed⁴. During those times, Gurion, Israel's first prime minister, declared: "I am for compulsory transfer: I don't see anything immoral in it"⁵. As a result,

¹ Kapitan, T., 2019. *Op. Cit.*, Pp. 22-25.

² Cleveland, W. L. and Bunton, M., 2009. *Op. Cit.*, P. 267.

³ Kapitan, T., 2019. *Op. Cit.*, P. 23.

⁴ Cleveland, W. L. and Bunton, M., 2009. *Op. Cit.*, P. 268.

⁵ Kapitan, T., 2019. *Op. Cit.*, P. 7.

the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) had taken over 77% of mandated Palestine, including West Jerusalem and the Galilee. Palestinian Arabs were not permitted to establish a state and at least 750,000 became refugees through flight or expulsion by Israeli forces¹. Not only was there no Palestinian Arab state, but the vast majority of the Arab population in the occupied territories have become refugees and their flight was transformed into a permanent mass exodus². The massive dislocation and defeat of 1948 is referred to as the Palestinian *Catastrophe* or *Al Nakba*. This Catastrophe reverberates it echoes in the art world. One of the notable artworks addressing it is Emily Jacir's *Memorial to 418 Palestinian Villages Which Were Destroyed, Depopulated and Occupied by Israel in 1948*, an installation work explained in the following section.

After that, “a General Assembly Resolution of 1948 stated that refugees should be permitted to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors”, but Israel refused to abide³. “Throughout the remainder of 1948 and into 1949, there were incidents of forced expulsion of Arabs. As a result, by the time the last armistice agreement was concluded in 1949, there remained only 160,000 Arabs within the borders of Israel. The majority of those who had fled or been deported were destitute and crowded into refugee camps in various Arab states”⁴. The deportation of Palestinians, their exile and hope to return to their homeland triggered the production of a great part of Palestinian Art. Visual artists, poets, authors, playwrights and other kinds of artists were inspired to produce art reflecting their *Catastrophe*, with the deportation of their people, which is profoundly analyzed later in this book.

The *Catastrophe* of 1948 was just the beginning of series of wars, conflicts and injustices that Palestinians have been enduring. “The forceful creation of the state of Israel [...] has

¹ *Idem.*, P.25.

² Cleveland, W. L. and Bunton, M., 2009. *Op. Cit.*, P. 268.

³ Kapitan, T., 2019. *Op. Cit.*, P. 22.

⁴ Cleveland, W. L. and Bunton, M., 2009. *Op. Cit.*, P. 270.

caused great personal suffering and regional political turmoil ever since”¹. In addition to executing genocides and creating the tragedy of displaced Palestinians, Israeli government and its military forces have caused sufferings and invaded territories in the neighboring Arab nations strengthening the Arab-Israeli conflict. This, along with the defeat of Arab forces in the 1947-49 War, fostered revolutionary movements in the Arab world.

Ever since their *Nakba*, Palestinians living in their occupied land have never been able to dwell in peace. Persistent conflicts and violence subsisted and in the year 1967 war tensions began developing between Israel and Arab countries in the region. These tensions were burst forth in the 1967 “Six-Day War” which happened between Israel and combined forces of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. The war resulted in another failure of Arab Regimes against Israeli Forces. “Although the war lasted only six days, it created another tragic Arab refugee situation and a complex demographic dilemma for Israel”².

June War of 1967, also known as the Six-Day War strongly influenced later developments and events of modern Middle Eastern history. Israel continued its occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, which further contributed to the rising of national parties as a resistance force against the occupier. Among these parties is the ‘Palestine Liberation Organization’, referred to as PLO, which is a national movement with the purpose of liberation of Palestine. Among the members of PLO are many artists who took the Palestinian cause as a major theme of their art. “The Israeli occupation also contributed to the rise of Palestinian nationalism and to the formation of Palestinian organizations committed to the establishment of an independent Palestinian state”³.

The peace that usually follows wars did not come to the Middle East after June War of 1967. The Palestinian inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza Strip participated in a mass

¹ *Ibid.*

² Cleveland, W. L. and Bunton, M., 2009. *Op. Cit.*, P. 339.

³ *Idem.*, P. 274.

uprising, known as *Intifada*, which means a shaking off in Arabic, to bring an end to the Israeli occupation and establish an independent Palestinian state. The uprising was initiated on December 9, 1987, following a road accident involving an Israeli military vehicle that killed four Palestinians and injured several others. It started as a purely local Palestinian response to unbearable local conditions. Thousands of Palestinians gathered to protest the incident, and when the Israeli army shot and killed some of the demonstrators, all of Gaza burst into open revolt. Within a few days, the West Bank also participated in the uprising, and later it broadened to include all strata of Palestinian society, and an underground local leadership endeavored to coordinate the uprising. During the Intifada thousands of Palestinian demonstrators carrying stones, slingshots, and gasoline bombs confronted the Israeli armed forces. The Israeli government made a determined effort to crush the uprising. Stone throwers were met by the violence of the armed Israeli military. Television images of Israeli troops shooting at unarmed teenagers contributed to mounting criticism of the Israeli government both at home and abroad. The military also employed collective punishment on a broad scale, demolishing the homes of suspected stone throwers, placing entire villages under curfew for several days at a time, uprooting fruit and olive trees, cutting off water and electricity, and closing the West Bank schools and universities. This uprising endured for nearly five years and forced Israel to recognize the impact of occupation on Palestinians¹. The *Intifada* was also an inspiration for many Palestinian artists, exemplifying the Palestinian resistance against the occupier. Moreover, knowing that the Palestinians' weapons of defense were mostly stones and slingshots, these tools became symbols of this revolution and the Palestinian resistance. They have been repeatedly displayed in visual arts to embody the concept of *Intifada*. Palestinian artists Abed Al Rahman Al Muzain, Leila Shawa, Suleiman Mansour and many others exhibited

¹ Cleveland, W. L. and Bunton, M., 2009. *Op. Cit.*, P. 473, 475,477.

these tools along with other signs, such as the uprooting of olive trees, to represent the uprising. By the end of 1990, the uprising had cost the lives of an estimated 1,025 Palestinians, injured more than 37,000 and caused the arrest of around 40,000 while 56 Israelis died. It was at this point that the intensity of the uprising began to diminish, but continued periodically until spring 1992¹. In September 1993, an agreement known as the Oslo Accords intended to establish peace was signed between PLO leader Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, in the presence of US President Bill Clinton. The Oslo Accords is a declaration that calls for Israel to withdraw from Jericho and Gaza, and eventually the West Bank and give years of limited autonomy for Palestinians in those areas, in addition to the endorsement of other political issues². Nonetheless, as other agreements, this was not applied and the intended peace remained unattainable.

This was followed by continuous unrest, and “in late September 2000 Palestinians protested in an [another] outbreak of demonstrations and stone throwing”³. At the core of the uprising was the Palestinian reaction to the increasingly oppressive Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the ever-expanding network of settlements, and the inability or unwillingness of outside mediation to stop it. The proliferation of Israeli military checkpoints and the ongoing confiscation of land increased Palestinians’ feelings of being dispossessed and deprived of a future. The Israeli reaction was swift and deadly, turning a series of demonstrations into a sustained popular uprising. On the Palestinian side, there was intensified suicide bombing campaigns and Palestinian forces were armed with light automatic weapons. The stone throwing that had characterized the first intifada was still present, but they no longer symbolized the Palestinian preference for nonviolent protest. On the Israeli side, the use of force was far deadlier and more heavily mechanized than

¹ *Ibid.*

² CNN Library, (2018). Oslo Accords Fast Facts [online]. [Viewed 19 April 2019]. Available form: <https://edition.cnn.com/2013/09/03/world/meast/oslo-accords-fast-facts/index.html>

³ Cleveland, W. L. and Bunton, M., 2009. *Op. Cit.*, P. 516.

before, deploying tanks, helicopters and fighter jets against a civilian population. Israeli forces escalated their military operations and forcibly reoccupied all the territory in the West Bank and Gaza Strip that had been earlier turned over to Palestinian Authority. At the same time, Israel imposed an internal closure on the West Bank, prohibiting Palestinians from leaving their communities of residence and effectively shutting down all forms of internal commerce. The result was economic disaster for the occupied territories ¹. This uprising is known as the *Second Intifada* which lasted more than five years with various intensities and levels of violence.

These wars and uprisings that took place in Palestine as a consequence of its occupation were also interspersed by many other conflicts. Palestinians didn't witness peace, even between wars, but were rather prone to oppression and violence ever since the occupation of their country. These conflicts were followed by many uprisings and violence and oppression imposed by Israeli forces persist to our present day. However, these are the major conflicts with paramount effects that took place in the country. Although other conflicts are also fundamental in studying the modern history of Palestine, it is unattainable to interpret all these events, with their political connotations and their consequence in a single section. Therefore, I have chosen to briefly present the major conflicts that affected this country and influenced its art. In addition, other conflicts embodied in art are presented upon the analysis of their respective artworks.

Palestinian art characteristic of war reflects the Palestinian struggle and suffering these people endured. All of the above mentioned historical events and their consequences are exhibited in this art, revealing a tight relationship between these circumstances and the Palestinian art scene.

¹ *Ibid.*

2.1.2. The Civil War in Lebanon and following conflicts

One of the most important issues that needs to be addressed when discussing the Lebanese Civil War is that there is no one single historical narrative that can be adapted and agreed upon among all groups of Lebanese society. The war in Lebanon was basically of a civil nature with external interventions, involving diverse groups with different political and religious affiliations. This made it hard for historians to agree on one history of the war. Each group of the warring factions during the war had narrated an history to its advantage serving its ideologies and considering it as something foundational for its self-understanding and identity. This confirms J.W. Scott's conclusion that history can never be objective and can never be treated like a neutral science ¹. The different interpretations of events during the war and its causes only lead to more disagreements and conflict. In this regard, Lebanese historian and sociologist Ahmad Beydoun declared that Lebanese scholars during the war were under the heavy influence of political and ideological projects that sought to mold history in their shape ². This disagreement about a unified war narrative made it an unattainable task to produce a unified history book that is approved by all the Lebanese constituents. However, there are certain issues that are documented and agreed upon by all parties, such as dates and places of specific incidents, formal political agreements, the happening of several massacres, the deaths of thousands of civilians and few more, but points of views and analysis that the Lebanese parties hold on the Lebanese civil war, its reasons and consequences, the interpretation of the political circumstances surrounding the massacres and the perceived necessity of the crimes are issues of great debate. This uncontrolled historical documentation of a sensitive conflict such as the civil

¹ Scott, J.W., 1989. History in crisis? The others' side of the story. *The American Historical Review*, 94(3). P. 690.

² Beydoun, A., 1984. *Identité confessionnelle et temps social chez les historiens libanais contemporains*. Université Libanaise.

war may lead to inaccuracy in its researching. To overcome this problem, I present the events that are unanimously narrated with the most agreed upon interpretations in order to be able to analyze the war's effects in art.

The Lebanese Civil War lasted from 1975 to 1990 and it is characterized by unleashed violence that dominated the country. In daily discourse in Lebanon, and even in academic writings about the war, the widespread experience in recurrent cycles of mass violence can translate into descriptions of violence as “irrational”, or simply beyond belief¹. According to historian Haugbolle Sune, the history of the civil war can be divided into five core stages. First the period from April of 1975 to November of 1976. Second, from November of 1976 to June of 1982, which marked a long period of failed peace negotiations, internal conflicts, and interventions by Israel and Syria. Third, from June of 1982 to February 1984, the main event of which was the Israeli invasion. Fourth, the late 1980s with internal wars. Fifth, from 1988 to 1990, which marked the intra-Christian wars and the end of the conflict².

Most historians who wrote about the civil war in Lebanon agree that it broke out as a result of internal and external affairs which increased the tension between internal groups of the Lebanese population. Those who stress the external affairs as the triggers of the war derive their argument from the fact that Lebanese were divided between those who supported the right of the Palestinian resistance to launch attacks against Israel from the territory of Lebanon, and those who opposed it. Whereas “another group of scholars stress the internal dynamics of the Civil War. They are interested in interpretations of political economy and highlight the over-reliance of the Lebanese economy on Western capitalism from the late

¹ Khalaf, S., 2002. *Civil and Uncivil Violence in Lebanon: A History of the internationalization of communal conflict*. Columbia University Press. Pp. 1-22.

² Sune, H., (2011). The historiography and the memory of the Lebanese civil war. *SciencesPro*. [Viewed 20 April 2019]. Available from: <https://www.sciencespo.fr/mass-violence-war-massacre-resistance/fr/document/historiography-and-memory-lebanese-civil-war>

19th century onwards”¹. However, the most agreeable argument is that each of these aspects triggered the outbreak of the war, including its economy, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, sectarian divisions. These aspects include the Palestinian presence in the country, political dominance of Christians which were outnumbered by Muslims and the weakness of the Lebanese Government. The Lebanese Civil War “was both an internal Lebanese affair and a regional conflict involving a host of regional and international actors [...] including the Palestine-Israel conflict”². According to William Cleveland, after the June War, also known as the Six-Days War, mentioned in the previous section, “the Palestinian-Israeli conflict intruded on Lebanese political life. This development, in combination with demographic and political changes taking place inside Lebanon itself, upset the country’s fragile sectarian balance and plunged it into fifteen years of vicious and destructive civil war”³. And this is the most agreed upon interpretation concerning the initiation of the civil war. However, it does not add to my analysis digging deeper into the causes of the outbreak of the war, and for the purpose of my research, it is sufficient to present this brief interpretation. I, therefore, move on to present important stages of the war that affected Lebanese Art.

The Lebanese civil war was characterized by a number of confrontations, battles, and massacres between different internal groups and with external, Israeli and Syrian interventions. “What is habitually referred to as the Lebanese Civil War was in fact a series of more or less related conflicts between shifting alliances of Lebanese groups and external actors”⁴. The Lebanese civil war was initiated on April 13 of 1975 in a region in Beirut called Ain Al Rumana with a massacre referred to by this name. It happened when the

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*

³ Cleveland, W. L. and Bunton, M., 2009. *Op. Cit.*, P. 382.

⁴ Sune, H., (2011). *Op.Cit.*

Phalange or Kataeb militia, a Christian right-wing party, shot a bus load of civilians, killing twenty-seven Palestinians. After this incident, a round of fighting started between Palestinian Liberation Organization, PLO, and Kataeb militias. Battles and violence between the two opponents increased “until the end of June, at which point the main PLO forces accepted a cease-fire and withdrew from the fighting for the remainder of the year”¹. The bus shooting incident represents the start of the war and was displayed in artworks as a reminder of the tragedy.

However, PLO’s acceptance to cease fire didn’t end the war and Ain Al Rumana was followed by other massacres. In August 1975 fighting broke out between Muslim and Christian militias. The Muslim groups in general supported Lebanese National Movement, known as LNM, a political group formed by Kamal Jumblat, the political leader of the Druze* community. The movement was “committed to administrative reform, the abolition of the confessional basis of politics, and freedom of action for the Palestinian commandos”². On the other hand, the Christian forces were led by the Phalange who are also known as Kataeb. “In December, the conflict took an even more ominous turn as the Phalange and its allies began expelling Muslims who resided within those areas of Beirut controlled by the Maronite* forces”. This first major incident was called Black Saturday massacre of 6 December 1975, during which Phalangists killed around 200 Muslim civilians in East Beirut. Two days later, the LNM responded to Black Saturday by attacking Christian areas in Beirut. Meanwhile, civilians were killed according to their sectarian identities by both opponents. On January 18, 1976, Al Kataeb launched an attack in Beirut

¹ Cleveland, W. L. and Bunton, M., 2009. *Op. Cit.*, P. 383.

*Druze is a religious sect in Lebanon.

² Idem., P. 384.

*A Christian sect originated in Syria, with their largest population in Lebanon.

in a neighborhood called Karantina, protected by the PLO, where several hundreds¹ of Muslim civilians were murdered, and by bombarding cities killing more than 500 inhabitants². The PLO responded by attacking the Christian villages of Jiyeh and Damour, the latter is referred to as Damour massacre, on January 20, 1976³. This motivated a cycle of revenge, as massacre followed massacre in the first two years of the war, which intensified the sectarian divisions within Lebanon and increased the longevity of the civil war.

In August 1976, another major massacre referred to as Tal El Zaatar took place. During that time, Kataeb, with the participation of Syrian forces, laid siege on the Palestinian camp of Tal El Zaatar. During that time, “Syria’s invasion of Lebanon escalated the fighting and expanded the level of destruction”⁴. Tal Al Zaatar camp fell on 12 August 1976 with an estimated number of 4,280 Lebanese and Palestinian casualties⁵. In retaliation, LNM forces attacked Christian villages, killing around 200 civilians⁶. After that, there were continuous violence, killings and mass executions in Beirut and various Lebanese villages. “In the years from 1976 to 1982, the country disintegrated into a collection of sectarian enclaves, each defended by its own militia organization. Warfare between militia factions became a way of life”⁷.

In June 1982, Israeli troops crossed the border into Lebanon and launched what would become “Israel’s longest and most controversial war. In the course of the three-month-long

¹ Hanf, T., 1993. *Coexistence in wartime Lebanon - Decline of a state and rise of a nation*. I. B. Tauris. Pp. 210-211.

² Nisan, M., 2003, *The Conscience of Lebanon: A Political Biography of Etienne Sakr (Abu-Arz)*, Routledge. P. 41.

³ Hanf, T., 1993. *Op.Cit.*, Pp. 211.

⁴ Cleveland, W. L. and Bunton, M., 2009. *Op. Cit.*, P. 385.

⁵ Sayigh, Y., 1997. *Armed Struggle and the search for a Palestinian state: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949-1993*. Oxford University Press. P. 401.

⁶ Chami, J. G., 2002. *Le Mémorial de la guerre 1975-1990*. Chemaly & Chemaly. P. 94.

⁷ *Idem.*, P. 386.

operation, the Israeli Defense Forces not only engaged units of the PLO, they also placed an Arab capital city—Beirut— under siege and contributed to the deaths of hundreds of Lebanese and Palestinian civilians”¹. Throughout summer 1982, West Beirut was subjected to intense air, sea, and land bombardments that caused heavy casualties among the predominantly civilian population. The invasion was of the most violent incidents of the war, costing at least 17,000 people their lives and wounding up to 30,000 others².

The Israeli invasion also paved the way for yet one of the most violent and brutal massacres that happened during the war, the Sabra and Shatila massacre. It happened in September 1982, when Kataeb Party, with the help of Israeli military forces, entered the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila killing “a total of between 1,400 and 2,000”³, which were mostly children, women and men “who had been left unprotected by the PLO evacuation”⁴. This was one of the most famous and repeatedly mentioned massacres that occurred in the country and the most documented of the war’s massacres in its disturbing detail. It is probably the viciousness of the killings, as well as their international exposure, that has made Sabra and Shatila the iconic massacre of the Lebanese Civil War⁵. This massacre has been commemorated by political posters, books and documentaries and was reflected in many works of art, including visual arts and literature.

For most of the decade following the Israeli invasion of 1982, Lebanon suffered from armed violence and massacres. Muslim and Christian militia groups continued their mutually destructive combat, in addition to the presence of Israeli military and Syrian armed forces which further aggregated the violence and prolonged the war. Although in 1983 the Israelis finally decided to get out of Lebanon, they continued to occupy a Lebanese zone in the

¹ *Ibid.*

² Hanf, T., 1993. *Op. Cit.*, P341.

³ Sune, H., (2011). *Op.Cit.*

⁴ Cleveland, W. L. and Bunton, M., 2009. *Op. Cit.*, P. 388.

⁵ Sune, H., (2011). *Op.Cit.*

south, where they did not withdraw until the year 2000¹. And as long as Israeli forces remained in Lebanon the country remained subject to continuous attacks. However, in November 1989, aiming to put an end to the war, the Taif Agreement was established to provide the basis for the ending of the civil war and reassert Lebanese authority. The agreement set a time of two-year frame for Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon.

In the months preceding the Taif Conference, the assigned President Amin Gemayel term expired in September 1988. He appointed the commander in chief of the Lebanese armed forces, General Michel Aoun, a Maronite Christian, in command. The General, portraying himself as a Lebanese patriot rather than a sectarian Maronite, proclaimed a war of liberation against the Syrian presence in the country and began a military campaign to drive Syrian troops from Lebanon. His two-year rebellion was destructive and killed over 1,000 civilians. Although his stand against Syria attracted a certain amount of support from Muslims as well as Christians, but his recklessness and callous disregard for civilian lives soon turned most Lebanese against him. By early 1990, Aoun's forces were fighting not only Syrians and Lebanese Muslims but also gunmen from the major Maronite militia. This was brought to an end in October 1990, when Syrian forces launched an all-out attack on Aoun's positions, resulting in his escape to asylum in France as Syrian troops took control of Beirut².

All this violence and destruction was followed by the Syrian armed presence in the country, which further prolonged the suffering. Although large scale massacres were no longer present, Lebanese suffered occasional shooting and humiliation by their presence, in addition to their interference in Lebanon's political life. It was not until April 2005 that Syria was forced to announce its full withdrawal from Lebanon.

¹ Cleveland, W. L. and Bunton, M., 2009. *Op. Cit.*, P. 389.

² *Idem.*, P. 391.

The tragic history of the war in Lebanon was followed by continuous periods of unrest, political assassinations, bombings and occasional massacres and fighting. One major massacre that happened in Lebanon after the civil war was Qana massacre. It took place on April, 1996 in a village in Southern Lebanon called Qana, when Israel Defense Forces fired artillery shells at a United Nations compound composed of 800 Lebanese civilians who had taken refuge there. This was followed by the 2006 Lebanon War, known as the July War, a 33-day military conflict between Lebanon and Israel. The Qana massacre as well as the July war had also inspired artists to reflect these tragedies.

The famous massacres of the war were serious instances of mass violence, that tend to overshadow less prolific forms of violence that became an “habitual” part of life during the war, such as fighting between soldiers and militiamen. During all phases of the war and on all sides, atrocities were committed against both groups. Kidnappings, road-block executions on the basis of people’s sectarian identity, revenge killings of civilians, torture, car bombs and planted bombs, wanton shelling of residential areas and many other violent acts characterize the Lebanese Civil War¹.

3.1.2. The revolution in Syria and the start of the war

In February 2011, a civil uprising occurred in Syria and was later transformed into a prolonged civil war. The people protested against the regime in a peaceful demonstration, in turn, the government security forces resorted to violence to stop it, which made it progress, along with other aspects, into becoming a civil war that still persist until our present day. The uprising was a response against the oppressive regime and was anticipated by series of events. However, to understand the conflict, a quick review of the pre-war situation in Syria is essential.

¹ Sune, H., (2011). *Op.Cit.*

Starting with an explanation of the situation in Syria prior to the war, I initiate this section with the election of the current Syrian president to elucidate the political and social aspects in the country which motivated the occurrence of the crisis. On June 11, 2000, one day after the death of Hafez El Assad, the prior Syrian President, the Ba'ath Party unanimously nominated his son Bashar for the post of president of the republic. The authoritarian regime in Syria wasn't created during Bashar's term, but was rather implemented by his father who "had used the military and the Ba'ath Party as the vehicles for his ascent to the presidency, and once in power he established them as the foundations of his regime. He himself took the office of secretary general of the Ba'ath, [...which] developed into an instrument of political control and indoctrination. The other pillars of the regime, the military and the internal security forces, enforced the state's authority and, when necessary, were deployed to stamp out opposition"¹. Remaining the president until his death, Hafez El Assad passed his legacy to his heir, Bashar. All the powers were concentrated in the hands of the president. He had the final say over major domestic policies and all foreign policy, he was the supreme commander of the armed forces. In addition, he had the authority to appoint and to acquit civilian and military officers, including the prime minister; declare state of war and a state of emergency; and to dissolve the People's Assembly whenever he deemed fit². Ever since that time, this authoritarian regime has oppressed the population in Syrian. The regime dominated both the political and social aspects of Syrian society, depriving people from the freedom to choose their political affiliation and from their own private rights. The regime re-formed the authority in terms of security, creating numerous security services, and handing the real power to them, not only in the security area; but in all fields,

¹ Cleveland, W. L. and Bunton, M., 2009. *Op. Cit.*, Pp. 400-401.

² Ziadeh, R., 2012. *Power and policy in Syria: intelligence services, foreign relations and democracy in the modern Middle East* (Vol. 98). IB Tauris. P. 5.

political, social, economic and cultural¹. Syrians, in general, were often under the government's surveillance which abolished any expression considered inappropriate by the regime. The leading political party in Syria was the Ba'ath Party, under the leadership of the president, which has been, since Bashar's father's term, a major supporter of the Assad regime. Moreover, being Alawite* himself, Bashar entrusted Alawites with key political, military, and paramilitary posts. Institutions such as Air Force Intelligence and Military Intelligence are headed by the Assad regime loyalists and are mandated to suppress both civilian and military opposition to the regime, through a combination of intimidation and violence, and the largest organized force providing armed support to the Assad regime is the Syrian Armed Forces, which comprises an army, air force, and a small navy². With all powers of the state under his control, Bashar El Assad and his government had controlled all life aspects in Syria.

Bashar El Assad's authority didn't rest on popular civilian consent but on the loyalty of the armed forces. Before the civil war in Syria, oppression and social, economic and political inequalities had led to more discontent among Syrian civilians who were not in favor of the regime. Although "[d]iscontent in Syria has slow-burned for decades"³, peoples' fear from the regime and its usual violent response made it improbable for the people to take large-scale revolutionary actions previously. However, by 2011, the so-called Arab Spring that took place in many Arab countries swept through Syria and motivated the civilians.

¹ Harmoun Center for Contemporary Studies, (2016). *The Lost Syrian Identity: Will Syrians Ever Retrieve Their One National Identity*. [Viewed 20 April 2019]. Available from: <https://harmoon.org/the-lost-syrian-identity-will-syrians-ever-retrieve-their-one-national-identity/?lang=en> P. 5

*A religious sect primarily centered in Syria.

² Prom, S., (2018?). Conflict Analysis and Mapping Paper: The Syrian Civil War (2011-Present). Academia. [Viewed 20 April 2019] Available from: https://www.academia.edu/.../Conflict_Analysis_Syrian_Civil_War_2011_-_Present

³ Sterling, J., (2012). Daraa: The spark that lit the Syrian flame. *CNN* [online]. [Viewed 14 April 2019] Available from: <https://edition.cnn.com/2012/03/01/world/meast/syria-crisis-beginnings/>

The protests against the regime initially took place in provinces away from the capital Damascus. The first episode showing Syrian popular resentment against the regime took place on the 2nd of February 2011, when the population held a candle vigil to protest against the Assad government's ban against acts of public protests¹. The major uprising, however, effectively started on March 15, 2011, in Daraa; a city on the Jordanian border some 60 miles south of Damascus. On that day, protests broke out demanding the release of a few school children who were arrested and tortured for writing anti-regime slogans. The group of children spray-painted graffiti on the wall of their school in Daraa, in February 2011, writing 'Ejak el door, ya doctor' in Arabic, which means 'It's your turn, Doctor'². By 'Doctor' they meant Bashar El Assad and by 'turn' they were referring to El Assad's turn in the series of revolutions, or what is known as the Arab Spring. These children were taken from their houses and tortured in prison for their act. In turn, people in Daraa protested against the regime demanding the release of the children. Nonetheless, the immediate response of the regime was to fire at the crowd and to cut basic services to the city of Daraa. After the regime's brutal crackdown, demonstrations spread over other parts of the country. Mass arrests unfolded, tales of torture spread across the country and the protest movement grew and developed into an opposition³. On the other hand, the regime did not hesitate to deploy the army to surround rebellious cities with tanks and to fire live ammunition at unarmed demonstrators. These brutal measures only served to embolden the

¹ Pillon, M., 2014 The Syrian Conflict. Conflict Analysis of a Multi-Layered Civil War. Academia. [Viewed on 25 March 2019]. Available from: https://www.academia.edu/11304521/The_Syrian_Conflict._Conflict_Analysis_of_a_Multi-Layered_Civil_War

² Ensor, J., (2017). Follow Six years of war in Syria: 'I regret that so many innocent people had to die', says the boy whose defiance sparked the conflict. *Telegraph* [online]. [Viewed on 20 April 2019]. Available from: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/03/14/six-years-war-syria-regret-many-innocent-people-had-die-says/>

³ Sterling, J., (2012). *Op. Cit.*

protestors who had no choice but to bear arms to protect themselves and their families. As a result, what started as peaceful demonstrations quickly morphed into a violent civil war. Starting with people non-violently demanding civil rights to people arming themselves and demanding the resignation of the Syrian government, the mounting resentment towards the Assad government drove the social unrest in Syria to become a civil war in 2012¹. The war in Syria was initially an intrastate conflict between the Syrian government and internal armed rebel groups. However, the conflict has become an internationalized intrastate war due to the interference of international actors, which raised the prospect of regional proxy war². Moreover, there was the radicalization of the rebel forces, whose fighters comprised the armed groups that were relatively more effective in fighting the Syrian military forces but were also more notorious in engaging in sectarian violence and in orchestrating a series of indiscriminate collective massacres³. In turn, this has entrenched a kind of sectarianism in the war, since “the war has compelled Syrians to cling to their sectarian identities more tightly, whether out of socioeconomic self-interest or simply to survive”⁴. However, the power and influence of violent extremist groups growing within the rebel landscape, the violence and brutality of the regime forces and its allies, the introduction of sectarian division and the interference of international actors resulted in a prolonged and more violent war in Syria.

¹ ARK Group DMCC, (2016). *The Syrian conflict: A systems conflict analysis* [online]. [Viewed 21 April 2018]

Available from:

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ae73030297114427dc5d4de/t/5b28cbfb758d460f5394b51c/1529400324160/ARK-Syria-Conflict-Analysis-Digital-copy.pdf>

² Prom, S., (2018?). *OP. Cit.*

³ Ouardi, K., (2014). *The Long and Bloody Spring: The Uniqueness of the Syrian Uprising*. Master’s thesis, Texas State University. [Viewed 14 January 2019] Available from:

<https://digital.library.txstate.edu/bitstream/handle/10877/4958/OUARDI-THESIS-2014.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> P. 55.

⁴ Balanche, F., 2018. Sectarianism in Syria’s Civil War. *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy* [online]. [Viewed on 22 April 2019]. Available from <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-01702640/document>. P. xi.

In addition to mass shooting, airstrikes, raids, continuous bombardments, and the thousands of imprisonments and torture, the war in Syria comprised dozens of violent massacres. Anyway, I do not intend to profoundly analyze the war, its causes and events since it serves no further benefit to my research and giving an overview of it and the uprising is sufficient for my analysis of the artworks. Consequently, in the following, I list only few events that happened during the war in Syria and are reflected in art, in order to reveal the intensity of the deployed violence which affected the Syrian art scene.

Primarily, it is important to know that raiding and sieges, bombardments, violent attacks on civilians and torture became a way of life in Syria during the conflict, nonetheless, there happened events that are even beyond those and were globally denounced as they are considered internationally illegal during wars by international law. Raiding a whole village, with its civilians because of suspected opponents was very popular during the war, where “in February 2012, the Syrian Army stormed the city of Homs, a rebel stronghold, causing an unprecedented number of deaths”¹. This was one of the first massacres after the uprising, but definitely wasn't the last. More massacres committed by the regime as well as the rebels followed, in Homs, Deir El-Zour, Al-Qubeir, Al-Buwaida Al-Sharqiya, Darayya, Douma and many others, and some were categorized with brutal violence where mass executions, beheading and slaying of civilians, including children, became popular.

In addition, the use of chemical weapons and toxic bombs were also utilized during the war. Although chemical attacks are illegal and banned under international law, in August 2013, forces loyal to President Bashar al-Assad launched an assault on the Eastern Ghouta that reportedly left more than 1,700 civilians dead. Moreover, two separate incidents of

¹ Pillon, M., 2014. *Op. Cit.*, P. 5.

bombs believed to contain toxic substances were dropped by the Syrian Air Force¹. However there are also other similar incidents, such as the attack on the rebel-held town of Khan Sheikhoun in north-western Syria where more than 80 people were killed in a suspected chemical attack². Chemical weapons were also used in an attack on Douma and the Syrian government was accused by firing rockets filled with the chemical ‘Sarin’ at several rebel-held suburbs of the capital Damascus in August 2013, killing hundreds of people. These events led to great international condemnation, nonetheless, organizations, including the UN, have continued to document the use of chemicals in attacks during the war³. These brutal attacks had raised the number of casualties in general, and children in particular. In turn, the suffering and killing of children have triggered many Syrian artists, such as Abdalla Al Omari, Khalil Younes, Mohannad Orabi, Walid El-Masri and others, to display this theme revealing the unbearable conditions these helpless beings had to endure.

Another major catastrophe, that has also motivated artists to expose, was the destruction of cultural monuments in the historical site of Palmyra. This world heritage site was repeatedly attacked during the war, destroying some of the country’s most historic treasures. While many artists depicted the destruction of their country, which is demonstrated later in this book, artists Humam Alsalim and Rami Bakhos have created digital artworks to highlight the graveness of the destruction that surrounded Palmyra. However, since this section is an historical overview of the conflicts in Syria, the reflection of these war incidents in art is profoundly explained in the following section.

The Syrian Civil War is one of the major tragedies that struck the world in the present decade. It caused massive number of deaths and injuries, in addition to a refugee crisis. In

¹ BBC News, (2018). *Syria war: What we know about Douma 'chemical attack'* [online]. [Viewed 20 April 2019]. Available from: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-43697084>

² BBC News, (2017). *Syria chemical 'attack': What we know* [online]. [Viewed 25 April 2019]. Available from: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-39500947>

³ *Ibid.*

December 2018, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said in an updated death toll that about 560,000 people have been killed since the Syrian war began¹. More than half a million people are dead, including women and children. A UN envoy has verified 7,000 cases of children either killed or maimed in Syria's seven-year war, but unverified reports put the number "way beyond 20,000" , where in 2018 alone, an estimated 1,106 children were killed amid the fighting². Other than the huge number of casualties, the war has caused 5,624,891 Syrians to become refugees and 6.8 million people were internally displaced within Syria³, in addition to the many other consequences of war, including physical injuries, social disintegration, economic deterioration and others. Although the numbers I presented above, and all others, are not unanimously agreed upon among all statistics done to specify the tolls of casualties and refugees, they are the most recurring. And since these minor details do not affect my research, I did not investigate this issue further and settled for just presenting them as an average count to reveal the massive crisis.

2.2. Translating war events into artworks

After presenting a brief historical overview of the wars fought in Palestine, Lebanon and Syria, I move on to this section to interpret how this history and its incidents were reflected in contemporary visual arts in these countries.

1.2.2. Displaying incidents of the Israeli invasion in Palestine

¹ Haaretz, (2018). *560,000 Killed in Syria's War According to Updated Death Toll*. [Viewed on 25 April 2019]. Available from: <https://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/syria/560-000-killed-in-syria-s-war-according-to-updated-death-toll-1.6700244>

² Ruiz-Grossman, S., (2019). Record Number of Children Died in Syria In 2018: UN. *Huffpost*. [Viewed on 26 April 2019] Available from https://www.huffpost.com/entry/record-number-children-killed-syria-2018_n_5c86c2fae4b0ed0a00164694.

³ I am Syria, (© 2015). *Syrian Refugee Crisis*. [Viewed 26 April 2019]. Available from: <http://www.iamsyria.org/syrian-refugee-crisis.html>

Palestinian Art characteristic of war has been a reflection of the Palestinian struggle ever since the emergence of the Palestinian cause. It has reflected the Palestinian's plight, their suffering, loss and exile. Moreover, some artworks manifested the events and political conditions experienced in a torn country making the "[o]verriding themes within Palestinian practice- be that in Palestine, within the Israeli Green Line or in the diaspora- stem from the harsh reality of living under occupation: displacement, exile, memory, violence, identity, loss and home"¹.

The traumatic events of Al Nakba, the deportation of hundred thousands of Palestinians, the destruction of the landscape, the oppression Palestinians has faced, and many other political aspects the nation experienced, are all exhibited in visual arts. However, due to the huge number of works created to depict certain war events in Palestine, I choose only few that best exemplify this issue rather than presenting them all. Selecting these artworks is sufficient to reveal how war events were embodied in art.

Therefore, in what follows, I reveal how conflicts were manifested in art through analyzing the translation of specific war events discussed in the previous section. The conflict that led to the foundation of the state of Israel, known as Al Nakba, the subsequent Arab-Israeli wars and the ongoing tension and violence have exerted a profound influence on many artists in the region². I intend to reveal this influence in analyzing the embodiment of war events in arts.

Starting with the massive dislocation and defeat of 1948, referred to as Al Nakba, this catastrophe reverberates it echoes in the Palestinian art scene. One of the most famous Palestinian artworks that displays this event is Emily Jacir's *Memorial to 418 Palestinian*

¹ Sloman, P. ed., 2009. *Op. Cit.*, P. 17.

² Eigner, S., Caussé, I. and Masters, C., 2010. *Art of the Middle East: modern and contemporary art of the Arab world and Iran*. Merrell. P. 138.

Villages Which Were Destroyed, Depopulated and Occupied by Israel in 1948. Jacir is a Palestinian artist and filmmaker who lives and works between Ramallah, Palestine, and New York, USA. She is primarily concerned with “transformation, questions of translation, resistance and silenced historical narratives”¹. Her following artwork is an installation displaying a life-size refugee camp with its walls embroidered by the names of the 418 villages that were destroyed, depopulated and occupied by Israel during Al Nakba. The title Jacir gave her work explains it all; it is created to commemorate the destruction of these villages and the deportation of Palestinians. Moreover, this artwork is supposed to raise awareness about Al Nakba, urging people to realize the graveness of the occupation and sympathize with the Palestinian cause.

Among the villages destroyed and depopulated by the Israeli invasion in 1948 is *Deir*

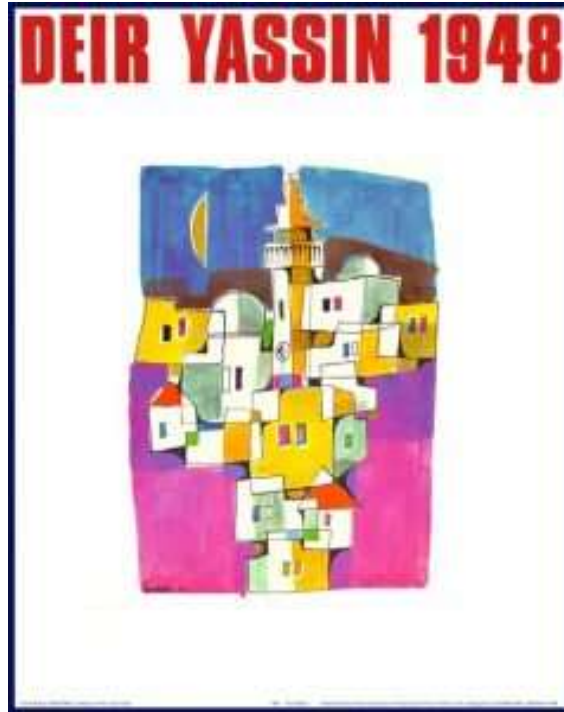


Emily Jacir, 2001, *Memorial to 418 Palestinian Villages Which Were Destroyed, Depopulated and Occupied by Israel in 1948, Refugee tent, embroidery thread.*

Yassin. Palestinian artist Kamal Boullata whose work explores the Palestinian identity and

¹ Edge of Arabia., (2019). *Emily Jacir*. [Viewed 29 January 2019]. Available from: <http://edgeofarabia.com/artists/emily-jacir>

the conditions of exile commemorated this village in his work below titled *Deir Yassin 1948* referring to the date of its occupation.



Kamal Boullata, 1968. *Deir Yassin 1948*. 42.8 x 57.8 cm. From the Palestine Poster Project Archives.

Lydda, the home town of renowned Palestinian artist Ismael Shammout, is yet another occupied and depopulated village by Israel in 1948, and the artist himself “with his family were amongst 25,000 residents of Lydda expelled from their homes”¹. The artist represented Al Nakba from his own experience in his work *Thirst on the Road from Lydda to Ramleh* (sometimes referred to with the title *The Road to Nowhere*).

¹ El-Zabri, H., (2006). Ismail Shammout (1930-2006) Artist, Activist, Legend. *If Americans Knew* [online]. [Viewed 4/5/2019] Available from: https://ifamericansknew.org/cur_sit/shammout.html



Ismail Shammout, 1998. *Thirst on the road from Lydda to Ramleh*, Oil on Canvas, 160x 200cm.

In a great number of artworks, Shammout exhibited the Palestinian tragedy, and the presented work is not the only one depicting Al Nakba specifically. His works *Beginning of the Tragedy* and *A Sip of Water* are also direct displays of this catastrophe. Their titles alone elucidate his intention, leaving no room for misinterpretations. *Beginning of the Tragedy* represents the first stages of exile, when Palestinians were expelled from their houses, while the second one reveals the difficulties experienced during their journey, featuring an exhausted woman sitting on the floor, unable to move forward and drinking water from a container while children surround her waiting for their turn for a sip. The three paintings visualize the distress and hardship experienced by Palestinians as a result of Al Nakba. They exhibit barefoot, weary refugees, dressed in rags and carrying their possessions on their backs as they move through their desperate journey. The artist depicts

their despair and loss through their gestures and symptoms of suffering on their faces, while using expressive brush strokes in a gloomy atmosphere.



Ismail Shammout, 1953, Beginning of the Tragedy, Oil on canvas, 48 × 68 cm, Private Collection Shammout Family.



Ismail Shammout, 1953, A Sip of Water, Oil on canvas, 45 x 60 cm, Private Collection Shammout Family.

Moreover, Ismael Shammout depicted the Palestinian Plight from its beginning and through its many stages in a series of paintings called *The Exodus and the Odyssey*. This series is made up of nineteen wall murals illustrating and documenting Al Nakba of 1948 and what followed it, revealing the journey Palestinians were forced to face. However, this series is analyzed later in this book due to its great worth as an historical documentation of the Palestinian tragedy.

Palestinian artist Adnan Yehya was born in exile and has been living with his family in a refugee camp in Jordan¹. Yehya represented the catastrophe utilizing yet another expressionist approach in his artwork *1948*. Calling it simply *1948*, which is the date of Al Nakba, is sufficient to comprehend the theme since it became widely associated with the Palestinian catastrophe. The work expresses the tragedy of Palestine. It shows a wounded man coming out of a grave and holding a dead child, and on the tombstone the word Palestine and the date 1948 are inscribed in Latin and Arabic fonts. The painting offers an

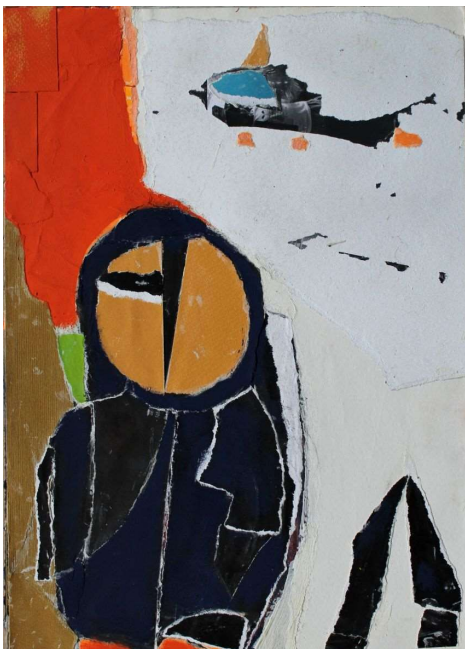


Adnan Yehya, *1948*, Oil on canvas, 204 x 204 cm, 2000.

¹ Station Museum of Contemporary Art. *Adnan Yehya*. [Viewed 29 December 2019]. Available from: http://stationmuseum.com/?page_id=2409

implication of the death of Palestine, but the image of the man coming out of the grave implies the resistance of Palestinians despite all the hardships.

Palestinian artist Mohammad Joha was born in Ghaza, Palestine, and now lives in Italy. His work adopts an expressive style and explores “the questions and conditions of childhood and the loss of innocence and freedom experienced by generations of children in Palestine”². Joha displays Al Nakba in two collage works titled *Al Nakba 1* and *Al Nakba 2*. In the former he depicts a fragmented figure of a Palestinian woman and above her a military jet, referring to the Israeli air force. While in the other work, Joha depicts a Palestinian family, a father, mother and their child, leaving their land. Despite its almost abstract nature, upon contemplating this work, one can neither ignore the expressions of suffering depicted on the faces of the family members, nor the child’s hands’ gesture reaching for his father. In both artworks Joha was able to depict the impact of the catastrophe on Palestinians by representing these cases.



Mohammad Joha, *Al Nakba 1*, 2007, Collage on paper, 20x30 cm.



Mohammad Joha, *Al Nakba 2*, 2007, Collage on paper, 20x30 cm.

² Art Scoops., (2019). *Mohammed Joha*. [Viewed 29 December 2019]. Available from: <https://artscoops.com/artist-details/joha-mohammed>

A different artistic approach in depicting the Israeli occupation is John Halaka's work revealing the occupation of Palestine. In his work *Mapping Repression*, Halaka drew the original map of Palestine illustrating in black scribbles the current restricted Palestinian presence in their homeland as a result of their catastrophe. He exhibits the occupation in depicting the shrinking map of Palestine and the deduced number of Palestinians currently present there.



John Halaka, 2006, *Mapping Repression #1*, 33 x 24 cm, Ink on Map of Palestine

In a rather conceptual approach Palestinian-American artist Mary Tuma, embodied the occupation of Palestine in her installation, *Homes for the Disembodied*. Her work is composed of five slender black dresses, she herself has woven of translucent silk, suspended from high above the floor to, as stated by her, “symbolize the interconnectedness [of Palestinian life]”. She continues “providing the spirits [of deceased Palestinians] with a space to



Mary Tuma. 2000, *Homes for the Disembodied*, 50 continuous yards of silk, 33x63.5cm.

dwelling³. Her work is a sort of memorial to those deceased Palestinians who have no homeland due to the occupation.

Another approach featuring the Palestinian catastrophe but in a rather different manner than the ones presented is visual artist Hazem Harb's work. Harb, "always referring to his own Palestinian identity, takes a research-driven approach, [...] to create a physical representation of multi-faceted social issues. His collages examine the nuances and problems surrounding shifting borders, displacement and diaspora"⁴. He "explores architecture within the context of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Photos of Palestine from before 1948 are superimposed with the Bauhaus-style architecture the Israelis brought to the landscape"⁵. Highlighting the transformation of his homeland, photographs of Palestine before El Nakba are juxtaposed with shapes referring to the Israeli architecture. In his *Power Does Not Defeat Memory 1*, Harb displays a cut-out photograph of Palestinian landscape prior to the catastrophe, slightly overlaid by a grey triangular cut-out, which,



Hazem Harb, 2018, *Power Does Not Defeat Memory #1*.

³ Eshelman, R., (2005) Review: "Made In Palestine" exhibit. The Electronic Intifada [online]. [viewed 2 May 2019]. Available from: <https://artforces.org/exhibitions/made-in-palestine/>

⁴ Harb, H. *Hazem Harb - The Website*. [Viewed 29 December 2019]. Available from: <https://hazemharb.com/bio.php>

⁵ Noor, N., (2015). Concreting the Past. *Global Citizen Global Citizen* [online], [viewed 3 May 2019]. Available from: <http://global-citizen.com/hazem-harb-artist/>

according to him, “is the color of concrete – of colonization”⁶. Harb depicted Al Nakba and its consequences in exhibiting the landscape transformation of his homeland imposed by Israeli architecture.

As seen, Al Nakba, which marks the beginning of the Palestinian plight, has been repeatedly expressed in visual arts. Diverse artistic approaches depict this catastrophe while many highlight different aspects of the same tragedy: the suffering of the people, the destruction of Palestinian villages, deportation of its inhabitants, and the transformation of Palestine. It is important to note that there are many other artworks depicting this exact event to the extent that discussing them alone would require a book on its own. However, since Al Nakba is not the only event addressed in this text, I have chosen to solely present the above artworks expressing different sides of this tragedy as well as diverse artistic representations of it, knowing that this is sufficient to prove my requested aim.

The Intifada, which is the uprising initiated in December 1987 to bring an end to the Israeli occupation and establish an independent Palestinian state (for more historical information, see the Israeli occupation of Palestine section 1.2.3), is another event depicted in visual arts. Intending to liberate Palestine, this event reveals the force of resistance of Palestinians against the occupier. Artists highlighted these aspects in their art as a statement against the invasion of their country as well as an encouragement of the uprising so that Palestinians gain victory and freedom. Moreover, since this event is also characterized by Palestinians’, especially children’s, use of stones to defend themselves, artists depicted this issue in their art.

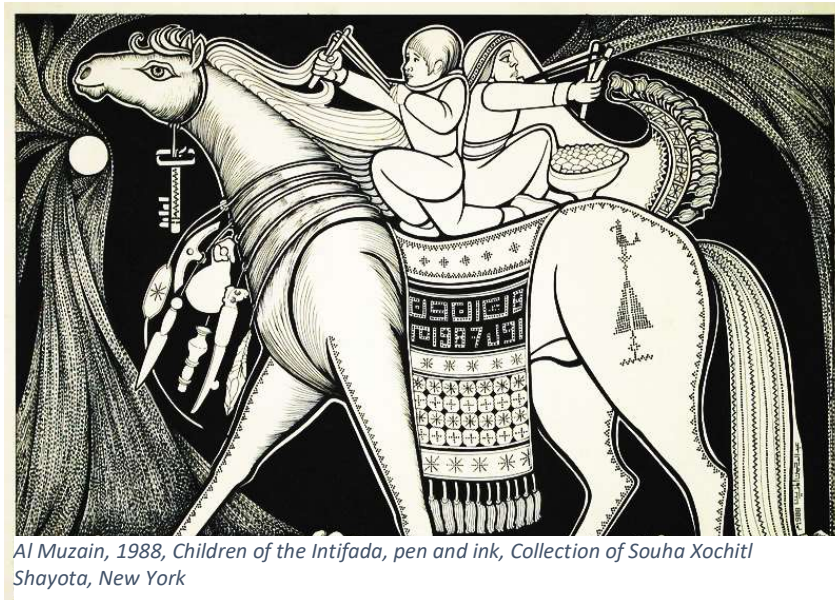
⁶ Gronlund, M., (2018). Artist Hazem Harb's excavation of the Palestinian past. *The National* [online]. [Viewed 3 May 2019]. Available from: <https://www.thenational.ae/arts-culture/art/artist-hazem-harb-s-excavation-of-the-palestinian-past-1.796353>

Ismael Shammout depicted the Intifada in a painting titled with this event, showing the resistance of Palestinians. In the middle foreground, in front of the protesting Palestinian crowds on the right, he depicted children throwing stones at the Israeli military on the left side of the painting. Above the military, we see three men, of whom two are shaking hands. This part expresses the Oslo Accords (September 1993), knowing that after the signing of this agreement, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat (referred to with the man on the right) and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin (the man on the left) shook hands for the first time, in the presence of U S President Bill Clinton (in the center). Opposite to this, we see people holding the Palestinian flag as if the artist was acknowledging the importance of the uprising to attain the Palestinian aspiration.



Ismael Shammout, 2000, Intifada, Oil on canvas, 165 x 200 cm.

Another artist expressing his views about the importance of the Intifada in his art is Abed Al Rahman Al Muzain. Al Muzain was politically involved in directing the Palestinian revolution forces, as well as in the army forces of the Palestine Liberation Organization⁷. In his artworks, *Children of the Intifada* and *Intifada: Against Fascism*, the artist represented the uprising in displaying images of children throwing stones against the occupier. In *Children of the Intifada*, Al Muzain displays the image of two children on the back of a horse throwing stones with a slingshot, while the horse's back is covered with a caparison with the date of the Intifada, December 9, 1987, inscribed in Arabic font. The horse is also carrying weapons, such as daggers and knives, and the key, which refers to the promise of return of Palestinians to their homeland (the key symbol is profoundly discussed later in this book). The artist's intention is clearly suggested, stressing the importance of the uprising to defeat the occupier and return to the homeland. In the other work, *Intifada: Against Fascism*, Al Muzain depicts the image of a boy, wearing traditional Palestinian outfit, destroying a military helmet of the occupier with a rock. Moreover, as



⁷ Ektab LTD., (2015). *Dr. Abed Al Rahman Al Muzain*. [Viewed on 29 December 2019]. Available from: <http://www.ektab.com/%D8%AF%D8%B9%D8%A8%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B1%D8%AD%D9%85%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B2%D9%8A%D9%86/>

the title suggests, the artist described the boy's action as an intifada or uprising against *Fascism*, which is referred to the Israeli occupier.



Al Muzain, 1988, *Intifada: Against Fascism*, pen and ink.

Renowned Palestinian artist Laila Shawa also responded to the uprising in her art. One of her best-known works, *Walls of Gaza* series, is based on vivid photographs of graffiti, which was a medium of self-expression for Palestinians during the First Intifada. From this



Laila Shawa, 1992, *Target*, From the *Walls of Gaza* series 1, Silkscreen on canvas, 95x150cm, Private collection, London.

series, her work *Target* exhibits the photographic image of a child against a red colored circle, such as a gun target, on a wall of Gaza painted with graffiti, which she had photographed. This work speaks about the killing of children by Israeli forces during the Intifada.

Most of Laila Shawa's art is a reflection of the tragic situation and events in Palestine. She has written: "I believe that one of the roles of contemporary artists is to record the signs of their times"⁸. And knowing the circumstances in her country, she has played her role as an artist, according to her belief, to record the turmoil of her times. After the first *Walls of Gaza* series, Shawa produced *Walls of Gaza* series 2 and 3, displaying the conflicts in Palestine.

Following the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, Shawa created the artwork *Boy soldiers* as a reflection of her disappointment concerning the agreement which, as she saw, made no difference to the lives of children in Gaza⁹. Expressing her discontent from the bitter circumstances children endure in Gaza, she depicts in this work the image of a boy holding



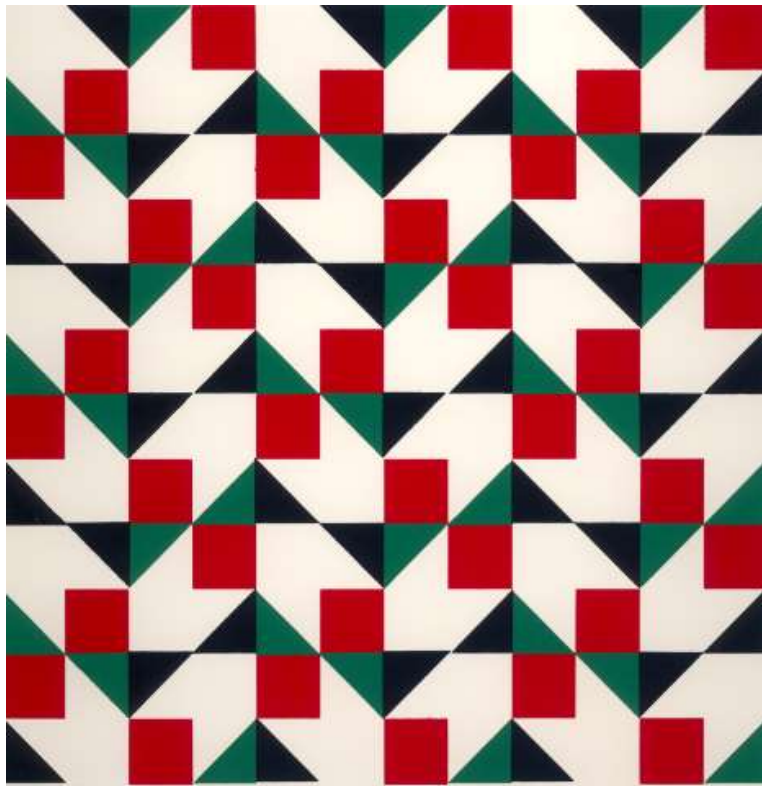
Laila Shawa, 2011, *Boy Soldiers*, Digital print on canvas, 100x140cm.

⁸ Eigner, S., Caussé, I. and Masters, C., 2010. *Op. Cit.* P. 140.

⁹ *Ibid.*

a toy which obviously seems like a gun. The innocence of this child is contrasted by the violent implications of the gun and by the wall painted graffiti in the background.

A different artistic approach reflecting the First Intifada is seen in Kamal Boullata's abstract art. "In 1987, at the start of the uprising, some children carrying the Palestinian flag were killed by Israeli sharpshooters. Boullata's response was to produce a series of compositions that referred to the flag's unmistakable shapes and colors"¹⁰.



Kamal Boullata, Homage to the Flag 2, 1990, Silkscreen on paper, 18.5x18.5cm, Andre Bullata collection, London.

During the first Intifada, Palestinian artist Suleiman Mansour and many others boycotted Israeli goods, thus avoided Israeli art materials and began using only natural, locally found materials such as coffee, henna, mud, and clay¹¹. Among the most-recognized and

¹⁰ Idem., P. 142.

¹¹ Suleiman Mansour. *Selections* [online]. [Viewed on 19/8/2019]. From: <https://selectionsarts.com/portfolio-posts/suleiman-mansour/>

distinguished Palestinian artists, Mansour who is “now regarded as a pivotal cultural leader in Palestine”¹². His work titled *Graffiti* is one of the many works he did using mud and other raw materials. This work recalls the graffiti that covered the walls of Gaza and the West Bank during that time. Not only the work reflects the Intifada and the Palestinian struggle, so does the act of producing it while boycotting Israeli art materials. By doing so, Mansour made a statement of resistance and encouragement to avoid the consumption of the occupier’s goods.



Suleiman Mansour, 1990, Graffiti, Mud on wood 118 X 80cm.

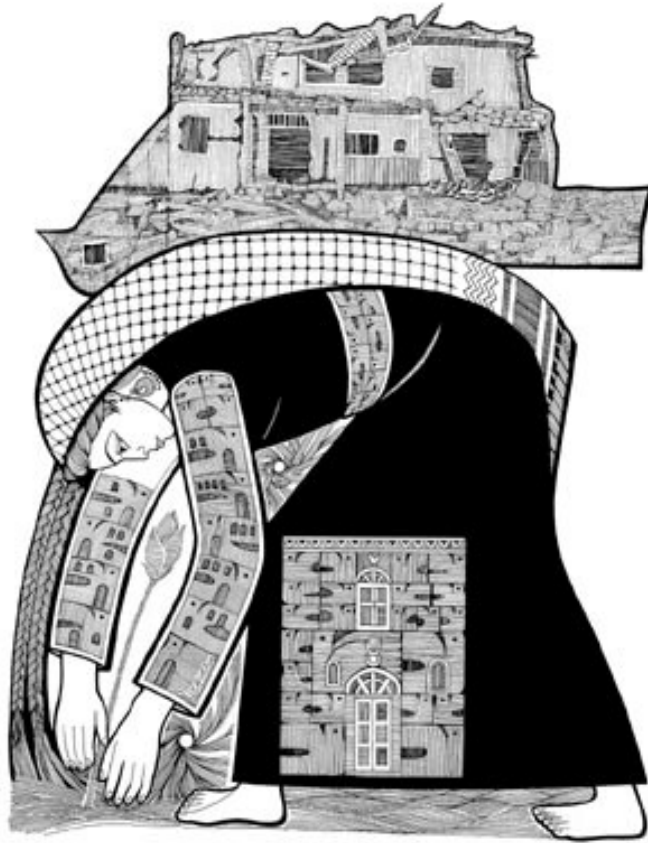
As many other war events in Palestine, the First Intifada has been repeatedly expressed in art. However, I settle for presenting few artworks that are sufficient in exemplifying the case, and move forward to present the depiction of other conflicts in art.

¹² Barjeel Art Foundation., (2019). *Suleiman Mansour*. [Viewed 29 December 2019]. Available from: <https://www.barjeelartfoundation.org/artist/palestine/suleiman-mansour/>

Many Palestinian artists have dedicated their careers to visualize the struggle of their people. As seen in this section, there are abundant number of artworks that depict historical events in Palestine and serve as witnesses to the horrors experienced. Nonetheless, it is important to note that not only major historical events are expressed in art, but almost each conflict experienced is depicted. Knowing that unrest is an everyday experience in Palestine, artists have utilized their art to transmit these experiences. Palestinians' oppression, their waiting at checkpoints, their inability to move freely in their country, the separation wall which separates Palestinians from their relatives, the arrest of political activists, occasional raiding and many other aspects of living under occupation are expressed in Palestinian art.

In April 2002, the Israeli army bombarded and assaulted Jenin refugee camp for more than ten days and sent troops into the heart of six major cities in the occupied West Bank and surrounding towns and refugee camps that were ostensibly under Palestinian Authority control. This brutal attack on Jenin camp is known as Jenin refugee camp massacre and was also expressed in visual arts.

Abdel Rahman al-Muzain, inspired by the Jenin refugee camp massacre produced a series of drawings titled *Jenin Series*. The series is constituted of pen and ink drawings of the destruction of the city of Jenin reflecting the tragedy of the massacre. In the following drawing, Al Muzain depicts the image of a Palestinian woman in her traditional dress carrying the destroyed camp on her back. The woman is displayed as the resistant icon who endures the struggles of Palestinians.



Al Muzain, 2002, from the series: Jenin, ink on paper, 64x 50cm.

Since 2002, during the Second Intifada, the Israeli government has built a partition wall that winds deep into Palestinian territory, claiming the barrier would keep Palestinian suicide bombers from striking Israeli citizens. Although considered a violation of international law, by building the wall and increasing settlement expansion, Israel retained control over important Palestinian economic areas, agricultural grounds and natural resources¹³. This barrier, an apartheid wall, along with many military checkpoints constructed by the Israeli government obstruct the mobility of Palestinians in their country and expose them to more humiliation and suffering. Artists expressed these events of discontent and their own experiences in crossing the mentioned barriers.

¹³ Global Policy Forum., (2015). *Land and Settlement Issues*. [Viewed on 10 May 2019]. Available from: <https://www.globalpolicy.org/security-council/index-of-countries-on-the-security-council-agenda/israel-palestine-and-the-occupied-territories/land-and-settlement-issues.html>

Palestinians are not allowed to move freely in their country; they are always stopped and sometimes harassed and detained at Israeli military checkpoints. Their painful experiences provide the subject of Emily Jacir's video, *Crossing Surda*. About her own experience, the artist says that she was simply walking without intending to do an art piece, because she walks across that checkpoint every day to get to Birzeit University from her home. She wanted to record it for herself but when she was filming Israeli soldiers saw her. They held her at gunpoint for three hours, they confiscated the tape and threw her passport in the mud. After that she went home and intended to record it again. So she cut a hole in her bag and filmed her daily commute to work for eight days¹⁴. As a result, *Crossing Surda* was created as a response to Jacir's horrible experience and the injustice practiced by Israeli soldiers.



Emily Jacir, 2002, *Crossing Surda*, Video.

The interrupted mobility and violation Palestinians endure due to Israeli military checkpoints are also experienced by the artist Suleiman Mansour and depicted in his work.

¹⁴ Jacir, E., Rollig, S. and Rückert, G., 2004. *Belongings: Arbeiten/works 1998-2003*. Folio Verlag. P. 18.

The artist has to circumnavigate the Partition Wall, crossing back and forth through the Qalandia checkpoint, the checkpoint that separates Ramallah from Jerusalem, in order to reach his studio. His daily experience, which is also endured by all Palestinians who wait



Suleiman Mansour, 2009, *At the Wall*, 2009, oil on canvas, 117 x 117 cm. Artist's collection.

at Israeli checkpoints, is “characterized by the fact that one has no control over the loss of time, or one’s movement, often finds one drifting into dream space [...creating an] overwhelming sense of disconnectedness, combined with the extreme confinement that one experiences in that situation”¹⁵. This experience is addressed in Mansour’s works *At the Wall* and *Between the Wall Pieces*. Both paintings are created in black and white to intensify the melancholic feeling of confinement, waiting and timelessness. Consumed by waiting, some of the figures become part of the partition wall’s concrete, thus intensifying the feeling of immobility and helplessness Palestinians feel undergoing these unpleasant experiences.

¹⁵ Sherwell, T., (2011), Jerusalem: City of Dreams. *Jerusalem Quarterly* [online]. (49), 43-53. P. 51. [Viewed 9 May 2019] Available from https://www.palestine-studies.org/sites/default/files/jq-articles/49_Jerusalem_2.pdf

Another artwork in which “Mansour expresses the confinement and dehumanization experienced by Palestinians inside the checkpoint terminals, behind the electronic gates and turnstiles”¹⁶, is *Crossing*. The artist depicts the way in which Palestinians are cued and the violation they suffer to simply cross from one place to another. The setting of the painting is gloomy with figures closely packed together waiting to pass through, the features of the figures are almost identical deprived from their individuality and becoming similar to merchandise waiting to be tested.



Suleiman Mansour, 2009, *Crossing*, Oil on canvas, 140 x 100 cm.

¹⁶ *Idem.*, P. 52.

Palestinian artist Rula Halawani also captured the checkpoints through her camera lens in her work titled *Intimicy*. This work is a series of photographs that were taken at the Qalandia checkpoint depicting the unpleasant experience Palestinians endure. About this work Halawani says that “it captures the experience of the checkpoint which has become a hallmark of the current Israeli occupation. [...] One of the distinctive characteristics of the Israeli occupation is its highly personalized quality and the particular way in which it invades and penetrates the private space of individuals”. She continues that at the checkpoints, “there are no privileges, everyone waits in line, and is reduced to an ID number, and everyone is searched and questioned. It is these qualities and aspects that are conveyed in my photographs, in particular the repetitive inspections of papers and personal belongings”¹⁷.



Rula Halawani, 2004, *Intimicy*. Photo series of the Qalandia checkpoint.

¹⁷ Halawani, R., (2006). *Intimicy*: photo series of the Qalandia checkpoint between Ramallah and Jerusalem, *Nafas Art Magazine* [online]. [Viewed on 10 May 2018. Available from <https://universes.art/en/nafas/articles/2006/rula-halawani/>]

Another work for artist Rula Halawani, *Negative Incursion*, records the destruction undergone when Israeli tanks ravaged parts of Ramallah. She recorded acts of brutality as Israeli soldiers rampaged through the streets of the city. Her images are printed in the negative, forcing viewers to pay close attention to the devastation she captured on film¹⁸. Halawani's photographs speak about the Israeli occupation of Palestine highlighting the experiences and violation Palestinians encounter.



Rula Halawani, 2002 From the series: *Negative Incursion*, B/W negative print, 34 3/8" x 48".

These are only few of the many artworks that address calamities and war events in Palestine. However, I have chosen to present them to exemplify how certain historical events of the conflict are visualized in Palestinian art. As seen, these artworks focus on telling aspects of the great calamity which has befallen the Palestinian people; Al Nakba,

¹⁸ Hanley, D. C., (2003). "Made in Palestine": A Stirring Art Exhibit Rocks Houston and Hits the Road. *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* [online]. 32-33 [Viewed on 2 May 2019]. Available from <https://www.wrmea.org/003-november/made-in-palestine-a-stirring-art-exhibit-rocks-houston-and-hits-the-road.html>

events of destruction of the villages, the Intifada, forced relocation of the inhabitants into refugee camps, massacres in Palestinian villages, Israeli incursions, the apartheid wall and waiting at military checkpoints. The “hardship [of Palestinian people] during periods of violence has been recorded and some memorable artistic images [...] are among the most direct responses to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict”¹⁹. As a result, upon presenting these artworks we notice the direct relationship between war and art in Palestine, making art a platform to exhibit and expose events of turmoil.

2.2.2. Depicting war events in Lebanon during the civil war and afterwards

Many discussions about contemporary Lebanese art are fraught with questions about the Civil War and the ongoing conflicts in Lebanon. Although not every Lebanese artist handled the theme of war in his/her art, many of them did. One might feel confused concerning the fact that this theme still occupies a great deal of artistic productions although the civil war ended in 1990. Being a Lebanese myself who had lived the war, or to the least stages of it, the most precise expression I can think of concerning this is Pink Floyd’s words: “The flames are all long gone, but the pain lingers on” in the song *Goodbye Blue Sky*. In Beirut, one still sees the war-torn buildings that have remained standing there since the war. People still go to visit relatives or friends and see photos of their deceased or kidnapped during the war hanging on the walls or placed on a sideways table. Moreover, in Lebanon, not only historical facts are distorted but also memories of the war are contrasting. Imprecise historical documentations and biased opinions of people belonging to different political parties still until today present their own distorted version of the wars. The inability to provide a unanimous true version of the war’s history in Lebanon is yet another phenomenon that inspired the production of various artworks. Moreover, there exists a

¹⁹ Eigner, S., Caussé, I. and Masters, C., 2010. *Op. Cit.*, P. 139.

general amnesia among Lebanese concerning the civil war, since after it ended there were no reconciliations or confrontations of what happened; it ended as if nothing had happened during the fifteen years of suffering. This phenomenon of Lebanese amnesia is also the topic of a great number of artworks in contemporary Lebanese art.

The persistence presence of the shadow of the civil war in the country and the fact that many Lebanese artists still revisit this subject in their art may be traced back to many reasons, but the most accountable ones to explain these phenomena are the following. First, although the civil war is over for more than twenty-five years, political turmoil and conflicts have been frequent in the country. Second, despite the construction of the country, there are still war-torn buildings in Beirut. Third, there has been no reconciliation after the war and most war criminals were not prosecuted, and militia men, some of whom had committed massacres, are now major political figures in Lebanon. This goes back to the Amnesty Law issued at the end of the war in 1990 granting any former members of militias exemption from criminal prosecution except those involved in political assassinations. And this law contributed to the present amnesia among Lebanese, which is the fourth reason. Fifth, Lebanese are not able to agree on a specific history or narrative of what happened during the war. Sixth, still nothing is known about the whereabouts of the kidnapped during the war. Last, nothing of what happened was confronted in order to be solved, instead many aimed for this history to be buried. Renowned political and military personnel in the country, perhaps feeling ashamed of what was done and hoping to maintain their prestigious social ranks, assumed that such a prolonged violent war can be forgotten as if it can be undone and all its consequences can disappear overnight. For all the mentioned reasons we sense that many Lebanese, especially the politicians, avoid any narrative that triggers the subject of the civil war and particularly the events and violence that took place. While some want to forget what happened and the violence they endured, others believe

that forgetting is not the solution, but rather confronting what happened in order to be a lesson to avoid future conflicts.

An important phenomenon inspected in analyzing Lebanese art displaying the civil war or its consequences, is that most artworks handling this theme were accomplished years after the war ended and not during the long fifteen years of its term. “The Lebanese Civil War [...] dealt a severe blow to one of the most flourishing art movements in the Arab World”²⁰. The whole country, being a small one of 10,452 km², was under attack. “Cultural and artistic activity suffered. Foreign cultural centers and commercial galleries closed down and universities held classes occasionally, depending on the extent of the fighting and violence”²¹. Therefore, many artists who remained in the country were unable to work as they did before the crisis. “A significant number of gifted artists left the country to live abroad, mostly in Europe and the United States. Those who remained behind had to make the difficult choice between safeguarding their artistic standards, or giving them to the predominant vulgar taste in order to sell their works and make a living”²². During the war we find only few artists, especially those who lived abroad such as Lebanese artist Aref El Rayyes, who produced art reflecting incidents they heard about in the news. On the other hand, many of whom lived in Lebanon during that time found in art the refuge to survive their present crisis instead of displaying it in their work, although some had produced at least a work to reflect the war in general. However, excluding Aref El Rayess, artists who were committed to document the events of the civil war (1975-1990) during its active years, such as many Palestinian artists, are rare.

²⁰ Zuhur, S., ed., 2001. *Colors of Enchantment*. The American University in Cairo Press. P. 382.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

The major works produced to display the civil war are those of Lebanese artists who responded to its aftermath with works probing memory and history and questioning the consequences of the present amnesia without thriving on a direct post-traumatic approach. These artists have contributed to the shaping of a Post War Lebanese art scene and resorted to different media to express their concerns, going beyond the usual clichés of nostalgia or war.

Therefore, when it comes to art characteristic of Lebanon's civil war performed during its term, we do not confront a lot of work serving as an historical documentation of specific incidents. Unlike Palestinian art which serves as an historical documentation of events, most artworks that display the civil war in Lebanon provide a general depiction of it, or a memory, or perhaps a personal narrative. Most artworks handling the issue of the civil war in Lebanon were produced after the war ended and handled this theme as an analysis of the events and its effects, rather than documenting the incidents with historical precision and detailed facts. However, many conflicts after the civil war, such as the Israeli attack in July 2006, have been documented in details among Lebanese artists. I think this goes back to the fact that the country was divided during the civil war and artists who stayed were very traumatized by the events around them, some were politicized and others were neutral, but they all wanted it to stop. Therefore, being in such a delicate situation, when an artist displays a specific event with its horrors, he/she might unintentionally present preference to specific political party which automatically implies further divisions. Just as many historians were unable to document history from an objective point of view, I believe that artists were also unable to display specific incidents without revealing their political and sectarian affiliation. As a result, we see images of the war and its destruction and killings with mostly no reference to the specific incident per se. Moreover, the critical and dangerous situation of the country affected the production of art in general, which rendered

the depiction of specific events unlikely to happen. This is yet another reason why we see most artworks during the civil war depicting the general horrors of the war rather than presenting specific events. In the following, I present artworks produced during the civil war as well as others created afterwards and those inspired by other conflicts in the country.

Starting with the beginning of the civil war, or the bus incident of Ain El Remmaneh (for more details see section 2.1.2), Lebanese artist Jameel Molaeb depicted this event in his work, *Painting of the Bus of War*. He created this work in 1976, a year after the incident, revealing the horrors of the event. Molaeb referred to the violence of the event by displaying people screaming and dead bodies in the bus and on the road facing it, some are trying to leave the bus while others are hanging dead through the windows. Although the painting is figurative, the figures are simplified with no attention to details. Nonetheless, the artist didn't neglect showing some figures shouting, others spilling blood, and most importantly he displayed in details the bullet holes on the bus caused by the attack. The work was painted in black and white to further increase the horror of the incident and reflect the artist's mood during that period.



Jameel Molaeb, *Painting of the Bus of War*, ink on canvas, 1976.

Another incident of the Lebanese civil war displayed in art is Sabra and Shatila massacre, which took place in September 1982. This massacre has been commemorated by political posters, books and documentaries and was reflected in many works of art, including visual arts and literature. Of the most famous artworks reflecting this tragedy are created by Iraqi artist Dia Azzawi's. Azzawi depicted the massacre in prints he called *We are not seen but Corpses* and a mural titled *Sabra and Shatila Massacre*.



Dia Azzawi's, Sabra and Shatila prints, We are not seen but Corpses.



Dia Azzawi, Sabra and Shatila Massacre, 300 x 750 cm, Ink and wax crayon on paper mounted on canvas, Tate Collection

Palestinian artist Abdul Hay Mussalam Zarara has utilized his art to denounce the violent suppression of his homeland. His work below was created to commemorate Sabra and Shatilla massacre. It is a relief painting that depicts the violence of the massacre showing Israeli military killing the children of the camps. In the aftermath of this massacre, Mussalam and thirty-three Japanese artists staged an exhibition in Tokyo handling this incident.



Abed Mussalam, Sabra and Shatilla massacre.

Triggered by the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, during the year following the massacre of Sabra and Shatila, Mona Hatoum staged a performance in Ottawa titled *The Negotiating Table*¹. In the performance, Hatoum was blindfolded concealing her face, her body covered from head to toe with bandages drenched with blood and heaped with raw organs, and her whole body was constrained in a plastic bag. Her body looked like a motionless

¹ Boullata, K., 2009. *Op. Cit.*, P. 178.

corpse laying horizontally on a table flanked by three empty chairs. The room was dark and the only source of light was an interrogation lamp under which Hatoum's figure laid, augmenting the dramatic effect of the view. "This image was accompanied by the sound of news coverage of the Lebanon war interrupted by declarations of peace voiced by Western heads of state"¹. Hatoum's response to the catastrophe in Lebanon and her denunciation of the Israeli invasion and the Sabra and Shatila massacre was translated in this expressive performance. "Performed after the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, *The Negotiating Table* documents Hatoum's ability to provoke both an intellectual and sensory response in the viewer and, more importantly, one that engages the particular socio-political circumstances within a broader discourse on violence and oppression"².



Mona Hatoum, 1982. *The Negotiating Table*. Art Performance.

¹ *Ibid.*

² Amirsadeghi, H., Mikdadi, S. and Shabout, N. eds, 2009. *Op. Cit.*, P. 152.

Another work by Hatoum addressing the Israeli invasion is *Under Siege*, which is one of her earliest performances held in London. Hatoum performed *Under Siege* a week before the Israeli Invasion and the siege of Beirut, but, according to Hatoum's own words, "it was almost like a premonition"¹. Before the date of her performance, Hatoum's city of birth, Beirut, was besieged, "cutting off the supply of electricity and water from Beirut's population, the Israeli army, air force and navy proceeded to bombard the city incessantly"². The siege of Beirut inspired this work highlighting the artist's feeling of inability to change the current situation. In *Under Siege*, Hatoum is locked up unable to stand still, similar to the people in Lebanon living locked under the siege, unable to move freely. Her naked body is covered with clay and imprisoned in a transparent container. For seven consecutive hours, she tried and struggled to stand up but slipped and fell repeatedly, during which the viewer could watch inside the container as she made hopeless attempts to hold herself and stand up. As the day wore on, the container's walls grew dirty, smeared



Mona Hatoum, 1982, *Under Siege*. Art Performance.

¹ Hatoum, M., Archer, M., Brett, G. and de Zegher, M.C., 1997. *Mona Hatoum*. Museum of Contemporary Art. P.13.

² Boullata, K., 2009. *Op. Cit.*, P. 177.

with marks left by her muddy hands, face and body. At the same time, the viewer could hear revolutionary songs in Arabic, French and English, and news reports from the Middle East played throughout the gallery. Despite the fact that Hatoum's performances discussed here were inspired by war events, they are not explicit translations of the incidents, but rather emotional expressions of their effect on her and on the people living the situation.

Another incident during the civil war translated in art happened in April 1983 with a suicide bomb in the US Embassy in Beirut killing 63 people. Lebanese Artist Mohammad El Rawwas, whose friend Lily Issa died during the explosion, translated this event in his

artwork *The April the Lilies Died*. Inspired by the death of his friend, he named his painting after her paying homage to her memory and documenting the incident. In the artwork, "etchings and stencil drawings depicting destruction during 1983 include the bombed-out barracks where, in October of that year, 241 Americans who were part of a multinational peacekeeping force were killed"¹. The



Mohammad El Rawwas, 1983. *The April the Lilies Died*. Etching, relief and stencil. 68 x 49 cm. Ed.5/7

¹ Healy, P., (2009). Face of War Pervades New Beirut Art Center. *The New York Times* [online]. [Viewed 10 May 2019]. Available from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/07/arts/design/07center.html>

artist created this artwork although he didn't intend to handle the theme of the civil war before that. He said: "I deliberately ignored and avoided working on the theme of war until 1983, when the war had its severe toll on me through the death of a very close friend"¹. El Rawwas associated visual elements from various localities and themes, including a portrait of Lily, a view of the blasted embassy with a circle placed on the remains of her car, an obituary of the victims and video tapes. "The "Unknown" tag relates to the morgue where Lily's unidentified body was taken and the artist went to confirm her identity"². In addition, he displayed the American flag, referring to the American Embassy, and two human hearts. El Rawwas used a direct approach to translate the incident and its impact on him, in losing his close friend, and on the country, in displaying the destruction, the American flag and the death toll.

Among the artworks that were created during the war, depicting its effects in general and some specific incidents, are Aref El Rayyes's drawings and etchings titled *Road to Peace*. El Rayyes created these artworks when he was in Algeria during the first years of the war. This work is made up of thirty-seven etchings created from charcoal drawings interpreting events of the Lebanese Civil War and each drawing was signed, dated and given an individual title in Arabic. Some of the drawings indicate specific incidents such as the massacres of Damour and Karantina, others refer to the horrors of the civil war in general, of which he had occasionally given ironic titles, and in some he presented his views concerning the conflict.

El Rayyes's following drawing titled *Karantina* refers to the massacre of January 18, 1976, during which Al Kataeb attacked the Karantina neighborhood in Beirut, which was

¹ *Ibid.*

² Saradar Collection (2019). Mohammad El Rawwas. [Viewed 20 May 2019] Available from: <http://www.saradarcollection.com/saradar-collection/english/collection-details?collid=19>

protected by the PLO, killing around 1500 people. The artist displayed the destruction and the deaths showing the graveness of the massacre.



Aref El Rayyes, 1976. *Karantina* from the series *Road to Peace*.

In response to the Karantina massacre, the PLO responded with the Damour massacre on January 20, 1976. El Rayyes had also depicted this event in his drawing called *Damour*. He displayed a burning church referring to the church that the PLO had destroyed and burned, and two militia men holding guns, one of them wearing a white shirt designed with the cedar tree referring to the flag of the Kataeb party, in addition to drawing the dead bodies and the destruction.

Another major massacre called Tal El Zaatar is exhibited in Rayyes's drawings. This massacre happened on August 12, 1976 when Al Kataeb, with the participation of Syrian forces, attacked the Palestinian camp of Tal El Zaatar resulting in an estimated number of 4,280 Lebanese and Palestinian casualties.



Aref El Rayyes, 1976. Al Damour from the series Road to Peace.



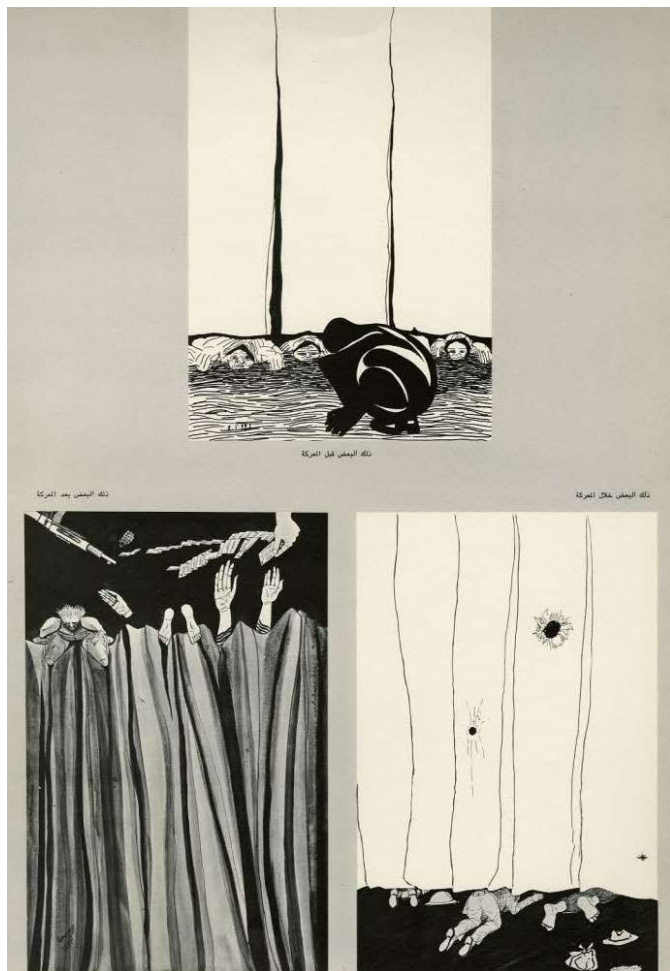
Aref El Rayyes, 1976. Tal El Zaatar from the series Road to Peace.

In the previous drawings Aref El Rayyes documented the massacres that took place in Damour, Karantina and Tal El Zaatar, revealing the violence and destruction. These are considered as depictions of specific events of the Lebanese civil war, whereas other drawings of the series show general scenes of the suffering.

As for the following three drawings, they display the artist's point of view concerning the war. He titled them *Some Before the Battle*, showing people taking shelter before the battle, *Some During the Battle*, showing people hiding, others dead and bullet holes breaching the shelter, and *Some After the Battle*, showing people with imputed limbs and hands raised to collect money and weapons distributed by an unknown body.

El Rayyes revealed this unknown body as the one that controls the battle from outside without jeopardizing its safety, it is the decision maker such as the political leaders who, in order to protect their own agendas, make people fight their battles.

Another important thing notable in these drawings is the appearance of the curtain in each of the three. We no longer see people taking refuge behind brick walls, such as before, but rather behind veils reminding us of theatre curtains. This essential observation, along with other



Aref El Rayyes, 1976. From the series Road to Peace.

drawings of the series, confirm the artist's view in considering the civil war in Lebanon similar to a stage performance where the only losers are ordinary people.

As mentioned, although Lebanese art is fraught with themes of the civil war, artworks that depict specific incidents during the conflict are rare, compared to the Palestinian art scene. There are works produced during the civil war in Lebanon generally depicting images of the suffering and destruction rather than being inspired by specific incident or displaying certain event. However, since this section interprets the exhibition of particular war events, I leave the analysis of those artworks for later. Moreover, knowing that massacres were continuous, especially in the first years of the war, displaying a scene of specific incident cannot be linked to it simply by interpretation, unless specified by the artist.

In the following I interpret those works concerned in depicting certain issues of the war but created after it had ended. It is generally considered that artworks handling the theme of the aftermath of the civil war are of greater importance than those produced during it. "In fact, contemporary Lebanese art has found wider recognition since the end of the civil war [...when many] Lebanese artists [...] returned to Beirut at the end of the war to spearhead a contemporary art movement that negotiates the realities of the war and its aftermath"¹.

Many of the artists during the civil war left the country, "then the promises of the Taif Accords of 1989 brought this generation back to Beirut during the early 1990s and a loose Association of friends and collaborators developed"². Those artists who came back during the 90s produced contemporary artworks handling the theme of war in an original unprecedented approach within the Lebanese art scene. Moreover, the issues of war they addressed dealt with the aftermath of the civil war, mostly in a conceptual way rather than direct depiction of events and destruction, with the exception of few. "The collaborative

¹ Amirsadeghi, H., Mikdadi, S. and Shabout, N., 2009. *Op. Cit.* P. 20.

² *Idem.*, P. 39.

relationships at the heart of post-war Beirut art during the 1990s thus coalesced around a series of projects that share a theoretical interest in the role of the visual image in the construction of historical knowledge”³.

Nada Sehnaoui is a Lebanese artist who lived her childhood in Lebanon during the civil war and has repeatedly handled the theme of the war in her art by addressing its aftermath. She emphasizes issues that analyze the effects of the war and presents her experience or point of view concerning specific incidents. In her work, *Haven't 15 Years of Hiding in the Toilets Been Enough?*, Sehnaoui highlights the issue of taking refuge during the battle. As the title reveals, she is acknowledging the act of hiding from the bombs and bullets in the toilets, which many Lebanese had done during that time since battlefields were inhabited areas. Moreover, the title suggests a moral meaning that what has been done is enough. In the installation, *Haven't 15 Years of Hiding in the Toilets Been Enough?* Sehnaoui placed six hundred toilet seats in vacant lots, in downtown Beirut, addressing a war experience she and other Lebanese had shared.



Nada Sehnaoui, 2008. *Haven't 15 Years of Hiding in the Toilets Been Enough?*, Beirut, 600 toilet seats. Courtesy of the artist.

³ *Idem.*, P. 40.

Another work, created by Sehnaoui, addressing a specific habit or action experienced during the war is *To Sweep*. In this installation she placed hundreds of brooms crowded together in the gallery space. Inspired by images of people sweeping up after a bombing, which was a usual thing seen during the war.



Nada Sehnaoui, *To Sweep*.

During the civil war in Lebanon many were kidnapped according to their religious and political affiliation, and even after the war had ended the fate of an estimated number of 18,000 Lebanese who went missing during the fifteen-year period is still unknown⁴. This issue has been presented in the Lebanese contemporary art scene through different artistic approaches.

Lebanese artist Lamia Joriege addressed the issue of the kidnapped Lebanese in her video *Here and Perhaps Elsewhere*. In the video, Joreige walks in Beirut through the neighborhood of what was called the Green Line which divided Beirut into east and west,

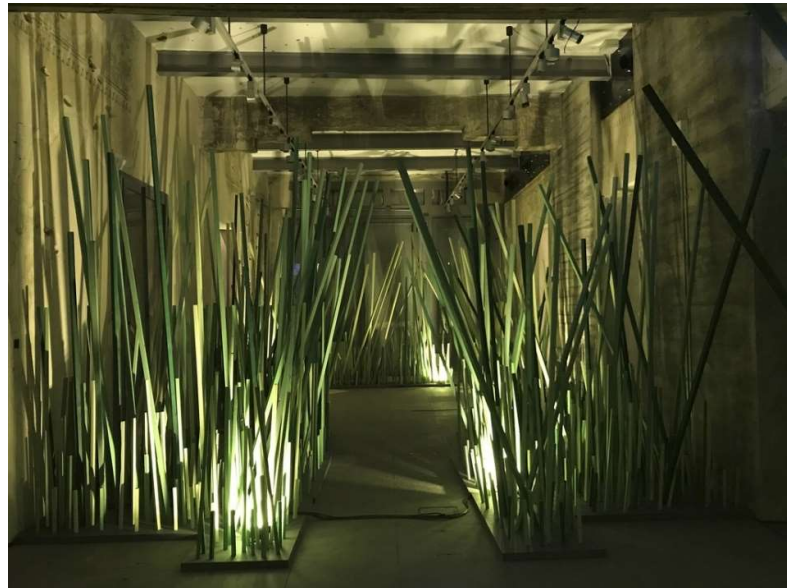
⁴ Elias, C., (2004). Artistic Responses to the Lebanese Wars. *Tate* [online]. [Viewed on 11 May 2019]. Available from <https://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/in-focus/on-three-posters-rabih-mroue/artistic-responses-to-the-lebanese-wars>

the first referring to the Christian part of the city while the latter refers to the Muslim sector. Knowing that many of the kidnappings took place along this line, Joreige is filmed approaching residents and asking each of them the same question: ‘Do you know anyone who was kidnapped from here during the war?’ Different responses were given to the artist; some talked about their own experience, others stated what they had heard during the war, while some refused to answer claiming that the artist was trying to open closed wounds. However, addressing this sensitive issue of the civil war serves in documenting specific incidents from diverse personal perspectives.

Another video that addresses the issue of the kidnapped during the civil war is Khalil Joreige and Joana Hadjithomas’s film *A Perfect Day*. This film presents fictitious characters and centers on the family of a kidnapped father during the war. It displays the suffering and hesitation of a wife who is lost in whether she assumes that her husband is already dead or considers the probability that he might appear again.

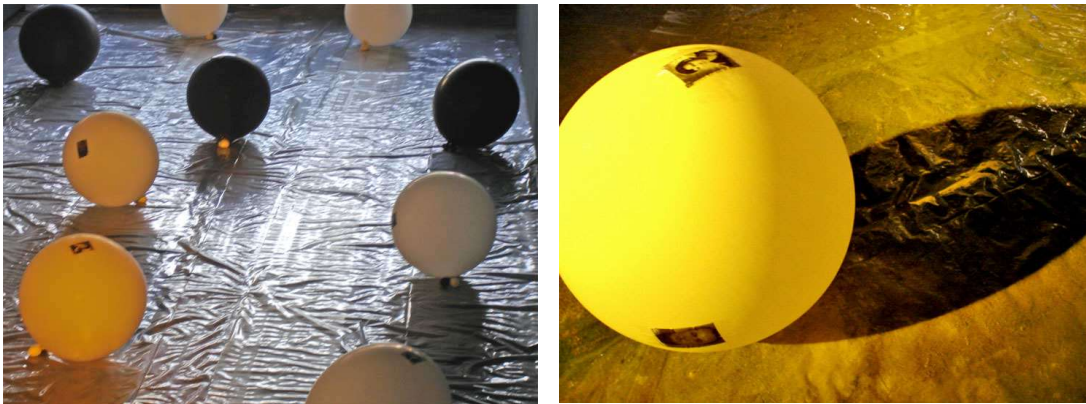
Inside an old building on the former Green Line in Beirut, Lebanese artist Zena Al Khalil commemorated the kidnapped. The artist placed seventeen thousand sticks, painted in

green, inside the war torn building whose walls are stained black by fire and riddled with bullet holes since the civil war. Each of the sticks represented one of the people that have disappeared during Lebanon’s civil war.



Zena Al Khalil. A 'forest' of memory and remembrance of the 17,000 people declared missing during the Lebanese civil war. Courtesy Zena Al Khalil.

Another installation handling the issue of the kidnapped during the civil war is Nada Sehnaoui's *Waynoun, Where Are They* (2006). Sehnaoui is a Lebanese visual artist "whose work, paintings, and installations deal with issues of war, personal memory, public amnesia, the writing of history, and the construction of identity"⁵. In this work shown below, she stuck three thousand names and four hundred photographs of the kidnapped on four hundred large black and white balloons.



Nada Sehnaoui, Waynoun? Where Are They?, Beirut, 2006 and Liège, 2007, 3000 names, 400 photographs, 400 large black and white balloons and text. Courtesy of the artist.

Ever since the war ended in 1990, there were no serious and sincere attempts by the Lebanese government to investigate the whereabouts of the kidnapped or, at least, to confirm if some of them are still alive. It is, as if after the war, Lebanese are supposed to continue their lives with what is left for them without discussing the past. But, of course, this is far from practicality, especially concerning the families and relatives of the kidnapped, many of whom still hold hopes of their return. At the end of the conflict in 1990, the "general amnesty was issued and the subject of the civil war has never been formally discussed. Students don't study the war's history because officials can't agree on which version of the war to include in textbooks. And despite appearing to have moved on,

⁵ Galerie Tanit. *Nada Sehnaoui*. [Viewed 30 December 2019]. Available from: <https://www.galerietanit.com/artist/sehnaoui>

Lebanon is still stuck in a cycle of dysfunction, corruption and social volatility”⁶. This, in addition to the fact that the history of the civil war was not documented properly, inflicted a sort of amnesia upon Lebanese society, which is yet another issue repeatedly visited in art characteristic of war in the Lebanese art scene. However, since this is a collective psychological phenomenon rather than a war incident, I discuss it in the historical dimension later in this book.

Another event represented in the Lebanese art scene is the Israeli occupation of South Lebanon.

Artists Walid Raad and Jayce Salloum produced in 1993 a documentary called *Up to the South* which dealt “with the complex situation in south Lebanon during the Israeli Occupation. It focused on the difficult living conditions, the histories of the inhabitants, and the political and economic background of the region”⁷. Both artists were trained abroad during the civil war in Lebanon and they “continued their examination of the South and captivity narratives in later individual projects”⁸.

Lebanese artist Akram Zaatari also pursued this theme in his art. Zaatari’s “work is largely based on collecting, studying and archiving the photographic history of the Arab World”⁹. In 1997, he completed his documentary video, *All is Well on the Border*, which presents narratives of resistance and the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon in a series of testimonies by Lebanese citizens who were detained during the occupation.

⁶ The Associated Press. (2017). Art exhibit in Lebanon takes on civil war’s old wounds. *Al Arabiya* [online]. [Viewed 2 May 2019]. Available from: <https://postwar.hausderkunst.de/en/artworks-artists/artworks/beginning-of-the-tragedy>

⁷ Oweis, F., 2008. *Encyclopedia of Arab American Artists*. Greenwood Press.

⁸ Amirsadeghi, H., Mikdadi, S. and Shabout, N., 2009. *Op. Cit.* P. 40.

⁹ Tate. *Akram Zaatari*. [Viewed 30 December 2019]. Available from: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/akram-zaatari-11598>

Living the Lebanese civil war, along with his old interest in photography, Akram Zaatari had photographed conflicts in Lebanon since he was very young. He had kept these photographs and used some of them in later artworks. Among these is his work, *Saida June 6, 1982* in which he displays the bombing of Lebanese landscape during the invasion.



Akram Zaatari, 2009, *Saida June 6, 1982*, Composite digital image, Lambda print, 92 x 190 cm.

The date of the Israeli attack is also displayed in another work for Zaatari's. In his work *March Fourteen Cedar Tree*, the date March 14, 1978, the date of the Israeli Invasion of south Lebanon, is displayed on a pack of cigarette.



Akram Zaatari, 2007, *March Fourteen. Cedar Tree*. C-print, 49 x 40 cm.

Another work, a film by Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige, *Khiam 2000 – 2007*, handles the theme of Israeli occupation of South Lebanon. While South Lebanon was still occupied, Hadjithomas and Joreige met six recently freed prisoners from the detention camp in Khiam to discuss their experience. In 2000, the camp of Khiam was liberated and

later, during the July 2006 war, it was totally destroyed. Eight years later, both artists met again with the same six prisoners to talk about the liberation and subsequent destruction of the camp.

There are many more works that handle the theme of the Israeli occupation, but knowing that my aim is revealing how war events are translated in art and not demonstrating all artworks that depict certain issue, I have presented few of the most renowned works to show different artistic approaches in handling this theme. While some of the works involve the articulation of real events, others present fictitious incidents and characters, albeit inspired by real events. An example of the latter is Walid Raad's project *The Atlas Group*. Raad's project is fiction but the presentation of incidents and characters appear real since they are depicted in a way similar to archiving real events.

A conflict which happened after the occupation and is displayed in the Lebanese art scene is the July 2006 war. The war is an Israeli military attack on Lebanon which lasted for thirty-three days and was repeatedly displayed in visual arts.

Mazen Kerbaj and Laure Ghorayeb's comics illustrate the July War in thirty-three drawings, which is the number of days of the Israeli attack. For thirty-three days Kerbaj and Ghorayeb depicted the bombing of Beirut in a sort of comic correspondence with the conflict documenting each day of it. Living in different parts of the city, the mother, Ghorayeb, and her son, Kerbaj, drew their different daily experiences then posted their pieces online.

In the following drawing, Ghorayeb (on the left side) wrote in Arabic *Qana first time 1996 and second time 2006*. The first date, 1996, refers to Qana massacre which happened in April 1996 and the second date, 2006, refers to the bombing of Qana which happened during July war, both committed by Israeli forces. Comparing Qana's bombing of July war to the massacre which happened ten years earlier, Ghorayeb wrote on her drawing the number of casualties and injured of whom were women and children.



Laure Ghorayeb and Mazen Kerbaj 2006. 33-Days. Laure Ghorayeb drawing on the left depicting the Qana massacre and Mazen Kerbaj on the right.

In addition, in 2018, the Faculty of Arts of the Lebanese University in Hadat, organized a students' exhibition commemorating the casualties of Qana massacre, called *Qana In Order Not to Forget*.

Artist Nada Sehnaoui responded to July War in her work *Rubble*. She photographed household items, such as toys, clothes, furniture, books and other things, she had found in the streets after the ceasefire in 2006. Highlighting the destruction of people's lives and their belongings caused by the war, she wrote with the installation *Rubble* a sentence that read: "Rubble is a meditation on the ongoing capacity of human beings to reduce other human beings' lives to rubble"¹⁰.



Nada Sehnaoui, 2006. *Rubble*. Installation of 400 photos and 300 stools. Courtesy of the artist.

Another photography work displaying July war is Ziad Antar's series *Products of War*, which takes its subject the detritus of the 2006 Israeli incursion into Lebanon¹¹. In this work, photographs of cans of vegetarian spread and tuna fish or a broken chair, left by the Israeli soldiers in the southern town of Ayta el Chaab are displayed. "Everyday objects are

¹⁰ Allsop, L., (2012). With Inside Outside: Nada Sehnaoui in conversation with Laura Allsop. Ibraaz [online]. [Viewed 23 May 2019]. Available from: <https://www.ibraaz.org/interviews/25>

¹¹ Amirsadeghi, H., Mikdadi, S. and Shabout, N., 2009. *Op. Cit.* P. 70.

transformed into artifacts of both war and its experience. The title *Products of War* thus assumes a double meaning, since the war produces the cans' literal and symbolic presences. War may be visually excluded from the photographs, yet it remains their true subject”¹².



Ziad Antar. 2006. From *Products of War* series. Ultrachrome inkjet prints.

The 2006 conflict is also displayed in Ziad Antar's twelve-minute video *Tank You*. In *Tank You* the viewer witnesses a conversation between a woman and Antar amid the panic of fuel shortages during the early days of the Israeli invasion on the coastal city of Sidon¹³.

Lebanese artist Khaled Ramadan had also produced a video work depicting July War. Unlike Antar's work, Ramadan's video is a conventional documentary called *Mapping the South* which recorded the damage caused by the conflict.

Lebanese artists Lamia Joreige and Rabih Mroue collaborated to create an installation project, *...And The Living Is Easy*, that documents the thirty-three days of Israeli attack on Lebanon during July 2006. In the project, Mroue wrote his diary in a little blue notebook and Joreige filmed her every day experience with a video camera, “each capturing, in their own way, their daily life and impressions. The work shows fragments of these two types of diaries assembled together day by day and is presented as 21 texts and 21 video sequences, each pair corresponding to a day”¹⁴.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Idem.*, P. 174.



Lamia Joreige and Rabih Mroue. 2007 *...And The Living Is Easy*.

Another approach in depicting the artist's experience during July War is artist Zena El Khalil's project. During the war, El Khalil immediately began to write her blog¹⁵ from her apartment in Beirut. For thirty-three days, she recorded her personal experience during the war and its impact on her and people around her. The blog received international attention and was publicized on the news.

Although events of the civil war were not widely displayed in specific during the war's term, its aftermath has repeatedly triggered the production of a huge number of artworks. Moreover, as if Lebanese artists acknowledged the scarce documentation of events in art during the civil war, we notice that there is an abundant amount of artworks depicting in details the conflicts that happened afterwards.

¹⁵ Al Khalil, Z., (2006). Beirut Update. *Environment pr - more damage* [online]. 28 July 2006. [Viewed 8 June 2019]. Available from: beirutupdate.blogspot.com

3.2.2. The depiction of incidents in Syria during the war

Since the beginning of the revolution and the war in Syria, artists and activists have generated a considerable mass of artworks and videos. These works capture the upheavals that Syria has been undergoing since 2011 and the multiple consequences of the war. Hundreds of thousands of works depicting the Syrian crisis have been spread internationally. Utilizing the social media as a primal platform for spreading these artworks, due to its prompt and wide diffusion among huge number of people, artists, protesters, activists and combatants were able to propagate the situation in Syria. Demonstrations, battles, political demands, scenes of funerals, protest actions, testimonies, declarations of soldiers, homage to martyrs, fighting, and many other experiences have been articulated through media. However, some of these were able to penetrate the international art scene while others remained available on social network.

The availability of social media during our present decade has rendered the live depiction of the Syrian war feasible. Artists and activists have been easily displaying their surroundings, war experiences and political views. Upon examining the contemporary art scene characteristic of the Syrian war, we notice a large number of Syrian artists' work takes the form of digital art and video production. This goes back to the fact that such works are easily transmitted on social media and, at the same time, can be quickly discarded if caught by the authorities. A practitioner of this kind of art is Syrian artist Sulafa Hijazi who was involved in the peaceful protest of the Syrian revolution, and was creating and publishing digital artworks that criticize the political and social oppression. Regarding this issue, Hijazi said: "Creating these illustrations in Syria was not easy. I knew that at any time the authorities could come to my house and demand to see what I was working on. However, it is safer doing digital art - you can hide the files on your computer and scrap

them easily if necessary”¹⁶. For similar reasons, many Syrian artists have produced digital works mirroring the horror and violence around them. In doing so, they were able to reveal their situation to a large number of people in a short period of time, while, to a certain extent, minimizing the risk of being captured by authorities. Therefore, “short videos and graphics have been the dominant media, reflecting the need for images that are easy to distribute and reproduce. Individual artists as well as collectives have been prominent in this new wave of critical artistic expression”¹⁷.

However, knowing the oppression imposed by Al-Assad, creating artworks supporting the revolution or showing the slightest dissent towards the regime has its consequences. Many artists have been detained and tortured by the government for focusing their talents to display the catastrophe around them. In 2012, Al Jazeera reported that a number of artists, filmmakers and actors were persecuted, arrested and even tortured by the state for dissent¹⁸. Among these is the Syrian renowned artist Youssef Abdelke who “was detained for a month for peaceful opposition to President Bashar Al-Assad’s embattled regime”¹⁹ and whose work is discussed later in this section. Determined to express their thoughts freely, many Syrian artists had to leave the country to survive and produce their art peacefully. Moreover, for their own safety, many of them invented fake names under which they publish or broadcast their work, thus minimizing the risk of being caught.

The oppression forced by the authoritarian regime in Syria has affected many artists in the country, however, the revolution and war motivated them to express their dissent. Since the beginning of conflicts in 2011, artists started to produce work displaying their own political

¹⁶ Halasa, M., Omareen, Z. and Mahfoud, N. eds., 2014. *Op.Cit.*, P.16.

¹⁷ *Idem.*, Pp. 67, 68.

¹⁸ Ferguson, J., (2012). Portrait of Syria artists in a time of revolt. *Al Jazeera* [online]. [Viewed 25 April 2019] Available from:

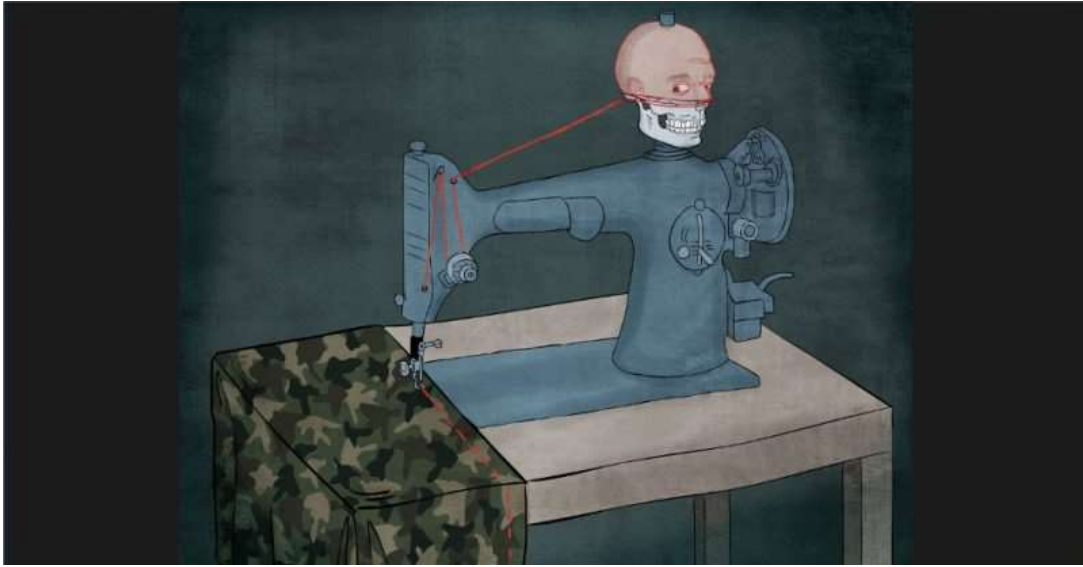
<https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2012/08/2012825111359827174.html?xif=%20and>

¹⁹ AFP, 2014. Syrian dissident artist paints war’s agony. *The Times of Israel* [online]. [Viewed 2 April 2018] Available from: <https://www.timesofisrael.com/syrian-dissident-artist-paints-wars-agony/>

and social views, which was something rarely seen before that time. However, even during the chaos in the country, freedom of expression was still banned and authorities prosecuted artists who produced work opposing the regime. This oppression has been imposed ever since the election of Hafez Al Assad, father of the current president (for more information, see section 3.1.2), and was inflicted on Syrians in their childhood years. In Syrian schools, any direct mode of expression is banned from childhood and military uniform was compulsory until 2000. The methods of education allowed no freedom of expression. From elementary school to high school, there is no question of exposing any individual research or opposing point of view and self-expression was systematically proscribed²⁰. Political debate was also forbidden and enforced through the suppression of dissidents. This oppression experienced by Syrians was expressed by artists revealing the ruthlessness of such a regime. One of these artists is Sulafa Hijazi, who according to her own words, “The Syrian regime harnessed the Syrian people since early childhood, placing them in the service of the military machine. They became one of the tools of the regime's oppression”²¹. She reflects this idea in the following presented illustration, which is part of her series *Ongoing*. The image displays a sewing machine using human skull for threads in order to sew a military uniform. The work clearly addresses the abuse of Syrian people for the wellbeing of the military, which is a primary power used by the regime to suppress the people.

²⁰ Asalia, N., (2018). Syrie. Violence visuelle contre violence du réel. *OrientXXI* [online]. [Viewed 10 May 2019]. Available from: <https://orientxxi.info/lu-vu-entendu/syrie-violence-visuelle-contre-violence-du-reel,2564>

²¹ Halasa, M., Omareen, Z. and Mahfoud, N. eds., 2014. *Op. Cit.*, P. 11.



Sulafa Hijazi, 2012, *Untitled*, digital print, 80x100 cm. *Courtesy of the Artist.*

Hijazi adds that the illustrations were born out of her experiences in Syria, representing an aspect of her identity and the pale colors she experienced in her city²².

Another work addressing the oppression of the Syrian regime is artist Imranovi's work, *Vote!* Imranovi has employed his art to reveal the situation in Syria during the war and the brutality of the regime and created an abundant amount of digital art handling these issues. In his work *Vote!* he reveals the compulsory force exerted on civilians to vote for the president. He depicts a wounded man, or perhaps a dead one, dragged by Bashar Al-Assad to the election box with a paper in his hand. In Syria, although the president is elected by the people, many denounce "the election as a farce"²³. This work clearly shows Imranovi's view concerning that, highlighting the mandatory force exerted by Al-Assad on Syrians.

²² *Idem.*, P. 15.

²³ The Guardian, (2014). *Bashar al-Assad wins re-election in Syria as uprising against him rages on* [online]. [Viewed on 5 May 2019] Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/04/bashar-al-assad-wins-reelection-in-landslide-victory>



Imranovi. *Vote!* Posted on April 30, 2014

The revolution in Syria has provided an outlet for artists to express themselves, albeit it is not devoid of risk. Many groups of artist and activists emerged as a response to the Syrian war and the uprising. Committed to the dangerous task of transmitting the Syrian situation and encouraging the opposition against the regime, these groups operate under a given name while their members remain anonymous. In this regard, one of the most interesting collective projects is the anonymous group *Alshaab Alsori Aref Tareeko* (The Syrian People Know Their Way) “whose work is rooted in the tradition of political posters with some particularities specific to the Syrian situation”²⁴. Among the posters produced by *Alshaab Alsori Aref Tareeko* revealing the oppression imposed by Al-Assad is the work, *Assad Dialogues*. In this poster, we see a military boot stepping on the head of a civilian, with the

²⁴ Halasa, M., Omareen, Z. and Mahfoud, N. eds., 2014. *Op. Cit.*, Pp. 67, 68.

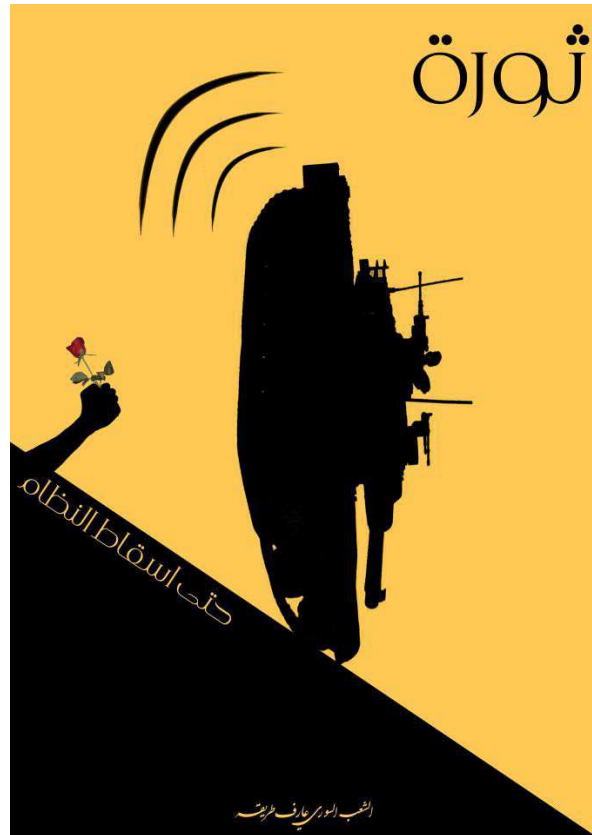
words 'Assad Dialogues' written in Arabic. The work clearly addresses the oppression imposed by Al-Assad which denies the people of their freedom to have different views.



Alshaab Alsori Aref Tareeko, Assad Dialogues.

The Syrian government has always suppressed the rebel groups to obliterate any secession tendencies while the rebel groups have sought to challenge its military dictatorship and to overthrow the regime. Since the start of the revolution, protestors demanded to get their freedom and to put an end to the regime's rule. However, the people first protested in peaceful demonstrations while the government security forces resorted to violence and this gradually developed into a full-blown war. The encouragement of a peaceful revolution avoiding casualties was mirrored in many of *Alshaab Alsori Aref Tareeko's* posters especially those accomplished during the first period of the revolution. This collective was dedicated to produce posters which provided an "insight into the ideas that arose at the beginning of the Syrian Revolution. They testify to a period of time filled with hope for

change, which was kept alive even in the face of the regime's brutal violence”²⁵. Their work *Revolution Until the Regime Falls* mirrors the concept of a peaceful revolution. It displays the image of a military tank, referring to the regime forces, vertically standing while being faced by a fist holding a flower, symbolizing the peaceful protests.



Alshaab Alsori Aref Tareeko, Revolution Until the Regime Falls.

Another work that displays the Syrian regime attacking peaceful civilians during the revolution is Wissam Al Jazairy’s work *Dancers and the Dictator*. El Jazairy has utilized his art to contribute to the revolution. In the following work, the artist refers to Bashar El-Assad as the dictator who kills the peaceful civilians. He shows a military tank attacking the civilians who are dancing in response to the regime’s brutal action.

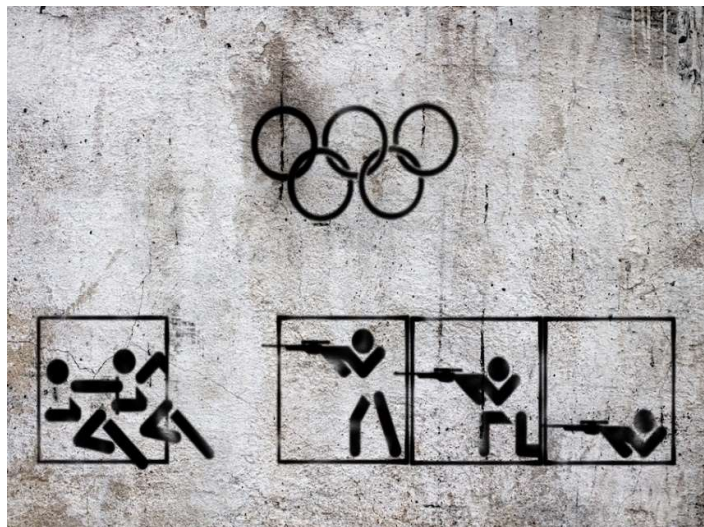
²⁵ *Idem.*, P. 77.



Alshaab Alsori Aref Tareeko, Revolution Until the Regime Falls.

The killing of peaceful civilians is also depicted in Tammam Azzam's *Syrian Olympic*. Azzam is a contemporary Syrian artist whose work deals with the ongoing conflict in his country. Unlike the presented couple of artworks, in the following work, Azzam doesn't reveal the identity of the shooters; the predators and the preys are displayed in the same

manner. In addition to the ironic title *Syrian Olympic*, the artist's intention in this work was solely to reveal the killing of civilians and the brutal circumstances of his country with no reference to his political identity. Instead of the usual Olympic games which



Tammam Azzam, Syrian Olympic, 2013, c-print diasec mounting, 133 x 200 cm, edition of 8, courtesy the artist and Ayyam Gallery

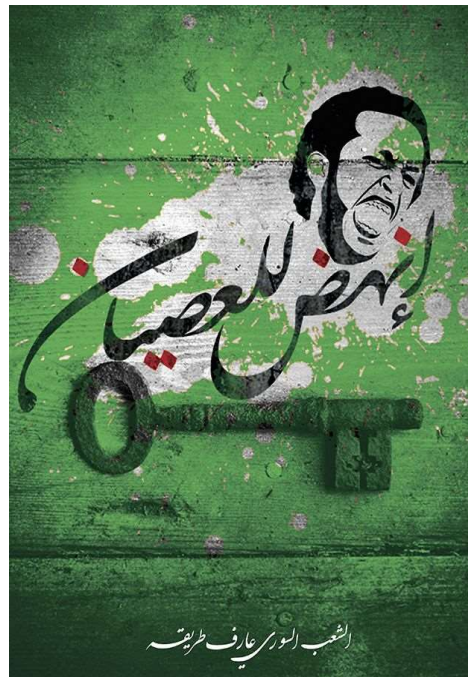
are supposed to be cultural and peaceful, *Syrian Olympic* is violent and brutal.

Another work by Tammam Azzam which displays the attack of peaceful civilians is *Demonstration*. Nonetheless, unlike Alshaab Alsori Aref Tareeko's *Revolution Until the Regime Falls* and Wissam Al Jazairy's *Dancers and the Dictator*, Azzam depicts another hostile force in Syria, ISIS, which is referred to by the black flag carried by the attackers. Here, Azzam refers to the peaceful civilian by depicting musical notes in the background.



Tammam Azzam, *Demonstration*.

Lots of posters were produced to encourage and motivate the revolution against Al-Assad. While some encouraged a peaceful protest, others only motivated people to revolt. The poster on the right created by the collective group *Alshaab Alsori Aref Tareeko* encourages the revolution. It displays the image of a man screaming with the words 'Rise Up for the Rebellion' written in Arabic. The poster also features a key, implying that the key for freedom is through rebellion.



Alshaab Alsori Aref Tareeko, 2011, *Rise Up for the Rebellion*.

These works reflect how the revolution, which was among the first incidents of the Syrian war, is depicted in visual arts. However, there are many other artworks that encouraged the revolution but are discussed in chapter three, analyzing their political dimension and later their implied messages.

With the oppression imposed by Al-Assad regime, most Syrians were living in fear and many still do. However, “it was common in the early months of the uprising to hear references to the barrier of fear that had fallen”²⁶. *Alshaab Alsori Aref Tareeko* created the following poster emphasizing this issue. It displays a figure running away from a gigantic fingerprint with several lines in the fingerprint missing, forming the outline of a person. The running figure holds what looks like the missing lines of the finger print in his arms. The text reads in Arabic: This is civil disobedience. There is no need to stay quiet anymore. “The missing lines in the fingerprint point to the broken power of the feared security services, which used to keep the population in a state of paralysis”²⁷.



Alshaab Alsori Aref Tareeko, *This is civil disobedience. There is no need to stay quiet anymore.*

²⁶ *Idem.*, P. 74.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

Alshaab Alsori Aref Tareeko produced posters to depict incidents of the Syrian war and mirror the circumstances in the country. Many call for protests, others state political demands, some display brutal incidents and request the release of prisoners, thus documenting the war events and revealing the situation of the people.

Another group that has taken the initiative to document and depict the circumstances in Syria on almost daily basis is a collective called *Kartoneh*, whose “methods of expression were simple school chalk on black paper”²⁸. The artistic and political initiatives of *Kartoneh* was launched after March 18, 2011, which is considered “the largest day of unrest in recent Syrian history, thousands of protestors clash with government officials in demonstrations in Damascus, Daraa, Homs, Baniyas, al- Qamishli and Deir ez-Zour”²⁹. *Kartoneh* is an anonymous collective of activists and artists from a city called Deir El Zour, in Syria. A spokesperson from *Kartoneh* declared that members of the group did not carry weapons despite the siege of the city and stayed living there although the city was declared a disaster zone. They gained the trust of the population, they documented the names of martyrs and destroyed neighborhoods, recorded the names of the people who remained in the besieged city and those of the displaced families³⁰. Although *Kartoneh*’s work is temporary due to the utilized medium, it documented the incidents and situation of Deir Al-Zour during the war. In the following work the group addressed the situation of Deir El-Zour as a disaster-struck city, written in Arabic, and for mature audience only since the damage is unsuitable for children under eighteen years.

²⁸ *Idem.*, Pp. 60,62.

²⁹ Khatib, L. and Lust, E., 2014. *Taking to the Streets: The Transformation of Arab Activism*. Johns Hopkins University Press. P. 161.

³⁰ Halasa, M., Omareen, Z. and Mahfoud, N. eds., 2014. *Op. Cit.*, Pp. 60-64.



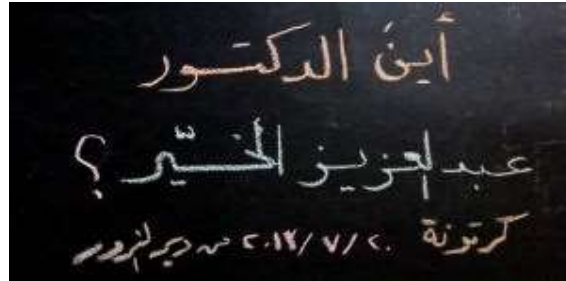
Kartoneh, 18+, A Disaster-struck City 1km Ahead, Deir Al-Zour, Chalk on black card board

Kartoneh also created an animated film called *Abu Eskandar*, which tells the story of the siege of Deir El Zour from the point of view of a cat who lives in a poor neighborhood in the city. The video displays the life of the cat, Abu Eskandar, who took part of the revolution and was injured later by a bomb. It addresses the first demonstration that took place in Deir El-Zour along with following protests and speaks about the siege of the city by regime forces, hence documenting the experienced war incidents.



Kartoneh, Abu Eskandar, Video.

In the following work, the group *Kartoneh* wrote in Arabic: Where is Doctor Abdul Aziz al-Khair? Asking about a political leader of the Communist Labor Party who was kidnapped by regime forces in September 2012³¹.



Kartoneh, July 20, 2013, Where Is Dr. Abdel-Aziz Al-Khair? Chalk on black card board.

Another work that addresses the kidnapped during the Syrian war is *Syrian Graffiti* designed by Syrian artists Zaher Omareen and Ibrahim Fakhri. The artwork displays the portraits of some of the individuals lost in the Syrian revolution with the word ‘freedom’ written in Arabic. “The piece was created using stencils and spray painted directly onto the gallery wall. Similar stencils have been shared online to encourage people to repeat them on walls around the world as they have done and continue to in Syria”³².

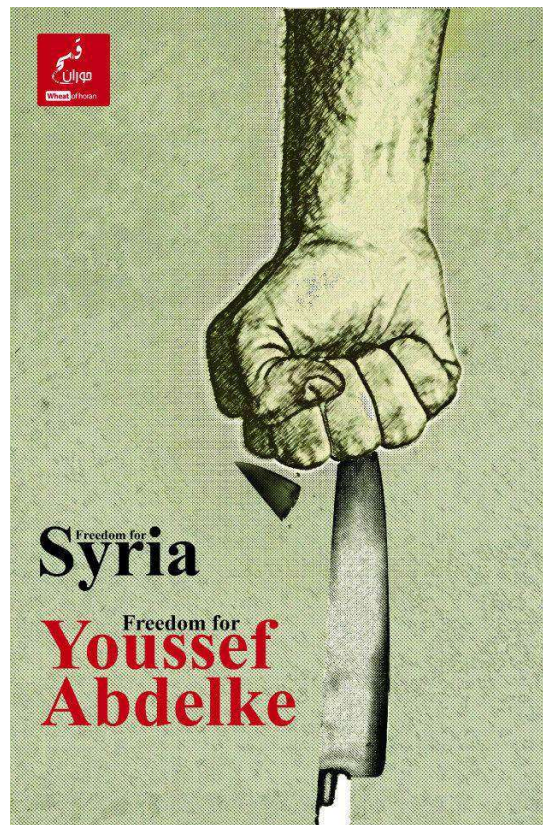


Zaher Omareen and Ibrahim Fakhri. Syrian Graffiti.

³¹ The Creative Memory of the Syrian Revolution. [Viewed 15 June 2018] Available from: <https://creativememory.org/en/archives/33415/where-is-abdul-aziz-al-khair/>

³² Victoria and Albert Museum. *Closed Exhibition – Disobedient Objects*. [Viewed 10 June 2019] Available from: <http://www.librarydevelopment.group.shef.ac.uk/referencing/harvard.html>

As mentioned previously in this section, the Syrian government arrested number of artists, filmmakers and actors, among whom was artist Youssef Abdelke. A collective group of activists and artists named *Wheat of Horan* who post their work on Facebook, addressed this incident in their poster, *Freedom for Syria, Freedom for Youssef Abdelke*, dedicated to the freedom of the artist.



*Wheat of Horan, posted on 20/7/2013, Freedom for Syria
Freedom for Youssef Abdelke*

Other recurrent incidents displayed by Syrian artists are the massacres that happened during the war. After the massacres when hundreds of Syrians were killed in the Syrian town of Baniyas in early 2013, Zaria Zardasht painted *Baniyas, The Wounded Spirit*. Strong brushstrokes and abstract shapes mirror the violence and horrors of the massacres. She used

red, white, black and grey paint reflecting the colors of blood, bandages of the wounded, destruction and smoke which are the most visible during wars³³.



Zana Zardasht, 2013, *Baniyas, the Wounded Spirit*, Acrylic on fabric, 70x50 cm, Courtesy of the Artist.

Another work reflecting a massacre, but this time it's a massacre in Hama, is Alshaab Alsori Aref Tareeko's poster *It Will Not Happen Again*. The poster shows the figure of a child underlining the words 'it will not happen again' next to a waterwheel. "Water wheels are the landmark symbols of the city of Hama, the site of a terrible Massacre committed by Hafez E-Assad in 1982. The motif of the writing child links the poster to the act of the children of Deraa"³⁴.

³³ Kazan, S., 2013. Lost for Words: Discovering Syria's Contemporary Art Scene, in London. Islamic Arts [online]. [Viewed 20 June 2019]. Available from: http://islamicartsmagazine.com/magazine/view/lost_for_words_discovering_syrias_contemporary_art_scene_in_london/

³⁴ Halasa, M., Omareen, Z. and Mahfoud, N. eds., 2014. *Op. Cit.*, P. 77.



Alshaab Alsori Aref Tareeko, It Will Not Happen Again Hama Massacre.

Alshaab Alsori Aref Tareeko also exposed the massacre of Baba Amr, a city in Syria, when “the Syrian army launched one of the most intense assaults of the conflict, with the bombardment of the Baba Amr district of Homs”³⁵. The poster shows a rebel holding a sling shot as an act of resistance against regime forces.



Alshaab Alsori Aref Tareeko, 2011, Poster released after the Baba Amr massacre.

³⁵ BBC News, (2018). Syria war: What we know about Douma 'chemical attack'. [Viewed 20 April 2019]. Available from: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-43697084>

Artist Imranovi, who has utilized his talent to reflect the Syrian catastrophe ever since the beginning of the war, addressed the Houla massacre where “at least 49 babies and children were killed”³⁶. Commemorating the children who died in the massacre, the work displays the image of a dead infant with his blood forming the roots of a blossoming tree, in addition to the date of the massacre, 25/5/2012, and a text reading Alhula Children Massacre written in Arabic and English. Despite the upsetting image of a buried baby, the flowers on the tree inspire a feeling of hope. Imranovi posted this poster on his Facebook page on June 24, 2012, with the words ‘new hope is born’.



Imranovi Houla Massacre, posted on June 24, 2012.

³⁶ The Guardian, (2012). The Houla massacre: reconstructing the events of 25 May [Viewed 13 July 2019]. Available from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jun/01/houla-massacre-reconstructing-25-may>

Massacres, brutal raids and chemical attacks in Syria raised the number of casualties in general, and children in particular. In turn, the suffering and killing of children have triggered many Syrian artists, such as Abdalla Al Omari, Khalil Younes, Mohannad Orabi, Walid El-Masri and others, to address this theme revealing the unbearable conditions these helpless beings have to endure.

Abdalla Al Omari's work *I Am Alive* addresses the chemical attacks that happened during the war. Al Omari utilized his art to describe the experiences of civilians, particularly children, during the war in Syria. In the following work, the artist displays two kids, the smaller child is depicted wearing a gas mask while the older is hugging and comforting him. In the background, the viewer reads the words *Am I alive?* inscribed in Arabic and English, to highlight the graveness of the tragedy; as if the children are not sure if they are still alive. The painting also displays childlike sketches of shells, people and a house to



Al Omari, 2013, *I Am Alive*, Mixed media on canvas, 140x120 cm, Kamel Gallery collection

refer to the children's lost childhood in Syria. In this work, Al Omari exposes the horrors of the chemical attacks and their brutal effects on children.

Artist Khalil Younes, an emerging figure in the Syrian art world, has addressed the Aleppo river massacre, where the bodies of "at least 147 people [...] were found in the city of Aleppo's river"³⁷. In the following artwork, Younes depicts the portrait of a dead young boy against a red background of dripping paint.



Khalil Younes Aleppo River Massacre.

In addition to the above mentioned issues, certain deaths during the Syrian war aroused humanitarian rage and provoked collective sympathy. Among these is the death of the thirteen-year-old child Hamza Bakkour who was shot in 2012 and lost his lower jaw before

³⁷ Human Rights Watch, (2013). Syria: A Stream of Bodies in Aleppo's River. [Viewed 13 July 2019]. Available from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/06/04/syria-stream-bodies-aleppos-river>

he died. In his work titled *Hamza Bakkour*, artist Khalil Younes displays the image of this child with his lower jaw injury.



Khalil Younes, *Hamza Bakkour*, 40x 50cm

Syrian artist Fares Cachoux has also commemorated the death of Hamza Bakkour in his work *Hamza Is Prettier Than You*. Known for his political posters that handle issues of the Syrian war, in the following work Cachoux displays a profile portrait of Bashar Al-Assad with a missing jaw, placing the Syrian president in the place of the dead boy. This symbolizes the artist's wish and implies the graveness of the incident. The words *Hamza Is Prettier Than You* are inscribed in Arabic referring that the child is prettier than Bashar Al-Assad. In addition, the artist inscribed the words *To the memory of the martyr Hamza Bakkour* followed by the date of his death, February 6, 2012.



Fares Cachoux, *Hamza Is Prettier Than You*. In memory of Hamza Bakkour

Artist Tarek Tuma was also inspired to reveal the graveness of Bakkour’s injury. Touma painted the portrait of the child in a realistic mode highlighting his violent death. However, this work is emphasized further in section 2.3.3 due to the display of disruptive violence.

In addition, “Hamza Bakkour has been made into spray-paint stencils used by Syrian activists inside the country”³⁸.

Another brutal killing that inspired artists to address is the murder of Syrian popular singer Ibrahim Kashoush. A day after Kashoush sang in a protest his famous slogan *Irhal ya Bashar* (Bashar Get Out) against Al-Assad regime, he was found dead, floating in the river with his vocal chords removed³⁹.

³⁸ Halasa, M., Omareen, Z. and Mahfoud, N. eds., 2014. *Op. Cit.*, P. 36.

³⁹ Chalala, E. Silencing the Singer. *Al Jadid* [online]. [Viewed 14 July 2019]. Available form: <https://www.aljadid.com/content/silencing-singer>

Artist Khalil Younes, who became famous for his pen-and-ink portraits of important resistance figures in the war, displays the tragic death of Ibrahim Qashoush in his work titled *About a Man Called Qashoush*. Younes highlights the way Kashoush was murdered by revealing the cut neck and spilling blood.



Khalil Younes, About a Man Called Qashoush.

Artist Fares Cachoux also addresses the death of Ibrahim Qashoush in his poster below. He symbolizes the singer by a singing bird on a branch of a tree, while underneath it is a roaring lion trying to capture it. Cachoux's use of the lion is a symbol of Bashar Al-Assad trying to attack the bird and silence the singing, knowing also that the word 'assad' means 'lion' in Arabic.



Fares Cachoux, Ibrahim Al Qashoush.

Youssef Abdelke, the Syrian artist who was detained by the regime (mentioned earlier in this section), produced black and white artworks displaying the horrors of the war since the beginning of the uprising. His work *A Martyr from Daraa* displays the image of a dead man shot in his forehead with his eyes wide open. The work explicitly reveals the horror

experienced during the war, and the title refers to a martyr from Daraa, which is the Syrian city where the first demonstration took place (for more historical information see section 3.1.2). In this work, Abdelke is commemorating those people who died in Daraa while peacefully protesting against Al-Assad regime.



Youssef Abdelke, 2012, *A Martyr From Daraa*.

Another work addressing the death of a famous Syrian activist during the war is Sam Kadi's video *Little Gandhi*. "This feature documentary follows the life of iconic Syrian peace activist Ghiyath Matar, who became internationally known as "Little Gandhi" for his initiative of facing down violent government security forces with flowers and bottles of water"⁴⁰. Matar was brutally tortured and died at the age of 26, the thing that inspired the production of this video. The video depicts some shooting with the sounds of bombs and

⁴⁰ TheHouseOfFilm, (2017). *Little Gandhi* Trailer [online]. Directed by Sam Kadi. The House of Film. [Viewed 3 July 2019]. Available form: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vhKDkt8yw-M>

bullets, and presents testimonies of two men who were detained for two years and a half. They talk about how in Syria 50 to 100 people are executed together on the spot and that the regime doesn't mind executing a million people together. There is also the testimony of Matar's relative who speaks about him and how people are humiliated in Syria.

In addition to the numerous artworks created to address specific incidents during the Syrian war, many artists resorted to displaying their own experiences during that time. In their art, they reported war incidents that surrounded them, although not widely reported on the news.

Among the artists who reported war incidents depicting their own experience is Syrian photographer Issa Touma in his video, *9 Days – From my Window in Aleppo*⁴¹. The artist spent nine days holed up in his apartment filming the emerging civil war on the street facing him from his window. In the video, Touma reported the beginning of the shooting, how the street facing his apartment had turned into a frontline, the condition of the fighters and his neighbors' fears. We can hear the shooting, the screams of the fighters and their conversations. Despite all this, he proceeded hoping to continue the other day since his life was at jeopardy, and meanwhile sleeping on the kitchen's sofa which, according to him, was the safest place in the house. Still alive to shoot the video on the ninth day, he reported that other fighters came. The artist then states that these are called freedom fighters by international media, whereas in national media in Syria they are referred to as terrorist. Nonetheless, for him, it doesn't matter what they are called since he decided not to be on anyone's side during the war. Touma then claims that it is a lie that the revolution started peacefully everywhere in Syria, continuing that in the street where he lives, it started with

⁴¹ Journeyman Pictures, (2016). *9 Days - From My Window in Aleppo* [online]. Directed by Floor van der Meulen and Thomas Vroege. Journeyman Pictures. [Viewed 10 June 2019]. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=THdMj0-LmRw>

weapons and wasn't peaceful at all. He ends the video saying that he will not film the war ever again and dedicates it to all the civilians in Aleppo.

Another work filming the circumstances in Syria is Azza Hamwi's video *A Day and a Button*⁴². The video starts with the sound of bullets and the filming of a cat and a helicopter in the sky. After that, the artist walks through the streets of Damascus, where life appears to be somehow normal, but she says that it is the same street that the fighting was happening before. This emphasizes how the shooting and killing in Syria have become a way of life. Then, the artist asks if the viewer has his ID with him, she declares that in Syria whether a person carries his ID or no, he might be arrested, but still it is obligatory for him to carry it. Later, the video shows orphaned children who left their destroyed homes, sights of destruction and groups of men protesting and singing against the regime. In the video, Hamwi confesses that she no longer knows her identity although she possesses an Identity card, but soon interrupts this confession and says that she wants to sleep, to go back to her bed and cat. This video addresses the incidents that Azza Hamwi encountered and mirrors her personal experience during the crisis.

The destruction of the cultural monuments in the historical site of Palmyra is yet another war incident that motivated artists to expose. This world heritage site was repeatedly attacked during the war, destroying some of the country's most historic treasures. Syrian artists Humam Alsalim and Rami Bakhos, who lived the difficult conditions of the war in their country, created digital artworks titled *Cultural Beheading Series* to highlight the graveness of the destruction that surrounded Palmyra. The following work depicts bleeding statues of Palmyra to underscore the tragedy.

⁴² Bidayyat Production, (2015). *A Day and a Button* [online]. Directed by Azza Hamwi. Bidayyat. [Viewed 5 March 2019]. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jB0HXHEnOZc>



Humam Alsalim and Rami Bakhos, Cultural Beheading series.

Many other artworks created by Syrian artists depict incidents of the war, however, my aim here is to reveal how war incidents are translated in visual arts rather than presenting all artworks that depict them, knowing that this is an unattainable task due to the huge number of works that cannot be included in a single section. Nonetheless, what I present clearly reveals the amount of art produced to document the Syrian war and its incidents. Some major war incidents have been repeatedly addressed by renowned and less prominent artists, resulting in a rich and abundant body of work addressing and documenting the Syrian war. However, more issues are mirrored in art reflecting war related issues, such as the destruction of the country, the suffering of the people, the refugee crisis, political struggle and others that are discussed later in this book.

3.2. Analyzing diverse representations of war in art

While the previous section demonstrates the translation of specific war incidents in visual arts displaying war in Palestine, Lebanon and Syria, this section inspects the appearance of other aspects related to war. It analyzes the exhibition of war related issues, such as destruction, violence, and emotional distress. In what follows, I reveal the different representations and approaches utilized by artists to express the horrors of the war and their aftermath.

1.3.2. Depicting destruction

Many artists who displayed war in their art depicted the destruction of their countries, regardless which war was reflected. The act of exhibiting destruction in art is not only a focused examination of the destroyed physical sites but rather a portrayal of both individual and collective suffering and anxiety. The destruction underwent as an impact of war is never solely a materialistic damage. Even if the person himself/herself hasn't been materialistically affected by the destruction, the sight of it and its presence induce a feeling of loss. Images of destruction have their impact on the human psyche and the depiction of this issue in art is capable to stir strong emotions in the viewer. Unlike landscape paintings which expose sites of aesthetical value on their own, images of destruction hold implicit meanings and connotations of loss, desertion and loneliness.

The horrible view of destruction as a result of war triggered artists to display this issue in their art. These artworks don't only refer to the physical devastation as an impact of war, but also address the psychological damage. Artworks exhibiting destruction hold powerful representations of the physical and psychological damage imposed by wars. Moreover, this art captures the physical and social deformations that characterized a county in conflict. Upon investigating these artworks, one might go to the extent of undermining the significance of the destruction while emphasizing the sense of loss and loneliness they trigger. It is not only the destruction that fascinates us in these artworks, but also their impact on the artist's psyche.

The theme of destruction is recurrent in Lebanese, Palestinian and Syrian art characteristic of war. In dealing with war, artists chose to address this theme revealing war's spatial consequences and going beyond this to imply deeper connotations. In this section, I analyze few artworks belonging to the three art scenes of my area of research as exemplars of this

aspect, to reveal the different representations of destruction and the diverse approaches utilized by artists. Initiating with the Lebanese art scene, I move forward to analyze this theme in Palestinian art and end this section with the Syrian art scene.

Starting with Lebanon, we can say that it is a country that holds many contradictions; its capital, Beirut, despite its modernity and all the reconstructions that happened, still encompasses shattered buildings that stand until our present day. Moreover, the 2006 June War, the series of bombings and assassinations that took place after the civil war and the ongoing conflicts have rendered the sight of destruction as a usual scene among Lebanese. In addition, the fact that Lebanese history is not well documented and misremembered by many stimulated the depiction of destroyed sites among artists.

Ayman Baalbaki is one of the Lebanese artists who frequently handled the theme of war in his art by often displaying images of destruction. Strongly influenced by the Lebanese civil war and the conflicts that followed, Baalbaki was forced to relocate more than once. Born in South Lebanon during the first year of the civil war, his family was forced to flee that area which was a frontline and later became occupied by Israeli forces. The family relocated to Beirut, another area under attack, and there he experienced life during the civil war. In 1990, after the civil war ended, Baalbaki's family left their house because of the post-war reconstructions, and later, in 2006, his own house in Beirut was destroyed by Israeli forces during the July War. These cycles of forced dislocation and destruction have apparently influenced Baalbaki's artistic identity and the themes he explores. Destruction, being an aspect he had suffered from more than once, in addition to his childhood memories of war have made him very often address this theme in his work.

The images of destruction Baalbaki displays range from paintings that address the shelling of buildings during the civil war to a series documenting the damage inflicted on Beirut's southern suburbs during the 2006 war. In his work *Here and Elsewhere*, Baalbaki displays the destruction that fell upon Beirut during the war. The wrecked building is dominating the canvas, devoid of human life, bleeding and looming against grey skies. The scattered structure, which survived the bombing, stands as a witness of the war and underscores the magnitude of destruction, both physically and psychologically. It is not only the physical destruction addressed here, the strong and expressionist brush strokes magnify the sense of distress, inspiring a feeling of loneliness, loss and alienation.



Ayman Baalbaki, *Here and Elsewhere, ici et ailleurs*, 2009, acrylic on canvas, 180 x 250 cm.

Another work entitled MEA, which Ayman Baalbaki created in 2006, depicts the destruction of Beirut airport in the 80's as a result of the repeated bombing by Israeli forces during the civil war. By doing so, he tackles incidents of Lebanon's turbulent history which happened more than thirty years ago, highlighting the trauma he experienced with destruction. Unlike the war-torn buildings that still stand in Beirut, the airport accidents had been forgotten and renovations were carried in the airport almost

immediately, leaving no trace of the incident. Nonetheless, the artist chose to address these specific happenings during the war to remind Lebanese of their history.



Ayman Baalbaki, *Here and Elsewhere, ici et ailleurs*, 2009, acrylic on canvas, 180 x 250 cm.

Although Baalbaki depicts destruction in a direct approach, the implied feeling of alienation, loss and loneliness these works trigger is very intense. His work is highly expressive suggesting a feeling shared by all those who had seen these sights. Influenced by his own experience and trauma, his work addresses deep personal issues as well as the nation's devastation.

Another work addressing the destruction that Lebanon endured as a result of war is Lebanese artist Marwan Rechmaoui's *Pillars*. Rechmaoui is conceptual sculptor who works with concrete, metal, found materials, textile, rubber and wax whose work focuses on Beirut⁴³. In his work *Pillars*, the artist installed cement structures, in various stages of ruin, as tall as the viewer to suggest the effect of a bombed-out city. These concrete and bent metal pillars appear as both crumbling, half-destroyed apartment buildings and

⁴³ Sfeir-Semler Gallery. *Marwan Rechmaoui*. [Viewed 3 January 2020]. Available from: <http://www.sfeir-semler.com/hamburg/exhibitions-hamburg/2019/marwan-rechmaoui.html>

minimalist sculptures, analogous with the sights of destruction after raids. Being a Lebanese artist, Rechmaoui lived in an environment where destruction was an occasional sight, as a result of conflicts and social upheavals. However, bombings and battles hadn't only targeted architectural sites, but had their profound effect on emotional, psychological and social mechanisms. His work explores this phenomenon where social and psychological traumas are embodied in architectural forms, making them analogous to wrecked human figures. From a distance, the pillars look like sculptures, but as we approach they feel like dead structures inspiring a feeling of desertion, chaos and coldness. Rechmaoui's *Pillars* are no longer mere depiction of destroyed buildings, but rather humanized structures implying psychological distress and emotional trauma.

Another diverse artistic approach addressing the destruction as a result of war is Lebanese artist Zena el Khalil's art performances. El Khalil transformed historic buildings partly



Marwan Rechmaoui, *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, 2014, Mixed media in cast concrete, 230 × 60 × 40 cm.

destroyed during the war into, what she calls, a sanctuary for art, bearing witness, healing and forgiveness. Inspired by her own experience, since her own family's home in Lebanon was occupied by the Israeli army for more than 20 years as a military detention center, she traveled to destroyed historic sites in Lebanon trying to understand the wars that wracked her country. At these sites of destruction, massacres and torture, El Khalil performs what she calls ceremonies of healing. She creates artworks using materials found on site and leaves behind symbolic messages of hope in the form of marks on buildings as well as painted objects left embedded in the rubble⁴⁴.

In the following photo, Zena El Khalil is filmed performing in an historic damaged building in Beirut called *Beit Beirut*. The building was taken over by militias during the Lebanese civil war due to its strategic location on the line that once split Beirut into two parts and was transformed into a killing machine where thousands of people were shot at from there.



Zena el Khalil stages Healing Lebanon in historic building Beit Beirut, in Beirut, Lebanon.

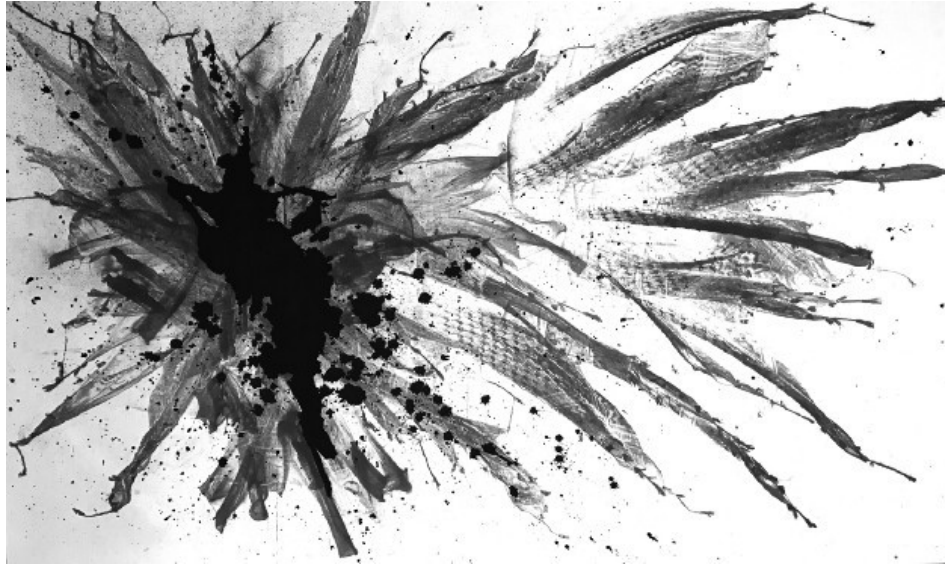
⁴⁴ Frances, K., (2017). How does a city ravaged by war heal and recover? *TED Fellows* [online]. 28 September 2017. [Viewed 18 July 2019] Available form: <https://fellowsblog.ted.com/how-does-a-city-ravaged-by-war-heal-and-recover-4ca5be9d5087>

According to her, El Khalil does “healing ceremonies in these sites—which involves a process of chanting, meditation and connecting with the land and space, while focusing on understanding the historical realities of what happened”. She burns things from the area, and from the ashes, she creates ink to paint on site (See artwork *Space without the dark could not hold the stars* below). She also leaves a mantra on site with words like “forgiveness,” “love”, “compassion” or “peace” written in Arabic (see *Gufuran (Forgiveness) mantra* below). She believes that in this act, she is “sending love, compassion, forgiveness and peace to those places”⁴⁵.



Zena el Khalil, 2017, *Space without the dark could not hold the stars*. Ink, ash, pigment and embroidery on canvas.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*



Zena el Khalil, 2015, Grand Hotel Sawfar 1. Ash, ink and pigment on canvas.



Zena el Khalil, Gufran (Forgiveness) mantra left in abandoned home. Souk el Ghareb, Lebanon. Ash, Ink and pigment on canvas.

There is still abundant amount of artworks characteristic of war in the Lebanese art scene that display images of destruction. However, through the presented artworks, I reveal how this theme has affected the Lebanese art scene and the different modes and artistic approaches utilized to address it.

Moving forward to inspect the depiction of destruction in the Palestinian art scene, I present few artworks to exemplify this aspect. However, due to many political and humanitarian

affairs and others related to the occupation of Palestine and the deportation of its people, we notice that the art scene is not focused on revealing destruction as much as it is oriented towards other issues that are handled later in this research.

Among Palestinian artists who employed their work to expose the Palestinian situation is photographer-artist Rula Halawani. The following photographs are part of her series titled *Negative Incursions*, which were taken in Ramallah in 2002 following an incursion by Israeli forces. "Rula Halawani maintains the tradition of documenting the occupation. [...] In this negative inversion series, Halawani prints the images in negative, which has the effect of leaving the gruesome details of the massacre to our imagination and making the viewer an active witness of the atrocities"⁴⁶. Horrified by the sight of destruction and the overall situation, the artist expressed her feelings and experience in this series. On March 28, 2002, the artist was in Ramallah when a major Israeli Incursion happened. On that night, the artist took a walk on the street where she was shocked, seeing so much destruction, the streets were empty except for the Israeli army and its tanks, and the only Palestinian she met on the road was an old man who was shot dead. Concerning this incident, the artist said: "That night I could not take away his face from my memory, and many questions without answers rushed inside my head. It was that night that my hopes for peace died"⁴⁷. The powerful photographs show the destruction of the streets and an Israeli tank ravaging parts of Ramallah. However, the destruction depicted in Halawani's photographs are not mere exhibition of the materialistic destruction of the site but also an expression of the distress it caused her.

⁴⁶ Amirsadeghi, H., Mikdadi, S. and Shabout, N., 2009. *Op. Cit.*, P. 34.

⁴⁷ Station Museum. Negative Incursion. [Viewed 4 March 2019] Available from: http://www.stationmuseum.com/Made_in_Palestine-Rula_Halawani/Made_in_Palestine-Rula_Halawani.htm

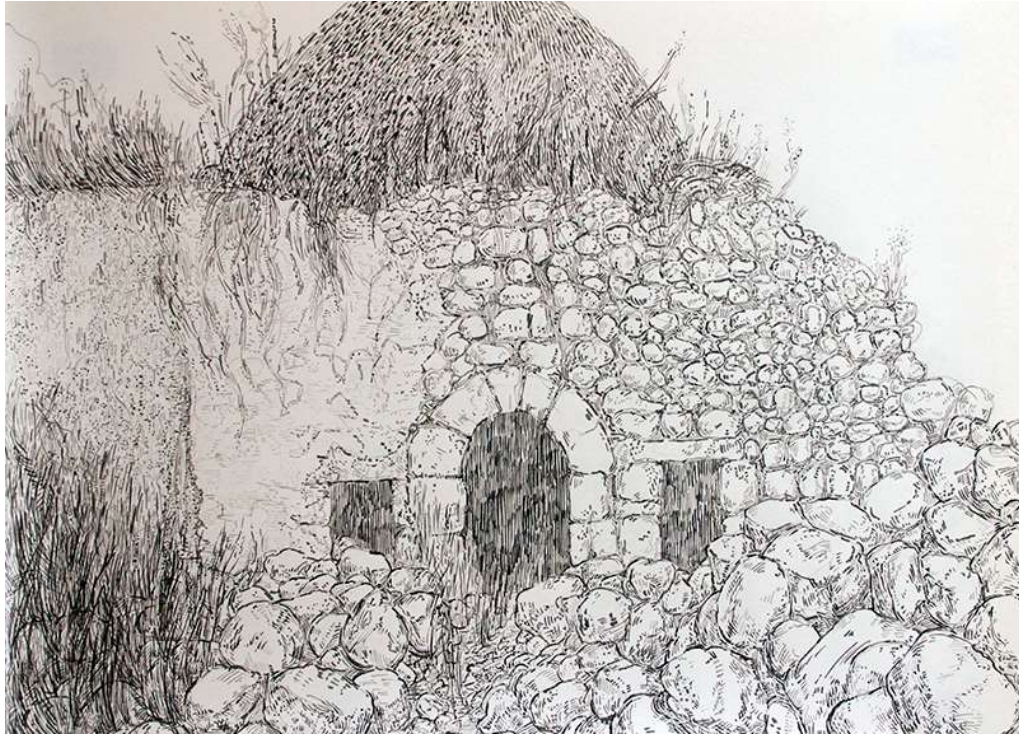


Rula Halawani Images from the series *Negative Incursion*, 2002, B and W negative print, 34 3/8" x 48".

Another Palestinian artist who displayed the destruction of his nation is John Halaka. His series *Landscapes of Desire* are drawings inspired by the ruins of Palestinian villages and homes that were destroyed by the Israeli occupation. In painting the ruins of stone homes in destroyed Palestinian villages, Halaka “underline[s] his belief that the persistence of memory is an act of resistance. [He says,] I consider myself an activist artist whose creative work serves as a vehicle for meditation on personal, cultural and political concerns”⁴⁸. Therefore, by exhibiting the destroyed houses of Palestine, the artist is not solely exhibiting these sites but rather highlighting the Palestinian cause, while intending to preserve memory of these places as an act of resistance. He says: “The images allow me to reflect on an enduring effort to annihilate a Palestinian culture that refuses to disappear [...], the persistence of memory is a crucial act of political resistance and cultural survival”⁴⁹. His series *Landscapes of Desire* bears witness to a tragic history of Palestine and documents the destruction the nation had undergone in order to be remembered, as an act of resisting the annihilation of Palestine and its culture.

⁴⁸ Amirsadeghi, H., Mikdadi, S. and Shabout, N., 2009. *Op. Cit.*, P. 150.

⁴⁹ Halaka, J. (2013). *John Halaka*. [Viewed 4 February 2019] Available from: <https://www.johnhalaka.com/artiststatements.html>



John Halaka. *Muslim Shrine in El Bassa*. From the series *Landscapes of Desire* (2009 - 2013). Ink on Paper.

Another approach in depicting the destruction in Palestine is seen in Vera Tamari's installation, *Going for a Ride?* Tamari created this work inspired by the crushing of hundreds of cars by Israeli tanks during the incursion in Ramallah in 2002. The installation exhibited about six very well polished and completely crushed cars with lights around them and music playing. Affected by the destruction of the city and the site of the destroyed cars, Tamari declares, "[w]ithin a few minutes of the curfew that was called, the city was full of crushed cars. That made such an impression on me— that this vehicle that symbolizes movement and freedom and going from one place to another—is completely destroyed"⁵⁰. By considering the main purpose of the car as a means of transportation, Tamari contemplates this specific incident as destruction of mobility and additional devastation of

⁵⁰ Tamari, V., (2005). Interview: Vera Tamari. *Mother Jones* [online]. [Viewed 4 June 2019]. Available from: <https://www.motherjones.com/media/2005/05/interview-vera-tamari/>

Palestinians' freedom. This gives further connotations to the incident and documents the tragic lives of Palestinians in exhibiting destruction.



Vera Tamari, 2002. Going for a Ride? Installation view.

As seen in the Palestinian art scene, revealing the destruction is not the only purpose intended in handling this theme. For a nation whose people are deported and exiled and whose entire existence is at risk, displaying destruction implies more connotations than exhibiting mere materialistic damage.

As for Syrian art characteristic of war and exhibiting images of destruction, we find an abundant amount of artworks utilized for this purpose. With the war still going on until our

present day and the mass destruction that took place in Syria, it is no wonder that many artists exhibited this issue in their work. In what follows, I exemplify these representations in the Syrian art scene.

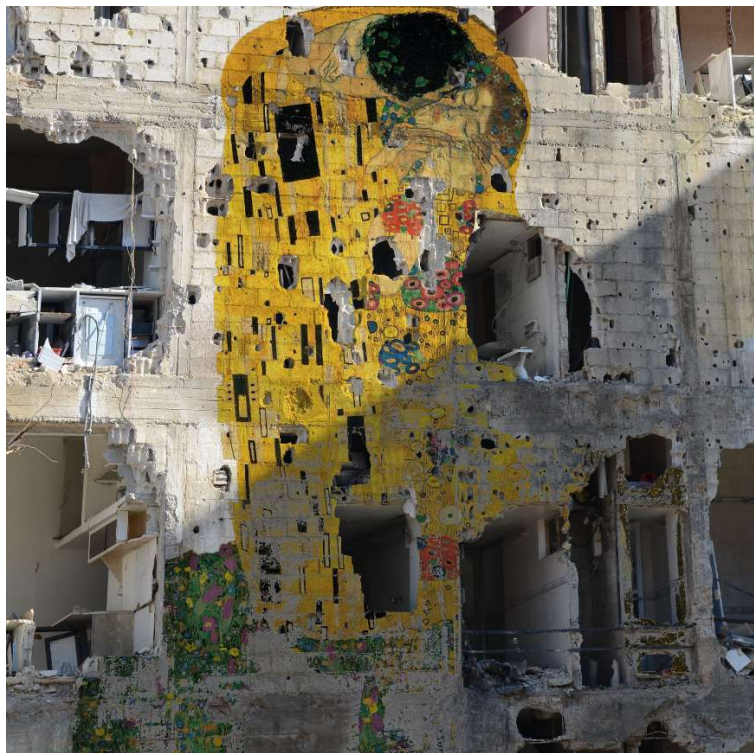
Syrian artist Tammam Azzam created his series *Storeys* to document the destruction of communities and their surrounding environments caused by his country's conflict. Based on the images of destroyed Syrian cities, Azzam created these haunting, realistic paintings to depict the horrible destruction in Syria. In the following painting, rows of destroyed buildings and streets filled with rubble are depicted with gloomy shades of grey and dripping paint to underscore the horror of destruction. Displayed in a realistic approach with the details of every storey, these damaged buildings tell the tragic stories of the ordinary Syrians who once lived there.



Tammam Azzam, 2015, *Untitled from Storeys series*, 180 x 235 cm, acrylic on canvas, Image courtesy of Tammam Azzam

Another series created by Tammam Azzam depicting the destruction in Syria is *Freedom Graffiti*. However, here Azzam added another connotation to expose the tragic situation in Syria. In this series of digitally-produced work, he superimposes masterpieces from the likes of Goya, Dali and Klimt onto photographs of ruined cities in Syria. While the famous artworks attract the viewers with their familiarity, a sense of discomfort is suggested upon viewing them amidst the horrible devastation. “By rooting these masterpieces in depraved soil, their messages of innocence and peace become farcical and tragic in their incongruity, or their messages of war and suffering are enhanced and revitalized”⁵¹. In his digitally produced image *The Kiss*, Azzam superimposes Klimt’s *Kiss* onto a bombed-out building in Damascus. By combining an act of love with destruction and death, the vivid colors with the grey shades of ruins and the serene state of the lovers with devastation and chaos, the

artist highlights the tragedy of Syria. He underscores the horror in juxtaposing contrasting scenes in the same artwork. In this original approach, Azzam reveals the situation in Syria, depicting the destruction in an influencing and impressive display, far from the usual cliché.



Tammam Azzam, 2013, *The Kiss (Klimt 1908)* Syrian Museum, from *Freedom Graffiti Series*, digital work

⁵¹ Creative Havens: Syrian Artists And Their Studios. Voices Louder Than Gunfire. *Creative Havens* [online]. [Viewed 20 June 2019]. Available from: <https://syriancreativehavens.com/2018/02/27/voices-louder-than-gunfire/>

A diverse approach utilized to display the destruction in Syria is noticed in the work of artist and architect Mohamad Hafez. He explores the impact of war in Syria through revealing the destruction in hyper-realistic sculptures crafted from found objects, paint, and scrap metal. His work *Collateral Damage* is a scale model of a section of a bombed-out city. Damaged buildings, crumbling structures strung with charred laundry, electrical wires protruding from destroyed walls, miniature graffiti on wall fragments, partly destroyed vehicle under the rubble and other simple details encountered with destruction are depicted in the artwork. Despite the massive devastation, the lights are still on in one high-rise room suggesting that some of the inhabitants are still living among the remnants. In addition, a sound radiating out from a tower, adds a psychological and nostalgic connotation to the piece. The audio is a peaceful call to prayer recorded by Hafez from his home's balcony in his last pre-war visit to Damascus. "The notion of a lit space with pre-war sound recordings does not only add a fourth dimension to the work, but perhaps a sense of defiance as well, resembling an ironic attribute to the Syrian will power necessary to overcome all hardships"⁵². Although Hafez depicted scenes of destruction with simplest details to augment their realistic sensation, the lit space and the recording imply a nostalgic feeling among Syrians and hint messages for peace.

⁵² Hafez, M. *Mohamad Hafez*. [Viewed 20 June 2019]. Available from: <http://www.mohamadhafez.com/Collateral-Damage>



Mohamad Hafez, Collateral Damage. Mixed Media. 90 x 90 x 120 cm.

Another touching work depicting the destruction of Syria is titled *Lovers*, by *Lens Young Homs*. *Lens Young Homs* is a group of photographers that utilize their work to address the war in Syria. Similar to the groups *Alshaab Alsori Aref Tareeko* and *Kartoneh*, discussed in section 3.2.2., *Lens Young Homs* is a group of artists and activists dedicated to reflect

the situation in Syria. Using photography as their mode of expression, artists of this group produced an amount of work to reveal and spread images of the conflict. In their work titled *Lovers*, we see amidst the rubble a frame holding the photo of a couple with the words “love is ... being together” inscribed on it. Upon seeing the work, destruction is marginalized compared to the sight of the couple’s photo. The viewer is emotionally influenced by the photo of two lovers amidst the destruction. Giving the work another emotional and psychological dimension, *Lens Young Homs* compels us to consider the lives of the people in the image who once inhabited the destroyed site. The work depicts the destruction while it underscores its effect on the lives of the people who used to dwell there. The viewer is not attracted by the horror of the destruction in this artwork, but is rather intrigued by the lives of this couple and their whereabouts amidst the damage.



Lens Young Homs, Lovers.

Lots of other artworks depict the destruction in Syria, however, these discussed artworks exemplify how this theme was translated in art to reflect the devastation and suffering endured as a result of the war.

2.3.2. Expressing violence and emotional distress

After revealing how a country's destruction is represented in visual arts in Lebanon, Palestine and Syria, I analyze how human devastation is embodied as an effect of war. Human devastation is reflected in images displaying death, suffering, trauma, violence, loss, or any other aspect that psychologically or physically affects the individual. In this section, I inspect the art representations of the effects of wars on the individual's physical and psychological states. I examine the display of violence, death or torture as part of inspecting the physical effects of war imposed on individuals. On the other hand, I trace the psychological effects of the wars in images revealing emotional distress, trauma or loss. However, some artworks solely display violent scenes, others depict emotional distress without any reference to violence, and some works exhibit both, emotional distress and physical violence.

Depiction of violence in art is an historic phenomenon. Ancient Egyptians exhibited scenes of violence in what they believed to be the journey of the afterlife and human sacrifices, and so did many other ancient civilizations such as the Mayas, Romans and Greeks. Moreover, images of violence and human suffering are seen in Christian art and in the genre of historic painting, such as the ones exhibiting war battles. In modern and contemporary art, this phenomenon is also recurrent. However, as a collective artistic approach to display violence and emotional distress, we notice this kind of art prominent during times of collective suffering such as times of war, notable in the work of German Expressionists such as Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Otto Dix and George Grosz. Consequently, due the wars and the frequent crises in my countries of research, themes of violence and emotional suffering has tinted the art scenes.

It is important to note that artworks depicting violence and others displaying emotional distress are often interrelated, and that is why I choose to inspect both aspects in the same section. It is also important to mention that images revealing destruction, war incidents and many other war-related themes imply a sense of emotional suffering. Nonetheless, in this section, I intend to analyze works that highlight signs of emotional distress as a result of the war and others that display clear signs of violence. I analyze the ways physical and emotional traumas are addressed and show their different representations and the diverse approaches utilized to reflect them in accordance to the nature of each experienced war. I reveal the recurrent incorporation of these aspects in art and how frequently they are addressed in Lebanese, Palestinian and Syrian art. I also analyze the relationship between the appearance of these kinds of images and the nature of the war fought in each country. Beginning with the Syrian art scene, which is fraught with these presentations, I move on to the Lebanese art scene and last to the Palestinian.

Images of injury, death, loss, and grief are prominent in contemporary Syrian art characteristic of war. Upon studying this art, we notice a notable amount of works displaying violent images as well as those expressing emotional distress.

The depiction of bloody violent images in the Syrian art scene is remarkably noticeable. Some artists have went beyond exhibiting the image of a dead wounded body and displayed the physical violence that the dead had been subjected to. In this regard is artist Tarek Tuma's work titled *Hamza Bakkour*. Inspired by the tragic death of Hamza Bakkour (discussed in section 3.2.2), the artist depicts the details of Bakkour's injury. He painted the portrait of the child and applied dark red color dripping underneath thick brushstrokes covering the child's jaw, this is contrasted by the light blue and green colors behind the child's portrait, highlighting the horror of the incident. Although the artwork implies emotional distress, it doesn't plainly express it; the injury of the boy is the only concern.

The disruptive violence in the image is intentionally underscored to reveal the graveness of Bakkour's injury and the violence of the war in Syria.

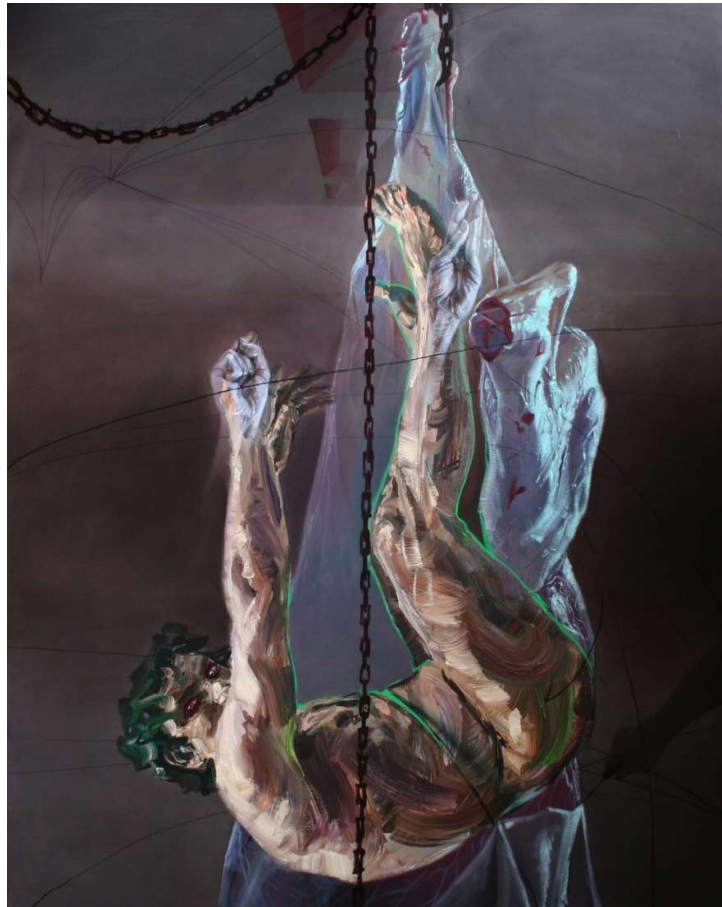


Tarek Tuma, 2013, *Hamza Bakkour*, Oil on canvas, 205 x 175 cm, from the series *Homo Sacer*, Courtesy of the Artist.

Other works expressing the violence of the Syrian war are painter Sara Shamma's artworks. Born to a Syrian father and Lebanese mother, Shamma's art was deeply impacted by the Syrian conflict. Her practice focuses on death and humanity and considers the impact of grief and deep internal emotions⁵³. Her artworks inspired by the Syrian war exhibit the physical violence and torture endured, in addition to the psychological state of the people undergoing the pain. Many of these artworks exhibit physical suffering with detached organs and disturbed body postures. In her following work titled *Meat* she exhibits the figure of a man hanged by his legs with a metal chain, similar to the way cows are hanged

⁵³ Shamma, S. (2019). *Sara Shamma - The website*. [Viewed 1 January 2010]. Available from: <http://sarashamma.art/?101>

in a slaughter house before being slayed. We see the man struggling to break the chain in vain. His eyes are fixed on the viewer as if asking for help or sympathy, and they are expressively painted with added red color to reveal his suffering. We also see what seems like body parts and internal organs covered with blood and plastic wrap, analogous to those used to cover raw meat, hanging from the chain above the man. This work underscores the physical violence that people has been subjected to in Syria, in addition, it hints at the emotional suffering and will to fight revealed in the man's struggling posture intending to break the chain despite his situation. The title of the work, *Meat*, obviously refers to the large amount of deaths and the way human lives in Syria are degraded becoming meat rather than individuals. This also gives another connotation to the work suggesting further psychological suffering and emotional distress.



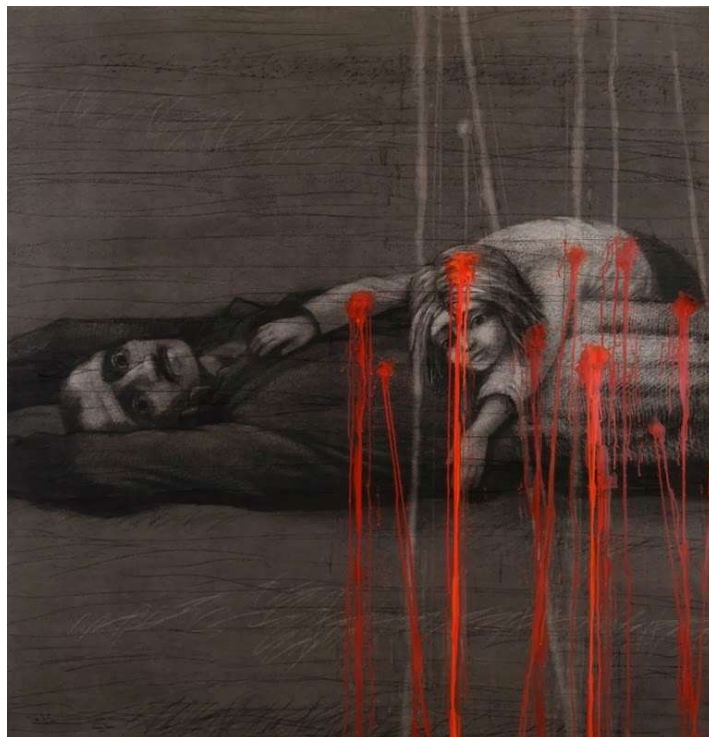
Sara Shamma, 2014. *Meat*. Oil and acrylic on canvas. 200x250 cm

Another work created by artist Sara Shamma displaying violent scene is *Mass Grave*. The painting displays decapitated heads in what appears like a swirl on the right side of the canvas, and on the left side, we see the image of a human brain floating but still connected to the heads with a highlighted strip passing through them on the other side. The drastic depiction of human heads disrupts the viewer and reflect the violence of the Syrian war. Moreover, the eyes of the heads do not resemble the eyes of a dead person; they are staring at the viewer while expressing ultimate pain. The artist draws our attention to the emotional expressions of pain in the eyes by the highlighted strip connecting them to the brain. *Mass Grave* mirrors the horrors of mass death in Syria and underscores the violence and emotional distress imposed by the Syrian war.



Sara Shamma, 2014. *Mass Grave*. Oil and acrylic on canvas. 200x250 cm

Artist Youssef Abdelké, who is known for his political views opposing the Syrian regime, also depicted the violence of the Syrian war and the psychological and emotional distress it caused. In the late 1970s, Abdelké was arrested for nearly two years because of his political position, then he went to Paris where he lived 25 years of compelled exile. In July 2013, he was arrested again in Syria by the regime forces and liberated five weeks later⁵⁴. Nonetheless, the artist didn't stop to express his opposition to Syria's regime and its brutal practice. His artworks displaying corpses referred to with titles of martyrs, massacres and dead civilians address the violence of the Syrian war. In the following work titled *Father and child*, Abdelké displays the image of a dead father with his dead child on top of him. Both bodies lay motionless on the ground with their eyes wide open. The painting is colored with black and white, except for few dripping spots of red, obviously referring to blood,

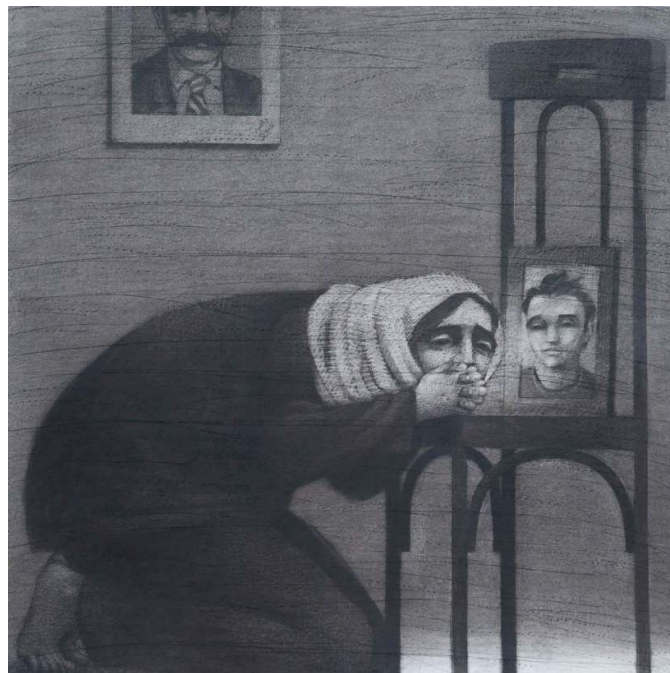


Youssef Abdelké, 2012, *Father and child*, charcoal and ink on paper 150x150 cm, Courtesy of Galerie Claude Lemand

⁵⁴ Galerie Tanit. *Youssef Abdelké*. [Viewed 1 January 2020]. Available from: <https://www.galerietanit.com/artist/abdelke>

highlighting the drama. The theme of a dead father with his daughter is disturbing in itself and Abdelké's approach underscored the suffering. The bodies look lifeless and the artist depicted them in a manner similar to a still life subject. Moreover, the space that surrounds the figures is all the same; we cannot distinguish if the background is a wall or continuation of the ground. This placement of the figures in this atmosphere underscores their presence and their physical state: cold, motionless, and dead. This disturbing scene of the brutalities of the war is one of many which Abdelké created revealing the violence of the war and, according to him, as a "tribute to the innocent victims of barbarism"⁵⁵.

Another work created by Youssef Abdelké evoking a feeling of loss, suffering and emotional distress, is titled *Martyr's Mother*. It shows a woman kneeling before a chair, over which a photograph of her dead son is placed. The mother clenches her hands over her mouth, struggling in pain because of her loss. Although violence isn't materialistically



Youssef Abdelké, *Martyr's mother*, 2012, Charcoal on paper mounted on wood. 100 x 101 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Tanit.

⁵⁵ Feugas, F., 2014. Youssef Abdelké, la mort dans l'art. *OrientXXI* [online]. [Viewed 5 May 2019]. Available from: <https://orientxxi.info/fr/auteur/francoise-feugas>.

displayed in the artwork, the expressive gestures of the suffering mother mourning her dead child affect the viewer. The artwork is also painted in black and white simulating death and suffering.

Abdelké created many other artworks displaying the suffering and violence of the Syrian war; mothers mourning their children and martyrs have become a recurrent theme in his work during the war. A painting shows a woman standing by a grave, another one displays the image of a woman carrying a picture of her dead son, another one shows a severed head and so on.

Among Syrian artists who displayed violent images to mirror the situation in Syria is Khalil Younes. In his following untitled work, he displays the image of a man holding a rifle with his head blown out. The decapitated body is still standing and the color of blood is basically white, which renders the violence of the image less disturbing. The theme of the work is violent but the way Younes approaches the subject, in a rather cartoonish depiction, along with his choice of colors and shapes diminish its fierceness. Emotional distress is not



Khalil Younes, 2011, Untitled, Ink on paper, 30x40 cm.

referred to explicitly, although the theme imposes it. In his own artistic approach, Younes depicted the violence of Syria without exhibiting the realistic details of its horrors.

Another work created by Younes displaying violence but in a rather diverse approach is *The Comb*. The artwork features a strange killing tool or war artefact with its killing part similar to a saw or a comb with sharp teeth and a gun shaped handle. The killing part of the tool seems sharp and piercing and is soiled with blood. Although this work doesn't show emotional stress or humans subjected to violence, the fierce tool depicted with blood stains implies its violent use for killing and torture. The brutality of this image conveys an underlying message about the violence of war, although suffering and emotional distress are not explicitly revealed.



Khalil Younes, 2011, The Comb, Ink on paper, 50x40 cm.

A recurrent theme suggesting emotional distress suffered by Syrians is also manifested in images displaying the Syrian refugee crisis. After the Syrian revolution and the outbreak of the war, many Syrian artists portrayed people carrying their possessions compelled to

leave their country and their means of transportation. The theme of refugees has been handled through diverse artistic approaches and media; painting, photography, video art, sculpture and installation work have been utilized to address it. However, I choose to present this theme through the works of Syrian artist Abdalla Al Omari, who has dedicated a series titled *The Vulnerability Series* to address this issue. In this series, Al Omari displays images of refugees with their ragged clothes and bare feet walking towards their asylum. However, the prominent feature of this series is that instead of depicting images of real refugees or unknown people, Al Omari portrays major political figures as refugees. The American president, Bashar Al Assad and other well-known politicians are portrayed to give a further connotation to these artworks. Expressions of emotional distress are visible on the faces of these refugees who are displayed solely, in migrating groups, or waiting in a queue. In the following painting, refugees are depicted standing in a queue waiting for their turn to fill their pots with food. Expressions of exhaustion and suffering are apparent on their faces suggesting the emotional distress suffered by such people. However, to our surprise, these people are not any refugees; they are the artist himself (third figure), Barak Obama (fourth figure), Kim Jong-un (fifth figure), Vladimir Putin (eighth figure) and Bashar Al Assad (ninth figure) along with other people. By putting these politicians among refugees, the artist is giving his artwork a further dimension; he is imposing this situation on people who are very far from experiencing such a distress. He is exposing the Syrian crisis in a way that demands others to put themselves in these refugees' shoes, urging them to consider the emotional distress caused by such a tragedy.



Al Omari, 2016. *The Queue*. Courtesy Ayyam Gallery.

Similar to his painting *The Queue*, in his following work *Donald*, Al Omari displays the image of the American president, Donald Trump, as a refugee holding his child on his back. Expressions of distress are shown on the soiled face of the refugee holding a photo of his family in one hand, his daughter and a bag in the other hand and a sleeping mattress on his back. The portrayal of Donald Trump in a detailed depiction as a refugee urges the viewer to contemplate the possibility that anyone, under certain circumstances, can become as such.



Al Omari. *Donald*, 2016. Courtesy of Ayyam Gallery.

Al Omari's *The Vulnerability Series* serves as a moral request addressed to the politicians to stop the crisis and encourage people to sympathize with the Syrian refugees hinting that any person may be exposed to live such circumstances.

The contemporary art scene in Syria during the war is fraught with artworks depicting violence and emotional distress. However, my aim here is to reveal how these aspects influenced the art scene and exemplify diverse ways utilized to highlight them.

After exemplifying the depiction of violence and emotional distress in art characteristic of war in Syria, I move forward to inspect this topic in the Lebanese art scene. As mentioned earlier, compared to Syrian and Palestinian artists, Lebanese artists, except for a few, rarely displayed specific incidents during the civil war; some had expressed the horrors of it in general, some had depicted some of its incidents and its aftermath after the war ended and others displayed specific conflicts that followed. The major body of work handling the civil war addresses its aftermath stressing the concept of collective amnesia, remembrance and the fact that it was not discussed, confronted and documented. However, few artists did display images of the war and its incident amidst its duration, but as a collective approach handling this theme, it happened after the civil war ended. Therefore, despite the distinguished violence during the civil war and its long duration for fifteen years, bloody violent images do not occupy a large sector of the Lebanese art scene, at least compared to the Syrian. Moreover, depicting violent subjects in art as a collective approach is not planned by artists, but rather a reaction to the witnessed savageness that happened and is most ignited and expressed during its happening and not afterwards. As a result, we find in the Lebanese art scene only few depictions of violent scenes. As for the expression of emotional distress as a result of war, knowing that war causes this condition during its happening as well as afterwards, and its effects usually last more than a reaction to violence, we see lots of artworks expressing emotional suffering.

Among the major artworks depicting the violence of the civil war during its term is Aref El Rayyes's series *The Road to Peace*. With the outbreak of the civil war, El Rayyes was in Algeria where he created this series of drawings and etchings to interpret the tragic events in art⁵⁶. The following drawing, *Safety of the Chair*, is part of this series where the artist depicted the dead bodies and the brutality of the killing and raping that took place during the war. A pile of bodies amidst the rubbles of a destroyed house disrupts the viewer who is unable to count them or distinguish each one separately. El Rayyes's pile of bodies displays the violence and mass killing that happened during the Lebanese civil war. The artist also didn't neglect to show the raping that happened and underscored this issue in depicting the body of a woman with naked lower part and scars on her thighs to display the violence she endured. Moreover, upon viewing the bodies' faces, we notice expressions of pain rather than frozen gazes of dead people, implying feelings of suffering and emotional distress. Another worthwhile aspect to mention is the sarcastic title El Rayyes gave this drawing, *Safety of the Chair*, ironically depicting a safe chair amidst the destruction and the devastation of human lives. In addition, showing dead bodies scattered over and under the rubble while the chair remained intact, is a suggestion about the cheapness of human lives during wars. El Rayyes displayed the violence along with the devaluation of people's lives, the latter further implies emotional distress and psychological suffering experienced by people living under such conditions.

⁵⁶ Agial Art Gallery, (2020). *Rayess, Aref*. [Viewed 1 January 2020]. Available from: <http://www.agialart.com/Artists/Details/29/Rayess-Aref>



Aref El Rayyes, 1976, *Safety of the Chair* from the series *Road to Peace*.

El Rayyes displayed the horrors of the war and highlighted the psychological aspect regarding the devaluation of human lives during the Lebanese civil war in his series *The Road to Peace*. However, what is outstanding about this series is its reflection of El Rayyes's own suffering and psychological reaction to the war. We notice that in the first period, he depicted scenes of the war and some specific incidents, showing the violence in the killing, raping, decapitation, torture and others, while in the last part of the series, dead bodies are depicted similar to bricks or rubble displayed on a stage. In this regard, I categorize the following drawing as showing the violence of the war reflected through the artist's own devastation and emotional distress. Human bodies are part of the rubble, undistinguished from it except in the few lines depicting the features of the faces or arms and feet. Death became daily news, killing a practice, and human lives degraded to lifeless objects. This feeling of loss, psychological suffering and emotional distress is notably detected in the following drawing.



Aref El Rayyes, 1976, from the series *Road to Peace*.

Another artist who displayed the violence of the war amidst its duration is Abdel Hamid Baalbaki whose artistic path was distinguished by his rural origins and his empathy towards the working classes. In 1977, Baalbaki created his artwork entitled *War* depicting through a symbolic scheme the violence of despair that tormented Lebanon and its inhabitants⁵⁷. The work, reminiscent of that of Picasso's *Guernica*, displays the horror and suffering encountered during the civil war. In the background, houses are burning, in the middle, we see falling buildings and opponents fighting, with no reference to their political or religious affiliation since both were depicted in metal armors and holding sharp spears. On the right, a woman is veiled in black, referring to a Muslim religious identity, is shown mourning a dead person who appears to be her child according to its size. In the foreground, we see a bunch of people screaming in fear of the fighters and of a red rooster attacking them. The

⁵⁷ Sarader Collection, (2020). *Abdel-Hamid Baalbaki: The lost-and sometimes found-murals*. [Viewed 1 January 2020]. Available from: <http://www.saradarcollection.com/saradar-collection/english/programes/adel-hamid-baalbaki>

fighting of different opponents and the presence of a third one, the rooster, mirrors the Lebanese civil war which, as explained, was not restricted to a war between two enemies only. In this painting, Baalbaki exhibits violence in the killing, fire, fighting and destruction, and emotional distress is obvious in the fear of the people and the mourning woman.



Abed Baalbaki, *War*, 1977, oil on canvas, 208 x 371 cm.

Depiction of violence is apparent in some more artworks created during the war depicting dead bodies, fighters and war artefacts. However, in those artworks, the intensity of the depicted violence is analogous to the ones presented here, which are obviously less severe than those of the Syrian art scene. I underscore this issue in the presented artworks and move on to show others that handle this theme after the end of the civil war.

Among the few artists who exhibited violent images about the civil war after it ended is Alfred Tarazi. In his series, *The Senseless Realm*, Tarazi displays images of the dead, kidnapped and fighters, as well as violent stories of the war. From this series, his following work titled *Portals* displays images of people who were lost during the war and, underneath them, fighters holding their rifles. In the middle of the artwork we are disturbed by a bullet

hole that seems to breach the glass protecting the image, along with two hands holding human ears detached from the body.



Alfred Tarazi, 2015. Portals. Giclee prints on Hahnemühle paper in stainless steel box, glass, 110 × 70 × 13 cm.

Despite the displayed violence in the artwork and knowing that Tarazi didn't produce it as a direct response to the witnessed horror, we sense that his intention is not urging the viewer to feel sympathy. Images of the dead or lost are presented as records with no reference to any emotional distress or suffering. In addition, violence is depicted as a projection of historical events and not as an artistic response to the horrors of war. With no intention to draw the viewers' sympathy, Tarazi aims to illuminate the dark points of the civil war that has ravaged the country. His work revolves around the memory of the civil war and positioning himself as an instigator to try and mend, understand and reconnect with a time that blacked out Lebanon. By creating collages and superimposing photos of the war, "the viewer is set in a position of the witness, where recollection is inevitable"¹. Similar to other

¹ Tarazi, A. *Alfred Tarazi*. [Viewed 10 May 2019]. Available <http://therunninghorseart.com/artist/details/2/123-alfred-tarazi>

Lebanese artists who handled the theme of war to serve as stimulants for remembering, Tarazi intentionally presents violence as a record of the civil war. He displays the violence of the civil war and the emotional distress it caused as a reminder, so that Lebanese may recall their undocumented history and learn their lesson.

Other than Alfred Tarazi, the theme of violence after the war ended is not very recurrent in the Lebanese art scene. Although destruction is an act of violence but by 'violence' here I am referring to the damage of humans' physical state. Emotional distress, however, is revealed as an aftermath of the war, such as handling the theme of the kidnapped. Lebanese artists express the emotional distress that the war had caused in displaying narratives of the war, mostly in video works. An example of this is Lamia Joreige's video, discussed in section 2.2.2, *Here and Perhaps Elsewhere*, where she is filmed walking in Beirut and asking residents: 'Do you know anyone who was kidnapped from here during the war?' In this video, Joreige is tackling issues that has caused emotional distress to people, and, at the same time, she is causing it by opening their wounds.

Another video that addresses the issue of the kidnapped is Khalil Joreige and Joana Hadjithomas's film *A Perfect Day* (also discussed in section 2.2.2), which displays the suffering and emotional distress of the wife of a kidnapped person.

An installation work that also highlights the emotional distress caused by loss of a husband, but here it is induced by death and not kidnapping, is Mouna Bassili Sehnaoui's *After Two Months*. The installation combines three components: the painting *Days of Antar*, *The Widows* and *The Suitcase*. Each is a work of art on its own with an accompanying text, but only two are discussed here due to their relevance to my topic. On the suitcase the words *After two months everything will be solved* are written in Arabic, referring to the end of the civil war and the conflicts experienced in



Mouna Bassili Sehnaoui, 2008, *After Two Months*.

Lebanon. The text next to the piece explains it all; it reads: “How many times have we heard and repeated the phrase, ‘after two months all will be well?’ Thus, in the middle of planning, to leave or not to leave?”¹. This opens the vaults of memory into recollecting the state of Lebanese and their emotional distress during the war.

Another piece of this installation, of importance to this discussion, is the piece titled *The Widows*, which is the black jacket. It relates to the emotional distress, sorrow and suffering shared by many Lebanese women who were widowed during the civil war. Beside the

¹ Amaya-Akkermans, A. (2016). Mouna Bassili Sehnaoui On Painting: The Lebanese Civil War. *Culture Trip* [online]. [Viewed 3 February 2019]. Available from: <https://theculturetrip.com/middle-east/lebanon/articles/mouna-bassili-sehnaoui-on-painting-the-lebanese-civil-war/>

jacket, the accompanying text reads: “The tragic role of young widows is to clear away the remnants of their dead husbands. Long after someone dies, his particular odors remain on the clothes in his closet. After the death of their loved ones, women from all communities are brought together in the same gut-rending sorrow”¹. This work and its accompanying text, which further augments the drama, address the loss of a husband and evokes feelings of emotional distress especially for those people who experienced it. Here, the artist approaches written narratives to evoke emotional distress, free from any displayed violence, further revealing how most artworks addressing emotional distress after the war had ended took the form of a narrative display, whether written or told in video work.

As discussed, Lebanese art characteristic of war is not fraught with images displaying physical violence, whereas emotional distress is predominantly reflected in narratives as an aftermath of the war basically serving as a tool for remembrance.

I move on to the last part of this section to inspect the appearance of violent images and the representation of emotional distress in the Palestinian art scene. As said, Palestinian art cannot be separated from the circumstances in Palestine and any art specific of this situation is actually addressing the Palestinian cause. Due to the occupation, Palestinian artists are disintegrated across the world and their art is differentiated according to artists who remained in Palestine and produced their work there and others who left the country and have been living and creating their work in exile. The first group is generally characterized by following a figurative approach, whereas the latter group, who had experienced abroad and haven’t been exposed to the daily life and struggle in Palestine, mostly utilizes a conceptual or abstract approach in addressing the Palestinian cause. According to Palestinian artist and historian Kamal Boullata, “the closer the artists live to the home

¹ *Ibid.*

culture, the more figurative their art, and the farther away they settle the more their art evolves into abstraction”¹. Although violence and emotional distress can be addressed in a conceptual, abstract or figurative approach, I, nonetheless, had to note this since one might expect that artists living under occupation expose these issues more compared to the others. However, in what follows I demonstrate how both groups of artists addressed these issues, albeit in different artistic approaches. While those who remained in Palestine expressed emotional distress in displaying the horrors of living under occupation, the others did so by exposing the hardship of living in exile. By exposing the violence Palestinians endure, the suffering of being expelled of their homes, their inability to return to their homeland, or any hardship they were subjected to, Palestinian artists reflect their cause and the struggle of their people.

“Since 1967, the work of Palestinian artists produced under Israeli occupation revealed anger and resentment. Working under difficult and sometimes very disrupted conditions, artists have attempted to express their defiance in their art work”². Among those is renowned Palestinian artist Suleiman Mansour who has been committed in his art to handle his people’s cause expressing the injustice they have suffered. His work *Bride of the Nation* dedicated to a schoolgirl who was killed by the Israel Defense Forces in 1976, which was confiscated by the Israeli government³, is exemplary of this. In a woeful way, the girl lies lifeless on the ground with blood spilling under her head. Nonetheless, despite the saddening scene of the girl stretched on the ground with blood spilling from her head, the image is not disruptive in its violence but rather saddening from the reality of its happening. In other words, the exhibited violence in itself is neither repulsive nor provocative to the

¹ Fidda, R. 2007. *Art in Palestine: Palestinian Women Artists*. Palestinian Art Court- al Hoash. P. 59.

² Zuhur, S., ed., 2001. *Op. Cit.*, P. 379.

³ Walsh, D., (2009). *The Palestine Poster Project Archives*. [Viewed 5 December 2018]. Available from: <https://www.palestineposterproject.org/poster/bride-of-the-homeland>

viewer although the whole scene and its reality stimulate a feeling of sadness and sympathy with the issue. The purpose of this exhibition is not disrupting the viewer by the image of blood since Mansour has simplified it with a patch of orange paint on the grass, and the girl's dead body reveals peace and tranquility rather than violence. The fact that her posture and expressions reveal serenity is further underscored by the rays of light in the



Suleiman Mansour, 1976, *Bride of the Nation*.

background. In addition, the title of the work, *Bride of the Nation*, implies that the artist displayed this murder to highlight his national cause, including the distress Palestinians endure in their homeland.

Another work created by Mansour exhibiting the violence and emotional distress Palestinian suffer is titled *Prison*. The painting displays the image of five men with bags covering their heads and their hands cuffed in a prison cell. Again, exhibiting the reality of living under occupation in a straightforward approach. The violence these men are

subjected to is displayed in their imprisonment and their covered heads and cuffed hands, and so is their emotional distress.



Suleiman Mansour, 1982, Prison. Oil on canvas, 71 x 60 cm. Courtesy of Gallery One and Artist.

Mansour, like other artists living in Palestine, didn't resort to displaying bloody violent images, although he exposed the violence and emotional distress felt by Palestinians while highlighting their persistence and cause. Artists "living in the West Bank Like Suleiman Mansour [... and others] and in the Ghaza Strip resorted to non-violent, artistic expression of nationalism in order to be able to display their paintings without offending and incurring the wrath of the occupying authorities"¹. In doing so, they exhibit their suffering and their cause without exposing disruptive violence.

A work expressing the violence of the Israeli invasion, although produced as a reaction to its violence in Beirut, yet affecting Palestinians in Lebanon, is Mona Hatoum's

¹ Zuhur, S., ed., 2001. *Op. Cit.*, P. 379.

performance *The Negotiating Table*, discussed in section 2.2.2. In *The Negotiating Table*, Hatoum displays physical violence through bandages drenched with blood and covering her whole body which is heaped with raw organs. The bloody violent scene in itself is not a real depiction of specific incident, but rather an expression of the violence endured due to the invasion. Although not a direct depiction of reality, the violent scene of the performance disturbs the viewer and evokes the suffering and emotional distress caused by war. “[T]he negotiating table documents Hatoum's ability to provoke both an intellectual and sensory response in the viewer and, more importantly, one that engages the particular socio-political circumstances within a broader discourse on violence and oppression”².

Mona Hatoum was born in Beirut, to a Palestinian family who, like thousands of Palestinians, had to leave their homeland. Later, when the civil war broke out in Lebanon, she was having a short visit to London but had to settle there, leaving her family and unable to return. So she was born in exile and yet forced to face another one. In her video *Measures of Distance*, she expresses emotional distress in addressing her situation as an exile, evoking the story of millions of Palestinians who were forced to leave their homes. This shows that even if exile moved Palestinian artists away from physical danger, most have remained morally committed to their cause and have strived to convey the essence of their plight. Hatoum speaks about her exile, displacement, separation and loss as a result of the wars. The video is about letters written by Hatoum's mother to her daughter in London. Hatoum reads a letter aloud in English while the words appear on the screen as Arabic text moving over slides on her mother's naked body in the shower. During which, we can also hear taped intimate conversations in Arabic between the mother and her daughter. She reads: “Being born in exile in a country which doesn't want you is not fun at all. And now that you and your sisters have left Lebanon, you're again living in another exile in a

² Amirsadeghi, H., Mikdadi, S. and Shabout, N., 2009. *Op. Cit.*, P. 152.

culture that is totally different than your own. So when you talk about a feeling of fragmentation and not knowing where you really belong, well, this has been a painful reality for all our people”³. This narrative clearly highlights the emotional distress Hatoum and other Palestinians have experienced in exile. It is an open confession addressing loss,



Mona Hatoum, 1988. *Measures of Distance*. Video.

suffering, and distress as a result of the Israeli occupation. Unlike *The Negotiating Table* in displaying violence, *Measures of Distance* manifests the emotional effects of the war.

Other projects for Hatoum “sustain an interest in the precarious relationship between the languages of formal of aesthetics and militarized violence”⁴. In this regard is her work *Doormat* where she uses sharp metal pins to create a doormat with the word ‘welcome’ inscribed on it. “[T]he word ‘welcome’ is made with shorter pins, so it’s like a little recess within the surface of the mat. From a distance you see the word clearly, but when you get

³ Dailymotion, (1988). *Measures of Distance* [video]. By Mona Hatoum [Viewed 5 June 2018]. Available from: <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x31gw4>

⁴ *Idem.*, P. 37.

close and you look down at it, the word almost disappears”⁵. The use of sharp pins in an object which is supposed to be at the door welcoming the guest, is no longer suggesting the warmth of an invitation but rather an implication to violence. Here, Hatoum solely addresses violence as an act with no reference to specific circumstances, but knowing her background we can understand her tendency to display such a theme. Moreover, the word



Mona Hatoum, 1996. *Doormat, stainless steel pins on canvas.*

‘welcome’ ironically suggests warmth since it disappears when we approach the work and what remains is the fierceness of the sharp pins and the violence it suggests.

Implications of dislocation as a result of Hatoum’s exile are recurrent in her work suggesting the emotional distress it drives. This is exemplified in her work *Grater Divide*. In the installation, what is supposed to be a kitchen utensil is augmented in size and displaced from its original environment. The displacement of an object from its original place is analogous to the displacement of Palestinians from their homeland. “Hatoum frequently plays with contradictions, such as hard and soft, pain and comfort, to suggest

⁵ Hatoum, M., Archer, M., Brett, G. and de Zegher, M.C., 1997. *Op. Cit.*, P. 13.

the menacing within the mundane. [...] She often seeks to agitate and challenge viewers with her work”⁶. Her conceptual approach in addressing the theme of exile implies a feeling of emotional distress experienced by the artist herself in exile. This theme of dislocation is suggested in many of Hatoum’s work, as critic “Edward Said and others have elucidated,



Mona Hatoum, 2002. *Grater Divide*.

the power of Hatoum's work resides in her ability to create a visceral sensation of dislocation, an aesthetic allusion to the real-life experience of exile”⁷.

Not only Mona Hatoum addresses this topic, the whole Palestinian art scene is fraught with artworks exhibiting the theme of exile with various expressions of emotional distress. These expose the fact that Palestinians were violently expelled from their homes and forced to leave their homeland.

In a different artistic approach to that of Hatoum’s, Ismael Shammout’s works *Beginning of the Tragedy* and *A Sip of Water*, discussed in section 1.2.2., are exemplary representations of the emotional distress suffered as a result of exile. Depicted in a realistic

⁶ Komaroff, L., 2015. *Islamic Art Now: Contemporary Art of the Middle East*. Los Angeles County Museum of Art. P. 59.

⁷ Amirsadeghi, H., Mikdadi, S. and Shabout, N., 2009. *Op. Cit.*, P. 37.

manner, tattered refugees appear with their expressive gestures of pain, loss, suffering, exhaustion, and struggling to survive. The scenarios of these artworks resonate with the reality of the Palestinian plight, underscoring the emotional distress experienced as a result of their deportation. The imagery in Ismail Shammout's work has become a central influence of the imagery representing the Palestinian experience of loss, exile and estrangement after 1948.

Emotional distress is also represented as a result of loss among many Palestinian artists. Among these is Taysser Barakat who used his expressive style to highlight the Palestinian cause. In his artwork titled *Mother and Child*, Barakat displays the image of a mother and her child, both dead and stretched in space. The figures seem to be floating and flowing in the background which is painted with repeated curved-line motifs similar to a flowing river. The expressive faces of the figures augment the emotional distress suggested by the theme and their bodies appear attached, inseparable in a lasting embrace. The theme of death presented here implies a violent act of killing, nonetheless, the figures appear peaceful and the painting doesn't reveal any kind of violence.



Taysser Barakat, *Mother and Child*, 2019, Acrylic on canvas, 41 × 47 cm, Zawyeh Gallery.



Tayseer Barakat, *Father*, 1997. Wood. 125 x 85 x 85 cm.

Another work addressing emotional distress from the artist's own experience is Tayseer Barakat's installation titled *Father*, where we follow the life of his father from the time before he was expelled from his home to his death in a refugee camp. The artist illustrates his father's life through a series of images

displayed within the drawers of an architectural cabinet. At first, the work appears to be nothing more than a wooden cabinet, but when the viewer opens each of the drawers a deep personal story begins to unfold: Inside each drawer, a day in the life of the artist's father has been scorched into the wood. The father's story is presented in its different stages; home, diaspora, and exile⁸. The work has an evocative power not just in recording personal history but in corresponding to the lives of many Palestinians who experienced exile. The artwork is evoked from Barakat's own experience of loss, however, it addresses the emotional distress suffered by many Palestinians and highlights their cause.

The question of estrangement and alienation experienced in exile notably influenced the choice of themes for many Palestinian artists. Such themes had been articulated by a generation of Palestinian artists in exile, focusing on the emotional distress they suffered. Depictions of emotional distress suggested in pain and hardships faced by Palestinians, including images of father figures, children and trails of lost people exiled from their homeland are very recurrent. On the other hand, violent images haven't been frequently

⁸ Eshelman, R., (2005). "Made in Palestine" exhibit. *The Electronic Intifada* [online]. [Viewed on 2 May 2019]. Available from: <https://artforces.org/exhibitions/made-in-palestine/>

displayed, although some works imply such acts but their representations mostly do not disrupt the viewer by their intensified fierceness.

4.2. Reasons for the accomplishment of these artworks and their relationship to the wars, by way of a conclusion

In the previous sections of this chapter, I reveal few of the impacts of wars on contemporary visual arts in Lebanon, Palestine and Syria. After offering an historical overview of the wars, I show how aspects of wars and their incidents were translated in art. Aspects such as war events, destruction, loss, exile, emotional distress and violence were inspected in artworks characteristic of war, and so were their diverse representations. By doing so, I have been seeking response to my research question which inquires into the relationship between the kinds of wars experienced and the artistic output in the three countries. In the previous sections, I show the translation of war incidents and the reflection of violence and emotional distress demonstrating their diverse representations in the three art scenes.

Moving forward to this final section of chapter two, I analyze my inspected results to reveal the reasons for the accomplishments of these artworks and for the diverse representations in reference to the kinds of wars fought. This further draws attention on the relationship between the specificity of the war and the artistic production. In this regard is relating the nature of the Syrian war to the recurrent and prominent presence of violent images in art. Therefore, I reveal how different artistic responses to crises are born out of the specific characteristics of each of the fought wars. However, the following analysis is not intended to be a comprehensive study of all the effects of war on this art, but rather a psychosocial analysis to highlight the psychological and social effects of war on the three art scenes. These are main influences that played pivotal roles in shaping the development of this art.

These effects underscore the fact that art characteristic of war in these three countries is not equal or uniform, but in direct relationship with the different kinds of wars fought. Nonetheless, despite this arts' relevance with the specific circumstances of each country, it is still internationally comprehensible while reflecting national struggle. Artists of these countries have circulated their own lived realities as well as their fellow nationals', and expressed in their art the influence of war on personal, social, psychological and national levels.

As seen, despite the fact that this art was a response to the wars, the representations, approaches and depicted themes highly vary among the three art scenes. Aiming to analyze the reasons for this variation and for the appearance of these issues in art and linking them to the kinds of wars experienced, I continue this section.

One of the basic postulates concerning the effects of war on a nation is that it causes a major change, which, undoubtedly, includes a change in the art scene. Just as wars cause a major change, which is a point proven in chapter one, they also alter the artistic representations in a country and the recurrent themes. Wars have stimulated artists' imagination and motivated them to express its horrors in their work, thus causing a shift from pre-war art and its themes. "War in the Middle East has been, without doubt, the foremost driver of world interest in modern and contemporary Arab art during the last two decades"⁹. Art characteristic of war is not created as a trend or imitation of an art movement, but as a response to the outrageous circumstances of war witnessed or experienced by artists. For this reason, we find many artworks, in the three art scenes, fraught with intense emotional representations. However, these representations varied according to the kind of horrors experienced. In this section, I analyze and elucidate the relationship between the recurrent

⁹ *Idem.*, P. 20.

artistic representations of specific aspects corresponding to the war in the country, in addition to inspecting the reasons for these representations. I start with the Lebanese art scene, followed by the Syrian and end with the Palestinian art scene.

As mentioned previously, there is no unified version of history of the civil war in Lebanon, where each political party managed to document it according to its own agenda, and each political party and religious sect possess their own collective memory concerning the war. However, “[t]he legacy of the Lebanese Wars cannot only be measured in the remnants of physical destruction or in the biographies of its survivors, including this generation of artists. The wars also changed the way images of conflict were perceived and, more specifically, contributed to a growing sense of their unreality”¹⁰. The inability of Lebanese to agree upon a unified history and share a uniform collective memory have created a schism in its society. The schism was not overcome after the end of the war, but still persists to a certain degree until our present day. Instead of aiming for a reconciliation after the war ended, perhaps this might help Lebanese confront their differences and affirm their similarities while unifying their nationality, the war was expected to be forgotten after the signing of Al Taif records. However, after the civil war ended many artists have utilized their work to urge Lebanese confront what happened during the war, perhaps by facing their history they might aim for reconciliation, peace and unity in order not to repeat the same mistakes. “Many Lebanese artists [...] have been dealing for over a decade with the ghosts of the civil war and the nation’s amnesia that ensued, by exemplifying a willful stubbornness to excavate personal and collective memory and tell narrative that have become sedimented in the rubble of destroyed buildings”¹¹. The presented works of the Lebanese art scene act as reminders of a period labelled to be forgotten, interpreting the

¹⁰ Elias, C., (2004). *Op. Cit.*

¹¹ Sloman, P. ed., 2009. *Op. Cit.*, P. 15.

notion that forgetfulness will not solve the problem, but rather renders its repetition more likely. By reminding Lebanese of their history, they might acknowledge the flaws of their actions or those of their political parties so that the same mistakes will not be repeated again. Moreover, by narrating and confronting this unwritten history, these artists, perhaps unintentionally, have contributed in promoting unity through a shared tragedy. Although, many of these artists do not explicitly promote a national identity, on the contrary, many claim the opposite, their representations of history play this role. By displaying the theme of war and its aftermath, reminding of war events, loss and suffering, these artists have contributed in reconstructing a Lebanese national identity, albeit unintentionally.

Artists Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige noted that in the minds of many Lebanese “the war had been put into brackets” as if it did not even happen¹². Many of their work aim to study the aftermath of the war in narratives resurrecting a forgotten history, such as their film *A Perfect Day* (discussed in section 2.2.2). Another work that explicitly foregrounds the symptoms of traumatic memory and questions the living’s responsibility to the dead is Lamia Joriege’s *Here and Perhaps Elsewhere* 2003 (also discussed in section 2.2.2). These works are exemplary of some artists’ intentions to resurrect historical events of the civil war, in order for Lebanese to confront what happened and not to repeat the same mistakes again.

However, as mentioned previously, artists have noticed the inappropriate consequences of not documenting a unified Lebanese history of the war, which resulted in collective amnesia and misinterpretation of events, and took it as part of their task to address this issue in their work. This is explicitly stated by artist Zena El Khalil who documented, out of her own personal experience, the 2006 Israeli invasion of Lebanon on her blog. She says,

¹² Chad, E., *Op. Cit.*

“writing was my way of contributing to establishing a “history” of a specific time and place. Like other artists of my age, I am interested in the syndrome of collective amnesia in Lebanon”¹³.

Many other artists, discussed in the previous sections of this chapter, such as Lamia Joriege, Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige, have centered their art around questions of war, trauma, and memory. Such artists have worked across fields of photography, video, and live performance, and have directly shaped each other’s practices creating artworks that provide platforms for the critical examination and recovery of collective memory in Lebanon. By conducting archival research, unearthing ephemeral artefacts, taking up questions of traumatic memory and collecting eyewitness testimonies, these artists seek to bear witness to the physical violence of the recent past and to the damage it caused. Their work is fraught with questions about the aftermath of the civil war instead of presenting its realistic events. “Thus, rather than confine their gaze to images of war, they are more interested in ‘what the war did to the images’”¹⁴. In other words, these artists resurrect the history of the war in their art to reveal its consequences including the horror, loss, and damage it caused, perhaps the audience might recollect and reflect on the past in order to project onto the future.

The fact that artists didn’t “confine their gaze to images of war” and were interested in its aftermath, in addition to the rare artistic depictions of war events during its term, resulted in a scarce display of bloody violent images. Instead artists display narratives of the war and its consequences, which include the physical destruction of the country, as a

¹³ Barjeel Art Foundation, (2015). *Mandy Merzaban interviews artist Zena El Khalil*. [Viewed on 5 May 2019]. Available from: <https://www.barjeelartfoundation.org/downloads/mandy-merzaban-interviews-artist-zena-el-khalil/>

¹⁴ Chad, E., (2004). *Op. Cit.*

presentation of its aftermath, such as the works of Ayman Baalbaki, discussed in section 1.3.2.

The major body of work characteristic of the Lebanese civil war do not depict specific incidents as mere historical documentation of events, but rather as an acknowledgement of the war and its aftermath. By revealing consequences of the civil war, artists have aimed for the audience to confront the aftermath of bloody events rather than presenting them. They have dealt “with images that do not simply capture a fully resolved moment in the past but rather resurrect a dormant and unprocessed history”¹. Artists Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joriege have theorized this condition of amnesia since the end of the civil war as a psychoanalytically-informed notion of latency, declaring that latency evokes what is often felt in Beirut, in face of the dominant amnesia prevailing since the end of the civil war². By making Lebanese confront the civil war and its consequences, these artists have aimed to construct awareness about the errors that have split the country for more than fifteen years and still jeopardize its unity. One of the basic reasons for creating works displaying aspects of the Lebanese civil war is that these artists do not agree with folding this page of history the way it was done. They consider that in order for the war not to be repeated again, Lebanese must know the history to confront what happened and reconcile with each other to maintain peace in the future.

In a country traumatized by a history of unspeakable violence, “echoes of the civil war still reverberate through the episodes of instability [...] and this is reflected to a degree throughout the art scene”³. Hoping to ease the suffering, Lebanese wanted to forget the war, but forgetting can lead to committing the same mistakes. Lebanese art characteristic

¹ *Ibid.*

² Hadjithomas, J. and Joriege, K., 2002. Latency. In *Home Works: A Forum on Cultural Practices in the Region*. P.40.

³ Sloman, P. ed., 2009. *Op. Cit.*, P. 14.

of war addresses this issue and hence it's directly related to the nature of the present situation in Lebanon as a result of the civil war. It evokes the horrors of the war back to the Lebanese consciousness reminding them of the suffering by connecting with the viewer on a personal level. By doing so, this art has served as a constant reminder of the pain and the mistakes, so that people do not fall into the same errors again.

Moving on to the Syrian art scene characteristic of war, we notice that war events were repeatedly documented, emotional distress was frequently addressed and images of violence and destruction occupied a prominent number of artworks. From almost the beginning of the revolution "street protests were accompanied by various forms of creative dissident expression, distributed and amplified through online social networks"¹. Nonetheless, whether artworks reflecting the war in Syria were created as an opposition to the regime or not, they have mirrored the horrors of this war in details and expressed the artists' discontent with the situation.

Since 2011, the Syrian conflict has generated hundreds of images of destruction and desolation. This is a common artistic response to the awful sight of what have happened in the country after continuous shelling and raids. The horrible feeling imposed by the sight of destroyed buildings and neighborhoods where people used to dwell inflicts a feeling of loss, alienation and loneliness. Syrian artists responded to this situation and have repeatedly depicted this destruction, sometimes in displaying it plainly and other times by implying further emotional and psychological implications, such as the series Freedom Graffiti by Syrian artist Tammam Azzam, discussed in section 1.3.2.

¹ Halasa, M., Omareen, Z. and Mahfoud, N. eds., 2014. *Op. Cit.*, P. 67.

The depiction of destruction is common in the three countries of research, however, the frequent display of intense bloody violent images is basically characteristic of the Syrian art scene. Mass killings, massacres, disappearances, kidnappings, industrial-scale torture and abuse, decapitation, staged executions, starvation tactics, use of chemical weapons, long continuous bombing of civilian areas, barrels of explosives, face-to-face slaying and shooting of children and other acts of extreme violence feature the Syrian war. With the practice of these drastic acts during the Syrian war, unsurprisingly blood-shed violence has become a frequent sight in recent Syrian artistic output, all media combined. As an example check the works of Sara Shamma and Tarek Tuma, discussed in section 2.3.2, and those of Sulafa Hijazi, Imranovi, Alshaab Alsori Aref Tareeko and others in section 3.2.2. In all these works and others displaying fierce actions, violence appears through direct and sometimes brutal images, with the exposure of corpses , mutilated bodies, naked or covered with blood, or through showing tanks of war, or other war artefacts and torture weapons, such as *The Comb* by Khalil Younes (discussed in section 2.3.2), and armed soldiers.

The intensified and consistent fierceness of the Syrian war and its hybrid nature, borrowing from every conceivable genre of human cruelty and volunteers from around the world contributing new varieties of horror, have dramatically affected the artistic outcome. Syrian artists, like others of their fellow nationals, saw live, on the news or heard about the savagery that has been happening in their country; organs were eaten, heads chopped off, children gassed, shot at or slayed, whole neighborhoods starved to death, numerous massacres and massive numbers of people tortured and executed in prisons. Upon realizing the violence of the Syrian war, we are no longer surprised by the exhibition of such violent images in artworks depicting it. Such unspeakable brutality has absolutely affected artists and their ways and themes of representation, hence generating violent images as their response to this horror and as a means to expose it to the world.

Another stimulant for the execution of violent images in contemporary Syrian art characteristic of war is the articulation of violent scenes on television and social media. Undoubtedly, “images evoke and are evoked by affects”¹. Indeed, there is no doubt that the fierce nature of the Syrian war has affected the Syrian art scene and acted as the primal stimulant for the execution of violent images, nonetheless, one cannot deny the impact of publically articulated images of violence along with their rapid pervasiveness via social media. Since the beginning of the Syrian war, violent images has been paraded in social media almost daily along with the news, being a political arena in which the spectacle of violence is perpetuated. Moreover, with the presence of electronic devices and applications that have rendered the feasibility of transmitting any image, fighters entertained themselves by circulating torture images amongst themselves, friends and family and others took pride simply in exploiting their own crimes to frighten their opponents. Yet, the consequent circulation of these images along with the focus of war news photography on violence and destruction of bodies and territories, expose us to witness the horrors of the war wherever we are. Therefore, even Syrian artists who left their country have been exposed to witness the violence that has occupied their nation. This display undeniably influences the audience who wants to know what is happening in Syria. Moreover, the augmented intensity of violent images in the news along with their prevalence in media, have induced higher tolerance to such images among the viewers, knowing also that violent news coverage has been steadily increasing, especially in terms of bloodshed and images of tortured bodies and corpses. This tolerance, in turn, has also encouraged artists to create bloody violent images since such disrupting scenes are not going to be rejected or criticized in the contemporary art scene. All the above mentioned factors combined have given rise to the prevailing depiction of violent images in contemporary Syrian art characteristic of war.

¹ Gregg, G.S., 2007. *Op.Cit.* P. 295.

The Syrian war wasn't the first or only experience with violence that Syrians have undergone; violence is rooted in the history of Syria, held for fifty years under the rule of an authoritarian regime, during which any act of dissent was immediately repressed. However, the violence before the war was practiced with absolute secrecy, but after 2011, violence became all-encompassing² and was no longer hidden. The revolution and the war in Syria have encouraged Syrians to expose what is happening in their country. Before this, with the organized forces of the authority, acts resisting the regime or exposing its brutality were out of the question. After the revolution, chaos spread all over the country and authorities were primarily occupied in restoring their military control, in addition, millions of Syrians migrated to safe grounds where freedom of expression is greeted, which made the opposition against the Syrian regime more common. However, as mentioned previously, even during the war, opposing the Syrian regime wasn't free of risk; artists were detained and tortured for this act, such as artist Youssef Abdelke (for more information about this see section 3.2.2). Authoritarian regimes throughout history have been afraid of intellectuals and artists; they fear pens, brushes and voices for their ability to criticize the government and to galvanize others into action. The Assad's regime is not an exception; it has an historical issue with intellectuals dating back long before the revolution began³. Therefore, living under this oppression, any act opposing the regime is considered an act of resistance. Syrian artists such as Abdelke, despite all the arrests, have created artworks exposing the Syrian situation and the horrors imposed by the regime as their act of resistance. Art has served to express the reaction of Syrian artists against the terrible situation of Syria as their act of resistance, keeping them committed to convey the

² Harling, P., (2016). The Syrian Trauma. *Synaps* [online]. [Viewed 17 December 2018] Available from: <http://www.synaps.network/the-syrian-trauma>

³ Souria Houria, (2013). *Syrian Artist, Youssef Abdelke, Arrested* [online]. [Viewed 30 April 2019]. Available from: <https://souriahouria.com/syrian-artist-youssef-abdelke-arrested/>

oppressed voice of their people and using the internet as “a new ‘public’ or ‘semi-public’ space in which to voice dissent and mobilize resistance in the Syrian Uprising”⁴.

Art served as the artists’ act of resistance, as well as their tool to expose the terrible circumstances in their country and address them to the world, which is yet another noticeable aspect prominent in contemporary Syrian art characteristic of war. Throughout the war in Syria, artists have been mirroring their personal experiences and reflecting the incidents that has been happening in the country, revealing to the world their dreadful situation. Massacres, violence, certain deaths, such as Hamza Bakkour’s, and all other incidents, discussed in section 3.2.2, were repeatedly translated in the Syrian art scene. After being prohibited to express their situation for decades, Syrian artists exploited the war and their migration out of the country to expose to the world the injustices they face, hoping to touch people’s feelings and sensitivities. Perhaps counting on art’s power to “move consciousness, feelings and sensitivities”⁵ and make all people empathize with their case. Syrian artists have depicted the war with its disruptive details and horrors in a massive number of artworks. In addition, the practicality of exposing these images around the world through social media rendered their wide pervasiveness and mass production.

As mentioned, some tragic deaths were exhibited in Syrian art characteristic of the war. The presentation of a tragic death in art is not unprecedented; since almost the existence of art, artists tended to display images of people who sacrificed their lives for a specific cause, and so are images of heroes and martyrs displayed to serve as models followed by others. Moreover, Christian art and iconography extended the political spectacle of an aesthetic death functioning as a way to guide or even regulate private devotion. In the case of Syrian

⁴ Halasa, M., Omareen, Z. and Mahfoud, N. eds., 2014. *Op. Cit.*, P. 67.

⁵ Buchakjian, G., 2012. *War and other impossible possibilities: thoughts on Arab history and contemporary art*. Alarm Editions. P. 54.

art, this spectacle is displayed to reveal and propagate the oppression faced, give further motivation of resistance against the regime and commemorate the dead. Many Syrian artists have exhibited the tragic deaths of Hamza Bakkour and that of Ibrahim Qashoush, in addition, some, such as Youssef Abdelké and Tarek Tuma, created artworks displaying images of dead people referred to with titles of martyrs (for more information about the display of heroic figures check section 3.2.2). Video works were also created to commemorate the dead of what some considered heroes, such as the film *Little Gandhi* 2017 directed by Sam Kadi (discussed in section 3.2.2). It is documentary film about the life of Syrian activist Ghiath Matar, whose advocacy for nonviolent protest gave him the nickname *Little Gandhi*. According to Kadi, the film “was made to build a better understanding of what the Syrian Revolution is all about and what it stands for. To unveil the truth about the Syrian heroes”⁶. Syrian artists created such work to commemorate their dead, motivate the people’s act of resistance, enhance a feeling of unity in the face of tyranny, and expose the horrors they are obliged to face. And all these reasons are generated in accordance to the nature of the Syrian war, which comprises the violence, oppression and repression experience.

The specificity of the war in Syria inspired artists to produce such images of horror and suffering, expressing their own distress and hoping to reveal the truth about the crisis. Raising awareness about the true situation is yet another reason for the execution of these works. This is plainly stated by many artists and declared by Sam Kadi in the previous paragraph: “to build a better understanding” and “unveil the truth”. As known, during the war in Syria many countries have intervened and interfered, which only made things unfaillingly worse. This has generated another trauma for Syrians which “is the horrifying

⁶ TheHouseOfFilm, (2017). *Little Gandhi* Trailer [online]. Directed by Sam Kadi. The House of Film. [Viewed 3 July 2019]. Available form: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vhKDkt8yw-M>

spectacle of an outside world watching on as their country is pointlessly and endlessly tortured”⁷. Aiming to show the world the truth, Syrian artists have echoed the horrors of the war, sometimes by reproducing the reality in all its atrocity, and sometimes by drawing inspiration from it, while addressing our private emotions and evoking our empathy with their case. Syrian artists have transmitted their work to the whole world, via social media and international exhibitions, aiming to shed light on the truth of what is happening in their country, perhaps this “will finally shake the world into “doing something””⁸.

The violent nature of the Syrian war and the repression Syrians have suffered for decades had generated an outbreak in visual expression. Violence, destruction, emotional suffering, repression and war events have been all frequently documented. Syrian artists have meticulously documented all aspects of the war, arguably more extensively than in any conflict in history⁹. The war has stimulated their imagination, and the pain they went through witnessing so much horror pushed them to express it forcefully.

Moving on to the Palestinian art scene, we can say that Palestinian art characteristic of war has one basic aim and all other aspects rotate around it, which is addressing their cause as an act to resist the annihilation of their existence. This includes the affirmation of the existence of Palestine, the Israeli occupation and the right of Palestinians to go to their homeland. Moreover, addressing the cause and sticking to it signifies an act of resistance; resistance against their inability to return to their homeland and have a sovereign state, against the oppression imposed by the Israeli occupation and resistance to the efforts exerted to demolish their identity and existence as Palestinians. By understanding the essence of the Palestinian cause and the struggle of Palestinians, we realize the reasons for

⁷ Harling, P., (2016). *Op. Cit.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

their art. It is important to note though, that in the case of Palestinian art, when I mention ‘art characteristic of war’, the intention is not only presenting images that display destruction, war artefacts, violence and other aspects usually related to wars. Palestinian art characteristic of war is not only the one which addresses common issues of war; it is the art addressing the Palestinian cause. In other words, exhibiting the dislocation of Palestinians, or signs affirming the existence of Palestine, such as the flag or any symbol of their land or struggle, which may be free of any reference to common wars, are all considered as ‘art characteristic of war’ in the Palestinian case.

After elucidating what is exactly meant by Palestinian art characteristic of war, I move forward to show the reasons for the recurrence of specific themes. As said, the Israeli occupation of Palestine has jeopardized its existence, and for people whose presence is prone to danger, art is considered one of the basic means to affirm it. Palestinian artists have exposed their situation and the horrors imposed on them to address their cause, proving their existence as Palestinians and encouraging resistance against the occupier. As artist and art historian Kamal Boullata phrased it:

For a people whose identity and land have been annexed and denied for at least three generations, the struggle to preserve and celebrate their identity takes many forms. There is the intransigence of physical resistance [...] and there are the visual arts, [...] which, because they are vivid and visual, are able to dress, to adorn, embroider, veil and disclose that identity¹⁰.

This intransigence on the issue of resistance is Palestinians’ only method for ensuring their subsistence. Therefore, the primal concern of Palestinian artists who dedicated their art for their cause is to assure the existence of Palestine. However, affirming the existence of an

¹⁰ Boullata, K., 2009. *Op. Cit.*, P. 21.

occupied land and its people lies in affirming its national identity. This is revealed in the work of many Palestinian artists which draws on the Palestinian tragedy and explains visually and philosophically issues and elements such as resistance, displacement, exile, home, homeland, tent, camp, village and others. All these elements and a lot more are recurrent in the Palestinian art scene as the art of resistance, which means the art that addresses the Palestinian cause and underscores the Palestinian national identity.

Academic and writer Sherifa Zuhur talked about political events in the Arab World that are responsible for introducing conceptual changes to this art, that is why much of this art has evolved to embody national identity. According to Zuhur, the first event was the Suez War and the second was the 1967 Arab Israeli War with its military defeat, which gave rise to a new trend in art and literature. Both of these wars were fought with Israeli forces and resulted in the defeat of Arabs, thus assigning more power to Israeli forces and determining the impotency of Arab forces in aiding Palestinians. By then, Palestinians were assured that it is their own mission to resist, otherwise they are heading towards extinction. Zuhur wrote, that after these defeats:

Art displayed a pessimistic tendency that revealed the bitterness and disappointment of artists and intellectuals with the leadership. They also carried a nationalistic message opposing the Israeli occupation¹¹.

However, in the specific case of Palestinian art, in my opinion, other factors are also accountable for the emergence of national art: basically an occupation that is trying to deny a people's identity. Nonetheless, these defeats indeed enforced the Palestinians' belief in their own resistance and strengthened their conviction that it is their only way to withstand the occupation.

¹¹ Zuhur, S., ed., 2001. *Op. Cit.*, P. 384.

As a result, Palestinian art characteristic of war aims to address Palestinians, their cause and their power to resist. It is the mission which many Palestinian artists hold as their only resolution. The basic aim of their art is to hold on this mission and encourage and motivate other Palestinians to do the same. Palestinians have learned their lesson that this mission is held on their back, on their back alone; it is them who need to resist, no one is going to restore what has been taken away from them. Few Arab countries tried, as in the case of the Suez War and the 1967 Arab Israeli War, but they failed and others have just watched. Their people were expelled from their land, and the world did nothing, their land was demolished and the world did nothing, their nationality denied and the world did nothing, Israeli forces frequently place Gaza under siege and the world does nothing, Israeli forces torture and kill minors almost every day and the world does nothing, in addition to many other injustices Palestinians face alone. Unlike Syrian artists, Palestinians' aim in their art is not to show the world what they endure, the world has already seen everything but did nothing. Their primal aim is to resist in order to exist. After clarifying these fundamental aspects of the Palestinian case, my following art analysis becomes clearer and more comprehensible.

As part of addressing their cause, many Palestinian artists display events of the occupation and other incidents they face. One of the major events that has been frequently addressed and is considered the major turn point in Palestinian history, the launch of their cause and the beginning of their struggle is Al Nakba, or the Israeli invasion in 1948. A renowned work addressing this event is Emily Jacir's *Memorial to 418 Palestinian Villages Which Were Destroyed, Depopulated and Occupied by Israel in 1948*, discussed in section 1.2.2. Al Nakba was addressed in an abundant amount of works ever since its happening, few of which are discussed in section 1.2.2. By exhibiting this incident, Palestinians are reminded by their catastrophe and history. Of course, displaying it exposes the tragedy and might

draw awareness to the Palestinian cause, but the basic aim of these works is to keep the tragedy of Palestinians alive. It is the Palestinians' shared catastrophe which unites them, reminds them of their history and strengthens their will to resist and restore what was lost. Ismail Shammout works *Beginning of the Tragedy* and *A Sip of Water* are direct display of this catastrophe. In these expressive works, Shammout depicted the plight of his people exhibiting expressions of suffering and despair on the faces and gestures of Palestinians leaving their land as a result of the Israeli occupation, thus reminding his people of a shared tragedy which unites them. Many other works display al Nakba as a major phase of history, commemorating a shared tragedy.

However, the main aim of creating works exhibiting the tragic events of Palestinian history is not exposing them to the world. Jacir's work doesn't solely aim at presenting the tragedy nor is it an appeal to the world to do something; it was created in 2001, which was more than fifty years after al Nakba. The work is a memorial of the incident and this is directly stated in the title. Similarly, Shammout's artworks are not created to gain international sympathy; all the world knew about this deportation and nothing was done. These artworks, despite their diverse approaches, embody the Palestinian cause in reviving this tragic historical event. By creating artworks depicting al Nakba, artists are enforcing the Palestinian national identity and evoking it through a shared history. As Siniša Malešević declares, "it is the continuous commemoration of past wars that maintains the strength of specific national identities"¹². And so did many Palestinian artists, such as Adnan Yehya, Mohammad Joha, (discussed Section 1.2.2.) and many others, who has continuously commemorated this war event, thus strengthening the Palestinian national identity. Until our present day, artworks are created displaying al Nakba to keep its history alive. Knowing the importance of history in the construction of national identities and the unifying effects

¹² Malešević, S., 2016. *Op. Cit.*, P. 3.

created in evoking certain tragedies shared by a people, exhibiting such historical events generates a higher sense of national identity among Palestinians.

Many other works mirroring historical incidents in Palestine serve as enforcements of the Palestinian national identity. John Halaka and Hazem Harb (presented in section 1.2.2.) reflected the repeated incidents operated by Israeli forces to destroy Palestinian landscape and drew attention to its history. They revealed what has become of it as a result of the occupation, thus reminding Palestinians of its consequences on their land and evoking the history of Palestine. In his work titled *Power Does Not Defeat Memory #1*, Hazem Harb exhibits photos of Palestine before 1948 along with the Israeli architecture brought to the landscape. By doing this, Harb arouses the memory of a Palestinian land before Al Nakba and reveals what the Israeli occupation had done to it afterwards, which, in turn, revives the historical event of the invasion and strengthens the national identity. Moreover, by analyzing the title, Harb is declaring that the power of the occupier does not overcome memory, or the history of original Palestinian land, which gives further connotations of strength and resistance through remembering the past.

The concept of resistance is highly suggested in many other artworks depicting war incidents in Palestine. Prominent of this kind is Abed Al Rahman Al Muzain's work. In his work, *Children of the Intifada*, Al Muzain draws attention to another historical event of Palestinian history, Al Intifada (for more information check section 1.2.2.), which is considered a main act of resistance. By depicting this event, in addition to inscribing its date in the drawing, Al Muzain evokes history promoting the Palestinian identity and encouraging the act of resistance. Abundant amount of work depicts events in Palestine to revive its history and promote its national identity.

Images reveling destruction are also displayed in the Palestinian art scene to suggest national aims. Artists John Halaka and Rula Halawani works depicting destruction,

discussed in section 1.3.2, address the situation of Palestine under occupation. By drawing attention to the horrors of the occupation in depicting the destruction of their land, they are addressing a shared crisis that unites Palestinians together. This unity, in turn, acts as a stimulant to reinforce the sense of national identity. Despite the fact that images of destruction do expose the situation in Palestine, this is not the main aim. Palestinian art characteristic of war basically addresses the Palestinian cause. It is neither a message to the world nor an exposition of their struggle; the world has already known and did nothing.

Another basic theme frequently handled in Palestinian art characteristic of war is the theme of exile. “There is a yearning for a Palestinian country due to a forced life in the Diaspora, it is depicted straightforwardly, in realistic, decorative or abstract styles by Palestinian artists”¹³. Being one of their main tragedies and a basic consequence of the Israeli occupation, exile is frequently addressed in Palestinian art. It is addressed in diverse artistic approaches; directly as in Ismael Shammout’s work *Beginning of the Tragedy* (discussed earlier in this section) depicting the deportation of Palestinians, or in a conceptual approach like Mona Hatoum’s work *Grater Divide* where she uses the method of dislocating objects from their original place (for more information about artworks handling the theme of exile check section 2.3.2). However, by handling this issue, Palestinian artists are evoking their history; the history of occupation when they were forced to leave their homeland and live in exile. So, in doing this, artists are commemorating their history and reviving their shared tragedy, thus strengthening the sense of Palestinian identity.

However, works handling the theme of exile and other struggles, such as Qalandia checkpoint or the prohibited mobility of Palestinians (check section 1.2.2.), suggest a sense of emotional distress, either transmitted to us through the displayed theme, or felt through

¹³ Fidda, R. 2007. *Op. Cit.*, P. 59.

the artist's own discontent. Since Palestinian artists have been living either under occupation or in exile, this is an aspect normally transmitted in addressing their struggle. In this regard, check Mona Hatoum's video *Measures of Distance*, discussed in section 2.3.2. Nonetheless, many artworks aim at transmitting a sense of strength and resistance, despite the distressing theme of war. These are usually free from any signs of emotional distress that might reduce the strength to resist. Under this respect is Muzain's work, *Children of the Intifada*. Despite the display of the image of two children living under occupation, their strength is implied by fighting the occupier and throwing stones, which encourages and motivates resistance.

Another important aspect noticed in Palestinian art characteristic of war is the depiction of the dead, or what is referred to as heroes and martyrs. Despite the exhibition of dead people, the display of bloody violent images is scarce in the Palestinian art scene. Regardless of the killing of children, the frequent shooting, imprisonment and torture that happen in Palestine, Palestinian artists didn't resort to exhibiting disruptive violent images. Instead of displaying bloodshed violence, aesthetic deaths of martyrs are frequently displayed. As said, Palestinian artists haven't aimed at exposing their tragedy to the world as much as motivating their people's resistance to hold on to their cause. By exposing bloody violent images, their aim won't be achieved; on the contrary, this might frighten Palestinians from the occupier and decrease their will to resist. However, by displaying images of martyrs or heroes who died for their cause, artists are commemorating them and encouraging their resistance. An example of this is Suleiman Mansour's work, *Bride of the Nation* (discussed in section 2.3.2). The serenity of the girl's posture and the light expanded behind her suggest that the artist wants us to believe that the girl is in a better place after her death. The artist is commemorating her and preserving her memory in his work, without exhibiting the ugliness of the violence she was exposed to, even the blood under her head

is colored orange to maintain the beauty of her stillness. He created this work to commemorate her death as the bride of the nation, she is no longer an ordinary person; she is the perennial bride of the nation. Violence exerted by the occupier in killing the girl is not depicted to disrupt here or to frighten Palestinians, on the contrary, it is projected to show strength even in death. This work plainly glorifies death for the nation, thus encouraging any act of resistance, where even death is no longer a threat; it is something embraced in the name of the nation. The depiction of the dead girl in this artwork is somehow analogous to the dead mother and child in Taysser Barakat's work *Mother and Child* (discussed in section 2.3.2) in the way that both artworks suggest glorious deaths rather than disruptive violence, despite the tragedy. However, this is an aspect that extremely strengthens national identity, and is clarified in Siniša Malešević's words below. He declares:

It is through the periodic commemorations and rituals of collective remembrance that war sacrifices made in the name of the nation are recognized and glorified [...]
The remembrance [...] of a "glorious death" perpetuate a degree of unity and solidarity between the living, the dead national heroes, and those not yet born¹⁴.

Therefore, this "glorious death" displayed in many Palestinian artworks induces solidarity and unity among Palestinians and strengthens their national identity. As seen, instead of revealing bloody violent images, such as the ones displayed in Syrian art, Palestinian artists exhibited death without depicting bloodshed violence to reveal a glorious death which strengthens the sense of national identity.

Art serves to express the reaction of Palestinian artists against the occupation, it is their act of resistance. Although diverse in terms of artistic practice and approaches, these discussed

¹⁴ Malešević, S., 2016. *Op. Cit.*, P. 3.

artworks are all responses to the Israeli invasion and occupation. This, however, evokes history and unifies Palestinians through remembering a shared tragedy, which both play a fundamental role in strengthening the national identity.

The prominent aim for enforcing resistance and national identity in Palestinian art goes to the fact that Palestine is under occupation and its war is an outside invasion. This kind of war threatens the national identity and this is highly distinguished in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Whereas, in the case of Lebanon and Syria, where both wars were civil, there was no threat on the national identity. As a result, the aim of reinforcing this identity is not a primal drive to create art in these countries. Nonetheless, some artworks in both art scenes imply messages of unity, which is an aspect that strengthens this identity, yet, as a whole body of work, we cannot claim that the target is strengthening it. However, the appearance of national identity in art is profoundly analyzed in the next chapter.

The presented analysis draws a direct relationship between the artistic outcomes in the three countries of research and the kinds of wars experienced. It relates the appearance of specific aspects, themes and aims in art to the specificity of each war. The appearance of bloodshed violence in the Syrian art scene is a response to the violence of the Syrian war and to the artists' aim to expose their situation to the world, showing the brutality of the regime. Whereas in the Palestinian art scene, the scarce depiction of blood shed violence stimulates their aim to induce strength among their people in order to resist the occupation, with no intention to expose their cause to a world who knew of their struggle and did nothing. As for Lebanese art characteristic of war, blood shed violence hasn't been frequently depicted despite the fierceness of the war. This goes back to the fact that the major body of work addressing the civil war in Lebanon was created after it ended. Instead of depicting incidents of the war and the struggles experienced during its term, major artworks characteristic of the Lebanese civil war tackled on issues of collective memory. They

addressed the aftermath of the war and the fact that the Lebanese war ended without reconciliation and wasn't objectively documented, aiming to remind Lebanese of what happened in order not to be repeated again. On the other hand, the aim of Palestinian artists in evoking the past is to unite their people in remembering shared tragedies so they remain loyal to their cause and strengthen their sense of national identity. As for the Syrian art scene, we see artists occupied in depicting the war in details with all its events to show the world the injustices they face under an oppressive regime. Knowing also that expressing any opposition was denied to Syrian artists before the war, it is no wonder that their expressive art has forcefully exploded after the revolution. Moreover, upon examining the depiction of the dead in the Syrian art scene, we see that artists reveal the horror of such a death and we feel frightened of it, aiming to expose the brutality of the regime to the world. Whereas in the Palestinian art scene the dead are depicted to encourage resistance, unite the people for a common cause and glorify this act. Whereas in the Lebanese art scene, dead people are rarely displayed, and when they are, the aim is addressing the aftermath of the war so that Lebanese remember an undocumented tragedy and learn from it.

By this analysis, I reveal how the aims of these works, their themes and visual representations varied according to the kind of the war. I show how the nature of the wars contributed in shaping the diverse artistic practices in these countries. In addition, all the discussed issues in this section are proofs to the existence of a direct relationship between the arts and the specificity of each experienced war in the three countries of research. In this section, I also show how the different nature of each war created diversity among the three art scenes. By this accomplished, I answer a basic research question which inspects the relationship between the specificity of each war and the relevant artistic output.

CHAPTER THREE: ART AS A PLATFORM TO PROMOTE NATIONAL IDENTITY AND TRANSMIT POLITICAL MESSAGES

This chapter analyzes the employment of art to promote national identity and transmit political messages as a result of the wars in Lebanon, Palestine and Syria. It analyzes the impact of war on the representation of national identity and the exploitation of art to promote it and transmit messages. In doing so, it also highlights the different roles and identities artists have (re)constructed as a consequence of the diverse wars. This serves in answering my research question which investigates the impact of war on the artist's collective and personal identities. Answering this question further reveals how wars contributed in shaping the artistic practices of these countries and draws into the relationship between the kinds of wars experienced and the artistic output.

1.3. The exploitation of art to promote national identity, as an introduction

After demonstrating the fundamental aspects of national identity and their prominent appearance during war, in chapter one, I utilize this information to inspect them in art. However, in this section, I present a quick review of the basic aspects of national identity and the role of art in promoting it, in order to move forward and inspect its appearance in the three art scenes of my study. Consequently, in the following sections, national identity dimensions in the artistic productions are studied along with their implicit and explicit identifications. Hence, demonstrating how national identity is embodied in the works of art in relationship to the kind of war experienced.

The basic characteristics of a nation can be simplified as a joint community where individuals share a specific territory, possessing a distinct culture, including language, values, traditions, and history, in addition to political and economic systems. The nation sets out a national collective identity which influences the community as a whole and the

individuals belonging to it. This identity is employed to provide solidarity among members of the same nation through collective similarities and at the same time it is exploited to signalize differences with other nations. This makes it extremely prominent in times of war when “sameness” and “differentiations” are most requested. Therefore, the “sense of national identity is never stronger than when countries are at war with each other, at imminent risk of war, or remembering war”¹⁵.

The reason for analyzing the representation of national identity in specific in art characteristic of war is due to its high appearance during times of crisis. It is the most affected collective identity during wars. Although civil wars do not threaten its existence such as in the case of inter-state wars, yet it is employed to create a sense of unity among members of the same group in order to fight the internal threat. Moreover, after the civil war ends, its exploitation is directed towards unifying members of the nation to promote peace (for more information about this topic refer to sections 2.4.1 and 2.4.2.). Artists, like other people of their community, “act to increase felt similarity to salient social identities, particularly when membership might feel threatened”¹⁶, so they tend to promote this identity through their work. “Among the presentations crucial in bringing modern nationhood to life as a rallying point for citizen loyalty were the following: the ability through art, popular culture or the media to relate ‘the Narrative of the nation’, its turning points, defining features and past glories”¹⁷. Moreover, as Jelena Petkovic declares:

More significant identification with a nation has taken place, as a rule, under critical historical, social and political circumstances, due to wars, migrations, illnesses, violent attempts at assimilation, etc. These circumstances have, due to ontological insecurity and a sense of being threatened, imposed the need for a more firm

¹⁵ Evans, G., 2011. *Op. Cit.*

¹⁶ Leary, M. R. and Tangney, J. P. eds., 2012. *Op. Cit.*, P. 90.

¹⁷ Kennedy, P. and Danks, C., 2001. *Op. Cit.*, P. 3.

national, cultural hegemonization and have enabled the strengthening of a sense of group belonging¹⁸.

Therefore, as a response to circumstances of instability, artists have employed their art to answer “the need for a more firm national, cultural hegemonization” and enable “the strengthening of a sense of group belonging”, as Petkovic declares.

Art has been repeatedly utilized to promote certain issues and its potent capacity in playing this role is never undermined. In the previous chapter, I highlight this point in referring to the fear felt by authoritarian regimes towards artists due to their ability to motivate and influence the public. In this chapter, I reveal the power of art to strengthen national identities and promote a sense of unity among members of the same nation. “National and nationalistic feelings have found their support in the various cultural realizations of nations, in their literature, music, art, tales of joint struggles, perils and victories, in the building of myths and customs”¹⁹. Accordingly, visual arts have employed different aspects to support “national and nationalistic feelings”, during times of crisis.

By now, there is no more doubt about the ability to promote national identity through visual arts, or “the glorification of one's own nation through artistic creativity”²⁰. However, the ‘how’ has yet to be answered; how can art promote national identity? To answer this question, I start by providing a quick review about national identity and its dimensions to show my utilized method in inspecting and analyzing how is national identity represented in art characteristic of war.

Well, national identity is dependent on several different factors and as Anthony D. Smith clarified, “it is fundamentally multidimensional; [...] it can never be reduced to a single

¹⁸ Petković, J., 2011. *Op. Cit.*, P. 145.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

element”²¹. Montserrat Guibernau distinguished national identity as having “five dimensions: psychological, cultural, territorial, historical, and political”²². There is a unanimous consent among sociologists who studied national identity that Guibernau’s dimensions are the necessary aspects of national identity. Although some researchers considered the prominence of one of these dimensions on the account of others, none had denied the existence of any of them. Therefore, considering these dimensions as the basics for the construction of national identity, I assume that they are the aspects that reveal how it is displayed. Consequently, in the following sections, I inspect and examine their presence in contemporary art displaying war or its effects in Lebanon, Palestine and Syria, considering them manifestations of national identity.

2.3. The Psychological dimension of national identity

Whether artists aimed to reveal a national attachment in their work or not, when they depicted war, they had at least expressed a concern about their country and fellow nationals. Montserrat Guibernau declares that “[i]n spite of globalization, [...] local and national attachments remain strong” and she continues that she expects “them to continue to be so in the foreseeable future”²³. Artists’ national attachments stimulated their will to create artworks displaying the horrors experienced in their nation. This attachment to a nation, Guibernau refers to as the psychological dimension and she says that it “arises from the consciousness of forming a group based on the ‘felt’ closeness uniting those who belong to the nation”²⁴. This ‘felt’ closeness is revealed when artists displayed their fellow nationals’ tragedy showing a concern in their well-being in times of war. Guibernau considered that

²¹ Smith, A. D. 1991. *Op. Cit.*, P. 75.

²² Guibernau, M., 2004. *Op. Cit.*, P. 135.

²³ *Idem.*, P. 138.

²⁴ *Idem.*, P. 135.

for the large majority of peoples “fellow-nationals are usually portrayed as if they were more ‘human’ than outsiders, as deserving our support, concern and nurture [and that ...F]ilial sentiments toward fellow-nationals are not matched by feelings for ‘foreigners’, ‘unknown peoples’, ‘strangers’, maybe potential ‘enemies’”²⁵. In chapter one, I elucidate the emotional attachment that people feel in acquiring collective identities in general, and how they identify emotionally with their national identity. “Sharing a national identity generates an emotional bond among fellow nationals, which, as Connor puts it, is fundamentally psychological and non-rational. It is not irrational, only ‘beyond reason’”²⁶. Anthony D. Smith also insists on the subjective nature of national identity’s components²⁷. Petkovic considered that within the construction of a national identity, we can cite precisely the national self-awareness which includes “the subjective feeling of belonging to one's country and one's people, identification with one's own nation and its cultural tradition”²⁸. The feeling of attachment that people possess towards their nation, or the felt closeness, might not be sensed during normal times, but rather intensified during wars. “Such closeness can remain latent for years and suddenly come to the surface whenever the nation is confronted with an external or internal enemy – [such as in the case of civil or interstate wars] – threatening its people, its prosperity, its traditions and culture, its territory, its international standing or its sovereignty”²⁹. In depicting the situation of their country and the tragedies experienced by their fellow nationals, artists reveal their closeness to the nation, which might had been latent before that. When war is displayed in art, no matter if it is exhibited in the destruction, war incidents, violence or any other aspect, the emotional attachment is exposed, thus revealing the psychological dimension. Whether plainly

²⁵ *Idem.*, P. 138.

²⁶ Connor, W. 1994. *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding*. Princeton University Press. Cited in Guibernau, M., 2004. *Op. Cit.*, P. 135.

²⁷ Smith, A.D., 2002. *Op. Cit.*

²⁸ Petković, J., 2011. *Op. Cit.*, P. 143.

²⁹ Guibernau, M., 2004. *Op. Cit.*, P. 135.

suggested such as inscribing the name of the nation, or implied in recording the destruction and struggle, the psychological attachment is nonetheless present. Therefore, we can deduce that all artworks depicting war detect a certain level of attachment to the nation, revealing the psychological dimension of national identity. As a result, this dimension does not need to be exemplified, since, and according to the presented analysis, it is disclosed in any artwork exhibiting war or any of the conflicts experienced by the nation.

Nonetheless, there are few works that exhibit this dimension plainly and are discussed in what follows.

All Palestinian art characteristic of the Palestinian struggle reveals the psychological dimension of national identity. Through encouraging resistance or revealing the struggle under occupation, “Palestinian artists have expressed an awareness to be a voice of the people and community as their primary audience”³⁰. They aimed for their art to reflect their people’s struggle augmenting the sense of national identity for the subsistence of Palestine. As a result, the psychological dimension of national identity is extremely depicted in Palestinian art characteristic of war.

Although all previous works depicting the Palestinian situation exhibited throughout the research are characteristic of the psychological dimension of national identity, I display the following drawing for the renowned cartoonist Naji Al-Ali plainly expressing his love to his country. With the word *Palestine* forming a heart and underneath it the words *the whole national soil* repeatedly inscribed in Arabic, Al-Ali explicitly reveals his love and emotional attachment to Palestine.

³⁰ Makhoul, B.W., 1995. *Contemporary Palestinian art: an analysis of cultural and political influences* (Doctoral dissertation, Manchester Metropolitan University). P. 73.



Naji Al-Ali, Palestine

Not as prominently exhibited as in the Palestinian art scene, Lebanese and Syrian art scenes also reveal this psychological dimension. Since, as mentioned, all artworks depicting war uncover an emotional attachment felt by artists to expose the tragedies of their nation. This is sensed when Lebanese artists highlight the general amnesia felt by Lebanese after the war, in order to remind them not to repeat the same mistakes, thus revealing their concern in the future of Lebanon. The psychological dimension is also revealed through depicting the horrors and violence of the war in Syria, in order to reveal the tragedies of the nation to the world.

In the following painting, *My City on a Tank*, Zena Assi's attachment to her country, Lebanon, is plainly suggested. Depicting Beirut as her city on a tank addresses her attachment to Lebanon and her discontent about its continuous conflicts.



Zena Assi, 2015, *My city on a tank*, Mixed media and paper collage on canvas.

Syrian artist Tammam Azzam plainly suggests his personal attachment to his nation in his exhibition titled, *I, the Syrian*, which was held in Beirut and London, exhibiting some of his renowned work such as *The Kiss*, discussed in section 1.3.2.

Artist *Khalil Younes* depicted the struggle of Syrians as a result of war in displaying the image of a dead child. The title of the work, *I am from Syria*, plainly exhibits Younes's belonging and his emotional attachment to his country and fellow nationals.



Khalil Younes, 2012, I Am from Syria.

Artists have represented their attachment to their country and fellow members in exhibiting any horrors of the war, revealing the psychological dimension of national identity.

3.3. The cultural dimension

The cultural dimension of national identity is unanimously agreed upon its importance in constructing a national identity. People identify with their nation through identifying with its culture as well. The process of identification with a specific culture implies a strong emotional investment able to foster solidarity bonds among the members of a given

community who come to recognize one another as fellow nationals³¹. Margaret Mead reached the conclusion that culture, in the sense of common tradition, myths, symbols, and values is of significant importance in the integration of people belonging to a particular nation³². Members of the same nation feel more attached to each other and to their country by sharing a common culture. The role of culture in the construction of national identity is extremely emphasized in Anthony Smith's writings. He considers a close correspondence between national and cultural identities to the extent that, according to him, the nation is "a kind(s) of collective cultural identity"³³ (for more information about the importance of culture in constructing national identities check section 2.3.1). This essential dimension of national identity distinguishes a nation from another and induces solidarity among fellow nationals in sharing common similarities and differentiating themselves from others (The issue of employing similarities and differences in the construction of national identities is profoundly explained in chapter one), making the attachment to a nation also an attachment to its culture. Each nation adopts a distinct culture that differentiates it from others, affirms its specific nature and binds its members together. What is more, cultural theories of nation adopt the stand that a nation is formed through cultural continuity, that it is a community of culture, and thus that "the issue of national identity is almost inseparable from the issue of the cultural identity of a people"³⁴.

However, during wars or other conflicts cultural representations become more prominent and pervasive in order to unite fellow nationals against any threat (this is profoundly explained in section 1.3.1). During wars, the need to represent the cultural dimension is augmented, which results in creating more symbols and national elements to convey

³¹ Gellner, E. 1983. *Op. Cit.*

³² Mead, M., 1972. *Op. Cit.*, P. 555.

³³ Smith, A. D. 2002. *Op. Cit.*, P. 15.

³⁴ Petković, J., 2011., *Op. Cit.*, P. 144.

messages of coherence, resistance, freedom, strength, and belonging. Cultural expressions are employed to boost the “national spirit” which “expresses itself in certain cultural forms of life and particular collective manners of behavior especially in moments of crisis”³⁵. In addition, “[c]ultural achievements can stir national pride”³⁶ and individuals need this sense of national pride to assure them that what they are committed to is worthwhile, and above that, it is something to be proud of. Moreover, according to Smith, collective cultural identity refers to a sense of continuity on the part of successive generations³⁷. As a result, the cultural dimension of national identity is employed during wars to enhance the national spirit, bond members together and create a sense of national pride. This dimension is referred to through cultural representations which may comprise messages of solidarity, belonging, resistance, persistence and lots of other communications that stir national pride when it is most needed. In doing so, feelings of attachment to a nation are evoked and augmented, and the unification of members under a joint national identity is raised.

After reviewing the importance of culture in the construction of national identity and its prominent representations during war, I continue to explain what it comprises and how it is reflected in art. Culture can be divided into two parts, material or physical culture and non-material culture. Material culture is the physical aspect and includes all that is physical, whether natural or artificial. It can be traced in the arts, architecture, natural landscapes, statues and so on. Whereas immaterial culture does not comprise any physical object and includes the language, beliefs, values, customs, habits, music, traditions, norms and other non-physical components that shape a society. These aspects combined makeup the culture that differs from nation to nation, giving each its specific characteristics and making its members feel their community as separate and distinct from others. Culture is an important

³⁵ Wodak, R. de Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., and Liebhart, K. 2009. *Op. Cit.* P.25.

³⁶ Evans, G., 2011., *Op. Cit.*

³⁷ Smith, A. D. 1991. *Op. Cit.*, P. 25.

feature of human life which binds all people, but also separates them, enabling their individual, national characteristics and autonomy³⁸. Cultural representations of a nation take many forms; they are expressed in symbols, emblems, flags, traditions, food, clothing and others, each playing its role in creating further sense of national identity. Smith insists on the fundamental role of myths, memories, values, traditions and symbols in his analysis of national identity³⁹, and explains the resonance of nationalism and national identity with ethnic, cultural, linguistic and territorial symbols. According to him “naming and self-definition and the cultivation of shared symbols, myths, values and traditions” are characteristics of nations⁴⁰. Artists have frequently utilized these symbols in their art reflecting their national identity, especially during times of crisis when it is most needed.

The employment of symbols and icons in art reflect the cultural dimension of national identity. Artists have frequently manifested their national identity by utilizing cultural symbols of their country. Expressing the importance of symbols in a culture, anthropologist Clifford Geertz refers to culture as "a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life"⁴¹. Members of a society attribute meanings to specific objects and that imbued meanings transform that object into a widely recognized icon which culturally symbolizes that society. Similarly, nations utilize icons to represent their national and cultural character. Out of their collective experience and relation to their land, members of a nation have utilized icons to symbolize their land, people, struggle, victories, special landscapes and so on. In addition, art, which is considered to reflect a nation's culture, plays an important role in constructing these icons as well as a medium

³⁸ Petković, J., 2011. *Op. Cit.*, P. 144.

³⁹ Smith, A. D. 1991. *Op. Cit.*

⁴⁰ Smith, A. D., 2002. *Op. Cit.*, P. 30.

⁴¹ Geertz, C., 1973. *The interpretation of cultures* (Vol. 5019). Basic books. P. 89.

for spreading them. Being as such, possessing a binomial employment, art has repeatedly contributed in inventing cultural icons and spreading the nation's cultural elements.

The transformation of cultural artefacts, monuments and even certain agricultural symbols that characterize the land into national icons is a remarkable aspect of artworks representing war. During times of conflicts, we notice a high employment of cultural and traditional icons to provide a higher sense of national identity. However, this is most visible during interstate wars and colonization that impose a threat on a nation's identity. "Colonized peoples often have embraced and defended some of their traditions as defining their identities, and used them to help rally resistance against the colonizers"⁴². In this case, cultural representations are employed to subsist a threatened national identity, such as in the case of Palestine.

The cultural dimension in Palestinian Art is highly notable in the abundant amount of symbols employed to represent the national identity. This goes back to the Palestinian experience of being forced to leave their homeland, which has fractured their existential sense of continuity, so they needed an assurance for their subsistence. In addition, their situation under occupation for more than seventy years imposed further threat on their national identity. Moreover, they are banned from expressing their national identity plainly since "until recently the adjective Palestinian was forbidden, and the use of it, under certain circumstances was [considered] a criminal offence"⁴³. So for a people denied to express their national belonging, the means to affirm their existence become a necessity. As a result, many Palestinian artists have clung to their culture, inventing symbols to represent it and promote their national identity. They have represented subjects of their culture to symbolize dispossession, their homeland, the right to return, nostalgia, exile and resistance.

⁴² Gregg, G.S., 2005. *The Middle East: a cultural psychology*. Oxford University Press. P. 36.

⁴³ Boullata, K., 2009. *Op. Cit.*, P. 19.

Renowned Palestinian artist, Suleiman Mansour expresses this, he says: “The main idea behind our work [Palestinian artists who addressed the Palestinian cause in their art] was to try to promote and develop and show that there is a Palestinian people and Palestinian identity and culture”⁴⁴. Across disciplines, these artists have participated in their nation’s struggle by representing subjects of their culture, identifying with a region from which they have been forced to move or live in under occupation.

Some of their frequent national representations are:

The key is a symbol of their heritage and their hope to return to the homeland. This goes back to the fact that when Palestinians fled their homes due to the invasion they locked their houses thinking that they will soon return. Of course, they did not, so families still keep the keys of their houses and pass it from one generation to another so that they will never forget where they are from. Artists display the key symbolizing their cause and their insistence to return to Palestine, thus preserving their national identity from one generation to another.



*Rula Halawani, 2013. A Key, from Traces series.
Photographic print, Edition 5 of 5, 68 x 144 cm, Courtesy of
Selma Feriani Gallery.*

⁴⁴ Paganelli, L. (2016). Video: Sliman Mansour and the art of steadfastness. *The Electronic Intifada* [online]. [Viewed 25 June 2019]. Available from: <https://electronicintifada.net/content/video-sliman-mansour-and-art-steadfastness/15356>



Al Muzain, pen and ink.

The Kaffiyeh is an Arabic word that describes a special piece of cloth like a scarf and contains white and black crossed zigzag motifs. A strong relationship exists between Palestinians and this symbol which represents their identity and love of the homeland. Over the years this icon has become associated with the Palestinian cause and the concept of resistance.

In his series *Self-portrait*, Tarek Al-Ghoussein presents his photographs in many different places, always wearing Kaffiyeh, marking out his Palestinian identity. In the series, he explores the aspect of his national identity in different lands but never his homeland, highlighting issues such as the land, longing, belonging and exile. However, for Al-Ghoussein, “the temptation to read too much into a simple act of scarf-wearing is the result of media hype and paranoia”⁴⁵, knowing that some has linked the kaffiyeh to terrorism

⁴⁵ Amirsadeghi, H., Mikdadi, S. and Shabout, N., 2009. *Op. Cit.*, P. 134.

instead of resistance. Nonetheless, whatever were his entire motives for the act, Al-Ghoussein has represented his national identity through using this national cultural icon.



Tarek Al-Ghoussein, 2002-ongoing. From Self-portrait series. Digital print. 55x 75 cm.

Another notable work displaying this icon is Mona Hatoum's *Kaffiyeh* which she wove using her own hair. By using her own hair to weave a Palestinian national icon, Hatoum exposes her personal and national identity as interrelated and reveals her attachment to Palestine.



Mona Hatoum, Keffieh, human hair on cotton, 1993-99.

Jerusalem and the Dome of the Rock represent Palestine. Jerusalem is the city that has inspired the creativity of poets, singers, and artists and has become associated with the Dome of the Rock's unique architectural design. They are symbols that most Palestinian artists use in their work to express their love for Palestine.

Among the most celebrated works displaying Jerusalem with the Dome of the Rock is Suleiman Mansour's *Jamal Al Mahamel III* (Camel of Burdens). The painting itself has become an icon of the Palestinian struggle and was reproduced and printed as posters distributed and hung in many Palestinian houses. Mansour is considered an artist of the uprising and his work has given visual expression to the cultural concept of resistance. In *Jamal Al Mahamel*, he created an iconic image of an elderly Palestinian man carrying on his back an eye-shaped sphere which contains the view of Jerusalem and the Dome of the Rock. The painting addresses the Palestinians' attachment to Jerusalem and implies an act of resistance in protecting it from any threat.



Suleiman Mansour, 2005. *Jamal Al Mahamel III* (Camel of Burdens). Oil on canvas, Courtesy Christie's.

Nabil Anani depicts the image of a Palestinian woman hugging Jerusalem and protecting it from any threat, and the title *Mothers' Embrace* underscores this interpretation. Moreover, by the traditional Palestinian dress of the woman, Anani underscores the identity of this city and its belonging to Palestinians.



Nabil Anani Latroun, 2013. *Mothers' Embrace*.
Acrylic on canvas, 120 x75 cm.

Rula Halawani's photographs of Jerusalem, titled *Jerusalem Calling*, evoke the memory of this city in the minds of Palestinians who were denied of it. "*Jerusalem Calling* gathers nighttime images of the city's streets, to which the artist includes black and white projections of Jerusalem's vibrant atmosphere recorded between 1936 and 1948"⁴⁶. Her images depict traces of a culture being pushed into oblivion by its occupier. Rula

⁴⁶ Ayyam Gallery. Rula Halawani. *Ayyam Gallery- the website*. [Viewed 30 July 2019]. Available from: <http://www.ayyamgallery.com/news/263/info>

Halawani's camera is not only an extension of her eye, but also her humanity and her cultural and political identity⁴⁷.



Rula Halawani. From the series *Jerusalem Calling*.

Palestinian artists have also resorted to depicting aspects of their land to symbolize their national identity. “For a colonized people the most essential value, because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land: The land which will bring them bread and about above all, dignity”⁴⁸. As a result, Palestinian arts use icons of their land to symbolize Palestine and their belonging to it.

The most prominent among land symbols is the olive tree, which is a major representation of the Palestinian identity. Palestinians say, “to seize an ancient olive tree is like a confiscation of memory”, describing their attachment to the tree. However, Israeli Forces

⁴⁷ Selma Feriani Gallery. The World of Rula Halawani. [viewed 12 September 2018] Available from: <http://contemporarypractices.net/essays/volumexv/11.pdf>

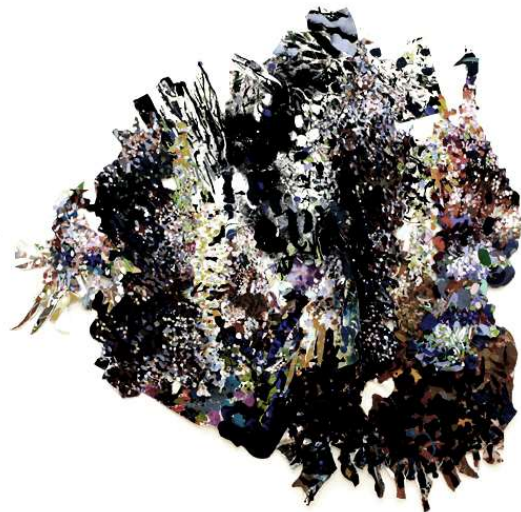
⁴⁸ Fidda, R. 2007. *Op. Cit.*, P. 59.

have set on fire and uprooted thousands of olive trees⁴⁹, destroying a main food supplement for Palestinians and intending to ruin a basic aspect of their culture. As part of preserving their culture and national identity, a great number of Palestinian artists display the olive tree symbolizing their homeland and some also reveal the tragedy of uprooting it.

Celebrated artist Samia Halaby have frequently displayed olive trees of Palestine in her art to reveal her attachment to her homeland and culture and symbolize her national identity. The two following artworks, painted seven years apart and in different artistic styles, expose Halaby's insistence on the importance of this icon in Palestinian culture and her personal connection with it.



Samia Halaby, 1996. Young Olive Tree. Gouache on paper. 19 x 14cm.



Samia Halaby, 2003. Mountain Olives of Palestine. Acrylic on canvas and paper. 206 x 114cm.

⁴⁹ Alwazir, A., 2002. Uprooting Olive Trees in Palestine. Mandala projects [online]. [Viewed 20 July 2019] Available from: <https://mandalaprojects.com/ice/ice-cases/olive-tree.htm>

The following installation by Vera Tamari displays the olive tree, also a persistent theme in her work, along with the tragedy of uprooting it. The installation refers to the thousands of olive trees that have been destroyed by Israeli forces. It sets a photograph of a great olive tree and beneath it hundreds of small ceramic trees, paying tribute to the olive trees of Palestine.



Vera Tamari, 1999-ongoing. Tale of a Tree. Ceramics and phototransfer on plexiglass. Print: 152 x 156 cm; platform: 198 x 157 x 23 cm; ceramic trees: vary, approx. 8 cm high.

The exhibition of the olive tree as an icon representing Palestine is a revisited topic among numerous Palestinian artist. However, I present these works to exemplify this issue rather than show the all major artworks displaying it.

We also find images of orange trees and cactus plants, attributes of the Palestinian land and its agriculture, to symbolize Palestine. Among these are Ahmad Yaseen's *Life* and Suleiman Mansour's work *Salma*. The cactus plant also symbolizes the persistence of Palestinians since it can grow and live in the hardest circumstance, just as them. Artist Ahmad Yaseen has employed the cactus plant as a canvas to paint Palestinian people and their struggle. In his work titled *life*, Yaseen depicts the image of a baby on the leaf of a cactus plant.



Ahmad Yaseen, *Life*, Acrylic on cactus, Nablus, Palestine.

Suleiman Mansour's work *Salma* has become an icon in itself. The painting displays the image of a woman in a traditional Palestinian dress holding oranges, symbolizing the homeland and preserving its culture.



Suleiman Mansour, 1978. *Salma*.

As a response to their deprivation of their land, Palestinian artists have repeatedly resorted to displaying the Palestinian landscape and its agricultural symbols, which have become icons representing the national cultural identity. “Landscapes came to dominate Palestinian art, as they were conceived as the locus of Palestinian identity”⁵⁰.

However, Suleiman Mansour’s *Salma* is considered an icon not only because it depicts oranges to symbolize the land but more due to its display of the Palestinian woman’s figure. The Palestinian woman with her traditional dress has become a repeatedly exhibited icon symbolizing national struggle, fertility and the homeland. *Salma* was “reproduced as a PLO

⁵⁰ Fidda, R. 2007. *Op. Cit.*, P. 59.

political poster and distributed under the title “Palestine”. *Salma* and Palestine thus became synonymous in the collective consciousness of Palestinians”⁵¹. Palestinian women are repeatedly displayed showing resistance and strength and symbolizing the homeland. This goes back to the 1970s when visual productions were “dominated by the iconic image of Palestinian women, who in their traditional embroidered dresses became symbols of national struggle and identity”⁵². In Nabil Anani’s work, *Mothers’ Embrace*, discussed in the symbol of Jerusalem, the woman is the strong icon holding and protecting Jerusalem, yet her kindness is shown in her motherhood. Moreover, the topic of the woman holding Jerusalem has been also repeatedly addressed in the Palestinian art scene.

In Imad Abu Shtayyah’s work *We Will Rise Again*, the woman, in her traditional Palestinian dress, is displayed as the strong resilient figure rising from the destruction, symbolizing the nation and the act of resistance.



Imad Abu Shtayyah. 2014. *We Will Rise Again*.

⁵¹ Birzeit University Museum. Framed / Unframed: Women Representations in Palestinian Art Practice. *Birzeit University Museum* [online]. [Viewed 28 November 2018]. Available from: <http://museum.birzeit.edu/exhibitions/framed-unframed-women-representations-palestinian-art-practice>

⁵² Ibid.

Another work depicting the icon of Palestinian women, but in a different and more contemporary approach than the ones I have already presented, is Tamara Habash's series titled *Filastinaya*, which means a Palestinian woman in Arabic. The series is a photography project inspired by Palestinian renowned poet Mahmoud Darwish's poem, *A Lover from Palestine*. It exhibits portraits of women with verses of this poem hand-drawn in Arabic calligraphy directly on their faces. The word *Filastinaya* is also drawn on their foreheads addressing their national identity, as well as the artist's, and their pride in possessing it. Moreover, all the women in the series are portrayed strong, resilient and powerful symbolizing Palestine.



Tamara Habash, Filastinaya.

The image of the woman as 'Palestine' became a revisited theme disseminating in Palestinian collective culture.

Another repeatedly displayed icon in Palestinian art is the stone. This goes back to the historical *Intifada* which is characterized by the resistance of Palestinians in using stones to bring an end to the Israeli occupation (artworks representing this event are discussed in

section 1.2.2). This act gave rise to the stone icon symbolizing the Palestinian identity and their act of resistance. Palestinian artists have depicted this icon as a national symbol referring to their resistance.

In the following artwork, Leila Shawa displays a slingshot with a stone, exposing this primitive tool that Palestinians use to defend themselves and resist the occupier. Giving the work its title *Weapon of Mass Destruction*, Shawa is ironically referring to the fragility of the stone with respect to the advanced armory used by Israeli forces in response. She also underscores the resistance of Palestinians using the stone as their primary weapon.



Leila Shawa, 2012. Weapon of Mass Destruction.

The stone is also displayed as an icon of resistance in Abed Al Rahman Al Muzain's work *Children of Intifada*, discussed in section 1.2.2., which displays the image of two children using the stone to fight the occupier.

The rifle also symbolizes the Palestinian resistance against the occupation. In Ismail Shammout's, *Odyssey of a People*, the artist highlights the fighter with his rifle facing the enemy and protecting his people. We can also see the fighter wearing a Kaffiyeh which underscores his Palestinian identity.



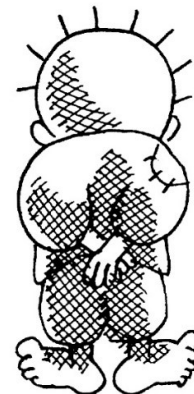
Ismail Shammout, 1980. *Odyssey of a People (Massirat Sha'ab)*. Oil on canvas. 103.5 x 604 cm.

National identity is also symbolized in *Handala*, a character representing the Palestinian people. It is created by artist Naji Al-Ali who was known for his cartoons depicting the struggle of Palestinians. Al-Ali gave his character qualities of resistance, strength and objection against the occupation. *Handala* became a symbol of the patriot who fights against oppression and stands for the people and developed further into becoming an icon representing their culture and symbolizing the Palestinian national identity.

Handala:

a Character & Icon

- Served as Naji's **signature**
- Born in 1969 at the age of **10 years**, will start growing up when he returns to Palestine.
- His Name derived from **bitterness**
- His hair like a **hedgehog**
- **Barefooted** like the children of the refugee camps.
- A **spectator** not agreeing to what is happening around him.
- As Naji said, he will show his face when "**Arab dignity is restored and Palestine returns**".



Naji Al-Ali, *Handala*.

The icon of the dove is also displayed in the Palestinian art scene. Analogous to its universal representation, Palestinian artists use the dove icon to symbolize peace, freedom and future.

In addition, the Palestinian Flag, which is the nation's emblem, is depicted to reveal the Palestinian National Identity and assert its existence. Artists also display their nation's flag as an act of revolt since "Palestinians are banned from using their flag in any act including art"⁵³, even using the colors of their flag is not allowed. At one point the Israeli army officially decreed that if the painting had the colors of the Palestinian flag then it would be confiscated and taken off the wall⁵⁴. Therefore, for them, the act of defying this law is a kind of resistance to preserve their national identity. Using the Palestinian flag in art has become an act of preserving the Palestinian culture and identity; it is a fight for demanding their existence while they are obliged to extinct.

An act of resistance against the prohibited display of the flag is revealed in Kamal Boullata's abstract painting *Homage to the Flag*. Boullata painted the flag's colors and shapes as a response to Israeli's shooting of children who were holding it (for more information check section 1.2.2). The flag is also depicted in Ismail Shammout's *Odyssey of a People*, discussed in the previous page. He displays it as a shield held by a child on the right side of the painting. Shammout reveals the child's will to protect the flag through her firm grasp around it, thus addressing the Palestinians' attachment to their nation.

These presented icons have been utilized to affirm the Palestinian national identity through stressing and enriching a Palestinian culture. A Palestinian culture that although is

⁵³ According to Palestinian artist and historian Samia Halaby: "Artists have been shot dead or imprisoned for using the Palestinian flag which is forbidden by the Israeli law, and entire exhibitions have been destroyed, burned, and confiscated for this reason." See: Halaby, S., 2001. *Liberation Art of Palestine: Palestinian Painting and Sculpture in the Second Half of the 20th Century*. H.T.T.B. Publishers; Dalrymple, W., (2002). A Culture under Fire. *The Guardian* [online]. [Viewed on 15 February 2019]. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2002/oct/02/art.artsfeatures>

⁵⁴ Tamari, V., (2005). *Op. Cit.*

perpetually stressed and fought, refuses to break or disappear. According to artist Samia Halaby, “[t]his is not a culture that will go away with ease [...] it is an ancient culture that will assert itself again, again, and again”⁵⁵. And this assertion of Palestinian culture finds its echo throughout the Palestinian art scene with the aid of abundant icons. Each of these icons plays its role in representing an aspect of the Palestinian culture, summarizing the hard conditions in which Palestinians lived and each era of their history.

Moving forward to analyze the appearance of cultural dimension in artworks characteristic of war in the Lebanese art scene, it is noticed that cultural icons are mostly exposed as reminiscent of the crisis. Of course, I am not referring here to all cultural icons, but rather to the ones presented in art characteristic of war. As mentioned, Lebanese art displaying war focuses on the war’s aftermath and displays destroyed monuments and landscapes to act as reminders of what happened. However, over the years, special incidents and landmarks of the Lebanese wars have become cultural symbols of national identity. In the following, I present these icons in relation to the war incidents.

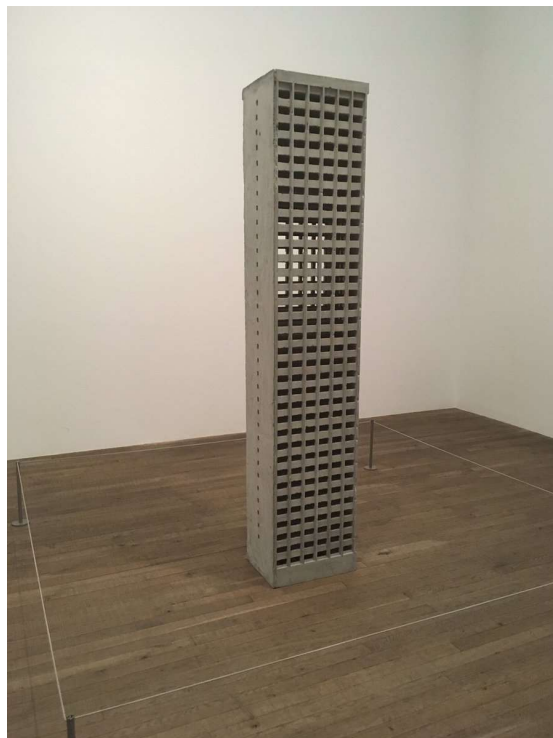
The Lebanese civil war beginning was marked when gunmen ambushed a busload of Palestinians, which made the bus a symbol for the beginning of the war and a reminder of the crisis. Lebanese artist Jameel Molaeb displayed the bus in his work *Painting of the Bus of War* (discussed in section 2.2.2.) symbolizing the start of the civil war.

Some destroyed buildings and monuments in Lebanon have been repeatedly depicted in the Lebanese art scene as symbols of the war. The Egg, El Murr Tower and other war-torn buildings that still exist till now are constant reminders of the prolonged and destructive war. These partially destroyed landmarks with their bullet holes have become over the years cultural symbols of Lebanon and the war experienced.

⁵⁵ Eshelman, R., (2005). *Op. Cit.*

From 1975 to 1977 a brutal battle overwhelmed an area in Beirut which was known as the ‘Battle of the Hotels’, in which a number of hotels and towers within the same area housed snipers of opposing militias engaged in fighting each other. Few of these buildings remain till our present day as constant reminders of the prolonged and destructive war which divided the people. Among these is Burj Al Murr tower. This is a 34-storey unfinished tower that was intended to become the Trade Center of Lebanon. The tower still stands unfinished, hollow and full of bullet holes, serving as a memorial to the conflict that has never been fully resolved. Many Lebanese artists have depicted Burj Al Murr referring to the civil war and making this tower an icon of Lebanon and its war.

Marwan Rechmaoui’s *Monument for the Living* is a concrete cast of Burj Al Murr building. He displayed it with its floors scaled down and bullet holes covering its surface. Rechmaoui has placed the building inside a coffin which suggests a memorial-like state for this icon of war. *Monument for the Living* is Rechmaoui’s second replica of this building.



Marwan Rechmaoui, *Monument for the Living* 2001–8, Concrete and wood. 236 x 60 x 40 cm.

Artist Jad El Khoury transformed Burj Al Murr into a public art installation. He hung sheets of all the colors on the windows and floors of the tower.



Jad El Khoury, Public installation, Burj Al Murr, Beirut.

Another artist who depicted Burj Al Murr is Ayman Baalbaki. He displayed this iconic building with its partially destroyed facade and bullet holes among a floral and colorful background contrasting the grey and gloomy structure.



Ayman Baalbaki, 2014. Burj Al Murr. Acrylic on canvas. 200 x 150 cm.

The Egg is yet another war-torn building that still stands in Beirut, and has become a cultural icon of Lebanon and a reminiscent of the war. It was one part of a set of buildings, a complex including an egg-shaped shell and two high towers with spaces for leisure and offices. The Egg is the only structure left standing there after the war and many artists have displayed it as an icon of Lebanon and its war.

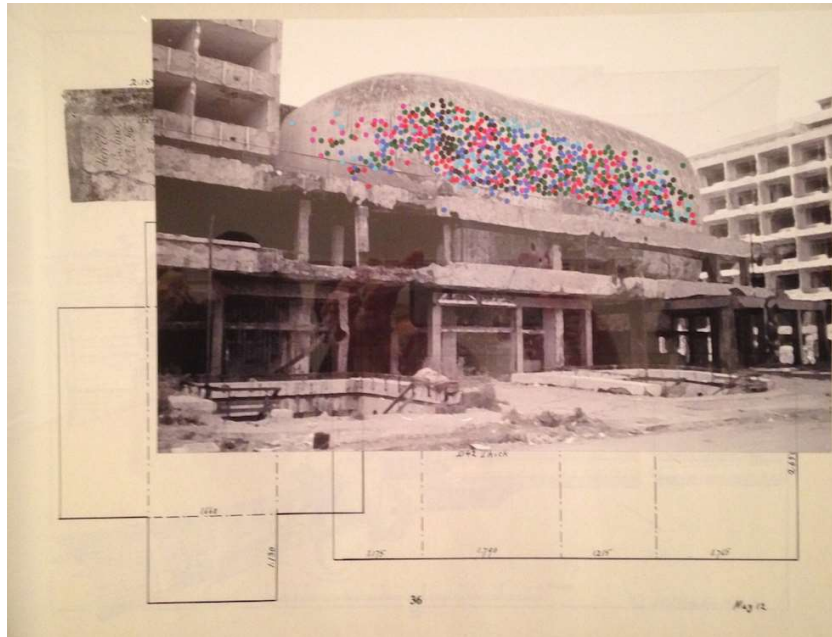
Ayman Baalbaki displays The Egg in his artwork, *Beirut City Centre (The Egg)*. He depicted this icon revealing its shattered structure and bullet holes.



Ayman Baalbaki, 2015. *Beirut City Centre (The Egg)*. Mixed media on canvas. 155 x 200 cm.

Artist Walid Raad also depicts the image of The Egg in his renowned project *The Atlas Group*. The image of the Egg is overlaid with different-sized colored disks that map bullets

and shrapnel left after bombings and battles. The diverse colors are linked to the national origins of the ammunitions⁵⁶.



Walid Raad. From *The Atlas Group*.

These war-torn buildings have become cultural icons of Lebanon reminding the people of an unwritten history. They serve to unite Lebanese in a common shared tragedy by evoking memories of the events that took place in these structures.

Another structure that is a cultural icon of Lebanon and was damaged and punctured during the war is a monument they refer to as the Martyr's Statue in downtown Beirut. Built few decades before the civil war, it is assumed to be a memorial for those who died for the nation's independence during the Ottoman Rule. Such statues are built in almost all countries serving to promote nationalism through commemorating those who died for the nation. According to Benedict Anderson, "[n]o more arresting emblems of the modern culture of nationalism exist than cenotaphs and tombs of Unknown Soldiers. [...] Yet void

⁵⁶ Respini, E. 2015. Walid Raad. *The Museum of Modern Art*. New York. P. 36

as these tombs are of identifiable mortal remains or immortal souls, they are nonetheless saturated with ghostly national imaginings”⁵⁷. Intended to be a national cultural icon of an independent nation, after the war, the statue gained yet another connotation as an icon symbolizing the war.

Artist Mohammad Said Baalbaki created his artwork *One Hand Cannot Clap Alone* addressing this national icon. The work is a sculpture of the missing arm of the statue, which was broken during the war, thus referring to the aftermath of the conflicts. Moreover, the title implies a message of unity since ‘one hand cannot clap alone’, Lebanese have to unite in order to work together.



Mohamad Said Baalbaki. 2010. *One Hand Cannot Clap Alone*. Alloy cast sculpture 90 x 30 x 15 cm.

Artist Mona Hatoum has returned to the image of the so-called Martyrs’ Monument several times to commemorate the destruction of Lebanese arts and culture, as well as the

⁵⁷ Anderson, B., 2006. *Op. Cit.*, P. 9.

psychological impact of the civil war on the Lebanese people⁵⁸. In 2009, Hatoum produced a replica of the statue in porcelain featuring the bullet holes and broken limbs of the original statue. Entitled *Witness*, Hatoum addresses the statue as a silent witness to the civil war.



Mona Hatoum, 2009. *Witness*. Porcelain, 49 x 24.3 x 24.3 cm.

Other structures that still exist in Lebanon today and considered as symbols of the country's war are roadblocks and checkpoints. Claiming to maintain peace in the country, the

⁵⁸ Espionart, 2016. Witness to the Lebanese Civil War. *Espionart* [online]. [Viewed 28 July 2019]. Available from: <https://espionart.com/2016/04/12/witness-to-the-lebanese-civil-war/>

Lebanese army and some political parties place road blocks and check points to supervise passersby. This was never overcome after the war. As long as I remember, these have been part of the country. During the war, each militia had its own checkpoints, afterwards, during the Syrian intervention, checkpoints were supervised by Syrian fighters. And now after the war is supposedly over, checkpoints and road blocks are not gone but supervised mainly by the army, except for some areas where they are controlled by political parties. The usual sight of these war-related structures is not a common issue among nations at peace, nonetheless, Lebanon still encompasses these reminders of the war, as if implying that the war is not fully over. As a result, roadblocks, checkpoints, barrels and jute bags filled with sand have become icons of Lebanon and its war. Few Lebanese artists have displayed these icons in their work addressing their consistent presence as an issue of the war.

Omar Fakhoury addresses the unfinished business of the Lebanese wars in his *Self-Defense* series. He paints roadblocks, checkpoints, and barrels, which are rooted in the past of Lebanon, but still occupy many of its roads. The reason for depicting these structures, according to Fakhoury's words, is to "archive the present", believing that these objects are both rooted in the past and bound into the future because they still punctuate Lebanon's roads today. Considering them as continuation of the war, Fakhoury expresses this, he says: "In every corner of this country, there is evidence of a conflict that is ongoing"⁵⁹.

⁵⁹ Ayad, M., (2016). The Inherited Wars. *Guggenheim* [online]. 17 June 2016. [Viewed 10 December 2018]. Available from: <https://www.guggenheim.org/blogs/map/the-inherited-wars>



Omar Fakhoury. *Self-Defense series*. Taymour Grahne Gallery

Ayman Baalbaki also addressed this issue in painting roadblocks. In his work titled *Concrete Beirut Barrier*, Baalbaki is referring through the word ‘Barrier’ to the obstruction that these structures cause.



Ayman Baalbaki, 2013. *Concrete Beirut Barrier*. Acrylic on cardboard. 70 x 100 x 5 cm.

Other repeatedly visited icons of the Lebanese war are the cars. During the civil war and the Israeli attacks on Lebanon, many families left their villages to find shelter elsewhere in the country, so they stuffed their belongings on their cars and left. As a result, the image of the car stuffed with belongings became a national icon and reminder of the shared tragedy.

Among these is Ayman Baalbaki's installation *Destination X*. Analogous to the ones used for escape during conflicts, the installation is an old blue car loaded with a pile of baggage and suitcases, symbolizing the consequences of war.



Ayman Baalbaki, 2010. *Safar Destination-x*, Installation view.

The wrecked cars are also displayed as symbols of the Lebanese war, but serving a purpose different than transportation. During the civil war and later conflicts, cars functioned as deadly weapons with bombs implanted in them to explode. Oussama Baalbaki depicted the icon of the bombed out car highlighting the repeatedly shared calamities.



Oussama Baalbaki, 2009. *Untitled*, acrylic on canvas, 69.5 x 100 cm.

The Lebanese Flag and the Cedar Tree are symbols of the nation. They are also displayed as cultural icons in art characteristic of the Lebanese wars. However, in this kind of art, the flag and the tree are displayed to address the aftermath of the war.

Lebanese artist Ginane Bacho has repeatedly displayed the cedar tree as a national icon, revealing the violence of the wars that fabricated the history of her country. The first cedar statue Bacho sculpted with the shrapnel that invaded her home in 1983⁶⁰. After about thirty years, the artist revisited this same topic and created a series of cedar trees referring to the continuous conflicts that have tinted Lebanon. By sculpting a national icon while using the

⁶⁰ Agial Art Gallery, (2019). *Agial Art Gallery- The website* [Viewed 20 August 2019]. Available from: <http://www.agialart.com/Artists/Details/51/Makki-Bacho-Ginane>

artefacts that were used during the war, and precisely the shrapnel that destroyed her home, Bacho highlights what has become of her country; a nation of ongoing conflicts.



Ginane Bacho, 1983. Cedar. Shrapnel



Ginane Bacho. 2012-2016. Installation view Shrapnel Cedars. Variable dimensions. Shrapnel.

In his work, *The Flag*, artist Fouad El Khoury displays a photo of the Lebanese flag painted on a concrete surface punctured with bullet holes, symbolizing the destruction that fell upon his country.



Fouad El Khoury, The Flag.

As seen, the cultural dimension of national identity is revealed using icons symbolizing the consequences of the wars and serving as reminders of them. Moreover, knowing that shared memories and tragedies are employed to enforce national identities, the discussed icons embody a national identity implied through cultural icons.

As for representations of a cultural dimension in the Syrian art scene, I notice that artworks that display the war reflect this dimension basically by symbolizing the horrors of the crisis and its impact on the people. Artists present scenes that exhibit the consequences of the war through exposing the suffering endured as a result of migration, the destruction of the country and the terrible situation that the people have been living. The abundant amount of artworks that display these consequences of the conflicts in Syria have transformed them into symbols representing the present nation.

The systematic destruction of the Syrian landscape during the civil war made many Syrian artists express their concern revealing a cultural dimension. They implied a cultural aspect in revealing their destroyed land, buildings and monuments. Among these are the images depicting destruction in the Syrian art scene (discussed in section 1.3.2). In addition, artists Humam Alsalim and Rami Bakhos created the *Cultural Beheading series* (discussed in section 3.2.2.) to reflect the destruction of the ancient ruins of Palmyra, a world heritage site and major cultural icon of Syria. The destruction of this site during the war is sort of depriving the nation and its people of their knowledge, identity, memory and history. In response to this, Alsalim and Bakhos created digital artworks to highlight the graveness of the destruction that have surrounded Palmyra. Moreover, the title plainly highlights the horrible consequences of destroying this historical site as killing the nation's culture. The work displays a cultural icon of Syria addressing the impact of the crises.

However, other than this collection, despite all images depicting the destruction of Syria, we do not see a repeatedly depicted monument that specifically symbolizes the war, such as in the Lebanese art scene. This, perhaps, goes back to the fact that the war is still going, and for such monuments to become symbols of war, time is an important factor. Nonetheless, knowing that the country's landscapes are part of its culture, we consider the images of destruction, profoundly explained in section 1.3.2., as implications of the cultural dimension.

Other than destruction, the images of suffering and dead children have become symbols representing present Syria and the horrors of its war. Although death and suffering are not normally considered cultural aspects of a nation, due to the recurrence of this disaster and its prominent display in this art genre, these have become recurrent symbols in the Syrian art scene. Moreover, the high death toll of children has indeed characterized the Syrian war. Consequently, by considering this aspect a symbol of the war and due to its frequent representations in art, I include it under the category of the cultural aspect, knowing also that symbols are interpreted in the cultural dimension of national identity.

As seen in section 3.2.2, almost all incidents that happened during the civil war in Syria were translated in visual arts, including the massacres and the pervasive death of children. However, being such an agitating and distressing topic, artists have repeatedly expressed their concern in depicting the terrible situation of Syrian children as well as their tragic deaths. Some have depicted them in their realistic sufferings and others have displayed them away from their tragedy. Prominent among the latter is artist Walid El-Masri. In his artworks, children are floating alone in the void, isolated from the aggression of their country. Their frightening eyes and smile refer to the consequences of war on them, deprived from their natural place and their childhood.



Walid El Masri, 2015. Child.

In a way different than El Masri, Mohannad Orabi displays his children sad, calm and gentle. Their eyes are fixed at the viewer and surrounded with black paint soiling their cheeks, as if they are crying and asking for our compassion. Depicted on plain backgrounds, with no direct reference to the war, yet the emotions of suffering on their faces refer to the tragedy.



Mohannad Orabi, 2015. Untitled, from Family Portrait Series. Mixed media on canvas, 150 x 150 cm.

As for artist Abdalla Al Omari, his artworks of children depict the real circumstances that these fragile beings encountered during the war. Sometimes they are wounded, sometimes wearing gas masks (check section 3.2.2.), other times they are deportees and so on. While displaying these images in such a realistic approach, Al Omari has exposed the impact of war on Syrian children.



Abdalla Al Omari, 2013. Try to Hide More When You Kill, Kids Are Watching. Mixed Media On Canvas, 140 x 120 cm. Private Collection.

Many other artists display images of children in their work as a response to the horrors of the war and its irreversible damage to these fragile beings. As a result, they have become symbols of the nation's war and its consequences.

In addition to the tragedy concerning Syria's children, artists have displayed images of their people migrating as a response to the huge wave of immigration and the tragic way Syrians

left their country. They present them carrying their possessions in bags, bundles and suitcases, and display boats as their way of transportation. The images of migrating people and the boat which was a basic means for their migration have become symbols of the Syrian war.

Under this respect is Abdalla Al Omari's *Boat*. The work is a part of *The Vulnerability Series* (discussed in section 2.3.2.) in which he paints portraits of world leaders as refugees. In the following work, Al Omari paints world leaders together as refugees loaded on a migrating boat. Again, the artist is compelling us to consider that anyone may be subjected to such circumstances.



Abdalla Al Omari, 2017-ongoing. Detail, *The Boat*. Acrylic on canvas. 200 x 500 cm.

Khaled Takreti displays the image of a refugee dressed in black and carrying a bundle on her shoulder. The mood of the painting is gloomy and the expressions on the woman's face are those of unease, reflecting her unpleasant situation. The background of the painting is also painted in black augmenting the drama of the display. As an explanation to the dominating black color in Takreti's works, the artist says: "[the conflict in Syria] took off all the happy colors in my work"⁶¹.



Khaled Takreti, 2016. Women and War 4. Acrylic on canvas, 146 x 114 cm. Private Collection

In the following work, Syrian artist Imranovi displays the boat icon and refugees on board sailing above the destruction of his country. Instead of being in a sea, the boat is sailing on

⁶¹ Galerie Claude Lemand, (2012). Khaled Takreti. *Galerie Claude Lemand- The website*. [Viewed 20 July 2019], Available from: <https://www.claude-lemmand.com/artiste/khaled-takreti-62?souspage=bio>

destroyed buildings, highlighting the devastation that happened in Syria along with the ship that symbolizes the migration of its people.



Imranovi, Deluge Super

Abundant amount of works addresses the migrating crisis and the boat icon as symbols of the nation's current situation. However, these artworks exemplify how images of refugees and boats are frequently displayed as icons of Syria and its war.

As explained, contemporary artworks characteristic of the Syrian war reflect the cultural dimension of national identity in showing the destruction of the country and the struggle of the people. Out of the war's tragedy certain icons were frequently displayed to symbolize current Syria and its war.

4.3. The historical Dimension

History is a fundamental dimension in the construction of nations and national identities. It is a basic factor in how we identify a nation, its culture and its place in the world. "History contributes to the construction of a certain image of the nation and represents the cradle

where national character was forged”⁶². Every nation has to possess a distinct history which provides its members with a conception about the land where they belong, “so that when individuals look back in time they are not confronted with a blank picture about their own collective origin”⁶³. In possessing an ancient history, including origins, victories, sacrifices and past glories, a nation assures its old existence and promotes its future subsistence. Nations emphasize their ancient past in order to assure their people that they will continue to exist in the future, no matter what hardships they face. However, in accordance to the significance of the historical dimension in constructing national identities, this section is concerned in inspecting its appearance in contemporary visual arts characteristic of war in Lebanon, Palestine and Syria. Consequently, it focuses on the representations of the historical dimension in this specific kind of art. It investigates these representations during times of conflicts, when national identity is most needed and exploited to reach specific national goals. Therefore, I inspect the appearance of an historical dimension in investigating how history is reflected, narrated, evoked or documented in these works. I analyze how this art reflects on the past of these nations, or in the case of Syria, the recent past, and how, in turn, it aids in recording the histories of these nations.

Among the essential aspects for the construction of a National Identity, Stuart Hall considered the “emphasis on origins, continuity, tradition and timelessness”⁶⁴ where one’s belonging to a nation has to be underpinned by its historical aspect and its continuity; he/she has to believe that the nation is ancient so that it will continue to exist for future generations. This historical aspect or dimension proves and assures the ‘continuity’ of a nation which, in turn, preserves the national identity of a people. Montserrat Guibernau considered that history, or what she refers to as “[a]ntiquity [,] stresses one of the key elements of identity,

⁶² Guibernau, M., 2004. *Op. Cit.*, P. 137.

⁶³ *Idem.*, P. 136.

⁶⁴ Hall, S., 1996. *Op. Cit.*, P. 615.

that is continuity, and, in so doing, it contributes to the preservation of the collective self⁶⁵. Moreover, the emphasis on origins in constructing national identity, in creating the idea of original folk or ancestors, serves basically in promoting the ‘continuity’ of a nation. “The fact that ancestors are primarily made up and that their progeny is far from being the direct heirs of a single ethnically pure group is of no importance – what is important is the faith in historical and spiritual continuity”⁶⁶. However, for a people to conceptualize what Hall called “timelessness” and “continuity” of a nation or what Régis Debray considered as “eternal” (this concept is explained in section 1.3.1.), a nation has to possess a history, a story which tells the origin of its people, victories, sacrifices of ancestors, glories and so on. Whether its history tells about past glories through sacrifices of, what is considered, martyrs and heroes, or through defeats which brought suffering to the ancestors, or others, this history is a fundamental aspect for the construction of national identity.

Members of the same nation are united through remembering their common history, no matter if it speaks of the glories or defeats. “Nations remember admirable and awesome experiences, but they also recall dreadful moments of humiliation and suffering”⁶⁷, and all play their roles in uniting members of the same nation. Members of a nation are united when remembering tragedies and sacrifices of their ancestors, as well as remembering their victories. “The construction of national identity builds on the emphasis on a common history, and history has always to do with remembrance and memory”⁶⁸. Whether good or bad, victories or defeats, glories or humiliations, remembering the circumstances that a nation had passed through creates a sense of solidarity among its members. Moreover, tragic historical circumstances make people conceptualize that their nation, which had

⁶⁵ Guibernau, M., 2004. *Op. Cit.*, P. 136.

⁶⁶ Petković, J., 2011., *Op. Cit.*, P. 145.

⁶⁷ Guibernau, M., 2004. *Op. Cit.*, P. 137.

⁶⁸ Wodak, R. de Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., and Liebhart, K. 2009. *Op. Cit.* P.155.

undergone all calamities, is still standing and will continue to do so in the future. Consequently, when artists depict certain events of the war, whether massacres, victories or occupations, they contribute in their nation's image of continuity by reminding their fellow nationals about these circumstances, albeit it may not be intentional. In this regard, all artworks depicting war incidents explained in section 2.2. reveal an historical dimension. When Syrian artists depicted the massacres that happened in their country, or Lebanese artists displayed the bus incident, or Palestinian artists represented their Nakba, they all displayed "dreadful moments of humiliation and suffering", according to Guibernau's words. In doing so, members of the same nation, from our present time or even the following generations, may look at these works, remember the war and identify with the depicted historical events, sensing their national belonging in sharing the same tragedies as their fellow nationals. As a result, all artworks that display war incidents reveal an historical dimension of national identity.

In addition to the role of history in providing people with the idea of 'continuity' of their nation, it draws a collective memory which further adds to the emotional attachment of these people to their country. "The selective use of history provides nationals with a collective memory filled with transcendental moments in the life of the community, events and experiences that allow people to increase their self-esteem by feeling part of a community"⁶⁹. When members of a nation draw a collective memory evoked by a shared history, their solidarity is enforced, hence their sense of national identity is augmented. According to Leszek Kolakowski, historical memory (also called collective memory) is an indispensable prerequisite for national identity. He believes that it is not important whether the content of historical memory is true, partly true or legendary. The further real or

⁶⁹ Guibernau, M., 2004. *Op. Cit.*, P. 137.

imaginary memories reach, the more securely national identity is supported⁷⁰. Therefore, collective memory is built through ‘selective use of history’, whether true or false, to generate more solidarity among people of the same nation and further attachment to it. The evoking of collective memory is exactly what Lebanese artists have practiced in their art as an aftermath of the war. By arousing memories of the war, these artists tried to implant a collective memory among Lebanese which makes them realize their past mistakes and humiliations, so that the same errors will not be repeated again.

An important agent to create a collective memory among people of a nation and promote its history is narrative. Stuart Hall considered the “narrative of the nation”⁷¹, which appears in its history and culture, is among the essential aspects for the construction of a national identity. In their book, *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*, Ruth Wodak and others inspect the linguistic means as discourses and narratives involved in the construction of national identity. They questioned the means of how a nation which is an ‘imaginary community’, according to Benedict Anderson’s definition (check section 1.3.1), reaches the minds of its members. They reach the conclusion that national identity “is constructed and conveyed in discourse, predominantly in narratives of national culture. National identity is thus the product of discourse”⁷². They highlight the importance of narratives in the construction of national identities and considered that “[n]ationality is a narration story which people tell about themselves in order to lend meaning to the social world”⁷³. Whether agreeing with their conclusion or not, it is undeniable that national narratives and discourse play a fundamental role in constructing national identities. Paul Ricoeur states that the “[i]ndividual and community are constituted in their identity by taking up narratives that

⁷⁰ Kolakowski, L., 1995. *Über kollektive Identität*. na. P. 33. Cited in Wodak, R. de Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., and Liebhart, K. 2009. *Op. Cit.* P. 25.

⁷¹ Hall, S., 1996. *Op. Cit.*, P. 615.

⁷² Wodak, R. de Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., and Liebhart, K. 2009. *Op. Cit.* P.22.

⁷³ Idem., P. 23.

become for them their actual history”⁷⁴. Anyway, after demonstrating the importance of narratives as a means to present history and construct national identity, I consider that historical narratives employed in visual arts play this same role.

Narratives are often employed by artists to evoke history and collective memory, thus promoting national identity through its historical dimension. “The thematic content of discourses of national identity encompasses the construction of a common past, present and future”⁷⁵. Artists have presented historical narratives, reported narratives of their present circumstances and implied future progress, thus enforcing the national identity through their art. “Among the presentations crucial in bringing modern nationhood to life as a rallying point for citizen loyalty were the following: the ability through art, popular culture or the media to relate ‘the Narrative of the nation’, its turning points, defining features and past glories”⁷⁶. Artists have underscored certain historical events through narratives of their own experiences during the war as well as those of others, hence making their fellow-members identify with these presented narratives. Knowing also that “the road to [...n]ational identification was and is paved with monumental narratives”⁷⁷, artists have collaborated in paving the road to national identification. In what follows, I reveal how artists, through different artistic approaches and media, have represented an historical dimension through recording historical events, evoking collective memory and presenting narratives. I start with the Lebanese art scene, followed by the Palestinian and last, the Syrian.

After the signing of Al-Taif agreement, the war in Lebanon stopped with no reconciliation or confrontation with past events and the Lebanese government passed an amnesty law

⁷⁴ Ricoeur, P., 1988. Time and Narrative, volume III. *Trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer*. Chicago. P. 247.

⁷⁵ Wodak, R. de Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., and Liebhart, K. 2009. *Op. Cit.* P.187.

⁷⁶ Kennedy, P. and Danks, C. eds., 2001. *Op. Cit.*, P. 3.

⁷⁷ Wodak, R. de Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., and Liebhart, K. 2009. *Op. Cit.* P.18.

granting any former members of militias exemption from criminal prosecution, fearing that any investigation might jeopardize the peace process. However, this led to a complete incapability to deal with the past, whether in the form of national narratives or in documenting a unified history of the war. As mentioned earlier, during the war, historians were politicized which resulted in biased subjective opinions that couldn't present a somehow unified version of history. Moreover, till now, each political party has its own version of subjective history. "The difficulty in representing the events of this history not only concerns the problem of determining what happened [..., i]t also has to do with [...] the incapacity of subjects to narrate their experiences in larger collective terms"⁷⁸. As a result, not only there was no reliable documentation of the history of war, but also no national collective memory; each religious sect and political party has its own collective memory and version of history. "With their contradictory alliances, constantly shifting roster of combatants, and competing accounts, the civil wars remain a topic of obfuscation, denial and lingering antagonism within contemporary Lebanese society"⁷⁹. In addition, there is a common disagreement among Lebanese on their origin; many Christian Maronites claim to have Phoenician roots while other sects consider themselves of other different origins. All these issues have caused a deeply rooted concept of differentiation among Lebanese themselves and a fracture in their national collective identity. Consequently, in accordance to what is explained in this section and in chapter one about the construction of national identity, these issues of disagreement inflicted various divisions and a fragmented sense of national identity among Lebanese. In what follows, I demonstrate and analyze how this aspect is mirrored in art characteristic of war in Lebanon and how it is reflected in the representation of an historical dimension.

⁷⁸ Elias, C., (2004). *Op. Cit.*

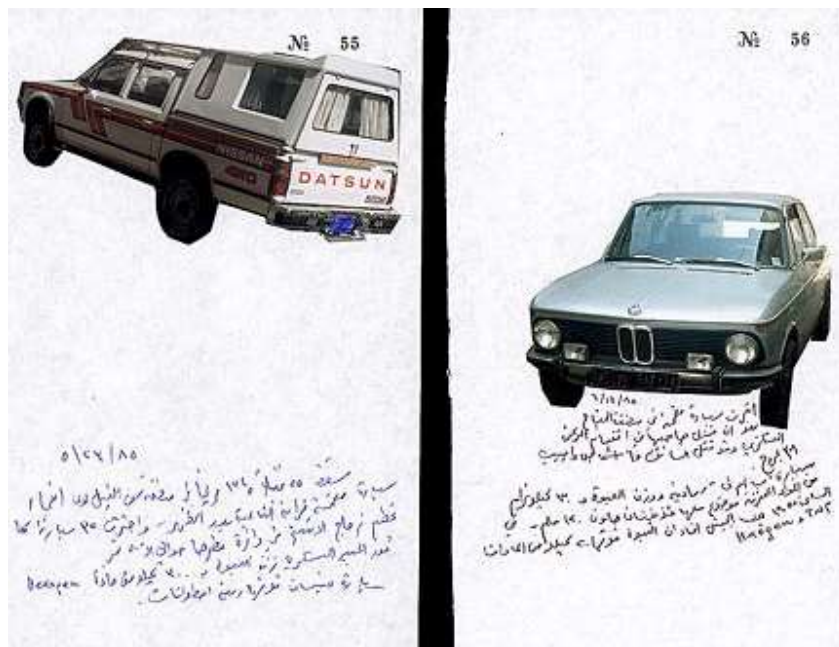
⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

During the civil war in Lebanon, many artists left the country, then then the Taif agreement and the promise of peace brought this generation of artists back to Lebanon during the early 1990s. Many of these artists and others who had remained in Lebanon collaborated and developed artistic productions addressing the aftermath of the war. They tackled issues related to collective memory, history of the war and contradictions of Lebanese society. In addition, “[t]he collaborative relationships at the heart of post-war Beirut art during the 1990s [...] coalesced around a series of projects that share a theoretical interest in the role of the visual image in the construction of historical knowledge”⁸⁰. Consequently, the Lebanese civil war formed a combination of conflicts in which its history, including its origins and events are not agreed upon, as for its consequences, these have united a generation of artists to scratch at its unhealed wounds and undocumented history in search of a bigger picture.

A major project that reveals the historical dimension of national identity in Lebanese contemporary art scene is Walid Raad’s project *The Atlas Group*. This project is a fictional foundation created to research and document the contemporary history of Lebanon and deals mainly with the Lebanese civil war. It aims to locate, preserve, study and produce audio, visual literary and other artifacts that shed light on the contemporary history of Lebanon. In this endeavor, it produced and found several documents including notebooks, films, videos, photographs and other objects. These works are organized in an archive, *The Atlas Group Archive*. However, Raad’s intention in his project is not presenting the history of the Lebanese civil war, but rather to show the malleable nature of history and images in their relationship to the truth. In fact, the images and the accompanying notes archived in *The Atlas Group* are works of fiction; they are false archival pieces put together by Raad. The group forms part of an ongoing contemplation on conflict, history and memory,

⁸⁰ Amirsadeghi, H., Mikdadi, S. and Shabout, N., 2009. *Op. Cit.*, P. 40.

remembering and forgetting, and the archive as artefact. Anyhow, in tackling issues of the civil war, such as car bombs or displaying the Egg building (discussed in section 3.3.), despite their false records, Raad freshens the memory of Lebanese in remembering actual historical events and perhaps induces a collective memory. In addition, his presentation of the fictitious in a way similar to real archival documents compels the viewer to reconsider false versions of historical narratives. In the following visual, Raad displays the images of cars mentioning their kinds and categories with fictitious dates and details of their explosion.



Walid Raad. From The Atlas Group archive.

Among the artists who tackle the issue of the undocumented civil war history and Lebanese amnesia is Lamia Joreige. In her video *Here and Perhaps Elsewhere* (discussed in section 2.2.2.), Joreige's question, 'Do you know anyone who was kidnapped from here during the war?' which she asked to people in different neighborhoods of Beirut, addresses the issue of collective memory in Lebanon; the question compels the interviewees to remember a tragedy that almost none of them were immune from experiencing. In the video, the artist

evokes a shared crisis and presents historical narratives of the civil war. Although some of these narratives are personal experiences during the war, but they still speak of historical happenings that stroke Lebanon. In doing so, Joreige presents an historical dimension through remembrance and narratives.

Khalil Joreige's and Joana Hadjithomas's film *A Perfect Day* (discussed in section 2.2.2.) also tackles on the issue of Lebanese collective memory. Although, the film presents fictitious characters, it arouses the subject of the kidnapped, evoking a collective memory of the war. Other works, mentioned previously and presenting the historical dimension, to name a few, are Akram Zaatari's documentary video, *All is Well on the Border*, which presents narratives of resistance in a series of testimonies by Lebanese citizens who were detained during the Israeli occupation of Lebanon. As well as Aref El Rayyes's drawings called *Road to peace* in which he documented incidents of the first two years of the civil war, revealing an historical dimension. Other artworks that document the wars in Lebanon, but this time it's July War in 2006, are Mazen Kerbaj and Laure Ghorayeb's comics, Lamia Joreige and Rabih Mroue's installation project, *...And The Living Is Easy*, and Zena El Khalil's project in which she wrote her blog narrating her daily experience during the war. El Khalil wrote about her blog: "In a way, writing was my way of contributing to establishing a "history" of a specific time and place. Like other artists my age, I am interested in the syndrome of collective amnesia in Lebanon"⁸¹. All these works are profoundly explained in section 2.2.2., nonetheless, their presentation of the historical dimension wasn't yet emphasized. Some of these works exhibit drawings of the war and others present narratives, written or told, addressing the issue. However, by now, the presentation of this dimension is thoroughly elucidated. As a result, such works, despite the

⁸¹ Barjeel Art Foundation, (2015). *Mandy Merzaban interviews artist Zena El Khalil*. [Viewed on 5 May 2019]. Available from: <https://www.barjeelartfoundation.org/downloads/mandy-merzaban-interviews-artist-zena-el-khalil/>

fact that some display unreal records and inaccurate events, evoke historical memory among the viewers in presenting personal and historical narratives of the war, thus revealing an historical dimension of national identity.

Moving forward to analyze the representation of an historical dimension in the Palestinian art scene, I consider that this aspect is inspected in all artworks characteristic of the Palestinian conflict. As previously explained, all Palestinian art characteristic of war addresses the Palestinian cause. By depicting events under occupation, the oppression Palestinians face, their exile, their Nakba, the destruction of their land and imposition of Israeli architecture and all other related themes, Palestinian artists are displaying their history and evoking the collective memory of Palestinians. Even the cultural icons arouse historical memory; by simply displaying the 'key' icon, for example, artists evoke the collective memory of Palestinians compelling them to remember their houses and homeland which they were obliged to leave. Consequently, all these artworks do present an historical dimension of national identity, nonetheless some expose and stress this dimension more than others. In what follows, I present a few artworks that highlight the historical dimension in Palestinian art.

One of the artworks that prominently reveals and underscores the historical dimension in Palestinian art is Ismael Shammout's *The Exodus and the Odyssey*. The work comprises nineteen large murals documenting the struggle of Palestinians in chronological sequence since the beginning of their tragedy. The murals, each given a different title, tell the story of Palestinians since the start of the Israeli occupation or Al Nakba in 1948. Painted in sequence, starting with *The Spring That Was*, the first painting of the series, Shammout depicts the life in Palestine during the British Mandate when, despite the trouble and upheavals against the British-Zionist plot to take over the country, Palestine was still inhabited by its people. Followed by the second painting, *To The Unknown* which depicts

the Israeli invasion of Palestinian villages when the people were forced out of their ancestral homes at gunpoint. Then, *The Road to Nowhere* depicts the time when Palestinians were violently forced to march through rough terrains, during which many old people and children were killed by the heat and thirst and many children were separated from their families. *Palestinians ... Refugees* depicts the end of the march when Palestinians reached their destination, a refugee camp, thus becoming refugees. *The Nightmare and The Dream* shows the refugee camp as a nightmare prison, which had to be escaped. *For Survival* reveals how scattered Palestinians had to work and study in different places in the world to be able to live and excel. *Life Prevails* refers to Palestinians' struggle to survive, assert their presence and preserve their traditions under a ruthless Israeli occupation. *Resistance* refers to the resistance of Palestinians to revive their peoples' pride and hope of return. *Homage to The Martyrs* to commemorate those who died and sacrificed for Palestine. *Intifada* (discussed in section 1.2.2) shows stone-throwing children confronting the occupier, in addition to depicting the Oslo Conference. *The Dream of Tomorrow* symbolizes Palestinians' dream to return and live in their homeland⁸². As seen, Ismael Shammout displays the history of the occupation since its beginning, highlighting the struggle of his people, their resistance, and sacrifices they made. Future generations will see these works and become informed of their ancestors' sacrifices and sufferings to maintain their existence and protect their identity, hence enforcing future generations' sense of national identity. As S. Mock emphasizes the "perception of distant familial ties alone does not translate into national community unless it is accompanied with a sense that those common ancestors suffered and sacrificed to maintain the group as a group"⁸³. In addition, Shammout displays the dream and hope for a future in the homeland, implying

⁸² Shammout, I. Ismael Shammout Exodus. *One Fine Art* [online]. [Viewed 26 May 2018]. Available from: <https://www.onefineart.com/internal-page/ismael-abdul-qader-shammout/ismael-shammout-exodus>

⁸³ Mock. S., 2014. *Symbols of defeat in the construction of national identity*. Cambridge University Press. P. 87.

the ‘continuity’ aspect of national identity. *The Exodus and the Odyssey* explicitly reveals the historical dimension of nation identity; it evokes collective memory, visually narrates the history of Palestine, speaks of tragedies and victories, and implies the aspect of ‘continuity’ in giving hope for the future.



Ismail Shammout, 1997 – 2000. *The Exodus and the Odyssey*. Oil on canvas. 165 x 200 cm each.

A different approach in revealing an historical dimension is depicted in Mona Hatoum’s video *Measures of Distance*, discussed in section 2.3.2. Through a personal narrative, the artist speaks of her alienation and exile, evoking the historical memory of millions of Palestinians who were forced to leave their homes. In the video, Hatoum reads her mother’s letter, addressing the impact of exile, she says: “... when you talk about a feeling of fragmentation and not knowing where you really belong, well, this has been a painful reality for all our people...” This narrative clearly highlights the collective tragedy of Palestinians and evokes their collective memory, hence revealing an historical dimension through remembering and narrating the past.

Palestinian artworks that display the destruction of the land and the imposition of Israeli settlements also reveal an historical dimension. Although not by means of narratives, these

works arouse a collective memory among Palestinians in remembering their homeland and the fact that they were forced to leave it, thus uniting them in a shared tragedy and for a common cause. Prominent of this kind is Hazem Harb's work *Power Does Not Defeat Memory* (discussed in sections 1.3.2. and 4.2.) in which he displays the Palestinian landscape before the Nakba superimposed by Israeli architecture. Harb arouses the collective memory of Palestinians in remembering their land before occupation and the tragedy of the invasion. In addition, the title clearly suggests the power of memory which cannot be defeated by strength. Harb says: "I want to put the images back into time. Philosophically time stopped at that moment [of the Naqba]. Now they are part of the present again"⁸⁴. The artist explicitly declares his intention of reviving the memory of Palestinian land and hence reveals an historical dimension by arousing collective memory and documenting the historical landscape.

Although they utilized different artistic approaches in revealing an historical dimension of national identity, the mentioned Palestinian artists as well as others discussed throughout this book have tackled issues such as their past and present tragedies as well as their resistance and hope for the future. In doing so, these artists have presented the historical dimension in evoking a collective memory, documenting historical incidents and implanting hope in their people, all employed to assert their jeopardized identity. By referring to the past, they are arousing collective memory, and by referring to a hopeful future, they are asserting their continuity. 'Continuity' contributes in preserving the national identity and this is why the historical dimension is prominent in the Palestinian art aiming to stress an identity at risk.

⁸⁴ Gronlund, M., (2018). *Op.Cit.*

As for the historical dimension in the Syrian art scene characteristic of war, we find it present in all artworks depicting the events of the war. The huge amount of artworks displaying events of the war in their simplest details serve as an historical documentation of the Syrian war. Artists have depicted the destruction of their country, the exile of their people and the oppression they faced, all revealing an historical dimension. Upon viewing these works in the future, Syrians will recollect what happened, arousing a collective memory that unites them together through a shared tragedy. However, knowing that Syrians are still amidst of their crisis and their pain is fresh and not forgotten, Syrian artists did not present far historical events and memories. Nonetheless, in the future, these documentations of war events in art will serve as historical reminders of the tragedy. As for the present time, Syrian artists have been contributing in preserving and documenting the history of their nation, thus enforcing a national identity through its historical dimension.

In addition to images of the war, Syrian artists have created videos displaying personal and national narratives in which they expose the situation of their country and their experiences during the war. Prominent among these works are two videos that I discussed previously in this book, *9 Days – From my Window in Aleppo* and *A Day and a Button* (both discussed in section 3.2.2). In *9 Days – From my Window in Aleppo*, Artist Issa Touma spent nine days in his apartment filming a battle on the street facing him, recording the shooting along with his own experience and reaction concerning the war. As for the second video, *A Day and a Button*, artist Azza Hamwi recorded the sound of bullets from her house, then she walked through the streets of Damascus, narrating how life in Syria became and confessed that she no longer knows her identity. Both videos record the situation in Syria and serve as historical documentations of the war. Moreover, by narrating their own experiences and the circumstances in their country, both artists arouse the collective memory of Syrians

who were exposed to similar situations. Consequently, these works reveal an historical dimension of national identity in narrating the situation in Syria.

In addition, artists Humam Alsalim and Rami Bakhos in their *Cultural Beheading series* (discussed in sections 3.2.2. and 3.3) expose an historical dimension in highlighting the graveness of the destruction that surrounded the historical site of Palmyra. By displaying this site, they remind Syrians of their history and cultural heritage. Being an icon of Syria, Palmyra symbolizes the country's ancient history and the deep-rooted origin of its people. Therefore, this series serves as a reminder of Syrian history and origin thus revealing an historical dimension.

A major artwork concerned with the Syrian conflict and presents historical and personal narratives in addressing the situation is Mounira Al Solh's project *I strongly believe in our right to be frivolous*. The artist exposes the tragic situation of Syrians in displaying personal narratives about their lives in Syria and their horrible experiences during the war and in exile. In the project, Al Solh recorded conversations she had with people who fled Syria during the war, documenting how the crisis has deeply affected each one of them. Al Solh noted what they said and sketched and drew their portraits onto a yellow notepad. The recordings consist of diverse peoples' personal stories, their views and memories from Syria, their political opinions, social and historical events, personal and public matters, going back to pre-Assad's times, and thoughts about the future. The drawings and interviews with those people are presented as notes mostly on yellow legal pad written in slang terms, mainly Arabic, that they both, the artist and the interviewee, communicated in. These conversations that the artist collected serve in documenting the crisis in Syria through different individuals' experiences. Although the work mainly focuses on personal experiences during the war and in exile, it still presents historical events of the crisis and

offers an insight to the county's situation, and above all, it serves in recollecting historical incidents of the war. When Syrians read the written narratives, they identify with the documented events and remember their own experiences during the war and hence arousing collective memory becomes inevitable. The artist herself confessed about retrieving her memories of the Lebanese civil wars as a result of her conversations with those individuals. Being born to a Syrian mother and a Lebanese father, Al Solh and her family took refuge in Syria during the civil war in Lebanon. According to the artist, these interviews have deeply affected her and changed her perspective about almost everything. They have allowed her to understand Syria and the revolution and have drew back her memories of the Lebanese civil war. She says: "What I am obsessed with, is to capture my own history as a child, the traumas I have been through during the Lebanese Civil war"⁸⁵. Al Solh's statement further proves how such narratives serve in remembering the past and in building a collective memory.



Mounira Al Solh, 2012 - Ongoing. From the series I strongly believe in our right to be frivolous. Hand-written conversations and drawings on yellow legal-pad and other A4 papers.

⁸⁵ Al Solh, M., 2019. *Mounira Al Solh - The Website*. [viewed 2 August 2019]. Available from: <http://mouniraalsolh.com/works>



Mounira Al Solh, 2012 - Ongoing. Installation view. I strongly believe in our right to be frivolous. Hand-written conversations and drawings on yellow legal-pad and other A4 papers.

Mounira Al Solh's project and other presented artworks addressing the war in Syria reveal an historical dimension. They are valuable depictions of the nation's crisis and serve in recording, understanding and, eventually in the future, remembering a common tragedy by arousing collective.

5.3. The Political Dimension

This section investigates the appearance of political and territorial dimensions in contemporary art displaying war in Lebanon, Palestine and Syria. After analyzing the appearance of psychological, cultural and historical dimensions, following Guibernau's notion concerning the five dimensions⁸⁶ necessary in constructing national identity, I move on to analyze the last two dimensions. The reason I include these two dimensions in one section goes back to the fact that territorial aspects, as boundaries of a nation, are presented in art as political issues, whereas, as landmarks and homeland, they feature a cultural aspect and are, consequently, analyzed in the cultural dimension. Therefore, in what follows, I

⁸⁶ Guibernau, M., 2004. *Op. Cit.*, P. 135.

analyze the appearance of the political dimension, which comprises the presentation of the countries' territories as political notions, in my research area.

The political dimension plays an important role in constructing national identities, since after all “the process of nation-building and of national identity formation is a political product”¹. Moreover, this dimension is prominent during conflicts since wars too are political issues and “affect individuals' political attitudes”². As said in the previous section, a basic issue in constructing national identity is providing it with the aspect of ‘continuity’, which is acquired through the history of a nation. However, ‘continuity’ is concerned with the future which, in addition to the requirement of a history to be assured, it imposes an employment of politics to dictate how it can be attained. An exemplary case is the Palestinian’s: Palestinians considers that the ‘continuity’ of their national identity requires acts of resistance which are political issues. Therefore, “future orientation provided by the national identity transforms the nation from a backward-looking ethno-cultural community concerned with preserving the past, into politicized interest group which intents on seizing control of its fate or destiny: National self – determination”³. The future goals of a nation are planned and executed through politics. Under this regard is exhibiting acts of resistance in Palestinian art; artists imply the future of Palestine through acts of resistance. They imply that through resistance Palestine will be gained again, the exiled will return to their homeland, national identity will be maintained and other goals can be gained. So did Syrian artists by exhibiting images against Al-Assad regime and encouraging the revolution; they are implying political aspects to gain freedom in the future Syria. Although direct political aspects are not detected in most Lebanese art in comparison with the Syrian and Palestinian art scenes, Lebanese artists evoke war memories for future

¹ Breuilly, J., 1993. *Nationalism and the State*. Manchester University Press. P. 2.

² Stein, A.A. and Russett, B.M., 1980. *Op. Cit.*, P. 407.

³ İnaç, H. and Ünal, F., (2013). *Op. Cit.*, P. 231.

goals: in order not to repeat the same mistakes and attain unity among Lebanese. As a result, politics is employed by nations for future-oriented goals, and artists reveal a political dimension in their art to maintain a better future, according to their political views.

After revealing the importance of political dimension in constructing national identities and its orientation for future goals, I move forward to inspect its representations in the Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese art scenes.

Ever since the emergence of the Palestinian cause, art has been the visual expression of the Palestinian struggle for liberation. Most visual productions of Palestinian artists had been strongly tied with political conditions. It is not unusual for people struggling for freedom to express a political dimension in their visual productions and artistic expressions, where sometimes even aesthetic values are neglected in favor of revolutionary subject-matter. The occupation of Palestine, the deportation of its people, the intention to annihilate its culture, and the whole existence of the nation till our present day, as well as its people's, are defined by political circumstances. The Palestinian struggle is not only limited to Al Nakba and other past events, but rather to all the experiences in exile or under occupation which persist till our present day. Palestinians now are either living in exile, not allowed to return to their homeland, or under occupation experiencing various forms of injustice and oppression on daily bases. Therefore, upon realizing the political environment in Palestine where many Palestinian artists create their work, and the political circumstances that prevent those in exile to return home, we know that the appearance of a political dimension in art is inevitable. And above that, this dimension is not usually expressed in Palestinian art by planning but is rather inseparable from their very existence. Artist Rula Halawani, who lives and creates her art in Palestine, elaborates this, she says: "[T]he question of making political art does not arise in the Palestinian context. Our existence is entirely defined, at

all levels, by political circumstances”¹. Because Palestine is still under occupation and Palestinians are still subjected to tragic events, Palestinian art cannot be discussed with only referring to history and no mention of the present struggles. The Palestinian cause is not solely embodied by notions of memory, trauma and exile, but also through depiction of the present reality of life under occupation in an intense political environment reflected in various ways in the works of countless artists who live these unbearable conditions. “[T]he occupation forces every Palestinian to be “political” in some sense by their very insistence on life”². Consequently, Palestinian artists have addressed issues of their past and hopes for the future, as well as current issues of occupation, oppression and daily struggle within Palestine, and each of these reveal a political dimension.

Palestinian artists have reacted to Israeli policies and reflected their past and present struggles, as well as their hope for the future in their visual expressions of resistance. With extreme efforts exerted to deny them of their own identity, Palestinians’ persistence to exist is considered an act of resistance, and so is any form of art asserting this existence. Artists have displayed their history, daily circumstances, love for their homeland, culture and many other aspects of their lives as an act of resisting the efforts to annihilate their existence. These artists have responded to their circumstances in ways which they have been affected “not only by the founding of Israel in 1948 but also its long, brutal history of occupation — a narrative that remains pertinent to understanding the evolution of numerous trends in Palestinian art”³. By simply expressing their will to exist, Palestinian artists are considered to reflect an act of resistance and hence exposing a political dimension. Even the portrayal

¹ Nadour. Rula Halawani. *Nadour - The website*. [Viewed 4 June 2018]. Available from: <http://nadour.org/artists/rula-halawani/>

² Farhat, M., (2009). Review: Gannit Ankori’s “Palestinian Art”. *The Electronic Intifada* [online]. [Viewed 5 May 2018]. Available from: <https://electronicintifada.net/content/review-gannit-ankoris-palestinian-art/3556>

³ *Ibid.*

of Palestinian women in traditional outfit is considered an act of Palestinian resistance: resisting the annihilation of a culture. This example also clearly reveals how Palestinian art in its very essence cannot be separated from exhibiting a political dimension. Consequently, usual political themes are not the only aspects that categorize Palestinian art as political or holding a political dimension; the mere representations hinting at a Palestinian existence are categorized as such.

Palestinian art characteristic of war always comprises a political dimension and is often directed towards resistance goals. Artist and art historian Samia Halaby identifies the art that came into prominence in the second half of the 20th century, during and after Al Nakba, in both Palestine and its diaspora in the Arab world as the “Liberation Art”⁴. This liberation art, or it can be called resistance art, cannot be interpreted without referring to the political circumstances that gave rise to it. It is a kind of art employed to address the Palestinian cause, stressing a Palestinian identity and resisting the attempts to obliterate it, and this task is unattainable without exhibiting a political dimension. However, some artists were not satisfied by solely exhibiting their plight and asserting their identity and went beyond that in encouraging their people’s resistance against the oppression and injustices practiced by the occupier. These national aims were reflected in abundant amounts of works intended to motivate Palestinian’s steadfastness and, in cases, to mobilize their acts of resistance. Furthermore, many Palestinian artists have seen such works as indispensable to sustain their identity and confront the imposed political struggles. In an exhibition catalog published by a group of Palestinian artists called New Vision*, the need for such art was elaborated;

⁴ *Ibid.*

*New Vision is an art collective founded in 1987 that consisted of artists Suleiman Mansour, Vera Tamari, Tayseer Barakat and Nabil Anani.

For the Palestinian artist, political themes were for many years part of his visual vocabulary. Those were a necessary means to express the aspirations and dreams of his people but he never ceased to explore new aesthetic venues and ways of expression. This continuous search reflected a deep sense of liberation and inner freedom. The Palestinian artist sought beauty and truth while daily struggling to survive and attain freedom⁵.

In addition to creating Liberation Art, artists of New Vision were involved in political activities in occupied Palestine, such as boycotting Israeli goods. Among them is artist Suleiman Mansour who, as many others during the uprising, boycotted Israeli goods, including Israeli art materials, and began using only natural, locally found materials such as coffee, henna, mud, and clay. This is explained in section 1.2.2. in discussing Mansour's work titled *Graffiti*. In this case, not only the work reflects the Palestinian struggle, but the act of producing it reflects and motivates an act of resistance as a political reaction to Israeli policies and its economic control of the occupied territories. By producing this work, Mansour is encouraging his people to follow his path, thus intending to politically mobilize them to boycott the occupier's goods.

Many Palestinian artists have displayed images of their political circumstances to induce, or even mobilize, their people's act of resistance. They have exhibited images of war weapons, martyrs and fighters to induce political resistance amidst their fellow-nationals. One of the most influential artists in this regard is Abdul Rahman Al Muzain. Al Muzain himself is a former resistance fighter who worked with the Palestine Liberation Organization, known as PLO, and often designed its political posters. Combining images of the homeland, farmers, fighters, Palestine's ancient history and recognizable cultural

⁵ *Ibid.*

symbols, “Al Muzain and others created a distinct aesthetic that sought to speak to the Palestinian masses and inspire a sense of resistance and *sumoud*, or steadfastness”⁶. His artworks, *Children of the Intifada* and *Intifada Against Fascism* (both discussed in section 1.2.2), as well as most of his other artworks, exhibit images to encourage Palestinian resistance against the occupier. In *Children of the Intifada*, the artist displays the image of two children throwing stones as their act of resistance, while in the latter, he depicts the image of a boy destroying the occupier’s military helmet. Moreover, as the title suggests, *Intifada Against Fascism*, the artist describes the boy’s action as an uprising against Fascism, which is referred to the Israeli occupation, thus encouraging his people’s resistance. In the following work, *Recording the past, Animating the present, Illuminating the future*, reproduced as a poster to celebrate Palestinian cinema, Al Muzain explicitly reveals his political views. Through exhibiting the image of a female fighter in the traditional Palestinian dress firing a rifle and another one doing the same and wearing a kaffiyeh, he is clearly encouraging these acts. In addition, with exhibiting the ‘dove’ icon, which symbolizes peace, exiting the rifle’s muzzle and another one inscribed on the woman’s dress, Al Muzain is declaring a political statement suggesting that peace can only be attained through resistance. This statement, however, reflects the Palestinian political situation, which despite all claims to bring peace, it was not achieved and Israeli military didn’t abide. As a result, Palestinians became convinced that it is their duty to bring peace and restore their dignity, which can only be attained through resistance. Asserting Al Muzain’s belief, as well as his people’s, that the road to peace is through resistance, he further suggests this notion in the title, *Recording the past, Animating the present, Illuminating the future*. ‘Recording the past’ is through remembering and recording history

⁶ *Ibid.*

and 'Animating the present' through raising arms and resisting the occupier in order to achieve an illuminated future.



Al Muzain, 1985. Recording the past, Animating the present, Illuminating the future.

Living in political repression, many Palestinian artists have resorted to the use of symbols and icons to refer to their political situation. Indeed, all icons and symbols utilized in Palestinian art scene and discussed in the cultural dimension (section 3.3), are as well considered political icons. Since, as previously discussed, Palestinian art is strongly tied to the political circumstances of the country, all dimensions of national identity do have political implications. However, despite the icons' direct relevance to politics as much as to culture, I discuss them in the cultural dimension since it comprises the creating of national icons. The reason for categorizing iconic representations in Palestinian art political as much as they are cultural goes back to the fact their employment in art is a resistance act asserting the existence of Palestine. Many Palestinian artists have intensely celebrated their

culture, preserved and promoted it as a political act of resistance: resisting the attempts to annihilate it. Jelena Petkovic declares that culture is often exploited by a nation “to realize more long-terms ideological and political influences in a more subtle way”⁷, and Palestinian artists, due to their political circumstances, have followed this notion. Consequently, cultural icons in Palestinian art are used as political symbols to attain long-term goals. Symbols of resistance, liberation, freedom and the homeland have been created out of Palestine’s political circumstances and were utilized by artists to attain political goals such as encouraging resistance to gain freedom and peace. Exemplifying this issue and demonstrating how “culture becomes an instrument in political mobilization”⁸, I consider the key icon. The key which symbolizes the Palestinians’ right to return to their homeland was created as a response to the Israeli invasion, or Al Nakba, which is a political issue, and above that, it is displayed to politically encourage the people’s resistance and their will to return to their lost homeland. Similarly, other icons are used as ‘instruments in political mobilization’ to motivate resistance and attain freedom in the future. Moreover, with the forces of occupation prohibiting the display of Palestinian flag (for more details check section 3.3) and other aspects associated with resistance, Palestinian artists utilized a coded artistic language of political implications used as an act of resistance.

The political circumstances in Palestine have also rendered the appearance of a territorial dimension in its arts, depicted in images of the homeland (discussed previously) and in showing the shrinking boundaries of Palestine. Denied of their homeland and the territories of their ‘left-over land’ shrinking as a result of expanding Israeli settlements and policies, Palestinian artists displayed the territorial boundaries as a response. Under this respect is

⁷ Prnjat, B., 1979. *Kulturna politika*. Radnička štampa. P. 22. Cited in Petković, J., 2011. *Op. Cit.*, P. 146, 147.

⁸ Petković, J., 2011., *Op. Cit.*, P. 146.

John Halaka's work *Mapping Repression* (discussed in section 1.2.2), showing the shrinking boundaries of Palestinian land and the current restricted Palestinian presence in their homeland due to Israeli occupation.

Artist Naji Al-Ali reveals his resistance to the occupation in the following artwork insisting on the political boundaries of Palestine. He writes in Arabic: "Galilee is Palestine, Nazareth is in Palestine, also Haifa, Acre, Jaffa ..." and continues naming other places from his homeland referring to them as the "Occupied Palestine and not Israel".



Naji El Ali

Mona Hatoum also reveals a territorial dimension in her installation *Present Tense*. The work comprises a floor grid composed from 2400 bars of soap made from olive oil in Nablus, a Palestinian town famous for its soap, and delineates with tiny glass red beads the boundaries of the Middle East and the "future Palestinian state according to the 1993 Oslo Agreement. Hatoum rests the power of present tense, and indeed her work as a whole, in an ability to weave together the various artistic and political histories"⁹.

⁹ Amirsadeghi, H., Mikdadi, S. and Shabout, N., 2009. *Op. Cit.* P. 152.



Mona Hatoum, 1996. Present Tense. Installation view



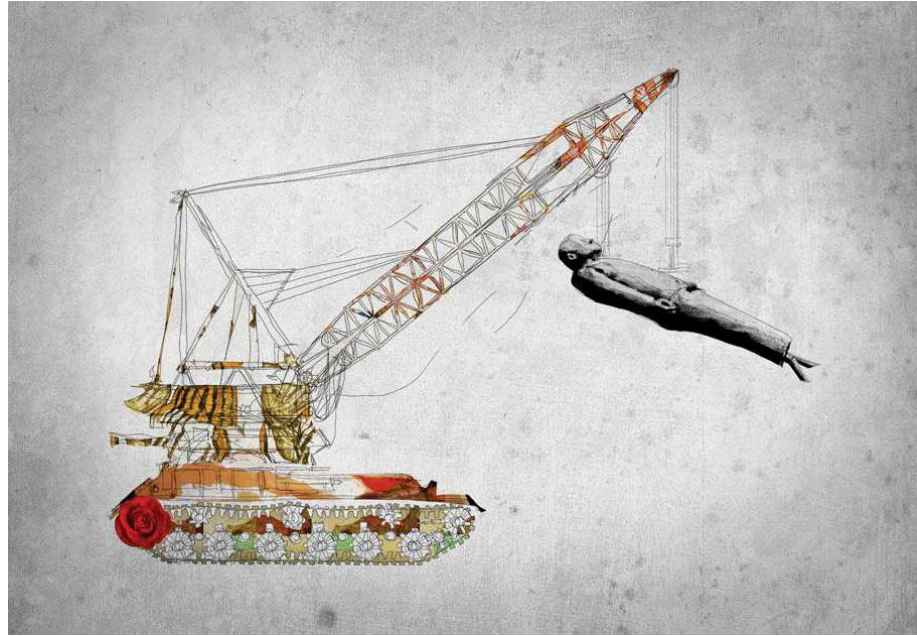
Mona Hatoum, 1996. Present Tense. Detail

Visual productions of Palestinian artists addressing their cause have been strongly tied with their political circumstances, furthermore, most of their presented cultural icons have been invented due to political issues and represented for political goals. This makes it unattainable to refer to Palestinian artworks displaying war without addressing a political dimension and considering the political background of the people's struggle.

As for the Syrian art scene, knowing that the war is still going on in the country, the political dimension of national identity is also highly noticed. It is very common to inspect a political dimension in the visual expression of people living under war circumstances and among those fighting for their freedom, such as in Syria. Moreover, political suppression instilled by the Assad regime and its Ba'ath political party has banned the expression of diverse political views (check section 3.1.2. to review the history of political repression in Syria), which rendered the absence of such artistic representations before the revolution. However, after the revolution and the outbreak of the war, Syrian artists have expressed opposing political views to the regime and many have exploited their art to serve this purpose, despite the fact that such acts are still fraught with danger (section 4.2 explains the fear of authoritarian regimes from artists and intellectuals). Nonetheless, international views, politics and media opposing Al Assad and supporting the revolution, in addition to the fact that many artists fled Syria during the war, have rendered the expression of opposing political views possible. Artists, acknowledging the potency of expressing these views to encourage people's revolutionary acts, have taken part in the uprising by displaying political images against the regime. As mentioned previously, artworks characteristic of the Syrian war mainly address the world and expose the horrors of the Syrian war, however, some were intended to mobilize the revolution and provoke the general opinion, including the Syrian's, against Al Assad.

Abundant amount of artworks displaying the circumstances of the Syrian war plainly offend the Assad regime, exposing the artists' political identity and revealing a political dimension. Section 3.2.2. provides a profound discussion of artworks created as a response to the Syrian revolution. While some of these works clearly encourage the revolution, others display the brutality of the regime, implicitly suggesting its necessity. Artworks such as *Assad Dialogues*, by Alshaab Alsoni Aref Tareeko, Imranovi's *Vote!* and Sulafa Hijazi's untitled work (all discussed in section 3.2.2.) which displays a sewing machine using human skull for thread, display the brutality of the regime and imply the artists' support for the revolution. Other artworks, such as *This is civil disobedience. There is no need to stay quiet anymore*, *Rise Up for the Rebellion* and *Revolution Until the Regime Falls* (both discussed and shown in section 3.2.2.) created by the collective Alshaab Alsoni Aref Tareeko, plainly motivate Syrians to revolt and are clearly created to politically mobilize the people. However, despite the fact that some of these works were more direct in encouraging political mobilization, they all comprise a clear political dimension.

In his artwork *When We Destroyed the Symbol of Repression*, Syrian artist Waseem Al Marzouki displays the image of a bulldozer destroying Hafez Al Assad's statue. The work clearly exposes the artist's political views against Al Assad and his encouragement to destroy his rule. Moreover, by his reference to al Assad as the 'symbol of repression' in the title of the artwork, Al Marzouki keeps no room for misinterpretation.



Waseem al-Marzouki. *When We Destroyed the Symbol of Repression.*

Jaber Al Azmeh series *Resurrection*, or *Al Ba'ath* in Arabic, takes the Syrian revolution as its subject and openly suggests a political dimension. The series comprises black-and-white photographs of Syrian activists, artists, writers and intellectuals, each holding a copy of the Ba'ath newspaper turned upside down, on which they have been asked to write their own thoughts about the revolution. Transforming the Ba'ath Newspaper, which is a symbol of the regime and the official newspaper of its political party, to a platform exhibiting diverse political views and thoughts reveals the artist's resentment to the oppressive regime in Syria.

In the following photograph, a former political prisoner holds Al Ba'ath newspaper upside down after writing his thoughts, *Syria's freedom is no longer a dream you can throw in jails*, and in the second, a journalist wrote *the mask has fallen*, referring to the image of the regime which, according to her, has fallen and people no longer fear to express their thoughts.



Jaber Al Azmeh, 2014. Syria's freedom is no longer a dream you can throw in jails form the series Al Ba'ath. Written by Nour Murshed - Former political prisoner. 70 x 112 cm ed of 3+1AP. Printed on Cotton Rag Fine Art Archival paper.



Jaber Al Azmeh, 2014. The mask has fallen form the series Al Ba'ath. Written by Alma Intabli - Journalist. 30 x 45cm ed of 3+1AP. Printed on Cotton Rag Fine Art Archival paper.

Al Azmeh says: “The portraits were made secretly, quickly and simply when I was still in Syria and in a more creative approach when I had the chance especially after I left the country”¹⁰. Similar to the case of many Syrian artists who fled the country to places where their political opinions were not only accepted, but rather encouraged, Al Azmeh’s project frankly exposes a political dimension in opposing the regime.

Most artworks characteristic of the war in Syria reveal a political dimension, nonetheless, some of them expose it more frankly. Moreover, the image of Bashar Al Assad has been recurrent in numerous artworks to reveal the brutality of his regime. Among these is Imranovi’s work, *The Modern Face of Syria*, in which he portrays the portrait of Bashar Al Assad with the ruins of Syria, highlighting the devastation that stroke the country under his rule. In this work, Imranovi reveals his political opposition to Al Assad and holds him responsible for the destruction in Syria.



Imranovi. 2013. *The Modern Face of Syria*. Digital work. 100 x 70 cm.

¹⁰ Al Azmeh, J., (2014). *Jaber Al Azmeh - The website*. [Viewed 9 August 2019] Available from: <http://www.jaberalazmeh.com/resurrection>

Abdalla Al Omari expresses his distress by displaying political figures as refugees in his *The Vulnerability Series*. Among these is his work titled *Bashar Al Assad*, where he displays Al Assad as a refugee with ragged clothes and soiled face, holding a paper boat on his head. The image of the paper boat on the president's head makes him appear ridiculous and childish, nonetheless, by this display, I believe the artist is referring to the thousands of Syrians who fled the country by boat and many drowned, accusing Al Assad of being responsible about the tragedies that has fallen among his people.



Abdalla Al Omari, 2015. Bashar Al Assad from The Vulnerability Series.

The war in Syria has changed the artistic expression of its artists who became able to express their feelings, fears, concerns, defiance and political views more overtly and frankly. After decades of political repression, following the revolution, artists have been capable of revealing a political dimension in their work without the regime's supervision and were encouraged to address their opposing political views plainly. In this regard, countless of artworks display the image of Al Assad with clear and frank displays of resentment towards his regime.

Moving last to inspect a political dimension of national identity in the Lebanese art scene, we notice that the representations of this dimension as well as the frequency of its appearance are quite different than the Syrian and Palestinian art scenes. Despite the fact that war is a political issue and handling this theme has its political reference, the prominent appearance of a political dimension is scarce in Lebanese art characteristic of war. As mentioned, the major body of work handling the theme of the civil war has been primarily concerned in its aftermath, tackling issue such as collective memory, history and remembrance. However, if we want to consider the primal reasons for the ‘forgetfulness’ phenomenon present in Lebanese society today, which gave rise to addressing it in art, well, of course, it goes back to political reasons. The way the war ended with no reconciliation and the Amnesty Law granting any former members of militias exemption from criminal prosecution are political issues serving the government political policies (for more details, check sections 2.1.2. and 4.3.). Nonetheless, these political issues which stand at the core of the ‘forgetfulness’ phenomenon and the undocumented history, are scarcely addressed, perhaps out of fear that such issues might jeopardize the so-called Lebanese solidarity; a fear of creating a fracture that might divide Lebanese again. Knowing also that political parties and their leaders, who were responsible for the death and kidnapping of thousands of people, are still in control of the country, in addition to the fact that most Lebanese still belong to these parties, any blame to a side will arouse more debates and undesirable effects. Consequently, no artist has displayed a political figure or even a militia leader as responsible for any war event or later conflicts. Instead, we see that art characteristic of the Lebanese civil war addresses its aftermath and consequences as a whole, without handling political issues responsible for its happening. Moreover, the fact that the causes, incidents and aspects of the civil war were not confronted after it ended, any reference to putting the blame on political figures now may cause unwanted consequences. With the current

Lebanese president, being a former leader of an army which under his command killed hundreds of his fellow-nationals, who would address such an issue? Regardless of the so-called political freedom in Lebanon, certain issues have not been addressed. Consequently, blaming political figures, such as in the Syrian art scene, and holding them responsible for specific disasters, in the past or the present, will only open wounds and create more prejudiced opinions and extreme political views, thus dividing the people again. Instead, issues that are thought to impose a certain unity among Lebanese are frequently addressed, such as building a collective memory that might allow Lebanese to confront the previous mistakes in order not to be repeated again. In addition, political issues that address an objection to the whole political body in Lebanon have been occasionally handled in art.

Alfred Tarazi is one of the few Lebanese artists who tackles sensitive political issues in his work. In his installation *Senseless Realm*, he presents stories of the war, narrating certain incidents and displaying the images of involved political figures. However, Tarazi presents all political figures during the war as responsible for the tragedies without putting the blame on only one side, such as in the Syrian art scene. By blaming the whole political body, Tarazi evokes the memories of the war reminding Lebanese of the mistakes committed by all, rather than dividing them to protect their leaders. His narratives tell about historical events, political alliances and the involvement of political figures from all parties in the massacres that happened during that time. In addition, Tarazi presents his historical narratives with irony which makes the viewer unable to know the real from the fabricated. However, the validity of these events are not subject to scrutiny here. The work also doesn't exhibit the artists' political affiliation to any party. In presenting these narratives without referring to his subjective belongings, the artist reaches his aim in addressing the errors without creating divisions among Lebanese. As a result, Tarazi presents a political dimension revealing his discontent from the whole political situation in Lebanon.

The installation *Senseless Realm* comprises five panorama works, rolls of collaged and painted paper that the viewer can rotate exploring five horrible stories from the Lebanese Civil War. Each of the panoramas relates to one of the senses, in order to, according to Tarazi's own words, "highlight the knowledge acquired by the senses in times of war and the often-deadly price one had to pay in return"¹¹. In other words, the reason for his display is to show the 'deadly price' Lebanese had to pay for their errors; that is to learn from previous mistakes. Each of these panoramas allows the viewer to move frame by frame through the visual representation of the conflicts, and in the middle of these frames, Tarazi wrote his narratives. In the following work titled *Vessels*, part of the installation, Tarazi starts his narrative about a memorial erected in memory of the 243 marines killed in Beirut in 1983. Then, he continues:

The Israelis had invaded the country, defeated the PLO, kicked out Arafat, and offered Bachir Gemayel –the leader of the Lebanese Forces- a presidency that would only last 17 days. Upon his assassination, his followers committed a blind massacre against the inhabitants of the Sabra and Chatila camps, on the out- skirts of Beirut. More than a thousand people were killed. [...] the most terrible part of that episode: the smell. From the beginning of the war the biggest problem was the disposal of bodies. A massacre takes a few minutes to commit and takes little planning, but then you are left with those inanimate bodies. [...] But you cannot hide such crimes for very long, and often what betrays you the most is the horrid smell of death. It doesn't take long after you've killed a person for the foul maggots and worms to consume their putrid corpses. [...] Nothing can be as haunting and impenetrably nauseating or foul as the smell of death. [...] What happened to all

¹¹ Tarazi, A., (2015). *Alfred Tarazi - The website*. [Viewed 3 June 2019]. Available from: <https://www.alfredtarazi.com/#/senseless-realm-2015-1/>

those kidnapped people who never reappeared? When the waves of arrests and kidnappings became too intense, we were faced with a logistical problem: if we kill them all, what would we do with their bodies? We had those empty containers, left overs of our smuggling activities. Sometimes, we would detain up to 30 men in those containers. And sometimes, we would load a container on a boat and sail. [...]and the container with human content would sink where no man would ever find it again¹².



Alfred Tarazi, 2015. *Vessels from the installation Senseless Realm*. Giclee prints on Hahnemuhle paper in stainless steel box.

Whether Tarazi's narratives are true or partly true is not the question here, he presents a political dimension revealing the traumatic effects of the war. Moreover, he scrutinizes the country's political and social reality, deconstructing his art by using irony which underlines the country's hypocrisy and political corruption that it faced during the war and still does.

¹² *Ibid.*

Another artist who tackles political issues in his work is Walid Sadek. Sadek had stayed in the United States during the Lebanese civil war and returned to Lebanon during the early 90's. He, among other artists, was concerned in addressing the aftermath of the civil war. These artists were occupied “in a series of a critical discussions surrounding the role of art in the immediate aftermath of civil war”¹³. In Sadek’s project, *I once Dreamt I was the Phoenix*, the viewer had to sit at a rotating table where the artist had placed a statue of a Phoenix at its center. The viewer was asked to look through a magnifying glass at a series of photographs displaying a man falling from a building. However, the focus of the magnifying glass prevented the viewer from seeing the statue of the Phoenix, only permitting him/her to see the photographs of the falling man. The phoenix is a mythological bird employed as a symbol of the Lebanese Kataeb Party or Phalanges, a right-wing political party whose members are predominantly Maronite Christians and who consider themselves of Phoenician origins. Sadek’s title, *I once Dreamt I was the Phoenix*, refers to his previous belonging to the Kataeb, since he ‘dreamt’ in the past, underscoring his divergence from this group. Moreover, the inability of the viewer to see the statue of the phoenix while observing the images of the falling man, refer to the sectarian and political radicalism that had blinded Lebanese. The whole scene available to the viewer had become similar to an optical illusion, unable to see the statue in front of him while fixing his gaze to images of violence. Sadek, in my opinion, is commenting on the illusion of Lebanese through their unquestioned belongings to political parties and their inability to see beyond their radical views. Perhaps, he is also referring to a deluded belief of tracing the origins and roots of Lebanese to Phoenicians or others, since Phoenicians have been also linked to the Phoenix, and, as mentioned earlier in this section, the idea of original folk or ancestors “is primarily made up and that their progeny is far from being the direct heirs of a single

¹³ Amirsadeghi, H., Mikdadi, S. and Shabout, N., 2009. *Op. Cit.*, P. 39.

ethnically pure group”. In addition, his display of the violent images depicting a falling man refers to the violence during the war as a result of those extreme radical ideologies that had divided the country. Upon further analyzing the work, Sadek obviously deconstructs his previous political identity, as a Kataeb member, indicating a change in consciousness and shift in his old belief. He questions the origin of his previous political identity and reflects the violence that happened in Lebanon as a result of radical political affiliation. Concerning this identity reconstruction, Sadek says:

My stay in Southern California between 1985 and 1992, must have been, in retrospect, a gradual and often inadvertent process of belittling the inherited gravity of my youthful belonging to the embattled Christians and Christianity of Lebanon. Distant as it was, California was firstly a loose space where I did scramble the signs of my identity and even further, the flesh of my belongingness. I suppose that I never did return to Lebanon in 1992, rather I went forth towards it¹⁴.

Sadek hasn't only questioned his previous political belonging, but also his religious identity as “Christianity of Lebanon” to whom phalanges belong. By exhibiting his new consciousness, Sadek is addressing the errors during the war and compelling Lebanese to reconsider their radical political views. In doing so, he attempted to implant national awareness in showing Lebanese their misleading and radical belonging to groups that had divided the country.

Another distinguished work tackling on political issues, but in a rather indirect approach and through a territorial dimension is Marwan Rechmaoui's work *Beirut Caoutchouc*. The work comprises a large floor-based rubber map of Beirut manufactured from car tires embossed with roads and highways represented in details. However, “the green line that

¹⁴ Amirsadeghi, H., Mikdadi, S. and Shabout, N., 2009. *Op. Cit.* P. 254.

divided Christian and Muslim communities during the Lebanese civil war is absent, mapping a terrain empty of the political and religious divisions that have characterized the city's recent history"¹⁵. The map is segmented into pieces following the division of neighborhoods in the city, yet once exhibited, it appears complete. The viewer is invited to walk on the map, "[h]opping within seconds from one part of the once-divided city to the other, the installation recalls how, during the war, crossing from the western part to the east and vice versa was an arduous and risky endeavor comprising long way at checkpoint and vulnerability to sniper gun fire"¹⁶. The artist's use of rubber stresses Beirut's resilience, despite all threats, and presents it as a city free from political and sectarian divisions. Yet, by addressing the issue of a united map of Beirut, which was once divided by political agendas, Rechmaoui is implying a political dimension in rejecting such divisions.



Marwan Rechmaoui, 2003. *Beirut Caoutchouc*. Installation view. Rubber. 3 x 825 x 675cm.

¹⁵ Tate. Marwan Rechmaoui - Beirut Caoutchouc. *Tate - The website*. [Viewed on 9 July 2019]. Available from: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/rechmaoui-beirut-caoutchouc-t13192>

¹⁶ Sloman, P. ed., 2009. *Op.Cit.*, P. 20.

As presented, the political dimension is not prominent in Lebanese art characteristic of war. Knowing that the country is intensely politicized and that major political parties were involved in the horrors of the civil war and in the division of the people, we see Lebanese contemporary art free from political charging in order not to trigger further fractures. However, the few artists who reveal an obvious political dimension in their work intend to draw collective memory reminding Lebanese of their errors.

6.3. Analyzing the different representations of national identity

This section analytically compares the different representations of national identity in contemporary art displaying war in Lebanon, Palestine and Syria. It compares the representations of the dimensions of national identity, analyzed in the previous sections of this chapter, among the three art scenes. And it relates the diversity of these representations to the kind of war experienced in each of the three countries. By analytically inspecting similarities and differences among the art scenes, I also inspect the reasons for this diversity. Consequently, I reveal how national identity is artistically represented in these three countries and show how its visual representations are related to the kind of war fought. As a result, I respond to the research question which inquires into the influences of war on the artists' collective identities as exhibited in arts, and draw further conclusions in the relationship between the nature of the war and the artistic outcome.

By now it is clear how deeply wars affected the artistic outcome in Lebanon, Palestine and Syria. As author Venetia Porter declares, “[p]articularly striking among the work of artists in the Middle East is the way in which their history and the recent crises and wars that have so deeply affected the region are passionately felt and articulated”¹⁷. However, different

¹⁷ Porter, V., 2006. *Word into art: Artists of the modern Middle East*. British Museum Press. P. 10.

kinds of wars and crises have been felt and articulated differently, thus diversely affecting the artistic scenes.

Among the effects of wars on art, are the effects on the appearance and representation of national identity. Based on Montserrat Guibernau's argument considering national identity as a "phenomenon of a fluid and dynamic nature"¹⁸, in addition to other supporting theories discussed previously in this research, national identity is definitely influenced by wars. Nonetheless, the ways in which it is influenced are dependent on the kind of war. This influence is noticed in its promotion, representation, articulation and exploitation, in addition to how it is felt, and all these aspects are observed in art.

National identity is affected by wars and in the ways it is felt according to specific situations. Knowing that "groups [...] on which identities are based are likely to differ in their longevity and how psychologically meaningful they feel across time and situations"¹⁹, it is noticed that wars are situations that alter the way national identities are felt. According to Gareth Evans, "the sense of national identity is never stronger than when countries are at war with each other, at imminent risk of war, or remembering war"²⁰. This felt attachment or sense of national identity is the psychological dimension of national identity and is reflected in art in the three countries of research, nonetheless, its intensity varied. Studying the collected data and the previously performed analysis, it is concluded that the psychological dimension is mostly sensed in Palestinian art. Although Syrian and Lebanese art characteristic of war reveal a psychological dimension by exposing the situation of the countries which implies a felt attachment and concern about their wellbeing, the Palestinian experience of being forced to leave one's homeland and live under occupation, has induced

¹⁸ Guibernau, M., 2004. *Op. Cit.*, P. 134.

¹⁹ Leary, M. R. and Tangney, J. P., 2012. *Op. Cit.*, P. 74.

²⁰ Evans, G., 2011. *Op. Cit.*

further emotional attachment among Palestinians towards their nation. In addition, their life under occupation for more than seventy years has created an additional sense of fear that their national identity might be lost. These reasons have stimulated artists to express their love to Palestine more emotionally, which is noticed throughout the Palestinian art scene. The expressive portrayals of home, the cultural representations, the preservation of traditions such as women clothing, the numerous cultural icons, the promotion of their history and many other aspects reveal an intensive emotional attachment to Palestine. Knowing also that any nation follows certain procedures to maintain its people's nationalism, "through banal and unnoticeable daily practices, from the nation-centric weather reports and tabloid newspaper headlines, the hanging flags on the government buildings, the everyday use of the national coins and postal stamps"²¹, and many other daily habits, Palestinians are not exposed to these national daily practices under occupation. To overcome the deficiency of usual national practices and the imposed threat by Israeli occupation, artists responded in overtly exposing their emotional attachment in order to maintain their threatened identity.

The Palestinian situation under occupation has also jeopardized the nation's culture. As a response, artists have stuck to their culture and promoted abundant amount of icons to represent it. These have become visual representations of Palestine and its People's struggle, furthermore, they have been frequently articulated and exploited by artists to preserve a threatened culture, hence revealing an utmost cultural dimension. As for Lebanese artists, cultural icons presented in art characteristic of war are limited to the country's landmark symbols that had been affected by the conflicts, in addition to few symbols representing war incidents. Lebanese artists' primal concern hasn't been reviving a fading culture, such as many Palestinian artist, but rather acquiring new contemporary

²¹ Malešević, S., 2016. *Op. Cit.*, P. 12.

artistic languages. In addition, since the wars in Lebanon were basically civil with some outside interventions that didn't directly threaten its culture, artists were not consumed in preserving it. Moreover, "[t]he desire to contest traditional forms of identification was common among Lebanese immigrant artists"²², so their work has been concerned in contemporary media rather than reviving traditions and culture. As for Syrian art characteristic of war, we see the cultural dimension represented in the people's struggle and the country's destruction. Similar to the Lebanese case, the Syrian war hasn't directly threatened the nation's culture, except for the historical sites of Palmyra, which were depicted as a response to their damage. As for other icons presented as a reaction to the Syrian war, we inspect frank symbols of the crises. However, it is of great importance to note that all wars threaten nations' cultures. Nonetheless, Palestinian culture is further threatened by its long term occupation and by plain goals set by the occupier, unlike the other two, whom the basic corruptors of their cultures were their fellow-nationals. As a result, we see the cultural dimension extremely prominent in the Palestinian art scene.

As for the historical dimension, we see it reflected in the three art scenes of research, presented in different approaches and media. Palestinian artists have frequently represented their history through figurative representations, displaying the story of their nation and the struggle and hope of their people, and through spoken and written narratives. Palestinian history is told, spread and asserted in art. The history of the Lebanese wars, on the other hand, is sought through art; it is represented as personal and historical narratives for the purpose of building a collective memory rather than presenting actual events. As for Syrian art displaying war, we notice that detailed events are represented visually and in the form of historic and personal narratives. The burst of Syrian artworks depicting war events is

²² Abdelhady, D., 2011. *The Lebanese Diaspora: The Arab Immigrant Experience in Montreal, New York, and Paris*. NYU Press. P. 167.

unprecedented. Syrian artists have repeatedly displayed most incidents of the war, including massacres and certain deaths, in their disruptive details, documenting the violent history of their present war and revealing the brutality of the regime, without highlighting a past history. As a result, the historical dimension is revealed in the three counties of research in diverse approaches and for different aims. While Syrian and Palestinian artists displayed actual history, the first aiming to keep an history alive as a way of preserving its culture and the latter to document incidents and expose the horrible conditions to the world, Lebanese artists were not concerned in revealing true historical events, but rather evoking a collective memory in order for the same mistakes again not to be repeated again.

Moving forward to analytically compare the different representations of political dimension in art characteristic of war, we notice that Palestinian art cannot be separated from this dimension, Syrian art prominently reveals it, whereas Lebanese art scarcely reflects it. This goes back to the fact that Palestine is under occupation and its people's lives are directly linked to the political circumstances of their country, hence their whole existence cannot be separated from political issues. We notice that even cultural icons are invented as a response to political conditions. Moreover, as a response to their struggle and the long duration of occupation, Palestinian artists created a kind of political art which became known as 'Liberation Art' aiming to reflect and encourage resistance against the occupier. As for the Syrian art scene, we observe a prominent appearance of this dimension due to the present war and the struggle against an oppressive regime which has repressed any opposing political views for decades. As a response, after the revolution, artists have revealed their opposing political views and plainly encouraged an uprising against the regime. Unlike the Palestinian and Syrian art scenes, Lebanese art characteristic of war exposes absolutely no politically charging aspects, and presents narratives that may enhance unity through building a collective memory and criticizing the whole politics of

the country. This goes back to the ever-present political and sectarian radicalization that once plunged the country in a fifteen-year war and has caused frequent conflicts that persist until our present day. Consequently, politically charged art is not practiced by Lebanese artists, instead narratives and visuals that reveal the horrors of the war showing a political dimension are visited by artists to show the errors done, perhaps uniting Lebanese through a past shared tragedy and building collective memory. “Following the sectarian strife, Lebanese nationalist discourse flattens any differences within Lebanese society for the sake of a manufactured national narrative of unity and patriotism”²³. And so does art characteristic of war. Moreover, the territorial dimension as a political issue is rarely revealed in the Lebanese art scene, and when displayed it serves the same mentioned purpose as the political dimension. Whereas, Palestinian art has exposed the territorial dimension as a political statement asserting Palestine’s boundaries and exposing the expanding Israeli settlement, as a result of occupation. Syrian art characteristic of war, on the other hand, has not yet shown any mentioned territorial dimension knowing that this aspect was not jeopardized during the war.

After analytically comparing the dimensions of national identity among the three art scenes, I interpret the diverse representations of this identity during wars through the use of icons and symbols. Starting with the Palestinian art scene, we observe the use of abundant amount of icons symbolizing the nation and created as a response to the Palestinian political situation. These were employed to represent the homeland, the deportation of Palestinians, their hope to return, their act of resistance, peace and many other aspects of the Palestinian struggle. However, we notice that these icons cannot be comprehended without knowing the reasons for their invention. In this regard is the rock; we won’t know that the rock is a symbol of resistance unless we are aware that it was the Palestinians’ weapon used to fight

²³ *Ibid.*

the occupier during the first Intifada. Consequently, we may consider many icons used by Palestinian artists, especially those living under occupation, as codes or indirect symbols of their struggle. Another important reason for this indirect display goes back to the fact that Palestinians under occupation are not allowed to express their political situation frankly or use direct symbols of their homeland, such as the flag. In addition, by the use of icons, Palestinian artists primarily aimed to address their people, encouraging their resistance, asserting their existence and giving them hope for the future. Whereas in the other two scenes, the use of codes wasn't necessary. Syrian artists were granted freedom of expression in their exile which rendered the use of frank symbols, moreover, they aimed to expose their situation to the world where coded symbols of their struggle may not be easily understood. As for Lebanese artists, although some have aimed to build a collective memory addressing Lebanese, their intention was also to acquire a contemporary artistic language that can be internationally comprehended. Consequently, coded symbols obstruct such a mission, moreover, they were not needed. As a result, national icons were mostly employed in the Palestinian art scene and some were similar to political codes utilized to address Palestinians. On the other hand, Lebanese and Syrian art scenes employed direct and frank icons to symbolize the wars of their nations.

Another fundamental part of national identity that have to be addressed in comparing its appearance in the three art scenes is its emphasis on the temporal axes; the past, present and future. “[T]he discursive construction of national identity revolves around the three temporal axes of the past, the present and the future”²⁴, which are reflected diversely and in various intensities in the three art scenes. Therefore, I interpret and compare how these temporal dimensions are translated in art characteristic of war in my area of research. Palestinian art has reflected the past, through the history of Palestine and plight of its

²⁴ Wodak, R. de Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., and Liebhart, K. 2009. *Op. Cit.*, P. 26.

people, its present through depicting the present situation and oppression encountered, and future through mobilizing an act of resistance and giving a promise of return to the homeland. Moreover, all these axes were underscored and repeatedly reflected in art to assure the continuity of a jeopardized identity under occupation. Syrian art characteristic of war displays the current crisis highlighting the present through depicting the struggles of Syrians. To a lesser extent, the future axis is also revealed in a political dimension stressing the need to oppose the regime and politically mobilize the revolution, which implies freedom for the future. As for the past dimension, it hasn't been prominently exhibited. Whereas, Lebanese art characteristic of war basically stresses the past through evoking memories of the war. Knowing that "the cultivation of shared memories is essential to the survival and destiny of [...] collective identities"²⁵ such as national and cultural identities, Lebanese artists have contributed in such a task. As a response to the collective forgetfulness of current Lebanese society due the unfinished business of the war, this issue has been predominantly highlighted in most contemporary artworks characteristic of the civil war. Lebanese historian Fawwaz Traboulsi elaborated that "[m]ilitia power not only practiced ethnic, sectarian and political 'cleansing' of territories but also committed [...] 'memoricide'"²⁶. Traboulsi has referred to Lebanese forgetfulness as 'memoricide', which means killing memory, and artists has responded to this phenomenon in addressing themes of the war, in order to arouse past memories. Lebanese artists evoke the past to build a collective memory so that previous errors may not be repeated, and this, in turn, aims for future unity. Hence, evoking the past has been utilized for future goals. Nonetheless, we cannot assert that this art prominently addresses the future, but rather addresses the past to imply a future. As a result, we can say that Palestinian art addresses the past, present and

²⁵ Smith, A.D., 1999. *Op. Cit.*, P. 10.

²⁶ Traboulsi, F., 2007. *A History of Modern Lebanon*. Pluto Press. P. 233.

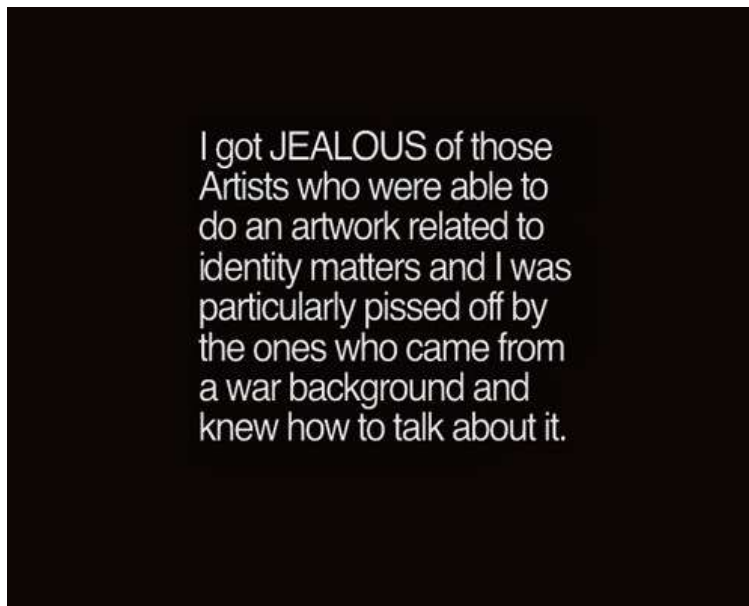
future, Lebanese art primarily addresses the past and Syrian art predominantly addresses the present.

As seen through the analysis, it is rather difficult to see a Palestinian artwork handling the Palestinian cause without underscoring the national identity and vice versa; all Palestinian images embodying a dimension of national identity convey the Palestinian struggle. This intense attachment and promotion of national identity among Palestinian artists is visible as a result of their plight and long time under occupation, which had jeopardized their whole existence. This has also made the exhibition of a national identity a necessary fight for them to assure their presence and continuity. The Palestinian national identity and the theme of war are inseparable in a work of art that exhibits either context. Moreover, this embrace of national identity is sensed in Palestinian culture and way of life, and according to my personal experience, it is noticed among ordinary Palestinians from different social backgrounds and living in different countries. An assertion to my belief is an interpretation I read comparing the embracement of national identity between Palestinian artist Larissa Mansour and Artist Mounira Al Solh, born in Lebanon to a Lebanese father and Syrian mother. The author states: “Whereas Al Solh shuns a fixed categorization as Lebanese artist and is weary to take on any role, Sansour embraces it to an extreme in an accumulative identity”²⁷, and this is visible among almost all Palestinian artists. Al Solh writes in her video *Rawane’s Song* that she doesn’t feel “typically Lebanese”²⁸, and declares that every time she had tried to do an artwork about the Lebanese civil war, she failed. In a still shot from *Rawane’s Song* displayed in the following visual, the artist declares how she is pissed off from artists who came from a war background and were able to address identity matters. Similar to Al Solh’s notion was narrated by Syrian artist Azza Hamwi in her video *A Day*

²⁷ Sloman, P. ed., 2009. *Op. Cit.* P. 24.

²⁸ Al Solh, M., 2006. *Rawane’s Song*. [Viewed 28 August 2019]. Available from: <https://vimeo.com/64128699>

and a Button (discussed in section 3.2.2), where she confesses that she no longer knows her national identity although she has a Syrian identity card. Anyhow, I am not building my analysis on the talks of three artists from each country, but rather exemplifying my case and further revealing how Palestinian national identity has been tangibly embraced in compared to the other two identities, which is an issue revealed throughout this study. Moreover, I am not implying the advantage of Palestinian artists over the others because of their attachment to their national identity, but rather analyzing this phenomenon in art and correlating it to the specificity of each war. As a result, we notice that Palestinian national identity is extremely embraced and revealed in Palestinian art, whereas Syrian and Lebanese identities, despite their representations in many artworks characteristic of war, are not embraced as such. This goes back to the Palestinians' situation under occupation which threatened their national identity, so artists' responded in an extreme attachment to it, whereas the wars in Lebanon and Syria haven't imposed such a direct threat on the national identity, so underscoring it in art wasn't as necessary as the Palestinians'.



Mounira Al Solh, 2006. Still shot from Rawane's Song, video. 7 min.

As a conclusion, we notice that the dimensions of national identity are expressed differently in the three countries of research, and these presentations are directly related to the specificity of each experienced crisis. Palestinian national identity has been repeatedly exposed through all its dimensions and its temporal axes in abundant amount of works and throughout the whole art scene. Compared to the Palestinian art scene, we notice that the Lebanese and Syrian national identities have been exhibited in a lesser extent. Lebanese artists basically exposed a national identity through an historical dimension in narratives implying the building of a collective memory, perhaps it can promote unity. Whereas Syrian national identity has been basically revealed through the political and historical dimensions, in encouraging the revolution and showing resentment towards the regime as the first dimension, and depicting detailed war events as the second. By this analysis accomplished, I show how the representation of national identity in the art scenes varied according to the nature of the experienced war.

7.3. Political messages in art

This section inspects political messages presented and transmitted in contemporary visual arts displaying war or its effects in Lebanon, Palestine and Syria. Here, my objective is to highlight and investigate the direct and indirect messages communicated in these works with respect to the experienced conflicts. I aim to investigate the effects of the specificity of each war on the transmission of certain messages. Upon analyzing this category of art, I notice that some artworks reflect trauma through the artist's own subjective experience of loss and sufferings while others reflect the country's state objectively as if seen through the people's lens, implanting diverse messages with different aims. I intend to expose these

messages, analyze their implications and inspect their relationship with the kind of war fought in each of the three countries of research.

Messages in art characteristic of war are determined by both, the particular goals of the artist and by the war circumstances of the country. These messages allow us to attribute further meanings to certain artistic representations as we look through the artist's own personal experiences and identity. However, in order to comprehend them correctly, it is essential to know the circumstances that triggered their presentation. Therefore, the messages transmitted in an artwork, the war circumstances of the country and the artist's goals and personal perspectives are all in direct relationship.

Despite the fact that some artists created their work without intending to deliver any messages, others have employed their art as a platform to conduct them. When asked what messages does he want to present, renowned film executive "Jack Warner replied that he just made movies, and that if he wanted to send a message, he would have used Western Union"¹. This idea, however, is widespread among artists, especially after the notion 'art for art's sake' emerged. It implies that art has value in itself and should be judged aesthetically far from any themes it implies, whether political, social or personal. Whilst this may be true for some art movements and works, it is not a general case, and "it seems hard to deny that artworks very often do have messages"². In this research, for example, we cannot understand many artworks, or in cases, aesthetically criticize them, if we separate them from their themes, the reasons and goals for execution and the circumstances in which they were produced. Therefore, the notion 'art for art's sake' cannot be applied on the kind of art inspected in this book which has taken the war as its theme. This doesn't

¹ Davies, S. ed., 2010. *Art and Its Messages: Meaning, Morality, and Society*. Pennsylvania State Press. P. 70.

² *Ibid.*

mean that the exhibited work does not have an aesthetic value, on the contrary, it mostly does, except for rare occasions where aesthetic values are neglected in favor of the theme. Nonetheless, we can neither judge this kind of art nor understand it apart of its theme. It was created as a response to war circumstances which, in turn, has resulted in its inclusion of artists' statements and transmission of messages. In other words, an artwork displaying war is reasonably taken as saying something, advancing some goals, endorsing some perspective, or affirming some value by implanting a message. "What is more, the imparting of such a message often appears to be a primary motivation of the artist who fashions the work the way he does"¹. As a result, the messages implied in artworks characteristic of war have often become a primal motivation for their execution.

Transmitting messages through art is highly visible during wars. This goes back to the fact that, during those times, large-scale communications are requested to convey messages of unity, resistance or peace, depending on the war's objective, and art has served as a basic means for such communications. It has become "a vehicle of communication, something to convey messages via"². Furthermore, some artists felt that it is a sort of national obligation to employ their art into serving this purpose during situations of conflict. They employed their art as a platform to conduct their statements and messages. "Despite some disclaimers by artists or their representatives, it seems hard to deny that artworks very often do have messages, and far from inexpressible ones"³. However, while some messages in art are intended to be social, humanistic, environmental or highlighting any other issue the artist wants, art characteristic of war basically transmits political messages, even social message of unity, for example, serve political purposes. In addition, these political messages reveal the nature of the war and show how it is or was communicated and

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Idem.*, P. 105

³ *Idem.* P. 70.

remembered. No matter what the political messages were, since they varied according to the surrounding circumstances, they have been a motivational aim for the production of artworks displaying war.

Artworks characteristic of war convey political messages to serve political goals, and are either explicitly revealed or indirectly implied. Knowing that wars are political issues, even the exhibition of war events or personal trauma as a result of the crises very often serve in conducting political messages. In other words, despite that some artworks do not comprise a mentioned political dimension, such as those displaying destruction or loss, the theme in itself proposes a political message, and upon analyzing the work we notice its implications. In the political dimension of national identity, I explain how politics is practiced by a nation to attain future goals, and so are political messages. "A nation is just as future-oriented as a person"¹, therefore, whatever serves its future is practiced, and the means for this practice is politics which comprises the transmission of messages. Political practices through the employment of messages to serve the future goals of a nation are also applied in art. In accordance, Palestinian artists employed messages of resistance to maintain their identity, Lebanese artists evoked historical memories implying messages of unity and Syrian artists conducted messages to support the revolution or stop the war. As seen, both, the reasons for these messages and their goals are political. Moreover, some of these messages are also intended for political mobilization. Under this regard are messages of resistance transmitted by Palestinian artists to mobilize their people, and so are messages that motivate the revolution in Syria. However, not all political messages in art aim for political mobilization; some conduct messages to raise awareness or move consciousness and feelings. Anyhow, the aim for conducting political messages and their representations are elucidated and exemplified later in this section. For now, it is proven that artworks characteristic of war

¹ Wodak, R. de Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., and Liebhart, K. 2009. *OP. Cit.*, P. 25.

conduct direct or indirect political messages as a response to the nation's circumstances and the artist's intentions.

The necessity for political messages during times of conflicts renders the exploitation of various means of communication to transmit them. Arts, national discourses, narratives, speeches, slogans, political posters, graffiti, the news and social media have been all exploited to transmit political messages. However, my aim is to inspect and analyze political messages in visual arts, which comprise certain graffiti and posters. Nonetheless, in order to perform a profound analysis, other media, such as slogans and speeches, which transmitted certain messages reflected in visual art, do take part of my study. This investigation is essential since political messages presented in art are reactions to political circumstances which are mirrored through the articulated messages, whether through speeches, slogans or others. Moreover, I noticed the existence of a direct relationship between messages presented in visual arts and those articulated through other media. In other words, certain messages articulated in public speeches, slogans or banners were also manifested in visual arts. In addition, knowing that visual arts do not always suggest such messages directly, examining other ways of communications which frankly state them serves as an important point of reference for my study. Also considering certain graffiti and posters as kinds of visual arts, I briefly inspect their transmission of major political messages. As a result, I inspect and analyze the manifestation of political messages in visual arts and, whenever necessary, reveal their relationship with the ones transmitted through other media.

A kind of art highly employed to transmit political messages during times of crises is the poster. The poster is a kind of persuasive art, considered as a form of visual communication that combines images and some text carrying a message. Max Gallo wrote about the persuasive effects of the poster: “[It] has the role to speak to our subconscious, to address

our barely conscious needs and to direct us so that we act according to the wishes of the commissioner of the poster”¹. In addition, with the development of digital art and graphic design, which have served as primal media to produce posters during the last two decades, many artists have directed their talents to solely create such works. Moreover, during times of conflicts, the employment of posters to conduct political messages is highly prominent. This can be traced back to many reasons, in addition to the poster’s persuasive feature. First, posters may be quickly executed, compared to other forms of art. Second, they are quickly printed and spread among large number of people, not locked in a museum or a gallery space. Third, their messages are directly implied, sometime even in words, giving no chance for misinterpretation. Last, they are surviving documentations of political messages. Political posters mirror the political circumstances of a nation and inform us about the perspectives of the various warring factions, political parties and movements during wars.

Another medium for transmitting political messages is graffiti, which reflects the situation of a nation through common people’s eyes. Similar to posters, graffiti is also quickly executed, inform us about the nature of the war, present the political views of various warring factions, and its messages are direct and reach a large number of people when executed in specific spots. Nonetheless, graffiti does not last for a long period of time and some works are far from being art, serving gang members to mark territories and passersby to write their thoughts. On the other hand, certain graffiti works are considered art no less than posters. Similar to posters, during times of conflicts, communications through graffiti are also very popular. The powerful transmission of messages through this medium is never underestimated. Knowing its potential in sending political statements and even igniting conflicts, it is no wonder that some has considered this art vandalism. In spite of that,

¹ Halasa, M., Omareen, Z. and Mahfoud, N. eds., 2014. *Op. Cit.*, P. 69.

graffiti has been repeatedly used by artists and political activists to make statements and transmit messages.

The war generates political messages according to its kind and aims. For example, if a nation is at war to gain its freedom, we notice that messages address this issue through slogans, banners, national discourses and any available media. Artists, being part of the country, are affected and motivated by these messages. Therefore, even non-artistic ways of communicating political messages that influenced visual arts are mentioned in this section, in order to show their influence on the artistic outcome. Consequently, in the following, I detect and analyze the representation and transmission of political messages in visual arts displaying war in Lebanon, Palestine and Syria, investigating their relation to the nations' messages and the kind of crisis experienced.

As discussed previously' it is unattainable to analyze Palestinian art without referring to the political circumstances of the country. These circumstances imposed certain characteristics to this art and made it a fertile ground to transmit messages. However, some messages are plainly suggested while others are referred to in symbols invented to refer to specific aspects of the country's situation.

Among the most utilized media to transmit political messages in Palestine is the poster and it is remarkably prominent in its art scene. There is a great number of political posters produced in Palestine since the Israeli occupation until our present day. They are mainly employed to transmit messages of motivation, encouragement, resistance, peace, and many other aspects that address the Palestinian cause, serving as direct visual documentations of the Palestinian struggle. Moreover, many of these posters include written texts that assert the visual representation, keeping no room for misinterpretation. The political circumstances of Palestine under occupation has imposed the production of a great number

of posters and the founding of a project that archives them. The project is called *The Palestine Poster Project Archives* (PPPA) and was founded to collect and digitally display a wide variety of works in the poster genre. Knowing also that the conflicts are still present in Palestine, the production of these posters is yet increasing. Dan Walsh, the producer of the PPPA, says: “Unlike most of the political art genres of the twentieth century [...], which have either died off, been abandoned, or become mere artifacts, the Palestine poster genre continues to evolve”². Some of these posters were created to publicize certain events of Palestine’s culture, such as Labor Day or The Palestinian Cinema Days, some serve as reminders of the Intifada or Al Nakba, some commemorate the martyrs, others mobilize people’s action to demand specific requests and so on. The quick prevalence of the poster has made it one of the most prominent arts to speak for the people and address their situation. Moreover, the emergence of the Internet has expanded the pervasiveness of the Palestinian poster and, according to Walsh, “amplified the public conversation about contemporary Palestine”³, hence also contributing in spreading the nation’s culture and asserting its existence and identity. In addition, some political posters are actually reproductions of famous artworks that address the Palestinian cause with some written text added to them in order to plainly present a message. Moreover, most icons utilized in visual arts have been also presented in posters to signify specific messages. All these issues combined have made the poster a basic medium in Palestinian art to reflect its situation and spread political messages, and above that, to assert the Palestinian culture and identity.

Among the artworks that were reproduced as printed posters is Suleiman Mansour’s *Jamal Al Mahamel*, or *Camel of Burdens* (discussed in section 3.3), which displays an old man

² Walsh, D., (2009). About the Palestine Poster Project Archives. *Palestine Poster Project Archives* [online]. [Viewed 12 January 2018]. Available from: <https://www.palestineposterproject.org/content/about-the-palestine-poster-project-archives-0>

³ *Ibid.*

carrying an eye-shaped sphere that contains a view of Jerusalem. The work explicitly transmits a message of resistance and persistence in order to return to the homeland. In addition, the old man symbolizes persistence, strength, resistance, love for the nation and steadfastness, despite his struggle, implying further messages and attributes that the artist hopes to implant in his people. This work has become iconic and countless reproductions were printed as posters, sometimes accompanied by written text, found throughout Palestine to spread the targeted messages.



Suleiman Mansour, 2005. *Jamal Al Mahamel II*

Palestinian artist Abed Al Rahman Al Muzain has also designed abundant amount of posters to spread and articulate certain messages, especially those of resistance. In the following poster *We Produce, Fight and Continue Our March with Determination*, the artist clearly exhibits his message as a response to his nation's situation under occupation. In the words *We Produce*, he is encouraging Palestinian local production, in *fight*, he is motivating resistance and in *Continue Our March with Determination*, he is telling his

people to persist and stick to their cause. The visual also suggests further messages. The image of a woman with child implies that all Palestinians, with no exceptions, are addressed; even children are expected to follow this path. The woman is holding tools to work in the land and the child is holding a house, implying that Palestinians have to work and build for future generations, thus also addressing the future of his nation and its continuity. The dove icon of peace is also displayed to imply the message that through hard work, determination and resistance, peace is attained. Behind the figures of the woman and child, the artist displays growing wheat to symbolize productivity and their increasing length hints at growth, giving further messages to encourage his people's production and hard work for future growth. In this poster, Al Muzain addresses his people and gives them clear messages of resistance. In addition to the symbolic representations of the messages through the drawing, Al Muzain's poster exhibits clear written text plainly stating them in Arabic so that all Palestinian comprehend his intention. The poster exemplifies the exploitation of this art genre to transmit clear and direct messages



Muzain, 1980, We Produce, Fight and Continue Our March with Determination.

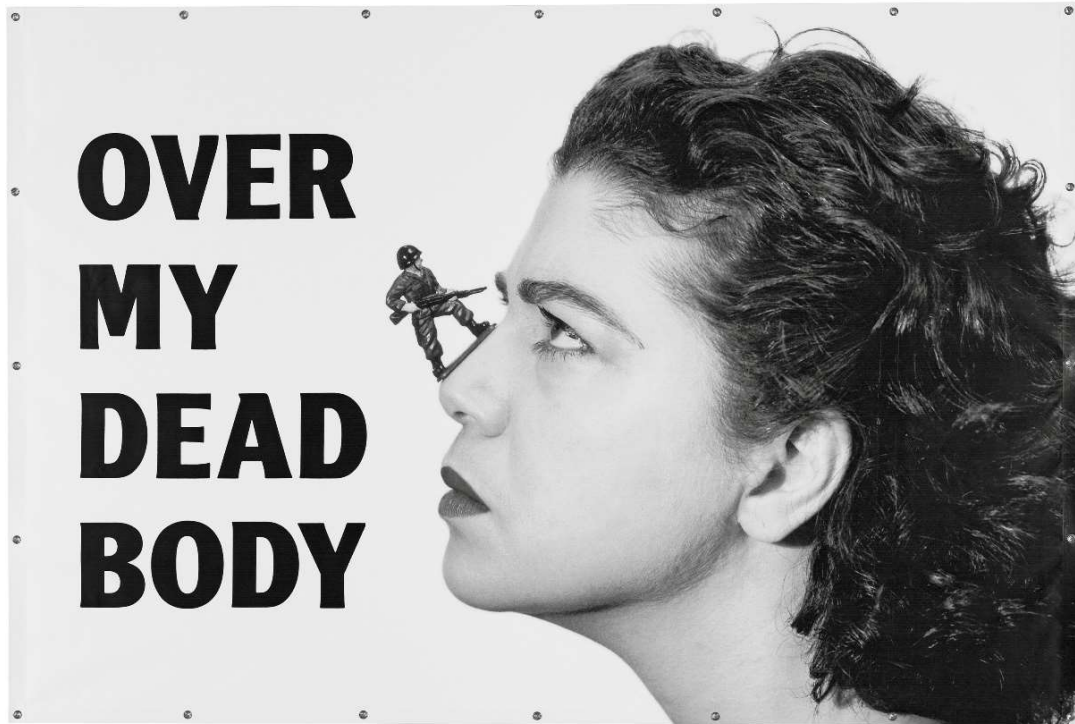
Upon seeing many Palestinian posters, we notice that messages of resistance are prominent. This is traced back, as mentioned earlier, to the long occupation of Palestine, which gave rise to the concept of resistance adopted by its people in order to exist and maintain their identity. Another famous poster that clearly exhibits a message of resistance is Ismael Shammout's *We Will Be Victorious*. The poster displays the image of a fighter holding his rifle and wearing kaffiyeh, asserting his national identity. The image in itself presents a message of resistance, in fighting the occupier and preserving national identity. Moreover, the written text, *We Will Be Victorious* in Arabic, asserts the message of resistance and above that, encourages and motivates this act which, according to the artist, will bring victory to Palestine. Shammout also presents in the background of the poster the list of names of Palestinian villages and towns, reminding Palestinians of their homeland and further motivating their resistance.



Ismael Shammout, 1970. *We Will Be Victorious*. Courtesy of the Palestine Poster Project Archives (PPPA)

Mona Hatoum's famous artwork *Over my Dead Body* evidently exhibits a message of resistance. The soldier, which symbolizes the Israeli occupier, is diminished in size, suggesting his reduced power with respect to her strength. Hatoum's courageous and defiant gaze implies her strength and the inscribed words *Over my Dead Body* represent

her strength and will not to surrender as long as she lives. This work exhibits a direct message of resistance.



Mona Hatoum, 1988. Over My Dead Body. Courtesy of the artist.

As I mentioned, political messages are invented due to specific circumstances in the country and so is their employment in art. In this regard, the message invented and articulated in art as a response to the imprisonment of 16-year-old activist Ahed Tamimi by Israeli forces. The message *Free Ahed Tamimi* went viral on social media, was repeated in slogans during protests claiming for her release, and written on banners and signs, and her case was broadcasted by international news. In addition to the



In this January 4, 2018 file photo, demonstrators hold posters reading, "Release Ahed" during a protest demanding Israel to release Ahed Tamimi. AP Photo.

mentioned media, posters, graffiti and other works of art transmitted the message to claim her freedom.

Italian street artist Agostino Chirwin, along with two others, painted a 13-foot mural of Ahed Tamimi on the separation wall in Bethlehem. In doing so, a message for her release is directly transmitted.



FiAgostino Chirwin. Ahed Tamimi. Graffiti.

Besides, the Irish artist Jim Fitzpatrick, created a print of Ahed Tamimi holding a Palestinian flag above DC Comics' *Wonder Woman* symbol. He said in a meeting: “Ahed Tamimi, to me, signifies nobility in the face of oppression”⁴. In other words, he called for her release and praised her resistant actions against oppression, and with referring to her as “a real Wonder Woman” he encouraged her resistance and transmitted messages to follow her path. Moreover, to further spread this poster Fitzpatrick made its download for free.

⁴ Campbell, F., (2018). Che Guevara artist makes Ahed Tamimi Wonderwoman poster available for free. *The National Arts and Culture* [online]. [Viewed 15 September 2018]. Available from: <https://www.thenational.ae/arts-culture/art/che-guevara-artist-makes-ahed-tamimi-wonderwoman-poster-available-for-free-1.705362>



Jim Fitzpatrick. Ahd Tamimi

The following poster was made by the Palestine Federation of Chile to demand freedom of Ahd Tamimi.



Issued by the Palestinian Federation of Chile (Federación Palestina de Chile)

Lots of other posters were created as a response of Ahed Tamimi's imprisonment, and the following image displays her photo as a stencil to further spread the message demanding for her release.



FREEDOM FOR PALESTINIAN PRISONERS

Made by Protest Stencil. 2017. Published in the UK, by London Palestine Action.

Lots of artists painted Tamimi's portrait or displayed her photo demanding for her freedom and supporting her act of resistance. However, it is misleading to assume that the only transmitted messages in these works is to free her. This goes back to the fact that she is a political activist detained for defying the occupier, therefore, the messages transmitted in those artworks transcend the superficial call for her freedom and transmit core messages of resistance.

Graffiti has been also highly exploited to transmit messages of resistance, and it was a basic means to mobilize many political acts. Among these is its important role "during the media

blackout enforced by Israel during the first Palestinian Intifada”⁵. At that time, graffiti became a primal medium for Palestinians to communicate with each other and articulate their messages, which inspired artist Laila Shawa to create one of her renowned *Walls of Ghaza* series (discussed in section 1.2.2).

As elucidated, Palestinian art basically implies messages of resistance suggested throughout the whole art scene. Palestinians mere existence is an act of resistance against aims for their extinction. However, as seen political messages are also utilized to serve the same purpose. Even if a message’s explicit meaning is different than resistance, it implies it. So when freedom is the direct message, perhaps implied with the dove image or through direct messages for freedom, what is actually implied is resistance because, according to Palestinians, their freedom can be only attained through resistance. This message is also clearly revealed through the following graffiti painted on the separation wall in Palestine. As a result, political messages in Palestinian art all imply, or frankly state, the principal or core message for their existence: Resistance. Through Resistance, they will return, they will be victorious, they will be free and they will continue to exist.



Grffiti painted on the separation wall in Palestine.

⁵ Morelli, N. (2019). The life and work of Palestinian Islamo-Pop artist Laila Shawa. *Middle East Monitor* [online]. [Viewed 15 August 2019]. Available from: <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20190402-the-life-and-work-of-palestinian-islamo-pop-artist-laila-shawa/>

While we inspect the articulation of a primal core message in Palestinian art, Lebanese art scene provides different messages and different representations of them, in reference to the war and post-war periods. Upon analyzing political messages during the war and those articulated afterwards, we notice an extreme difference. As mentioned earlier, artists during the war didn't create a lot of work to document its incidents. After the war, most artworks characteristic of it has addressed its aftermath, revealing no politically charging aspects. Nonetheless, this doesn't apply on messages presented in posters and graffiti, at least during the war. In the term of the civil war, Lebanon was divided according to its people's sectarian and political affiliations, and although this division has never been encouraged in notable works of art, it was clearly and vulgarly translated through posters and graffiti of those times. During which, each political party created its own posters to serve its sectarian and political aims, thus augmenting the division of the country. Those posters reveal the internal antagonism between political and sectarian communities, through the different war phases and fronts, and expose different alliances, relations and responses to regional threats. Created to implant messages of radical sectarian and political views, such posters were not exposed after the war ended, when opposing messages were required to induce unity and peace. Graffiti had served the same purpose as posters during the war, implanting messages of division among Lebanese through radical views. In addition, graffiti was employed as a way of communication among warring factions to provoke each other, exposing yet more radical behaviors and violent actions. However, due to graffiti's nature, works of this genre are not available anymore except for those which were filmed. These have offered the various views and messages across parties, and have allowed us to observe the antagonistic discourses and the violent representations of the war. As a result, posters and graffiti have mirrored the ugly truth during the war and provided a platform to transmit radical and vulgar messages, which were not translated in noticeable works of art.

The following poster exemplifies the radical sectarian beliefs shared in Lebanon during the civil war. Produce by the Lebanese Kataeb party, also known as Phalanges, it shows the Christian kneeling to the Cross, while his opponent, obviously Druze as referred to through his clothes, is displayed as a barbarian brandishing his dagger. Moreover, the Christian is addressed as the fighter, while the Druze as the murderer, both words inscribed in Arabic on the poster to further encourage a radical religious division. This poster explicitly exemplifies the kinds of messages transmitted and articulated during the civil war.



Lebanese Kataeb Party: The Fighter vs The murderer, 50x70cm.

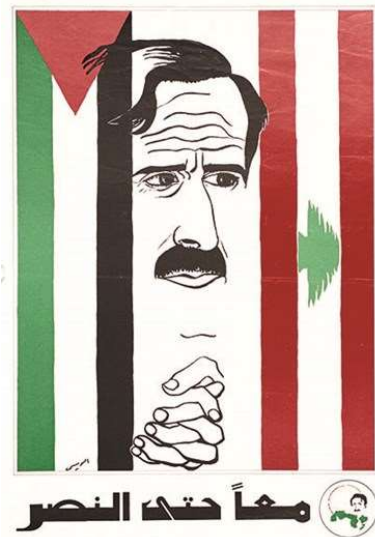
As said, despite the fact that the civil war in Lebanon was rarely documented and addressed in art during its term, a documentation of those conflicts is particularly evident in posters. There are recordings of speeches but they are hard to attain, and graffiti works are all wiped out, and slogans are no longer spoken of. Posters, on the other hand, are archived serving as witnesses to the violence of the war and the division of the people. Moreover, some famous Lebanese artists were members of political parties and had designed their posters revealing politically charging messages, despite the fact that their artworks for galleries and exhibitions were different, showing no politically charging aspects.

The following poster, published by Lebanese Communist Party, is designed by renowned Lebanese-Armenian artist Paul Guiragossian. As the title *Glory to the Heroes of Shaqueef Citadel* suggests, it was produced to commemorate those who died during a battle in Shaqueef Citadel, in south Lebanon, which happened between Israeli Forces and the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization). As mentioned in the history of Lebanon's wars (section 2.1.2), Lebanese political parties were divided, those who supported the PLO and fought for the Palestinian cause, such as Communists, and others who stood against it, such as Kataeb. Therefore, in the poster, Guiragossian clearly exhibits his political identity and views, in contrary to his other work created for art galleries. In addition, by referring to those who fought with the PLO as heroes, the artist sends a message to encourage Lebanese solidarity with Palestine, and thus opposes other political parties who don't.



Paul Guiragossian, 1980. *Glory to the Heroes of Shaqueef Citadel*. 66 x 100 cm. Published by Lebanese Communist Party.

Artist Aref Al Rayyes also exposes his political and religious identities in his poster, *Together Until Victory*. He displayed the Lebanese and Palestinian flags with a portrait of Kamal Jumblat, the political leader of the Druze community, explicitly revealing his support to Palestinians and further asserting his message through the Arabic written text, *Together Until Victory*.



Aref Al Rayyes, 1978. *Together Until Victory*. 50x71 cm.

As an antagonistic message, opposing the above couple of posters, Guardians of the Cedars, a far-right Lebanese party and former Christian militia in Lebanon, reveal their resentment towards the Palestinian Cause. Displaying a military boot stepping on the words *The Palestinian Cause* written in Arabic. The poster plainly reveals a message opposing the Palestinian presence in Lebanon.



Published by Guardians of the Cedars, *The Palestinian Cause*, 44x59cm, 1978.

As seen, posters augmented the Lebanese division and were also intended to politically mobilize people against each other. The following poster published by a right-wing Christian political party, called The Lebanese Youth Movement, clearly suggests political mobilization. The image of a woman holding a dead fighter mobilizes political action in favor of the claiming party. Moreover, the title, *We Give So That You Will Remain Oh My Country*, transmits a message to die for one's nation, or in the Lebanese case, for its political parties.



Published by The Lebanese Youth Movement. We give so that you will remain oh my country.

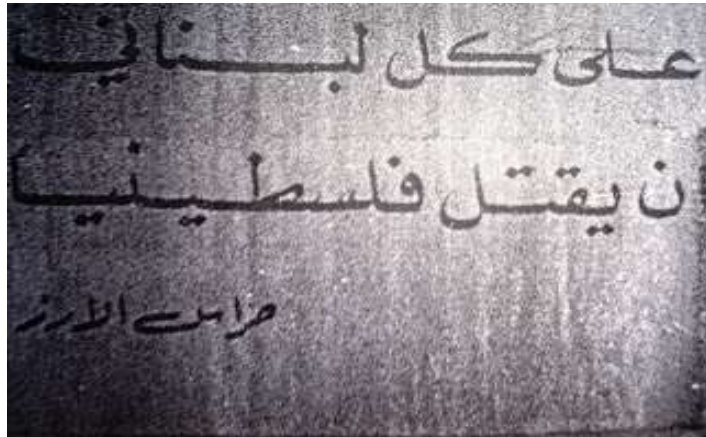
Similar to political posters, during the Lebanese civil war, graffiti revealed the antagonistic views between different warring factions and expressed direct messages to politically mobilize people. However, graffiti was even more radical, vulgar and violent than the issued posters, serving as a tool to express the unleashed hate, anger and commitment to sectarian politics.

The following graffiti clearly suggests political mobilization and reveals the same message as the previous poster, to die for one's nation, written in Arabic through the words *Lebanon lives when we die*, however, the author is unknown.



Lebanon lives when we die.

Political mobilization against the Palestinian presence in Lebanon and resentment towards their cause is vulgarly expressed in the following graffiti. Written by the Guardians of the Cedars, it reads, *It is a duty for each Lebanese to kill a Palestinian* in Arabic with the name of the party underneath it. Exposing such a drastic and radical view, the graffiti clearly states the message.



Guardians of the Cedars: It is a duty for each Lebanese to kill a Palestinian.

I present these graffiti to show the vulgarity of political messages during the Lebanese civil war, which, fortunately, didn't find their echo in the major art scene. Some of the graffiti, especially during the first couple of years of the war, were filmed and documented by the journalist Maria Chakhtoura who exhibited the photos in an exhibition she called *Walls of Shame*. According to her: "By framing them and exposing them, they become timeless and, who knows, they may sound the alarm bell, a tool against violence. To never repeat the

same mistakes again"⁶. Which is a general Lebanese fear ever since the war had ‘supposedly’ ended and it is reflected in visual arts as a post-war unifying message.

After the war, political parties and their militias claimed to have realized the grave destruction and damage caused. It was not possible for the previous messages to persist; it was time for recovery. The new situation imposed a different aim: peace. And nothing but unity promotes peace after the war. Therefore, after all the previous charging messages, messages of unity were created. Consequently, artists who addressed the after-math of the war tried to implant such messages in order for Lebanese not to repeat the same mistakes. However, Lebanon’s peaceful state has always been in jeopardy. This, in addition to the Amnesty Law and the missing Lebanese (both issues have been repeatedly discussed previously), have nourished a fear of another war among Lebanese. In such times, messages of unity are the only ones publically announced. To overcome this fear and the persistent conflicts in Lebanon, messages of unity have been exploited in public speeches, media, national discourses and slogans aiming to overcome differences amidst Lebanese society. Under this regard, in 2005, following the assassination of a Lebanese Prime Minister, out of fear that the incident might trigger another war, a renowned Lebanese journalist made a famous speech stating: “In the name of God we, Muslims and Christians, pledge that we shall remain united to the end of time to better defend our Lebanon”⁷. This national speech obviously indicates a message a unity in order not to repeat the old mistakes, and was further articulated in visuals and repeated in public and national discourses, to the extent that when I was teaching art in a school in Beirut, the students had an art competition with

⁶ Khalaf, C., (2017). Maria Chakhtoura: Exposing graffiti, as an alarm against violence. *L'orient Le Jour* [online]. [Viewed 8 September 2018]. Available from <https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/1030761/maria-chakhtoura-exposer-les-graffitis-comme-une-alar-me-contre-la-violence.html>

⁷ Annahar Staff, (2018). 13 years on, Lebanon commemorates the late Gebran Tueni. *An-Nahar* [online]. [Viewed on 20 August 2019]. Available from: <https://en.annahar.com/article/913777-13-years-on-lebanon-commemorates-the-late-gebran-tueni>

this specific theme. As a result, unity became the aim and the principal message implied in major artworks characteristic of war has become this: The civil war shall never be repeated again.

The following poster explicitly reveals the message of national unity.



Here's to National Unity.

Posters and graffiti, although still exhibit different political views, are no longer plainly provocative or intending to divide Lebanese. Moreover, notable artworks addressing the civil war, intend to heal the wounds of the past. Among these are Zena El Khalil's performances in historic war-torn buildings in Beirut (discussed in section 1.3.2), and the following graffiti created by artist Jad El Khoury in which he painted the bullet holes of a war-torn building in Beirut. Both works address the war and try to heal its scars and damages, sending messages of peace.



Jad El Khoury

Mohammad Said Baalbaki created his artwork *One Hand Cannot Clap Alone* (discussed in section 3.3) addressing the after-math of the war. The work is a bronze sculpture of the missing arm of a bullet-ridden statue in Beirut, which was broken during the war. The title, *One Hand Cannot Clap Alone*, synonymous with a traditional Lebanese maxim, clearly conveys a message of unity suggesting that Lebanese have to be united in order not to repeat the same mistakes again.

Other artworks that address the after-math of the war, mentioned throughout this book, act as reminders of the crises and suggest messages of unity. In his book *Contemporary Art in the Middle East*, Paul Sloman reaches the realization that Lebanese artists perform a “memory retrieval in order to understand and explain the present with an inward look”⁸,

⁸ Sloman, P. ed., 2009. *Op. Cit.*, P. 17.

and this is suggested in the Lebanese art scene. Through telling narratives of the war or depicting war-torn buildings, artists remind Lebanese of what was done. When Lebanese artists display destroyed buildings in their work, although they haven't implied a direct message, the gravity of this destruction imposes it. These artists intend to evoke history and build a collective memory among Lebanese so that they become aware of their mistake, hence conveying the message, not to repeat the same mistakes.

As for Syrian art characteristic of war, we find it fraught with political messages. In the political dimension of national identity, I explain how this art has prominently exhibited this aspect, and how artists explicitly revealed their political views, including some who frankly supported and encouraged the revolution. Well, most of these artworks convey clear political messages. However, it is known that political messages in Syria have been always fought back with violence by the government, whether implied in graffiti, media, news or visual arts, which made artists unable to express their views previously. Evidence of this political repression is found throughout the history of Syria, but the regime had made sure that such issues remained discreet. However, after the ignition of the revolution in 2011, Syria's situation and the violence practiced by the regime are no longer hidden. Of course, anti-regime graffiti in Syria is still wiped out very fast, and whenever reachable, any person responsible for the presentation of opposing views is detained. Nonetheless, with the motivation provided by the uprising, the international disapproval of Al Assad's policies, the presence of social media, and the fact that many artists are currently living in exile, exposing the situation in Syria has become possible. Even though, some artists still conceal their true identity when producing such works, for fear that they might be captivated. Political posters, graffiti, and other forms of art and media that expose the brutality of the regime and transmit political messages, have become primal channels to broadcast the war in Syria.

Political messages, propagated via graffiti, digital art, painting, video and other media, has become part of the language of the war and uprising in Syria. However, upon considering the majority of artworks displaying war in Syria, we notice that there is a huge production of digital art. This phenomenon is explained by Syrian artist Sulafa Hijazi, who said that it is “safer doing digital art” in Syria, since at any time, the authorities could come to the artist’s house and demand to see the work, but digital art can be hidden on the computer or scrapped easily, whereas other kinds of art expose the artist⁹. In addition, digital art takes less time to create than other forms of art, such as painting or video, is quickly printed as posters if needed, doesn’t require workshops or studios to produce, and can be distributed across various online platforms that reach millions of people. Digital art, including poster production, has served in documenting the war in Syria as well as transmitting political messages.

The poster has been the primal and most prominent kind of art utilized in transmitting political messages during the war in Syria. Serving the artists’ purpose in its persuasive aspect and the availability of social media to transmit it all over the world, a great amount of posters was created during the Syrian war. These posters reflect the war, its incidents and, above that, transmit political messages. Many Syrian artists as well as collectives have dedicated their talents to produce digital art as posters in order to spread their messages. Messages encouraging the revolution, showing the regime’s brutality, demanding the release of prisoners and defying the government are prominent in these posters, in addition, many of these were created to politically mobilize people to join the uprising.

Of the most prominent projects dedicated to create political posters during the war in Syria is produced by the collective *Alshaab Alsori Aref Tareeko* (The Syrian People Know Their

⁹ Halasa, M., Omareen, Z. and Mahfoud, N. eds., 2014. *Op. Cit.*, P. 16.

Way) (discussed in section 3.2.2). This group produced an abundant amount of posters addressing the specific stages of the war and implanted relevant messages. In the poster *Revolution Until the Regime Falls* (discussed and displayed in section 3.2.2), the group is clearly sending a message to mobilize the revolution until the regime falls. However, the display of the image of a flower in face of a military tank, a message of peaceful revolution is implied. In the poster, *Rise Up for Disobedience*, written in Arabic text on the poster, (discussed and displayed in section 3.2.2), the group explicitly sends a message to disobey the regime and mobilize the uprising.

As for the following poster, *Your Bullets Killed Only Our Fear*, Alshaab Alsori Aref Tareeko sends a defying message to the regime declaring that the people are no longer afraid of it and provides an encouragement for the revolution.



الشعب السوري عارف طريقه

Alshaab Alsori Aref Tareeko Your Bullets Killed Only Our Fear.

The following poster, displays Al Assad's photo with the text *Wanted for Crimes Against Humanity*, exposing Al Assad's brutality and implying a message against his rule.



Alshaab Alsori Aref Tareeko, Wanted for Crimes Against Humanity.

There are many other posters that expose anti-Assad messages, but I present these as examples of the employment of posters to transmit political messages and mobilize the revolution in Syria. However, whether calling to release prisoners, exposing the brutality of the regime or displaying massacres, the major transmitted messages in such works stimulate resentment and outrage against Al Assad. Moreover, what is noticed in the three posters, *Revolution Until the Regime Falls*, *Rise Up for Disobedience*, *Your Bullets Killed Only Our Fear* and others motivating the revolution is that Syrians are the primary audience. This goes back to the fact that they are the ones intended to be politically mobilized and persuaded to join the uprising, and the selection of Arabic text in these posters further proves this issue. Whereas the poster, *Wanted for Crimes Against Humanity*,

exposes Al Assad's cruelty, hence implies a message for Syrians to resent him and explicitly sends an international message speaking of his crimes and brutality, and the inscription of an English text serves the aim to expose the message to the world.

As for graffiti, I could not detect a prominent appearance of this art in transmitting political messages in Syria during the war. Nonetheless, a specific graffiti message had a prominent role in the ignition of the revolution, which started after a group of friends spray-painted graffiti against the government on the wall of their school. A 14-year-old boy wrote *Ejak el door, ya doctor* (It's your turn doctor in Arabic), meaning Al Assad's turn in the revolutions. The boy and his friends were arrested and tortured, whereas people protested demanding their release. The regime violently tried to stop the revolution and what had started as peaceful protests evolved into becoming a bloody civil war.



Ejak el door, ya doctor (It's your turn doctor).

However, despite its potent capacity to transmit political messages and its role in the ignition of the uprising, graffiti hasn't been primarily utilized to reflect the war in Syria or spread its messages worldwide. This can be traced back to many reasons. The first and primal reason for this is that the regime almost immediately wipes out any messages against it. Second, since graffiti is performed on the street, it exposes the artist to a huge risk of being tortured and killed. Third, for people who have been living such war circumstances,

survival becomes their primal aim. Fourth, graffiti in Syria can transmit messages solely to its people, in case it wasn't filmed and spread, and Syrian artists wanted to reveal their situation to the world. Fifth, even if an anti-regime graffiti wasn't wiped quickly, there is another risk of filming it. As a result, we find few graffiti on-line comprising short anti-regime messages, that were filmed and spread before they had been wiped out, stencils for ISIS, the regime's opponent which has been as brutal to the people as Al- Assad regime or even more, and others made by the regime to articulate messages serving its purpose. An example to this latter case is a graffiti filmed by a friend of mine, under my request, stating in Arabic, *Yes to dialogue and love, No to division and fighting*, which sends a clear message of peace, love and unity. Such pro-government graffiti are the ones which are kept in the country, serving the regime's agenda and disguising the truth. However, there are also some graffiti that spread political messages concerning the war, done by Syrians or others, outside Syria. An example of this kind is discussed later in this section.



Yes to dialogue and love, No to division and fighting.

Similar to the previous graffiti, there are other works created by those who are against the protest and supporting Al Assad government, sending pro-regime messages. These government supporting views and messages are vastly transmitted via Syrian news, kept-on-walls graffiti, and in posters that are intended to praise the regime. However, they

haven't displayed the war, and my aim here are messages in works characteristic of the war, which most of them present anti-Assad messages.

New political messages were created during the Syrian war in reference to the specific situations encountered. Moreover, in accordance with the specific situation, the same message was transmitted in slogans during protests, banners, posters and other forms of visual arts. In this regard are the messages motivating the people to join the revolution. As discussed in the analysis of Alshaab Alsoni Aref Tareeko's posters presented here, some were intended to mobilize the uprising and send frank messages to Syrians to revolt. Nonetheless, after the revolution subsided and the war started, such messages were no longer requested. Instead, messages that stimulate an outrage towards Al Assad, without the mention of revolt, and others pleading to stop the war are inspected, and most of these address an international audience since political mobilization of Syrians for a revolution is no longer aimed.

Another example of messages articulated in accordance with a specific war situation, was created as a response to the large number of children who died and migrated during the war. Consequently, the anti-regime slogan *We are the Child* or *Save the Children of Syria* was created, exposing the reality of millions of Syria's children and transmitting a message to stop this cruelty.

In the following poster, *Al Houla*, Syrian artist Fares Cachoux exhibits the image of Al Assad holding a butcher knife behind his back while a group of children is facing him. The poster depicts "the Houla massacre, when government forces killed 108 people, including 49 children"¹. Cachoux reflects the suffering of the children and exposes the brutality of

¹ Mahmood, Z., (2016). The Art of the Uprising Turned War in Syria. *Syria Deeply* [online]. [Viewed 12 January 2019]. Available from: <https://www.newsdeeply.com/syria/community/2016/03/16/cease-fire-and-prospects-for-success-in-geneva>

Al Assad, hence transmitting an anti-Assad message to stop the killing of children and encourages an outrage against him.



Fares Cachoux, 2012. *Al Houla*.

However, Cachoux also reveals his scorn to Al Assad’s opposing warring factions. In his poster *Daesh* (ISIS), he clearly mocks ISIS’s policies in their “self-declared caliphate”¹, showing a member of ISIS in a ridiculous manner.

In his posters, Cachoux reflects his resentment to all warring factions in Syria, including Al Assad and his allies, Al Qaeda and ISIS, uncovering the atrocity of Syria’s proxy war. By displaying the



Fares Cachoux, 2013. *Daesh*.

¹ *Ibid.*

brutality of these warring factions, the artist is raising awareness about the Syrian war and conveying a message to distrust any of these forces.

Returning to the works that transmit the message to save Syrian children, artist Abdalla Al Omari created a whole series displaying the suffering of those fragile beings. His following work *Maximum Range, Nayef*, displays the image of a wounded child and hence translates the slogan to stop the killing of children and conveys it as a message.

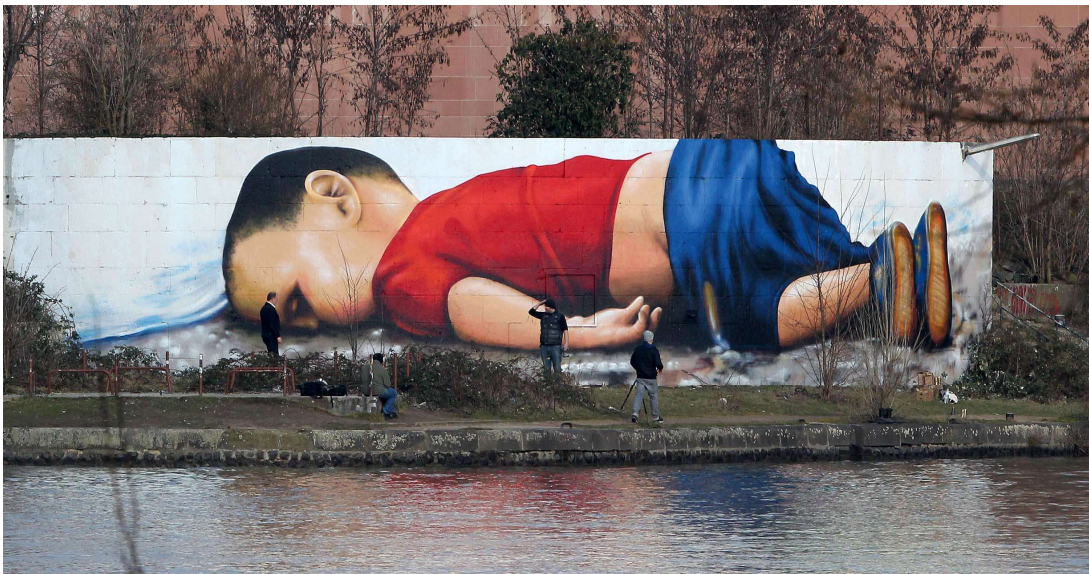


Abdalla Al Omari, 2013. *Maximum Range, Nayef*. Acrylic on canvas. 120 x 100 cm.

For Al Omari, the act of revolt is a form of art in itself and his work is a reaction to “the bigger masterpiece, which is the revolution”. He believes that the Syrian crisis has exposed Syrian artists, putting them under a spotlight to deliver their messages. In his opinion,

“voices of artists reverberate louder than others”¹. Following his notion about the potency of the artist’s voice, I further note how these artists contributed during the war making their art a platform to transmit messages.

The high number of deaths among children also triggered non-Syrian artists to expose this situation. In the following graffiti painted in Frankfurt, Germany, artists Justus Becker and Oguz Sen painted the image of a child, called Aylan, who drowned and was found dead on the Turkish coast during his family’s migration by boat. The image of this child was spread on social media and on the news, stirring up public concern. The artists made this work sending messages to stop the killing of children and to welcome refugees².



The artists Justus Becker, on the right, and Oguz Sen this Thursday in front of Aylan's graffiti in Frankfurt.

In section 3.2.2, I discuss how artists were influenced by the suffering and killing of children and provide lots of examples concerning this topic. In addition, in section 3.3, I

¹ *Ibid.*

² EL PAÍS, (2016). *A giant graffiti reminds the child Aylan before the European Central Bank* [online]. [Viewed 10 July 2019]. Available from: https://elpais.com/internacional/2016/03/11/actualidad/1457724873_363410.html

show that children have become a symbol of the Syrian war, and here I reveal how this situation resulted in creating and transmitting a message to stop this issue. This proves how the nature of the Syrian war affected the artistic representation, the artists' aims and messages and the targeted audience. Works of artists such as Abdalla Al Omari, Khalil Younes, Mohannad Orabi, Walid El-Masri and others analyzed in the mentioned sections further exhibit the Syrian children's case and convey messages to stop this cruelty.

The message to save Syrian children was expressed in the whole Syrian art scene, created due to a specific situation of the war, just as messages motivating the revolution were prominent during its term. Other messages were also invented as response to specific events during the different stages of the Syrian crisis, and most have been reflected in visual arts. However, among messages that support the regime, others that seem neutral and appeal to stop the war, and many that transmit resentment towards Al Assad, we cannot generalize a unified message. Consequently, I deduce that Syrian art characteristic of war transmitted various political messages in accordance with the nation's war episodes and the artist's affiliation, nonetheless, the majorly transmitted messages encourage anti-regime actions, whether in exposing the brutality of the regime implying the cessation of Al Assad's rule or in motivating action such as the revolution.

As a conclusion, art characteristic of war in Lebanon, Palestine and Syria has served as an important outlet to transmit messages. Artists exhibiting conflicts in Palestine primarily deploy messages of resistance as a response to the occupation of their country, and many were intended to politically mobilize fellow-nationals. While art in Palestine emphasizes the principal message of resistance to assure its' people's existence and continuity, Lebanese and Syrian art scenes follow different paths. Lebanon's messages are divided to pre-war and post-war messages. Messages created during the war in Lebanon, which were basically transmitted through posters and graffiti, served in dividing the country and

mobilizing action, reflecting the antagonistic views of different warring factions and revealing vulgarity and fierceness. Conversely, messages after the war intended to unify Lebanese in reminding them of the committed errors so that the civil war won't be repeated again. As for the Syrian art scene, the war gave birth to different messages in according to its specific circumstance and episodes, however, the majority of artworks transmit anti-regime messages intended to put an end to Al Assad's rule.

8.3. Concluding different roles performed by artists

This section concludes the chapter by highlighting the different roles performed by artists and embodied in the previously presented work. Wars affected the artists' identities and had given rise to new roles they performed. In this section, I reveal how artists' personal identities were affected and how different roles were created according to the nature of each war in the three countries. Art has become a reflection of each experienced crisis as well as a mirror to its impact on the artist's identities personified in different roles. Many artworks discussed in this book embody different roles played by artists as a result of wars and explore questions of identity which emanated from the displacement and loss they were forced to face. Therefore, I analyze these roles and underscore their embodiments through the artworks that I discussed earlier.

The war experiences that artists had lived stimulated their imagination into personifying different roles in their art. In chapter 2.4.1, I elucidate how war causes a major change in society and that it affects people's collective and personal identities. In addition, I have presented theories concerning the effects of wars on national identity and later revealed and analyzed the representations of these effects in art. However, art doesn't only exhibit the effects of war on national identity, it also reveals its impacts on the artist's personal

identities embodied in the different roles he/she performed. These roles, which embrace diversity among artists and art scenes, represent the artists' (re)constructed identities. They also reveal further effects of the wars on art since they were born as consequences of the experienced crises. Consequently, in what follows, I reveal and analyze these new roles as embodiments of (re)constructed identities and inspect their relationship to the specificity of the experienced war.

As a result of war, some artists have taken the role of a historian or a reporter. They have documented the history of the war, whether through narratives or depicting wars' incidents. Palestinian artists have reflected in details the struggle of their people and the occupation of their country. Artist Ismael Shammout documented this history in his work *The Exodus and The Odyssey*. Artist Rola Halawani has taken the role of a reporter, recording in her photos the frequent Israeli incursions and the suffering Palestinians experience under occupation. Artists such as Ismael Shammout, Emily Jacir, Naji Al-Ali and others documented the names of Palestinian villages, and lots of other artists reflected the history of Palestine and reported the daily conflicts through their art. Syrian artists depicted the war incidents in their disruptive violent details serving as reporters in documenting the war and spreading its news. They have displayed the horrors, they or their fellow nationals had experienced, thus documenting the history of Syria's war. Lebanese artists, such as Lamia Goreige, Alfred Tarazi and Walid Raad addressed their nation's errors through presenting historical and personal narratives of the war, intending to fill a gap of an undocumented history of the war. Their versions of history, despite their uncertainty, served in evoking historical memories. All these artists and much more played the role of historians or reposters as a response to the wars they experienced.

The artist has also become a narrator of different stories during the war. Some artists narrated different people's experiences and others presented personal narratives of the war

reflecting their own self and identity. However, in both cases, artists performed the role of a narrator. Nonetheless, those who presented their personal narratives dove into reconstructing a sense of self and displayed a (re)constructed self-identity. A personal narrative symbolizes internal evocation to affirm someone's existence and discover a sense of self and identity. "Individuals use narratives, they argue, to reflexively reconstruct a sense of self"³. Under this respect is Mona Hatoum's video *Measures of Distance*, in which she addresses her exile, displacement, separation and loss as a result of war. Hatoum talks about her feeling of fragmentation and not knowing where she really belongs. Mounira Al Solh is also the narrator of her own story in her film *Rawane's Song*. Al Solh discusses her struggle in making work about the Lebanese wars and confesses her lost sense of a Lebanese national identity. Syrian artist Azza Hamwi in *Day and a Button* addresses the war in Syria and admits that she doesn't know her identity anymore. These artists became the narrators of their own story and revealed their (re)constructed identities through the performed role. However, by telling their own stories or those of others, artists have played the role of narrators and storytellers.

Artists have also taken the roles of messengers, political activists and social reformers, thus constructing new identities and employing their art as a platform to conduct their statements. In accordance to the wars experience, artists have conveyed different messages in their work. Palestinian artists transmitted messages of resistance to their people. Many were even political activists intending to mobilize resistance against the occupation of their country, performing the role of social reformers in transmitting messages for a better future for Palestinians. Lebanese artists transmitted messages of unity opposing previous ones of division, acting also as social reformers intending to overcome the collective amnesia of the war in order for it not to be repeated. Syrian artists transmitted anti-regime messages or

³ Shotter, J.E. and Gergen, K.J., 1989. *Op. Cit.*, P. 155.

others, according to their own political affiliations and the war's circumstances, acting as political activists in mobilizing the revolution and intending to socially reform a nation living under oppression. Consequently, all these artists constructed certain identities to perform their aimed role. Since "[t]he construction of identity is a particular kind of social action which takes place within the context of external conditions"⁴, in accordance to the conditions these artists lived, they constructed new identities and personified them in their work. As a result, new role-identities were performed by those artists as a result of the wars, transmitting messages so that, according to their own beliefs and views, achieve social reform in their nations.

What is more distinct among the new identities or roles that artists have constructed as a result of war, is the birth of a 'hero identity'. It is known by now that a higher sense of national identity is required during wars, and so are national heroes; nations need heroes most when they are at war. The image of a hero who fights for his/her nation and the well-being of its people, giving motivation and encouragement to fellow-nationals, is highly demanded when a nation is threatened. Anyhow, as seen throughout this book, national identity is mostly felt in the works of Palestinian artists who employed all its aspects and dimensions to preserve it, as a result of a long destructive occupation. And this occupation compelled the construction of a resistant identity since "identities are formed often in resistance to extreme external conditions"⁵. Palestinian artists have constructed an identity which preserved, spread and asserted their national identity and existence. The elevated Palestinian patriotism and intensive sense of national identity, in addition to the extreme external conditions, made artists construct a hero identity that opposed the external invading force, spoke against the occupation, showed resistance, subsistence and the right

⁴ Kennedy, P. and Danks, C. eds., 2001. *Op.Cit.*, P. 154.

⁵ *Ibid.*

to return home. This hero acquired core features to exist, such as courage and strength to resist, passion towards the people, subsistence, patience, confidence of return and great love for the country, in addition to encouraging the people's resistance. In acquiring these aspects or embodying them in a figure, the result is a national hero. Artists assembled the qualities of a hero to their national identity transforming it into a figure which was translated in their artwork. This identity has become more and more personified and anthropomorphized into a national hero. Under this respect is Abed Al Rahman Al Muzain's hero identity revealed in his artworks. Al Muzain has dedicated his art to the Palestinian cause, encouraging and motivating his people's resistance and asserting their national identity. Also, in her work, *Over My Dead Body*, Mona Hatoum displays her image as a national hero; she is the hero that will not surrender to the occupier until her death. This is also revealed in Naji Al-Ali's character *Handala*. He created this character as an embodiment of his national identity. 'The child *Handala* is my signature', Al-Ali said, "he is a child of ten years old and will always be as such", since the artist was of that age when he was forced to leave his homeland. Al-Ali continues, "[h]e will start growing up only when his homeland returns". Although *Handala* "is not a fat, happy, relaxed, or pampered child, he is barefooted like the refugee camp children [...], a symbol of bitterness", the artist gave him the heroic qualities of resistance, strength and objection against the invasion. He said: "Handala is rough, he is an icon that protects me from making mistakes, and his hands are clasped behind his back as a sign of rejection [...], he will only show his face when Arab dignity is restored and Palestine returns"⁶. *Handala*, who symbolizes Palestinians, is also an embodiment of Al-Ali's hero identity. In addition, Palestinian artist Suleiman Mansour, who has been considered an artist of the intifada, created work that

⁶ Handala.Org. *Through The Eyes of a Palestinian Refugee*. Available from: <http://www.handala.org/handala/>).

gave visual expression to the concept of resistance. His work *Jamal Al Mahamel* depicts the image of an elderly Palestinian man carrying Jerusalem, embodying the hero who carries the burdens of Palestinians on his back. Leila Shawa, who is considered by many as 'The mother of Arabic Revolution', is concerned in reflecting the political realities of her country, symbolizing a hero identity which defies and resists the oppressor, speaks for the people, reports the events and targets injustice and persecution. Many other Palestinian artists created their work as an act of resistance, personifying in the process a national hero identity constructed as a result of their liberation struggle under Israeli occupation.

However, it is important to know the characteristics of a hero in Palestinian culture. The hero for Palestinians is not just the war fighter; it is the stone thrower, it is the child who fights the occupier with a slingshot, it is the one who holds the flag, it is *Handala*, it is Ahed Tamimi, it is Suleiman Mansour, it is anyone who fights for their existence and shows resistance in any way available, it is the one who asserts their existence, reports their struggles, affirms their right to return and the one who defies the oppressive rules asset by the occupier. As a result, we see that many Palestinian artists have taken the role of national heroes constructed through their beliefs and embodied in their art.

Comparing this conclusion with Lebanese and Syrian art characteristic of war, we face completely different scenarios. Due to the civil nature of the wars in both countries, what is considered a hero for part of its nationals is considered a criminal by the other part. In other words, since civil wars divide nations into two or more different groups, the person who fights under the name of his collective is considered its hero, while, according to the other groups, he/she is regarded as a terrorist or criminal. Moreover, in reference to the kinds of wars fought in these two countries, there are no unified characteristics of a national hero. As an example to this issue, some people in Lebanon believe that among the basic characteristics of a national hero is opposing Israel and standing by the Palestinian Cause,

while others deem such a person as endangering national unity, and vice versa; a group might consider someone who allied with Israel a hero, while others regard him a criminal and traitor. Under this respect is an incident that happened in Lebanon only two years ago. A court sentenced in absentia two Lebanese citizens to death for the 1982 assassination of President-elect Bashir Gemayel, knowing that those involved in political assassinations are not covered by the Amnesty Law (discussed in section 2.2.2.). Gemayel was allied with Israel and his death prompted the Israeli army to occupy west Beirut and his right-wing Phalange militiamen to break into the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila killing hundreds of unarmed Palestinian refugees and Lebanese Muslims. However, the conviction of the two men was praised and celebrated by many, whereas others considered it unfair believing that the killers should be honored for killing an Israeli agent. “More than three decades after Gemayel was killed in a powerful explosion in Beirut, the case still sharply divides Lebanese — some see him as a national hero while others say he was an Israeli agent”⁷. As a result, such a people cannot agree on a national hero. Similarly, in present Syria, persons who lead or provoked the revolution are considered heroes among those who oppose the regime, whereas pro-government groups consider them criminals. Under this respect is the film *Little Ghandi*, which was created to commemorate a peaceful political activist in the Syrian revolution, whereas this same figure has been considered a terrorist by the regime and those who are loyal to it. Consequently, we can say that Syrian artists who intended to mobilize the revolution through their art embodied a hero identity according to their own views, and perhaps considered as such by the collectives that agree with their beliefs, but not by all nationals. Correspondingly, Lebanese and Syrian art characteristic of war did not embody a national hero identity, since in such wars there are

⁷ Mroue, B. (2017). Lebanon issues death sentences in 1982 killing of president. *AP Press* [online]. [Viewed 5 October 2018]. Available from: <https://www.apnews.com/49343a0c6cd143e5898f392974070070>

no national heroes. These scenarios stand in contrast with the case of Palestine whose people are united and whoever fights or speaks for them is their national hero. As a result, unlike the Palestinian art scene, the manifestation of a national hero in Lebanese and Syrian art scenes is unattainable in relevance to their wars.

Wars (re)constructed identities among artists and were reflected in the different roles they performed. Artists throughout the three art scenes have taken the roles of historians, reporters, political activists, messengers, social reformers and narrators, and have embodied these identities in their work. Moreover, what is distinguished is the birth of a national hero identity in the Palestinian art scene, where many artists have embodied a hero identity through performing various resistant roles. Conversely, due to the nature of wars experienced in Lebanon and Syria, we do not detect the embodiment of the role of a national hero in their art scenes. However, this conclusion serves in responding to my question which inquires about how the wars in these countries affected the artists' collective and personal identities as expressed in contemporary visual arts. In addition, it further draws the relationship between the specificity of the crisis and the artistic output. Consequently, this reveals the diversity of this art genre among the scenes in accordance to the kinds of wars experienced.

CONCLUSION

The study was set out to explore the psychosocial effects of wars that are reflected in contemporary visual arts displaying crises in Lebanon, Palestine and Syria. It investigates how the specificity of the war in each of these countries affected the psychological and social aspects expressed in its corresponding art scene. It focuses on inspecting these kinds of aspects and analyzes their appearance in specific art genre characteristic of war. Therefore, I identify and analyze the affected psychosocial aspects, their generated phenomena, representations, types, extent and variations among the art scenes, and draw their relationship with the nature of war in each country. As part of this investigation, the reasons and motivation for artists to highlight specific issues and the diverse approaches utilized to address them are also analyzed. Moreover, in order to accomplish a profound psychosocial analysis, I examine the impact of the diverse wars on the artists' collective and personal identities, which comprises the effects on national identity, the various ways in which it was felt and embodied in art, and the roles artists performed. In addition, the employment of art to convey messages and attain specific war-related aims is also highlighted as an artistic outcome of the crises.

Lebanese artist Rafic Charaf declared in a manifesto written after the June War of 1967: "Art is a weapon that can, when correctly used, move consciousness, feelings and sensitivities"⁸.

This dissertation illustrates that Charaf is not alone in his assumption. Using a close examination of the work presented in this research, we notice an exploitation of art, in varying extents, to move consciousness, feelings and sensitivities, as Charaf stated it. The work discussed in this book along with the analysis performed prove that art characteristic

⁸ Buchakjian, G., 2012. *War and other impossible possibilities: thoughts on Arab history and contemporary art*. Alarm Editions. P. 54.

of war hasn't been created for sole aesthetic reasons or for art's sake. Not only wars affected the visuals and themes addressed in art, but also influenced the reasons for creating it. And above that, the reasons and effects are diversified in accordance to the different kinds of wars.

To reveal how the different wars shaped the artistic outcome in Lebanon, Palestine and Syria, this dissertation examines the translation of war events, the appearance of violent images, the representation of destruction and expression of loss and emotional distress in art as consequences of wars. It also highlights the manifestation of national identity as a response to war and investigates its appearance through all its dimensions, followed by analytical comparison of its various representations among the three art scenes. Moreover, this dissertation analyzes the exploitation of art in wartime to transmit political messages and highlights major messages in each country linking them to its circumstances. Last, it deduces the effects of wars on the artist's (re)constructed identities embodied in art through different performed roles. Each of these inspected phenomenon is analyzed through theoretical framework and observation, demonstrated through visuals and linked to the nature of war in each of the three countries.

The above mentioned issues are examined to reach the primal objective of my study which aims to find the psychosocial effects of the different wars on the art scenes of Lebanon, Palestine and Syria. Therefore, to reach this objective, it is fundamental to find answers to the following research questions. First, how did the wars in Lebanon, Palestine and Syria affect the artists' collective and personal identities as expressed in contemporary visual arts? Second, what is the relationship between the kinds of wars experienced and the artistic output in the three countries?

Focusing throughout the research to find answers for my questions, I utilize chapter one as the theoretical base of the study. The chapter discusses identity issues associated with

nations, wars and art. I first explain what is meant by identities, their types and aspects, and how they define who one is. The fundamental criterion of differentiation and sameness to build identities is elucidated, as well as identities' unstable nature and context reliability. Furthermore, I interpret how art serves to exhibit individual and collective identities. Second, chapter one presents different connotations of a nation and explains the means for constructing national identities. Considering Montserrat Guibernau's argument that national identity "has five dimensions: psychological, cultural, territorial, historical, and political"⁹, which agrees with most theories, I elucidate these dimensions. Third, the consequences of war on nations and individuals are explained. Considering war as a "major agent of change"¹⁰, I interpret its effects on identity (re)construction, in general, and on national identity, in particular. Last, as an exemplary case, I utilize the discussed theories to conduct a psychosocial analysis of the effects of wars on renowned artworks from the international art scene.

As for chapter two, it investigates the representations of war in Lebanese, Palestinian and Syrian art scenes. The chapter starts with presenting an historical overview of the wars fought in the three countries of research. This overview is fundamental in order to analyze the effects of each of these wars on its respective art scene. Armed with knowledge of history, background and theories, I conduct my analysis. I investigate the depiction of war events in the three art scenes and deduce that Palestinian and Syrian artists considerably displayed war events of their countries, exposing and documenting all incidents of turmoil, whereas Lebanese artists rarely depicted events of the civil war during its term. Instead, the latter artists addressed the aftermath of the civil war and many of them depicted the conflicts that followed it. After that, I analyze how wars were translated in diverse

⁹ Guibernau, M., 2004., *Op. Cit.*, P. 135.

¹⁰ Stein, A.A. and Russett, B.M., 1980. *Op. Cit.*, P. 399.

representations depicting destruction and expressing violence and emotional distress, and conclude the chapter in analyzing the reasons for creating these artworks and their relationship to the specific wars. I argue that contemporary art which exhibits war effects in Lebanon manifests images of the country's destruction and expresses emotional distress as an aftermath of the civil war serving as reminders of a catastrophe in order not to be repeated, whereas bloody violent images are rarely displayed. I draw this back to the Lebanese sense of an unfinished civil war as a result of its persistent evidence in the country, such as in war-torn buildings and in the general amnesia in society. As for the Palestinian art scene, images of the country's destruction are presented, not as frequent as the other two scenes though, and emotional distress and violence are expressed with no disruptive bloodshed images or others that might cause terror among the people. I argue and prove through evidence that the reason for this goes back to the fact that Palestinians' situation under occupation threatened their existence, consequently their primal aim in their art has become to assert their existence and national identity. And, according to them, this can be only attained through resistance, which requires courage and strength, but not fear. As a result, Palestinian artists presented images that promote resistance among their fellow-nationals and assert their identity. On the other hand, Syrian art scene is fraught with images of blood-shed violence, with disruptive details, which I draw back to the violent nature of the Syrian war and the pervasiveness of such images in the media. In addition, I argue that the reason for displaying such violence is to expose the brutality of the war and the Syrian regime to the world in order to gain sympathy and augment international resentment towards Bashar Al Assad. Syrian artists as well depicted the destruction of their country and expressed their emotional distress and their fellow-nationals' through frequently exhibiting the suffering they endured, which I also draw back to the same reason. In this

chapter, I draw a direct relationship between the specificity of the war in each country and the artistic representations in its respective art scene.

Last, chapter three of the research analyzes the representation of national identity and transmission of political message in the three art scenes. It investigates the appearance of national identity through inspecting its dimensions, psychological, cultural, historical, and political, according to Montserrat Guibernau, as points of reference. As for the missing territorial aspect, it is inspected in the political dimension or in the cultural depending on its implications in a specific artwork. By detecting the appearance of these dimensions and analyzing their diverse representations, I reach the following conclusions. Palestinian art has intensely revealed the whole dimensions. The psychological dimension is revealed as an intense attachment to Palestine. The cultural dimension is prominently exhibited through utilizing abundant amount of icons symbolizing the homeland, resistance, peace, strength, the promise of return, and others created to symbolize the Palestinian cause. The historical dimension is also underscored in images and narratives. The territorial dimension is presented in an assertion of Palestine's boundaries as a political issue and in representations of the land as a cultural issue. As for the political dimension, I reveal that it is inseparable from any Palestinian artwork characteristic of war. Due to their situation under occupation, the mere existence of Palestinians is tied with political issues, so any act that asserts their existence is considered political. Consequently, to assert a jeopardized existence due to long occupation, I argue that Palestinian artists resorted to promoting, strengthening and asserting their national identity in their art. As for the representation of these dimensions in the Syrian art scene, I argue that there is a dominant appearance of the political dimension, and the historical is detected in the distinguished frequent depictions of war incidents. The political dimension, although not considered as an inseparable factor as in the Palestinian art scene, is exhibited in works that reveal the brutality of the regime and others that are

intended to mobilize the revolution, as a result of the current war and the repression endured. As for Lebanese art scene characteristic of war, I argue that it prominently reveals an historical dimension of national identity apparent in addressing the aftermath of the civil war through images and written and spoken narratives. As a response to the forgetfulness of Lebanese and the undocumented history of the civil war, artists exhibited this dimension to remind Lebanese of the errors done in order not to be repeated.

After analyzing the dimensions of national identity and drawing conclusions about their diverse representations, I inspect in chapter three the deployment of political messages in art. Linking the messages transmitted in visual arts with those articulated in other media, I argue that Palestinian art basically transmits messages of resistance and many artworks were intended to mobilize actions of resistance as a response to long occupation. On the other hand, I argue that Lebanese contemporary art characteristic of war transmits messages to unite Lebanese in order not to repeat the same mistakes, whereas messages during the civil war aimed for dividing the country but were not deployed through notable artworks. Finally, I argue that Syrian art characteristic of war transmitted various political messages in accordance with the nation's war episodes, nonetheless, most of them were anti-regime messages and some were intended to mobilize the revolution during its term.

Moving to the last part of chapter three, I analyze through represented artworks and discussed topics the different roles performed by artists revealed in their artworks as embodiments of (re)constructed identities. While artists throughout the three art scenes have taken the roles of historians, reporters, political activists, messengers, social reformers and narrators, I argue that Palestinian artists also personified a national hero identity in their work. This identity was personified in different representations to promote national identity, encourage resistance and sometimes, mobilize political action. I argue that the kind of crisis under occupation gave rise to this (re)constructed identity in the Palestinian

art scene whereas the nature of the Lebanese and Syrian wars did not cause the construction of a national hero identity.

Together, these three chapters aim to provide a better understanding of art characteristic of war in Lebanon, Palestine and Syria. Moreover, by analyzing these issues and phenomena I was able to draw important findings to answer my research questions.

First, how did the wars in Lebanon, Palestine and Syria affect the artists' collective and personal identities as expressed in contemporary visual arts?

Responding to the first part of the question which handles the artists' collective identities, the effects are basically revealed on the representation of national identity since, as I explain in chapters one and three, it is the mostly affected. The three art scenes exhibit this identity because wars compel its appearance, however, in various intensities according to the nature of each experienced war. While the Lebanese art scene basically stresses the historical dimension of national identity through the past temporal axis, the Syrian art scene displays the political and historical dimensions through the present time axis. The Palestinian art scene, on the other hand, intensely exhibits the national identity stressing all its dimensions and temporal axes, past, present and future. This goes back to the fact that the Israeli occupation for more than seventy years has jeopardized the Palestinian national identity. As a response, Palestinian artists employed their art to strengthen the threatened identity. Although national identity in the other two scenes is represented, it isn't intensely exhibited compared to the Palestinian's, knowing that the kinds of wars in Lebanon and Syria didn't jeopardize its existence.

As for the latter part of the question, which inspects the effects of wars on the artists' personal identities, I argue that artists from the three scenes constructed different identities to serve war-related aims. As a consequence of the wars, artists constructed identities

embodied in different roles as historians, reporters, political activists, messengers, social reformers and narrators. Moreover, Palestinian artists who needed to resist the occupation also constructed and personified a national hero identity as a figure of resistance.

Second, what is the relation between the kinds of wars experienced and the artistic output? Just as wars cause a major change in a country, they also alter its artistic outcome. However, the effects of wars on art are directly dependent on the nature of the war, and this is proven in my research. The specificity of the war affected the aim of the artist, the theme, the messages conveyed in the artwork, the addressed audience and the visual representations. As a consequence of long occupation and persistent conflicts, the Palestinian artistic output is inseparable from the political situation in the country and is distinguished in representing its cause. Palestinian artists mainly address their people, they convey message of resistance, employ icons and symbolic representations, and create images to reflect their situation in art, aiming to assert their existence and national identity. As for Lebanese artists, in response to the so-called unfinished civil war business, they display images of the war and the destruction it caused and employ narratives to evoke history while sending messages of unity in order for the war not to be repeated. On the other hand, the violence of the current war in Syria and the repression imposed by its regime, made its artists resort to displaying violent images, transmit mostly anti-regime messages and document the horrors encountered in details, aiming to expose their suffering to the world. Consequently, the nature of each experienced war gave rise to certain themes, aims and artistic representations which differed from one art scene to another.

Together these findings allow me to reach my aim in revealing how the different wars contributed in shaping the diverse artistic outcomes of these countries. Moreover, their importance also lies in providing a new perspective in viewing and criticizing this art within the context of the unstable circumstances that had given rise to it. In addition, my findings,

through evidence, deny other arguments that consider the art of these countries as uniform or imitation of Western art and disconnected from the artists' lived realities. Relevant to this accusation is an article I read on *Post: MoMa* written by Lebanese journalist Souheil Idriss. He wrote: "Art, as one of the elements of culture and guidance, is rarely linked to our [Arab] current reality. It fumbles about in the chaos of different foreign artistic currents. It is not inspired, whether in small or large part, by personal or national feelings"¹¹

While some may echo Idriss's views, I totally disagree and, with evident proof in this dissertation, consider that such a notion undermines the diverse artistic outcomes of these countries. Asserting my argument is Venetia Porter's observation concerning Middle Eastern artists, she said: "It is also striking, whether inside or outside their homeland, the art they produce shows strong links with their own artistic heritage and history, powerfully demonstrating their reactions to conflict or exile"¹². However, this also adds more value to my findings in considering that they may rectify some biased opinions and stereotypes about the art in these countries.

This dissertation underscores how art in Lebanon, Palestine and Syria is diversely affected by the various kinds of wars. It highlights the fact that these affects didn't create uniformity among these scenes, but rather reveals that each was diversely influenced according to the nature of the war experienced. Consequently, the goal was not to conduct a comprehensive study of the three art scenes but to specifically analyze art that features war. This art genre is the focus of my study which doesn't suggest or contribute in conceptualizing that the three art scenes exclude art without reference to the crises. By inspecting this art genre in the three art scenes, I expose the richness and diversity of this art and by conducting a

¹¹ Idriss, S. Art and Arab Life, a Questionnaire. *Post: MoMa* [online]. [Viewed on 14 October 2018]. Available from: <https://post.at.moma.org/sources/35/publications/315>

¹² Porter, V., 2006. *Op. Cit.*, P. 14.

psychosocial analysis, I contribute to its understanding. Nonetheless, to further scrutinize this art genre, I propose a closer examination of how contemporary media inspires and contributes in creating visual arts displaying blood-shed violence. Future research may build on the findings of this thesis by producing further analysis of the relationship, for example, between violent images circulated on the media and the artistic production. This is especially pertinent in the study of Syrian art characteristic of war which comprises abundant amount of images displaying disruptive violence. In this study, I present a preliminary investigation of this relationship, but discovered that it provides a fertile ground for future research. Another interesting topic that drew my attention is investigating the role of art in the invention of national icons during wars. I found this prominent in the Palestinian art scene but also apparent in the other two. A close study probing the role of art in the invention of national icons during conflict, which doesn't have to be restricted to these specific art scenes, would further our understanding of the relationship between wars and art, and more importantly, the ability of artists to propagate these issues.

Throughout this dissertation, I underscore the psychological and social effects of wars in shaping contemporary visual arts displaying crises in Lebanon, Palestine and Syria, and demonstrate the relationship between the specificity of the conflict and the artistic representations. I investigate and analyze these effects and relationship through diverse representations, media and artistic approaches. Lebanese artists utilized art characteristic of war to evoke history among their fellow-nationals aiming to remind them of their previous mistakes in order not be repeated. Palestinian artists addressed their people's resistance and employed their art to maintain and assert their national identity. Syrian artists used their art as a platform to transmit the horrors of the war aiming to evoke the feelings of an international audience. However, each of these artists was affected by the wars and each contributed in reflecting it and highlighting its specific aspects. Their work

incorporated (re)constructed identities born as a response to the crises they witnessed. Through diverse representations, these artists addressed their audience hoping to rectify the damage wars have caused.

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