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# War and Worship: The drivers of social unrest in multi-ethnic states

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## Table of Contents

|                        |    |
|------------------------|----|
| Acknowledgements.....  | 3  |
| Abstract.....          | 4  |
| Introduction.....      | 5  |
| Literature Review..... | 7  |
| Methodology.....       | 19 |
| Yugoslavia.....        | 26 |
| Lebanon.....           | 45 |
| Switzerland.....       | 61 |
| Analysis.....          | 74 |
| Conclusion.....        | 84 |
| Bibliography.....      | 90 |

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## Abstract

Conflicts in multi-ethnic states can vary in their degrees of severity from protest to civil war or state dissolution. Though it can be attested that ethnic and religious differences fuel conflict, there are a multitude of variables that contribute to social unrest. In this paper, three case studies of Yugoslavia, Lebanon, and Switzerland are examined using the comparative historical method in order to determine what drives social unrest in multi-ethnic states in some cases rather than others. The analysis of four independent variables of economic disparity, foreign intervention, religious presence in government, and cultural distinctness show that the true drivers of social unrest are much more complex than purely sectarian divides. Since these variables vary in degree of relevance and strength to each case, it can be concluded that the true drivers of social unrest are highly interwoven and complex, with no one variable being the sole spark of outbreaks of unrest. The final conclusion is that foreign intervention and economic disparities play a significant role in spurring violence, though cultural distinctness and religious presence in government also have a hand in contributing to conditions necessary for unrest.

## Introduction

In July of 1995, Bosnia, known as a melting pot for Catholics, Christians, Jews, and Muslims, was shaken when Bosnian Serb forces laid siege to Srebrenica, killing more than 8,000 Bosniak men and boys, and expelling another 20,000 civilians from the area. It was this massacre that is credited with the inception of the term “ethnic cleansing”, and would make the United Nations criminal tribunal indict over twenty prominent Serb leaders and officers for their involvement in crimes against humanity. Srebrenica was the worst episode of mass murder in Europe since World War II and was a genocide rooted in ethno-nationalism and sectarian divides. This event shocked Europe and highlighted the dangers of such rampant ethno-nationalism - something that was seen in states all over the world. Through centuries of global empires conquering new territories and collapsing, certain regions and countries have observed groups of people of different ethnic and religious ties living within the same borders. While some have been able to flourish, other states have had to grapple with social unrest and violence stemming from a range of different factors, but mainly pertaining to their ethnic and religious differences. Social unrest is a broad term that can encompass anything from widespread protest to state

dissolution due to social dissatisfaction. Instances of social unrest exist worldwide at varying levels, thus the question explored in this paper is what causes social unrest in multi-ethnic states, and will make conclusions based on the analysis of multiple different variables.

Social unity with multi-ethnic states should be regarded as a delicate balance between sects so that no one group of people has more social, economic, or political power over another. Looking at conflicts that have occurred in the 20th century and still occur today such as civil wars, ethnic strife, and political revolutions, it is increasingly important to dissect what triggers these violent events. Ethnic and religious ties are often associated with being the biggest drivers of social unrest, particularly when looking at regions such as the Middle East or the Sahel region of Africa. While ethnic and religious associations are crucial factors for examination, there exist a number of other variables for consideration. A lack of understanding on these drivers, especially in the context of foreign policy, could continue to lead to extreme cases of social unrest whether that be civil war, state dissolution, or escalations to regional violence. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to analyze and better comprehend the nature of social unrest and what factors drive its outbreaks. This paper will look at three multi-ethnic states from different regions - the former Yugoslavia, Lebanon, and Switzerland. Studying different regions will allow my paper to provide global insights to ethnic and religious violence.

The first section of this paper will explore the literature on markers of social unrest as well as the role of religion and ethnicity in state conflict that have been identified thus far. The second section will illustrate the methodology used in the case studies as well as contribute the hypothesis that will be considered within the paper. The third section will be a case study of Yugoslavia, the former state in the Balkan region of Europe formerly comprising Serbia, Bosnia, Croatia, Slovenia, Montenegro, and Macedonia. Yugoslavia was central to a number of ethnic and religious conflicts throughout the 20th century, including its dissolution in the 1990s. The fourth section will examine the case of Lebanon which has been identified as a prime example of a sectarian state, and is the location of several episodes of ethnic and religious violence both internally and as it has related to other conflicts in the Levant region of the Middle East. Lebanon has a history of colonialism, has been targeted by international involvement throughout its violent conflicts, and has a high degree of religious involvement in government which makes it a valuable case in studying the role of religion and ethnicity in social unrest. The fifth section will examine the third and final case of Switzerland. Unlike the situations in the former Yugoslavia and Lebanon, Switzerland has not been marred by continuous social unrest. Though cases of unrest and conflict have been observed in the history of the country, particularly during its formative eras, this violence has stemmed primarily from linguistic differences, with some major conflicts and tensions arising from religious alliances. As has been

seen in the historical background of the nation, the strength of the federation and various constitutional changes as well as fluctuation of the centralization of the state have had impacts on the levels of social unrest. The sixth section will provide an analysis and comparison of the three cases to highlight their similarities and differences as well as examine which variables have greater impacts on the development of social unrest. The seventh and final section will be a final discussion of findings and offer final thoughts and recommendations for further research on the subject. Through a qualitative analysis this paper seeks to offer a perspective for understanding the complexities of social unrest in multi-ethnic states.

## Literature Review

The literature on social unrest asserts that it has differences dependent on time period and region of study, though there are certain markers that are key to understanding how social unrest develops. The very definition of social unrest varies and changes depending on the social context and political factors of where it is being studied as well as time period. Aleksandar Jovanovic and Ortwin Renn begin by defining social unrest as “unconventional political participation” which includes acts such as boycotts, sit-ins, traffic blockades, and strikes (Jovanovic and Renn 2014, 126). This definition, however, is fluid, and its boundaries are demarcated by the political system of a country. Though most sociological studies dealing with social unrest explain the term using their indicators of

measurement, Jovanovic and Renn offer an adequate definition as a basis of understanding, which is that social unrest is “an expression of collective dissatisfaction with the political system and manifests itself in unconventional forms of protest behavior” (Jovanovic and Renn 2014, 126). Social unrest can also be thought of as an escalator, wherein the kinds of actions become increasingly violent with higher degrees of social unrest. The lowest step on the escalator of social unrest would be the communication of dissatisfaction wherein people do not feel that their physical and social well being goals are being met (Ormel et al 1999). If this is the case and people feel dissatisfied with their political or economic decision makers, they tend to express this dissatisfaction in public arenas (Renn and Zwick 2008). The next step on the escalator would be organization. For this to occur, there must exist two conditions - the first being a large number of people who share the same feeling of dissatisfaction, and the second being these individuals having a way to communicate with each other in order to mobilize (Jovanovic and Renn 2014, 127). The size of the dissatisfied group also has its own considerations, as Mancur Olson argues, it can neither be too large nor too small. Too small of a group would not be visible in the political arena and potential members might be discouraged from joining if they will not reap any benefits. Too large and each individual will not have any incentives to join as they would only be adding marginal benefit to the group’s success (Olson 2004). The third step in the escalator of social unrest is mobilization.

Once organized groups reach an optimal size, they might use their momentum to influence policy decisions through legal and conventional means, these being dependent on what is legal and conventional in that specific country. If organized groups are not able to rely on conventional forms due to a lack of resources, ranging from money and power to social solidarity, then highly motivated groups may turn to unconventional forms of protest. The availability of channels of communication and resources are crucial to differentiating conventional and unconventional forms of protest (Jovanovic and Renn 2014, 128). The final step is actions of political violence. Though most protest organizations will attempt to distance themselves from violence, some tolerate it as a means of promoting their cause. If this is the case, most often it is done through accusations that the other side is committing civil rights violations or exploiting members of the other population for their benefit. Most often, cases like this are linked with ethnic or religious differences to strengthen the willingness to use violence (Jovanovic and Renn 2014, 129). These facets of social unrest are important to consider when evaluating cases of violence in multi-ethnic states because they show how unrest can escalate from dissatisfaction to widespread conflict, as well as establishing the social organization that is necessary for such events to occur. Further, by thinking of social unrest as an escalator, Jovanovic and Renn allow for a visual representation of how social unrest progresses, and the necessary conditions that allow groups to reach the final step of political violence.

The purpose of my thesis is to evaluate the role of religion and ethnicity in social unrest in multi-ethnic states, evaluating countries from different regions in order to offer a global perspective. The existing literature on ethnic and religious violence posits a number of factors which influence social unrest including economic inequality, historical foreign intervention and colonialism, religiosity in government, and the cultural distinctness of each ethnic group. Each of these variables has different complexities which make them hard to quantify. These variables are also dependent on the time period and the social and historical context of each state. Foreign intervention, for example, can range from empirical rule to foreign aid and assistance during times of conflict depending on which era is being studied. The definition of social unrest in itself is entirely dependent on social and historical considerations of a country and its political climate. All of these variables offer similar levels of complexity which make them impractical to quantify for the purpose of a comparative study.

### *Ethnicity in Conflict*

There are many instances across the globe wherein social unrest can be linked to ethnic and religious differences. Religion and ethnicity are key facets to the identity of a country and its people. Hutchinson and Smith identify six features of ethnicity: a common proper name, a myth of a common ancestry, shared historical memories, one or more elements of common culture, a link to a homeland either in a physical or symbolic sense,

and a sense of solidarity (Hutchinson and Smith 1996). They also offer an “instrumentalist” definition of ethnicity which says that “ethnicity is socially constructed and people have the ability to cut and mix from a variety of ethnic heritages and culture to form their own individual or group identities” (Hutchinson and Smith 1996). This theory concerns itself with the role of ethnicity in the mediation of social relations and the negotiation of primarily political and economic resources (Jones 1997). The instrumentalist view also contrasts the “primordialist” view of ethnicity within sociology which views ethnic differences as “ancestral, deep, and irreconcilable and therefore invariably salient” (Esteban et al 2012). While the two perspectives have differing nuances to how ethnic identities interact in conflict, there are some shared ideas. Both recognize that the exclusion of ethnic groups is easier when a group or groups are geographically concentrated, and that ethnic conflict could be exacerbated by resentments and hatred that are either ancestral or recently developing (Esteban et al 2012). Further, both of these perspectives assert that it is harder to come to democratic agreements in ethnically divided societies, and once made, agreements are fragile, meaning that the government will “supply fewer goods and services and redistribute less, and society will face recurrent violent conflict” (Esteban et al 2012). Therefore ethnicity, like religion, while not inherently conflictual, has certain psychological properties that have the potential to lead to violence.

Ethnic divisions create room for resource competition and the inequitable distribution of resources within a society. Michael Hechter suggests that exploitation is central to ethnic conflicts wherein the core group benefits at the expense of another. This can lead to social unrest and has the power to escalate to civil war (Taras and Ganguly 2002, 18). Though some literature argues that ethnicity could be removed from this question and an argument instead be made for different groups competing for resources and power, doing so would ignore the role that ethnicity plays in creating strong community ties and its ability to be used as a motivator to gain political and social benefits (Kaufman 2013, 91). Ethnicity can not go ignored as a powerful tool that can be harnessed or manipulated in social unrest in multi-ethnic states.

Ethnic conflict can be viewed as cultural incompatibility of groups combined with a rise in the awareness of one's identity in relation to another (Sotiropoulou 2002, 2). In conflicts such as these, at least one of the groups tends to present its goals in ethnic terms. This is done, for example, by claiming that the reason its group does not have the same rights as another is its distinct ethnic identity and that it has the lack of opportunity to express, preserve, and develop it further (Sotiropoulou 2002, 2). Ethnic identity, then, can also be used as an incendiary target for political elites to pursue their own territorial, political, or economic agendas. In doing so, ethnicity becomes politicized and a means of spurring individuals towards mobilization in conflict.

*Religion in Conflict*

Religion is a very broad term that can take many different shapes, and there exists no true universal definition of it. It can be better understood, however, as a conceptual and moral framework for understanding and ordering lives and communities (Skidmore 2007, 4). Existing literature posits two main approaches to understanding religion: the “substantive” approach and the “functional” approach. The substantive approach concerns itself with the content of a given religion such as key scriptures, theologies, bodies of doctrine, and any of the values and beliefs enshrined within these features. Even when these elements are easily identifiable, as in some cases they are not, it is not sufficient to only focus on them as one would still not be able to fully grasp the power of religion. This is why literature on the subject says that the substantive approach must be considered in tandem with the functional approach which looks at what religion does to people, such as “providing them with sources of identity, morality, law and order, or by linking them together into communities” (Silvestri and Fba 2015, 5). Ernest Gellner, in analysing religious fundamentalism, argues that it is not doctrine that ultimately matters, rather it is the loyalty to procedure, ritual, and celebration of community, that illuminates how it affects individual or group behaviors (Gellner 1992, 3). Here one can see the similarities between religion and ethnicity - both can provide a source of identity and community for individuals, and political power and resources become intertwined with these identities.

The role that religion plays in conflict is a topic much covered by literature. Anthropologists tend to examine how religion is used to create differences among groups in society. Similarly, political scientists argue that because it creates distinct in-groups and out-groups, religion can lead to structural violence (Silvestri and Fba 2015, 16). Johan Galtung's ideas of peace define structural violence as violence without a clear subject-object relation, for example, while one person being starved would constitute personal violence, famine would be considered structural violence (Galtung 1969, 171). With this framework for violence in mind, Galtung argues that religion is often the source of "cultural violence", which is used to warrant other forms of violence. Further, he argues that components such as religion, language, ideology, and ethnicity often become intertwined in shaping ways of thinking, and that this thinking then can lead to discrimination, ostracism, and can escalate to physical violence (Silvestri and Fba 2015, 16). Indian psychoanalyst Sundhir Kakar argues that against the background of competition for political power among ethnic groups and religious leaders, violence becomes increasingly morally and religiously sanctioned (Kakar 1996). These studies are valuable in their connecting religion to violence and showing the kinds of divisions that religion is capable of creating. These studies also evaluate the role of power and resource competition in religious disputes. Once again, it can be seen how religion, like ethnicity, can be used as a tool for division and manipulation for the advancement of political or financial power.

Further examining Johan Galtung's ideas of positive and negative peace, he distinguishes negative peace as the absence of personal or direct violence; which includes assault, riots, terrorism, and war; and positive peace as the absence of structural or indirect violence which includes poverty, discrimination, Apartheid, or social injustice (Grewal 2003, 3). Galtung asserts that violence exists because of structure, and actors merely carry out this violence. He also believes that peace research should not deal with reducing violence at the direct or indirect level, rather we should seek to understand the conditions necessary for the prevention of violence (Galtung 1996). He uses his theory of peace to focus on factors that can make religions prone to promoting violence, then identifies factors that can potentially allow religions to maintain peace. Galtung argues that to understand the potential for peace that religions have, one can look to what extent religions are prone to promoting or rejecting direct and structural violence (Galtung 2014).

### *Drivers of Social Unrest*

Scholars that seek to explain drivers of social unrest and conflict often examine the role of foreign military intervention. An EU report from 2017 looked at the causes of conflict in the Middle East and North Africa region and argued that foreign interventions polarized the region among religious lines, with devastating consequences for the region (Matthiesen et al 2017). Further, data from the global International Military Intervention showed that in the case of Lebanon, external interventions played a significant role

in the onset and intensification of the civil war (Abu-Bader and Ianchovichina 2019). Studies of foreign intervention produce strong evidence that “external interventions tend to lengthen civil conflict”, regardless of the kind of involvement that they are (Elbadawi and Sambanis 2000). A study from Albornoz and Hauk found that interventions from global powers such as the United States are sizable drivers of domestic conflict (Albornoz and Hauk 2014). James Fearon and David Laitin write that, in attempts to galvanize support and create hostility against rival groups, group leaders will seek to create strong ethnic identities among their followers (Jesse and Williams 2011, 35). Another scholar echoes this sentiment, arguing that ethnic conflicts are not necessarily always about ethnicity, rather this becomes “a convenient mechanism to organize and mobilize people into homogenous conflict groups willing to fight each other for resources that are at best indirectly linked to their ethnic identity” (Wolf 2006, 65).

Many studies have explored the link between ethno-religious diversity and social conflict, with some studies asserting that ethnic cleavages can increase the risk of conflict and the duration of civil wars (Ellingsen 2000; Cederman and Girardin 2007). Montalvo and Reynal-Querol argue that there is less violence in highly homogenous and highly heterogeneous societies, and there tends to be more conflict in societies that have a large ethnic minority living in close proximity to an ethnic majority (Montalvo and Reynal-Querol 2005). This idea can also be examined through the

geographical distribution theory, which posits that “violence arises due to the structure of boundaries between groups rather than as a result of inherent conflicts between the groups themselves” (Rutherford et al 2014, 2). Further, this study of geographical boundaries in relation to violence between groups says that physical boundaries such as lakes or mountain ranges are crucial to establishing boundaries of local autonomy that can prevent the violations of cultural norms that cause friction between groups (Rutherford et al 2014, 2). Rutherford’s study concluded that in most cases, the natural geography of populations can lead to a low level of violence, and that additional boundaries are not necessary (Rutherford et al 2014, 8). Geographic boundaries have the potential to act as strong forms of conflict mitigation and allow a multi-ethnic state to have higher levels of peace and coexistence.

### *Dependent Variable*

The dependent variable in this study will be defined as social unrest. The definition of social unrest changes depending on location, time period, and socio-political context, but can take on many forms such as boycotts, strikes, and demonstrations, and can lead to more violent forms such as civil war or state dissolution. Social unrest can be better understood as an expression of collective dissatisfaction with the political system (Jovanovic and Renn 2014). With this in mind, social unrest can be seen as a spectrum ranging from peaceful demonstrations of dissatisfaction to violent and large-scale disruptions. A country’s place on this spectrum should be

regarded as fluid, being changed depending on the time period that is being studied. As far as the three cases, Yugoslavia and Lebanon would find themselves on the violent end of the spectrum, with state dissolution and civil war coming as the result of social unrest in these countries, respectively. Because it was able to maintain its status as a single country post-war, Lebanon would fall below Yugoslavia on the spectrum.

Switzerland would fall on the other end of the spectrum due to its relative lack of social unrest. Because more than one time period will be analyzed in this study, the idea of social unrest as a spectrum is meant to offer a visual representation of the flexible definition of social unrest, rather than be a rigid marker of a country's position on it. In this paper, each case study will offer the reader a synthesized history of the country with relevance to the topic, and an overview of each major ethnic and religious sect will be thoroughly explained. Following this, each independent variable will be examined for each case and discussed within its relationship to the dependent variable of social unrest.

### *Independent Variables*

Literature exploring the drivers of social unrest offers an extensive list of possible motivators, and in order to achieve an in-depth and complex analysis, this thesis will focus on the most variables which are referenced. These are the economic inequalities of a country, historic foreign intervention and/or colonialism, religious strength and presence in government, and the cultural distinctness of each group.

The first variable is that of economic inequality of a country amongst different groups of people. A global study by Frances Stewart that builds on the work of other researchers found that “when cultural differences coincide with economic and political differences between groups, this can cause deep resentment that may in turn lead to violent struggles” (Stewart 2008). In societies with high levels of economic disparity, those without a high concentration of wealth are far more likely to express their grievances in the political area through other channels which contribute to social unrest (Ippolito and Cicatiello 2019, 366). In an empirical analysis of Italy and its financial crisis in 2008, it was concluded that political stability is negatively associated with income inequality, signifying that where the distribution of income is higher, there is less political stability (Ippolito and Cicatiello 2019, 377). Furthermore, studies suggest that rising levels of inequality are potentially harmful to democracies because it foments social conflict (Sen and Foster 1997, 1). For the purpose of this study, economic inequalities will be looked at in terms of whether or not they existed between the different ethnic groups in each case.

The second variable to be examined will be historical foreign intervention and colonialism. For this study it will be distinguished in each case whether or not the country had a colonial history and how foreign intervention took root or not in each case. Foreign intervention does not only refer to direct military involvement - it can come in the form of military aid, economic assistance or sanctions, and can favor the government or the

opposition. Intervening with the foreign affairs of another state comes with many potential costs and risks for all parties involved. One of these risks may include the domestic conflict becoming bloodier and spread out wider, which could paradoxically bring in the involvement of more nations to intervene (Pearson 1979, 259). Additionally, foreign powers may take advantage of existing or growing domestic conflict for their own benefit. In *The New Arab Wars: Uprisings and Anarchy in the Middle East*, author Mark Lynch argues that regional powers took advantage of the Arab Spring, a time of protests and uprisings across the Middle East, in order to increase their own influence in the region (Lynch 2016). In these case studies, the kinds of foreign intervention that appeared, if any, will be closely examined to see how they exacerbated social unrest by creating advantages over one sect or the other.

The third independent variable to be studied is religious strength and presence in government. There is much debate in democratic societies about the role that religion should play in regards to the conduct of citizens, and a large part of the debate is about the relations between church and state (Audi 2020). Though a majority of countries support religious freedom within their constitutions, many support open hostility or administrative sanctions to certain groups (Grim and Finke 2014). These displays of hostility are not limited to autocratic regimes or countries that boast religious freedom. Germany, for example, guarantees religious freedom in three different constitutional articles, but discrimination and restrictions

remain a large issue for the country (Grim 2004). Religion in government can also lead to religious favoritism, which is defined as subsidies, privileges, or favorable sanctions given to a select religion or group of religions, and these can lead to further divides among religious groups (Grim and Finke 2014). The case studies in this paper have varying levels of religious presence in government, and these levels have changed over time with different reforms. For those cases that have been under imperial rule for parts of history, this paper will also describe the kinds of political reforms brought on by their respective empires.

The fourth independent variable is that of cultural distinctness. Cultural distinctness plays a significant role in how groups interact with each other, as well as how different sects understand the other. Studies having to do with political conflict and collective action have often identified culture as a relevant variable, and cultural characteristics can sometimes enhance the likelihood of intercultural conflicts to occur because they encourage cross cultural misunderstandings (Akkus et al 2019). A study in Iraq found that people who spent time in ethnically mixed places were more likely to develop interethnic friendships and became more tolerant of people of other ethnic groups (Rydgren et al 2013). For the purpose of this study, this variable will be used in a way that compares elements of culture - food, language, tradition - among the different ethno-religious groups of each case as a way to study its impacts on social unrest and violence among groups.

These selected variables are important to study within the framework of this research because they offer a broad range of considerations on social unrest in multi-ethnic states. Each one is discussed in existing literature as markers of social unrest, particularly in cases of multi-ethnic states.

Economic inequality can align with ethnic divisions which can in turn intensify perceptions of marginalization and injustice among disadvantaged groups. Foreign intervention can destabilize existing social balances, either by empowering specific factions or by disrupting local power dynamics. The incorporation of religion into state government may institutionalize exclusion, particularly when it privileges the beliefs of a dominant group over those of minority communities. Additionally, cultural distinctness - manifested through differences in language, traditions, and historical narratives - offers a unique perspective on national social cohesion and how it ties to social unrest. These factors interact to shape the socio-political dynamics that underpin unrest in ethnically diverse societies.

The hypothesis that this thesis plans to test is based on supporting relationships that exist within the literature of social unrest, as there is a limited scope of research and case studies. The hypothesis that this paper seeks to address is that high levels of foreign intervention are conducive to social unrest in multi-ethnic states. Though the absence of empirical analysis will limit my ability to highlight statistically significant relationships between the dependent and independent variables, through a

qualitative analysis, I hope to support the existence of causative relationships between them.

## Methodology

The comparative historical method with three different cases in consideration will be used to guide and analyze my research on social unrest in multi-ethnic states. The comparative historical method is a basic method of sociological research that focuses on “cross-societal, institutional, or macro societal aspects of societies and social analysis” (Eisenstadt 1968, 423). This method combines comparison and historical analysis in order to understand large scale outcomes and causal relationships across cases over time. Comparative historical analysis often concerns itself with complex, multifaceted questions that may identify specific reforms or institutional changes on a macro level (Ferragina 2021). With this method of analysis, researchers focus on macro-level causal factors such as political and economic factors of institutional arrangements such as social policies (Ferragina 2021). Comparative historical analysis also seeks to develop a deep understanding of its cases in order to fully understand a hypothesis. While there are some limitations with this approach such as the fact that it does not propose a systematic way to approach problems and that it is dependent on secondary sources rather than archival material, for the purpose of this study, this approach is best

suited for taking apart and analyzing this complex question of the development of social unrest.

The varying complexities of the variables as well as multiple considerations of context for each case also make this the optimal research method. Theda Skocpol writes of this method, that it “is not committed to any single theory or technique - and thus it is splendidly open to synergy and innovation in both areas (Skocpol 1979, 419). The comparative historical method allows for a flexibility in attributing multiple variables across cases, and will allow my research to explore the similarities and differences of each case with more depth than a statistical method would allow, and without having to simplify any variables through quantifying them. Furthermore, a single case study approach, while it would allow for an extensive understanding of one instance of social unrest in a multi-ethnic state, would not singularly be sufficient in understanding the different drivers of social unrest and ethno-religious violence in global regions. Arend Lijphart writes of the comparative method, contrasting it with the statistical method of research, that, “the comparative method should be resorted to when the number of cases available for analysis is so small that cross-tabulating them further in order to establish credible controls is not feasible” (Lijphart 1971, 684). Additionally, he says that when the cases are national political systems, which is a substantial part of this thesis as it relates to social unrest, the number of cases is restricted so that the comparative method must be used (Lijphart 1971, 685). For the scope of

this thesis, the comparative method is more beneficial than statistical or experimental methods in generating, exploring, and testing hypotheses.

Through the use of multiple cases, the comparative method will offer a broader understanding of the influences that the independent variables have over the dependent variable in this study. The comparative method also has the benefit of being able to closely examine the intricacies of each independent variable, which quantifying them for a statistical method would not. Despite these benefits, there are certain shortcomings with this method over a quantitative one. The principal shortcoming with the comparative historical method can be defined simply as having many variables tested over a small number of cases (Lijphart 1971, 685). Having many variables to handle would perhaps prove more difficult to determine what the driving factors of the dependent variable are. Lijphart offers four recommendations for limiting this deficiency, these being to increase the number of cases, combine variables that may offer a similar underlying characteristic, focusing the study on comparable cases, and focusing on key variables (Lijphart 1971, 686-690). Utilizing these tactics increases the strength of the comparative historical method. Three cases of multi-ethnic states will be utilized via the comparative historical method, two of which have seen high levels of social unrest, and one which has had very low levels of social unrest despite its status as a multi-ethnic state. I seek to address the aforementioned weaknesses with the comparative method through the inclusion of multiple, comparable cases, and through studying only key

variables which existing literature posits as potential drivers of social unrest. My research will examine nations of three distinct regions, with the hope of being able to identify universally applicable conclusions and findings to the drivers of social unrest. Edward A. Freeman was highly enthusiastic of the comparative method, saying that it could lead to the conceptualization of “analogies...between the political institutions of times and countries most remote from one another”. In his view, comparative methods could open up a world wherein geographically and culturally dissimilar countries would find their place in relation to each other (Freeman 1873, 19, 302). By utilizing three countries of distinct regions, I intend to acknowledge their differences whilst also finding similarities and patterns that are evidence of causality.

### *Case Studies*

Three case studies will be examined for this thesis. The first case will be of the former country of Yugoslavia. This multi ethnic and religious country had one of the fastest growing socialist economies in the post World War II era, and during the 1950's and 60's was one of the fastest growing European countries. This country is a prime example of how foreign intervention influenced state conflict, as “local relationships between these groups were often economically symbiotic, not always cordial, but not necessarily hostile unless poisoned by the influence of imperial masters” (Hammel et al 2010, 35). Yugoslavia saw many different conflicts, but most notably, the Yugoslav Wars, which were many separate instances of violent,

bloody ethnic conflicts beginning in the 1980's, and inevitably leading to the dissolution of the state into six separate countries in 1991. The conflicts of the late 20th century in Yugoslavia are often cited as the deadliest armed conflicts in Europe's history after World War II, and the stories from this country can highlight how ethnicity and religion are intertwined in social conflict.

The second case to look at will be that of Lebanon. Lebanon has been labelled as a sectarian state which has long seen advantages for certain sects over others (Hirst, 2010). The development of social unrest and sectarianism in Lebanon can be looked at through the lens of its colonial history as well as political reforms that took place under Ottoman Empire rule. The main conflict in recent decades of Lebanese history is its sixteen year long civil war which damaged its infrastructure and displaced two thirds of the population (Mallo 2019, 8). Regional conflicts have also led to many foreign interventions onto Lebanese soil from Syria, as well as resulting from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict south of Lebanon. Sectarianism is seen as deep rooted in this country, but looking at its history can paint a picture of foreign interests influencing the present day state of the country.

The third case will be the state of Switzerland. This country, despite being ethnically and religiously very mixed, has experienced very low levels of social unrest and violent conflict. While disparities in the country do exist, the country takes a strong stance against the inclusion of religion in

government, and at the federal level, there is not even an administrative office that concerns itself with religious affairs. Further, political parties seek to keep themselves neutral of any religion, and there is no state religion (Pahud de Mortanges 2015). By examining the historical context of Switzerland and its reforms comparative to Yugoslavia and Lebanon, this paper seeks to highlight the differences among variables of economic inequality, foreign intervention, presence of religion in government, and cultural distinctness of sects. By examining these variables, I hope to gain and provide insight into the driving forces of social unrest in multi ethnic states from different regions.

Each of these cases were picked following a process of research on a multitude of multi-ethnic states. Cases were examined based on their geographical diversity, variance in their outcomes and levels of social unrest, complexity of the situation, and the availability of reliable data. Ultimately, with this criteria in mind, the three cases Yugoslavia, Lebanon, and Switzerland were chosen based on their relevance to the research objectives of this paper and the diverse perspective they can offer current and future research. For example, Nigeria, a case that was strongly considered, is an extremely complex state in terms of its ethnic and religious status, and the factors that have led to levels of social unrest. Such a case might have been too complex in nature for the purpose of this research question, combined with the fact that Nigeria's unrest is still unfolding, making it more difficult to analyze as a case that has completed a

cycle of conflict and resolution or collapse. Therefore, the cases I selected were ones that fit within the scope of this research and while still complex, are historically bounded. Yugoslavia presents a compelling case for this study due to its clearly defined trajectory from a multi-ethnic federation to complete state disintegration driven by sectarian divides. Unlike ongoing conflicts such as those in Nigeria, the Yugoslav case offers a historically bound case that allows for a comprehensive analysis of how institutional arrangements, identity politics, and external pressures all interact to trigger state collapse. Its phases of unrest and detailed documentation offer a structured framework for comparison with other multi-ethnic states facing internal divisions, such as Lebanon.

Lebanon was called, by historian David Hirst, “the sectarian state par excellence” (Hirst 2010, 2). There has been long standing dissonance between the Muslim and Christian sects in this country, which eventually escalated to all out civil war. The very structure of the Lebanese government and society makes it a perfect case in studies of social unrest along ethnic and religious lines. While there were a few states in consideration for the negative case including Canada, Switzerland was ultimately chosen for this role. This is a state that is highly heterogeneous, and though it has seen some levels of conflict between its sects, I found it compelling to evaluate factors that have allowed Switzerland to flourish while maintaining its status as a multi-ethnic state. While the findings between the cases are not broadly generalizable, they offer valuable

insights into the dynamics that are necessary for social unrest. While Canada is often cited as a successful multi-ethnic and multicultural state, it is less suited as a control case for this study due to its colonial settler foundations and ongoing tensions with Indigenous populations and Quebecois nationalism. These dynamics introduce unique historical and structural variables that are not easily comparable to the post-colonial or post-imperial contexts of Lebanon and Yugoslavia. In contrast, Switzerland offers a more directly relevant example of a long-standing, consociational democracy that has successfully managed linguistic, religious, and regional diversity within a unified and stable political framework, making it a more appropriate counterpoint in this comparative analysis.

Together, the three cases of Yugoslavia, Lebanon, and Switzerland offer variations in key contextual factors, and the availability of rich, empirical data. They offer a balanced combination of diversity and comparability in their details while still allowing for important comparisons. These cases were chosen for their shared characteristics of having significant ethnic diversity whilst differing in their historical trajectories, from social disintegration to long term stability.

### *Data Collection*

Data collection and research within the comparative historical analysis method relies predominantly on gathering information from secondary sources, and from those that are experts in their specialized field. Data was collected through extensive reviews of scholarly literature

including peer-reviewed journals, books, and reputable online databases that address the issues of ethnic conflict, state stability, and social movements. Additionally, the research incorporated insights from subject-matter experts whose work provided critical perspectives on the historical and socio-political dynamics influencing unrest in diverse societies. This multi-sourced approach ensured a rigorous and contextually grounded foundation for the comparative analysis.

The initial phases of research on social unrest in multi-ethnic states involved an expansive review of scholarly literature in order to survey a broad range of theoretical perspectives and historical cases. This wide ranging approach was essential for identifying the most prominent variables attributed to social unrest such as political exclusion, economic inequality, and foreign influences. As the research progressed, the focus was narrowed to the most consistently cited and empirically supported factors. Additionally, insights from experts in the field were integrated to further refine the analytical framework and ensure a nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics at play.

## Yugoslavia: A Brief History

Before examining the dynamics of social unrest in Yugoslavia, this section outlines key historical foundations of the state. Yugoslavia's history gives insight into the historical context and ethnic and religious factors that shaped its trajectory, and allows for insight into the factors that contributed

to its instability. Understanding the origins of the four variables requires attention to the state's existence under the Ottoman and Habsburg empires, state formation in the 19th century, and 20th century conflicts leading up to state dissolution. The following section outlines the key historical events and structural characteristics of the Yugoslav state, offering a framework through which subsequent periods of unrest can be more clearly understood.

Prior to the 20th century, the area of the Balkan region from Greece to Bosnia including Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, and all the present day countries in between was under the rule of the Ottoman Empire, and was from the 14th century onwards. Modern day Croatia was ruled by the Habsburg Empire, alternatively known as the Austro-Hungarian Empire. For the duration of its 500 year long rule, the Ottoman Empire was constantly met with resistance, with many pivotal uprisings taking place in the 1800s, primarily from Serbians. Serbian revolutions in 1804 led to their collaboration with Russia on the basis of both adhering to the Eastern Orthodox religion, and after a series of smaller successes in 1807, for the first time in history the Russians fought side by side with Serbians against the Ottoman Turks. Additionally in 1807, the first official agent of the Russian Tsar arrived in Belgrade to prove that Russia would extend its "paternal care" to Serbia (Miller 1966, 67). Despite this, when an armistice occurred in the Russo-Turkish war, Russia abandoned their protection of Serbia and only resumed their watchful eye over the state when they saw it

as a means of keeping their rival, the Austro-Hungarian empire, in check (Miller 1966, 68). Ongoing tensions between the Ottoman Turks and Serbs saw a short pause in 1815 when the Turks allowed Serbs to collect taxes, gave them a share in the administration of justice, and created a national senate to enforce these new rights (Miller 1966, 70). Going forward about twelve years, the Treaty of Adrianople was signed as a final peace treaty between the Ottoman Empire and Imperial Russia, with the document containing an affirmation of Serbia's autonomy. This affirmation came with a formal stipulation that no Turks were to live in Serbia, Turkish estates in Serbia were to be sold, and the whole of Serbia's internal administration was entrusted to Prince Miloš (Miller 1966, 140-141).

On the other side of the Balkans, the Austro-Hungarian Habsburgs ruled over Croatia beginning from the 13th century. This was the furthest their reach in the Balkans until 1878 when the Habsburgs added Bosnia, who had just recently freed themselves from the Turks, to their empire, and in 1908, the Habsburgs formally annexed Bosnia (Kaplan 2005, 26). The assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand of the Habsburg empire by Gavrillo Princip, a Serb from Bosnia, set off the first World War, and it was after its conclusion that the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was created at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. The creation of this Kingdom was an attempt to unite similar ethnic groups following the defeat of the German-Austrian alliance (Hammel et al 2010, 1099). Led by dictator King Alexander Karadjordjevic, the country's unity became a main priority,

with King Alexander wanting to foster a Yugoslav nationalism in order to overcome any internal divides (Calic 2019, 105). This was enforced through strict royal decrees such as limiting freedom of expression and freedom of association (Nielsen 2014, 77). Any programs or publications during this period were banned from including any narratives that could be seen as one-sided nationalism. The monarch became increasingly problematic, especially as he gave himself more and more power, and in 1934 he was assassinated on the streets of Marseille, France, by a man who was part of a Macedonian separatist group (Calic 2019, 106). The Great Depression that reached southeast Europe in the mid-1930s financially devastated The Kingdom of Yugoslavia because international grain prices decreased, and the Yugoslav economy plunged as its foreign trade was primarily based on corn and wheat exports (Pertot 1970). After a period of financial depression, Prime Minister Milan Stojadinovic, elected in 1935, used his financial expertise to create a New Economic policy which implemented subsidy programs to jumpstart the economy (Calic 2019, 109). Stojadinovic's financial reforms were modernist, as he adopted practices and policies from the United States and western European powers as models for the Yugoslav economy he sought to create. Despite his efforts to foster a positive image of Yugoslavia on an international stage, social and economic issues persisted. It was against the backdrop of dictatorship and depression that it became increasingly plausible for the citizens of Yugoslavia to attribute a failing economy to the obvious religious difference between them (Calic

2019, 110). Thus, pressing social problems such as low incomes, a heavy tax burden, and fears of being culturally overridden were essentially recycled into the alleged differences between Croats and Serbians.

Following the second world war, the Socialist Federalist Republic of Yugoslavia was created in 1945 after Josip Broz Tito and his partisans liberated Yugoslavia from Nazi Germany's rule. Tito also sought to distance Yugoslavia from Soviet influence, and as a result, President Truman offered military and economic assistance to Tito with the idea that it would further divide Yugoslavia from the Soviet Bloc (Lees 1997). There was great economic success in the 1950s due to an enormous increase of productivity, and shifting resources from the agrarian to the industrial sectors (Calic 2019, 183). Yugoslavia under Tito was a balancing act of foreign policy, with the East and the West wanting to gain Yugoslavia's favor during the Cold War. Tito's regime gained economic assistance from both - America in 1950 and the Soviet Union in 1954 after Stalin's death (Kuljic 2005, 342). This provides insight to the strategic importance and attachment that both Eastern and Western powers saw in Yugoslavia.

The 1960s proved themselves to be a golden era for Yugoslavia in terms of culture and the growing notion of a Yugoslav national identity. The economy, however, was once again declining, and where Croats and Slovenes wanted to strengthen the economies of their republics over the national federation, Serbian centralists opposed this with the idea that the state should continue to focus on macroeconomic policy (Calic 2019, 214).

Because of their split views, the tensions of nationalism were felt on either side, with both viewing each other's outlook as dangerous to Yugoslavia's stability. Further, economic inequality between the republics turned into rich and poor republics spouting accusations at each other about why these inequalities existed (Calic 2019, 216). A new constitution in 1963 gave more rights to each republic, as well as gave the Serbian regions of Kosovo and Vojvodina autonomy. The constitution of 1963 emphasized the freewill of the republics and their right to self-determination, spurring Yugoslavia down a path towards decentralization (Calic 2019, 218).

The economic recession in the 1970s led to the constitution of 1974 which built upon the constitution of 1963's policies of decentralization. Greater decentralization heightened political tensions between the republics and reinforced the republic affiliation over a national Yugoslav identity (Calic 2019, 245). Despite growing social tensions, Tito remained a popular leader due to his charismatic demeanor and ability to communicate symbolically with the citizens of Yugoslavia. Thus, Tito's death in 1980 did not bode well for Yugoslavia, who had only been sliding further into social, political, and economic crisis through the 70s. Tito had not defined a successor, and political leadership in some republics did not see the purpose of encouraging the emergence of a new national figurehead (Calic 2019, 255). Serbian Slobodan Milosevic saw the growing tensions and violence between Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo as a means for stepping into greater power. As the President of Serbia elected in 1989, he voiced

opinions that both nationalist and communist Serbs agreed with, such as re-centralization and returning to a unified Yugoslav market (Calic 2019, 261). Primarily the Republic of Croatia and Slovenia vehemently opposed to centralization and no longer wanted to contribute to the Yugoslav state.

Sociopolitical tensions reached their breaking point in the 1990s. In the spring of 1990 less than 30% of Slovenes and less than 50% of Croats identified with the Yugoslav state, though 70% of Serbs did, and nine out of 10 Yugoslavs considered the relations between the republics to be very bad (Pantic 1991; Institut Drustvenih Nauka 1990, 147). Eastern Bosnia was especially contentious due to Serb and Croat nationals both claiming this land, as well as Muslims considering it the heart of their homeland. On July 2nd, 1990, the Slovenian and Croatian parliaments voted overwhelmingly in favor of their sovereignty, and prior to the vote had been building up their own police and military forces (Hockenos 2003, 84-85). In the spring of 1991, the Republic of Yugoslavia began making concrete preparations for war, and Yugoslavia no longer had a head of state, with any notions of a Yugoslav statehood also vanishing (Calic 2019, 290-291). Serbia's conflict with Slovenia was very short, as Belgrade's main concern was keeping Serbs together and Slovenia had a very homogenous state, but Serbia and Croatia saw violent clashes and mass killings between each other. On a national level, Germany and Austria supported the efforts of Croatia and Slovenia to be independent, while governments in London, Paris, and Washington wished for the unity of Yugoslavia (Calic 2019, 299).

Sarajevo, the capital Bosnia, was largely multi ethnic, and Serbian military forces occupied the city for 44 months, resulting in around 11,000 deaths (Calic 2019, 302). Ethnic cleansing during the Yugoslav Civil War took place in systematic ways, and some studies posit that homogenization was a main objective of war (Mazowiecki 1992). In total, Serb forces destroyed approximately 850 Muslim and Croatian occupied villages (Calic 2019, 304). Though the international community primarily lent themselves to developing a strategy of humanitarian relief, the Bosnian government received much support from the Islamic world. Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Malaysia, and Indonesia were primarily financial sponsors, and a radical group of about 5000 *mujahideen* fighters from Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Afghanistan joined Bosnian Muslim forces in fighting (Perica 2002, 169-170). After continued violence across the newly broken Yugoslavia, the last institutional remnant was dissolved in 2001. Today, where Yugoslavia once existed are seven states - Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Kosovo. The international criminal tribunal for the former Yugoslavia charged anyone with a hand in the worst crimes to The Hague, and the last of the 161 cases was closed in December of 2017 (Calic 2019, 319). The most extreme nationalism has been largely contained or diluted, and the seven states live in relative peace with each other, slowly rejoining a unified Europe.

The sects that will be examined in this case study are Orthodox Serbs, Catholic Croats, and Muslim Bosnians. All three of these groups have been long established in Yugoslavia and its present day countries. According to the 1991 census, Serbs made up 36% of the population, Croats made up 20% of the population, and Bosnians made up 9% of the population of Yugoslavia (Hammel et al 2010, 1100). During the Yugoslav Civil War, as well as historically, it is these three populations that have been in conflict, and have found support from key players of the same religious identities, such as the Vatican Church which frequently voiced its support for the Catholic Croats against their proximity to the Eastern Orthodox and Muslim worlds (Kaplan 2005, 22). In Yugoslavia, religion became synonymous with ethnicity, especially in the case of Bosnians, who could not list their identity as such on censuses, rather their identities were classified under the name “Muslim”. Because of the complexities of Yugoslav political philosophies regarding ethnicity, census taking was very sensitive work. There were five *narodi* or “constitutive ethnicities”, each one associated with one of the republics of Croatia, Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro, and Slovenia. Despite it being a republic, Bosnia did not have a constitutive ethnicity in the census (Hammel et al 2010, 1104). Though the censuses focused on ethnic classifications, additional census research highlights that nearly all Serbs are Eastern Orthodox by practice, Croats are ubiquitously Catholic, and Bosnians are virtually all Muslim (Dyker, 1972). These distinctions are

crucial to studying how religious and ethnic identity would have impacted social unrest.

### *Independent Variables*

The independent variables of economic inequality, foreign interventions, religious presence in government, and cultural distinctness will be examined in the following sections for the sects in Yugoslavia and how they contributed to social unrest. Political reforms from the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Empires will also be examined for a historical perspective of how they would have helped create an unstable society.

### *Cultural Distinctness*

While each of the three main sects of Yugoslavia- Orthodox Serbs, Catholic Croats, and Muslim Bosnians- observed three distinct religions with their own holidays and worship practices, the ethnic groups themselves had much in common culturally. Linguistically, the three ethnic groups share essentially the same language, with some dialectal differences or minor vocabulary differences which stem from religion. Thus, it is quite difficult to distinguish the ethnicity of Muslim Bosnians from Bosnian Serbs or Croats in the same area, for example, just by listening to their speech. Muslims, however, do use more words of Turkish/Arabic origin or phrases from the Quran, and the Orthodox and Catholic sects take from their own sacred texts (Hammel et al 2010, 1099). Besides this, dialectal differences throughout the Yugoslav region are geographically rather than politically or ethnically defined. One important distinction, however, is that Serbia and

Macedonia, because of their observance of Eastern Orthodoxy, use the Cyrillic alphabet, rather than the Latin alphabet used in Croatia and Bosnia. Writing, then, can be used as an indicator of a person's ethnic identity.

The 1960s is commonly thought of as Yugoslavia's golden era, especially in terms of pop culture and how it was shared between republics. The most popular music artists such as Lepa Brena from Bosnia, Djordje Balasevic from Serbia, and Josipa Lisca from Croatia were listened to across Yugoslavia, irrespective of ethnic or religious background. Comedy shows that had comedians from one ethnic identity impersonating people from another were laughed at across the country, and common literature was typically printed in both alphabets and read throughout the country (Milutinovic 2013, 8). Through promoting these aspects of arts, literature, and pop culture, there became a supra-national Yugoslav cultural layer (Milutinovic 2013, 9). Strong translation programs and verbal support from the state allowed this culture to become widely accepted. Furthermore, what made this culture so robust was that it opened up dialogue and understanding of different cultures without the risk of one ethnic identity dominating another due to the relative equality in size and resources.

Yugoslav culture remained strong through the 1960s and until state dissolution in 1991, when, along with the state, the supra-national cultural layer was dissolved. Throughout this cultural boom, as well as the long standing aspects of language, food, and historical experience, the single most pertinent distinction was that of religion. Religious diversity was

recognized by authorities as something that could destabilize the state for two main reasons. The first being that resource competition could exacerbate social tensions, and the second being that there was a strong link between religion and pre-Yugoslav identities, and political groups representing these groups could harness religion to undermine Yugoslav identity (Falina 2021). British expert Neil Forbes posited that if it were not originally for religion, there would be little basis for Serb-Croat hostility (Kaplan 2005, 25). Thus, when thinking of causes of social unrest in Yugoslavia, the difference in religion among otherwise linguistically and culturally similar groups allows us to see the cracks that led to conflict.

### *Economic Inequality*

The socialist state of Yugoslavia, much like the rest of Europe, entered an economic recession in the 1970s triggered by the oil crisis. Yugoslavia was faced with massive economic losses in production and sales, which was exacerbated by federal mismanagement, lack of planning and investment, and technological gaps (Calic 2019, 240). A disconnect between citizens' expectations of continued economic growth and prosperity and the reality of surging unemployment, inflation, and cost of living intensified the propensity toward social disintegration which was inherent to the Socialist Yugoslav system (Berend 1996, 222). While the recession affected every republic in Yugoslavia, structural issues of inequality arose, and by the mid 1970s, the Slovenian population was roughly seven times wealthier than the population of Kosovo. The structural and redistribution policies imposed by

the government were losing their credibility and “endangered not only economic but also social and political cohesion” (Cohen 1989; Calic 2019, 242).

Economic disparities were largely regional in pre-war Yugoslavia, resulting primarily from their differences in development. Regional differences were broken down in a 1987 report which affirmed that Slovenia, Serbia, and Croatia were more developed republics compared to Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, and Montenegro, primarily due to their per capita output (Yarashevich and Karneyva 2013). This divergence in economic roles created a major variation in unemployment rates, with Slovenia and Croatia remaining well below a 10% unemployment rate throughout the 1980s, where Serbia, Bosnia, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Macedonia saw consistent unemployment rates above 20% (Yarashevich and Karneyva 2013). Internally, the economic links between republics were very limited, particularly when looking at trade figures which were only at around 20%, largely deteriorating in the 1970s (Yarashevich and Karneyva 2013). These negative internal economic relations were the result of “the interest of local political forces to maintain control over economic activities - for ideological and/or more practical reasons”, as reported by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development in a 1990 report (OECD Economic Surveys 1990). While the root cause of the economic disparities between sects was not entirely a result of ethnic differences, though the next section will provide historical context, the economic

inequalities between republics became synonymous with ethnic differences in the eyes of many that suffered high unemployment and poverty.

Economic inequality in Yugoslavia has links that date back to the historic religious powers that existed in the region. Since the time of Ottoman rule over the Balkans, Slavic Churches were consistently pitted against the Islamic Ottoman church. For centuries the churches served the “historic repository of nationhood, national values, and quite often, as the saviors of a nation’s very existence” (Radu 1998). By exhibiting this power over national consciousness and being able to control the narrative whenever incidents and maltreatment between the groups occurred, the churches shaped the divide between the Muslim and Christian sects which contributed to later tensions. Conflicts between churches were not limited to Muslims and Christians, divisions were also created between Catholic Croats and Orthodox Serbs. As early as the ninth century, the Roman Church brought education, religion, and literature along with the Latin alphabet to Croatia, while Constantinople’s Church of Byzantium brought Eastern Orthodoxy and the Cyrillic alphabet to Bulgaria, Macedonia, and Serbia (Slack 2001). These cultural differences also translated into economic differences, as Croatia and Slovenia used the Latinic alphabet, allowing them to foster close ties with contemporary European powers such as Italy, who engaged in the Industrial Revolution. On the other hand, Serbia and the southern republics remained underdeveloped and had close ties to Russia through the Cyrillic alphabet and Eastern Orthodoxy (Elzarka

2018, 31). Croatia and Slovenia's close relationship with western Europe through religion led to their economic success surpassing Serbia's (Bertsch 1977). The economic and cultural environments which were cultivated by the churches in their respective regions polarized the ethnic groups, and Michael Radu postulates that "perhaps the primary source of political conflict in Yugoslavia results from regional and, hence, ethnic inequalities in the goods and services produced and consumed by the different peoples" (Radu 1998). This sentiment was particularly felt leading up to the destabilization of the country as the more developed Croatia and Slovenia were not willing to subsidize the less developed regions any more than they had (Yarashevich and Karneyva 2013). In doing so, their breaking away from Yugoslavia can be seen as their attempt to get out of the macroeconomic disorder of the Yugoslav federation.

Economic challenges occurred in tandem with political reforms, particularly those concerning the representation of each republic in decision making, which was of particular importance during the economic crisis. The constitution of 1974, which favored greater federal decentralization, turned national politics to a complicated process of negotiation between the republics for virtually every issue, as republics had to fight much harder to protect their self interests. The constitution kept certain core competencies such as implementation and enforcement of federal law, defense of the country, and economic order, but the head of state became a nine member presidency, transforming Yugoslavia into a

“federation with several confederative characteristics” (Beckmann-Petey 1990, 337). The issue of proportional representation and federalism solidified conflict and competition between the republics and their people as opposed to creating political ideologies (Calic 2019, 245). This further polarized ethnic groups toward affirming an affiliation with their republic rather than a national Yugoslav identity. Furthermore, equal representation in parliament as opposed to proportional representation meant that where one delegate from Montenegro would represent roughly 20,000 people, one delegate from Serbia would represent about 200,000 people, creating disparities in republic representation (Calic 2019, 245). Tito’s Yugoslavia adhered to a communist standard of collective as opposed to individual rights, which resulted in leading more people down a path of “real-existing nationalism” (Sekelj, 1993). These historical and religious factors of development as well as the economic recession of the 1970s and the failure of Yugoslav leaders to properly undergo financial reform only furthered the country toward social instability.

### *Foreign Intervention*

Foreign interventions and influence in Yugoslavia have varied in the kinds of methods employed, and have changed depending on both global and domestic conflicts. In 1941, Yugoslavia surrendered to the Axis powers, and Hitler and Mussolini began dividing and annexing parts of the country for themselves. Germany occupied northern Slovenia and Serbia, and Italy was given southern Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, and Montenegro (Calic 2019,

125). Both had their own motivations for dividing up Yugoslavia. Hitler had many political, military, and economic objectives for the area, specifically his want to secure transport lines and access to economic resources in order to get an advantage over the Allied powers. Italy saw its new reign over Southeast Europe as part of its natural sphere of influence (Pavlowitch 2008). Under the rule of the Axis powers, the Independent State of Croatia was formed, and German military leaders put the fascist Ustasha movement in power, with their leader Ante Pavelic becoming a dictatorial authority of the state. Pavelic adopted many German political models, including the implementation of violent militias, secret police, and the creation of more than twenty concentration camps (Kisic Kolanovic 2001, 60). Feeling emboldened by the German-Italian occupation, the Ustasha and Pavelic saw their opportunity to implement their original agenda of creating an ethnically homogenous "Greater Croatia". Of the 6.3 million inhabitants in the Independent State of Croatia, 3.3 million were Croats, two million were Serbs, 700,000 were Muslims, and the rest were ethnic minorities (Jelic-Butic 1977, 106). Systematic campaigns were launched to drive out, put into concentration camps, or outright murder primarily the Orthodox Serbs, as Muslims were declared to be "Croats of Islamic Faith". These violent acts were allowed to be carried out by German occupiers as well as with approval from the Catholic Church (Calic 2019, 127).

Under the German occupation of Serbia, the military administration was instructed to exploit Serbia's resources to fuel the German war

machine. Military and civilian administrations were restructured and mostly handled by German officials save for Milan Nedic, a Serb who was appointed prime minister in 1941. Nedic's views were described by many as a mix of ultraconservatism and chauvinism, and he was very loyal to Orthodox religious causes (Ristovic 1991, 666). The nationalist Chetniks formed under Nedic, with their motivations varying from nationalism and patriotism to self-protection or chauvinism. In Croatia and western Bosnia, Chetniks served as resistance to Ustasha atrocities. Chetnik and Ustasha tensions increased as each group sought to ethnically cleanse the other from their respective lands. Only when Tito and the communist party liberated Yugoslavia from German-Italian occupation in 1945 were the Chetniks and Ustasha formally disbanded (Calic 2019). People were not quick to forget the atrocities committed by either side, however, solidifying the ethnic tensions fostered by the German-Italian occupying powers, which turned Yugoslavia into a land of violent ethnic clashes and social unrest.

Looking historically at how ethnic divides were deepened by foreign powers, one can go back to the time of the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires rule over the Balkans. The wealth of Habsburg cities such as Vienna and Budapest was made possible by the subjugation of Slavic peoples, and when revolts occurred against the empire's tyranny, the Habsburgs employed manipulative tactics to cease unrest. Not only were mass executions carried out, but the Habsburgs would deliberately grant the Serb minority in Croatia special privileges in order to turn the attention of angry Croats

against the Serbs (Kaplan 2005, 26). Further, Serbia's national vision of the nineteenth century, as put forth by the politician Garasanin, was to create a great Slavo-Serbian empire in the Balkans (Cubrilovic 1979, 42). This vision, however, posed an existential threat to the Austro-Hungarian empire, who had firsthand experience with how difficult it was to fully subordinate Serbia. Thus, they aimed to economically subordinate Serbia by depriving them of access to the Adriatic Sea through their rule over Croatia (Siousiouras and Arvanitopoulos 2005, 143).

When the Austro-Hungarian Empire died out following World War I, Croats had quickly forgotten the struggles imposed on them by the Habsburgs, the one thing remaining in national consciousness being centuries of rule that convinced Croats they were culturally superior to Serbs (Kaplan 2005, 27). Not only did the influence of the Habsburgs foster ethnic tensions and social instability, but the Vatican Roman Catholic Church also had a hand in divisions. The Catholic Church was wary of Eastern Orthodox Serbs who were aligned with Russia, and the Vatican much preferred the Catholic Croats to be under the rule of the Catholic Austro-Hungarians rather than be outnumbered by the Russians (Kaplan 2005, 27). Sentiments pushed forth by these major powers resulted in people feeling uneasy towards those with differing political affiliations, and it increased their degree of affiliation with their respective church. Croats came to feel their membership to Western Catholicism more intensely than those living in Austria or Italy because of their close proximity to Eastern

Orthodoxy and Islam, both of whom they shared borders with (Kaplan 2005, 22). Historical foreign influence from empires altered national consciousness and planted the seeds for social unrest on the basis of ethnic and religious differences to sprout in the 20th century.

Part of what made Yugoslavia and the Balkans susceptible to foreign intervention and influence was its proximity to the Middle East. The Balkans have been thought of for decades as a bridge or gateway to the Middle East, making it a powerful strategic region. This was recognized by political analysts in the United States, and a Washington Post article from 1999 wrote, “With the Middle East increasingly fragile, we will need bases and flyover rights in the Balkans to protect Caspian Sea oil. But we will not have these bases in the future if the Russians conquer southeast Europe by criminal stealth” (Kaplan 1999). Yugoslavia and the Balkans were not only recognized by their proximity to the Middle East, but also to the great enemy of the United States, Russia. Another article by journalist Robert Kaplan voices the western opinion that “He [the President] should intervene only because his own country can benefit from the intervention: strategically, or morally, or both” (Kaplan 1999). Not only an American sentiment, foreign influence from any country to Yugoslavia served a greater self interest.

Additionally, foreign powers could manipulate Yugoslavia for their own interests because they preyed on the fragmentation of society. Under Slobodan Milosevic’s rule, successor to Tito after his death, it became

increasingly difficult to maintain a unified Yugoslavia, especially as “Croatia and Slovenia sentimentally belonged to the West, and were ready to join physically” (Le Breton 1996, 332). This sentiment did not come from purely their own views, rather Germany sought to upgrade its trade relations in Croatia in order to increase its own access to the Aegean and Mediterranean seas, which it could only do so if Croatia became independent. Additionally, Slovenia was slowly convinced to break from Yugoslavia because of “the ideas injected into them from the North and from the West - from Italy - ... The people were obsessed with the idea that history was on their side, that in time they would...unite with the rest of Western Europe, in fact with the rest of the world” (Sherman 1996, 56). This powerful sentiment implied that by being a part of Yugoslavia, the Slovenes were somehow disconnected from the rest of the world. Thus, continued foreign influences from the West on Croatia and Slovenia and continued Russian support of Serbia led to social unrest along ethnic and religious lines, ultimately ending in a bloody civil war.

Yugoslavia’s susceptibility to violent fragmentation was deeply rooted in the region’s long and complex history of imperial rule, particularly under the Ottoman and Habsburg empires, both of which governed different parts of the Balkans for centuries. Under the Ottomans, large portions of the southern and eastern regions, including Bosnia and Kosovo, developed under Islamic legal and administrative traditions, fostering distinct religious and social structures. Meanwhile, the Habsburg Empire ruled over

Slovenia, Croatia, and northern Bosnia, incorporating them into a Catholic and Austro-Hungarian administrative and economic system. These contrasting imperial legacies left Yugoslavia with divergent legal, educational, and cultural institutions, which hardened ethno-religious identities and inhibited the formation of a unified national identity after the state's formation in 1918. Following World War I, the Western powers supported the formation of a South Slavic kingdom under Serbian dominance, marginalizing non-Serb groups and sowing early resentment. After World War II, Tito's communist regime forcibly suppressed ethnic nationalism and established a federal system that allowed for autonomous republics based on ethnic lines, which maintained institutional distinctions beneath the surface of unity. Foreign influence continued to shape the country during the Cold War, as Yugoslavia balanced Western and Soviet blocs to maintain its non-aligned status. The withdrawal of external support and the weakening of central authority after the Cold War unleashed long-standing grievances. The republics, emboldened by newly gained autonomy and external backing, turned to nationalism, triggering a series of violent secessions in the 1990s. The former state of Yugoslavia illustrates how historic imperial foundations and continued intervention can set the stage for civil war.

### *Religion in Government*

Under the government of Josip Broz Tito, Yugoslavia was considered a communist state. On this basis, there existed a separation of church and

state in accordance with the Marxist idea of “scientific atheism” wherein religion was held to certain restrictions. In the Yugoslav constitution of 1974, the federation underwent institutional changes, and with more power being granted to the republics, so were the legal status of religious communities under the discretion of the republics (Bozic 2019, 41). Additionally, all three Yugoslav constitutions, those in 1946, 1963, and 1974, explicitly guaranteed the freedom of worship. However, there still existed certain rules that observers of religion had to abide by, such as article 13 of a 1953 Federal statute which said that “free public worship is possible only in religious facilities or accessory spaces...and collective religious practice and affairs performed beyond this facility, i.e. public space...needed a previous administrative authorization” (Bozic 2019, 43-44). Though the later constitution of 1974 had Serbian and Croatian lawmakers moving away from this regime of police authorization, there was still a tendency in the legislation toward police penalties. For example, interior regulations from the early 1960s sanctioned non authorized processions and worshipping outside religious facilities with fines and 15 day detention, statutes after this increased the detention period to 30 days (Bozic 2019, 45). Yugoslavian legislation also had anti-discriminatory clauses, prohibited political abuse of religion, and required the registration of all religious communities. Yugoslavia was able to remain a secular state, though every registered religious community faced a plethora of legal restrictions and state control over its activities (Bozic 2019, 59).

Though the legislature from the mid-20th century onward recognized religious freedom, in the post World War I era, there was some debate over having a state religion. Ante Trumbic, Croat President of the Yugoslav Council, argued in favor of a strict secular and neutral state in order to achieve religious equality. He was met with the opposing view of Nikola Pasic, leader of the Serb delegation, who defended the special status of Orthodoxy due to its history as a defender of Serbian national character and identity (Falina 2021). Trumbic rebutted this with the notion that interests of the state must come before the interests of religious communities in order to maintain religious equality. Despite the majority population of the Balkans observing religion, many Yugoslav political actors agreed that a secular Yugoslavia would make national unification easier, and remove a potential factor of destabilization (Falina 2021).

In the case of the Yugoslav Muslim minority, religious freedom was recognized, and Nikola Pasic, who became the Yugoslav prime minister in 1918, posited that “the Serb-Croat-Slovene State, composed of a single people with three names, three religions and two alphabets, by its very nature is called to practice the broadest tolerance” (Robinson et al 1943). Despite his declaration of the acceptance of all religious communities, Ante Trumbic suggested that Christianity should have an elevated position, and he believed that it would be a mistake to establish full equality between Islam and Christianity (Krfska konferencija 1924, 31-34). A history of resistance to Ottoman oppression and resulting skepticism towards Islam

from the Christian sects provides a perspective on why there was a tendency to marginalize the Muslim community (Falina 2021). Despite the position of Yugoslavia as a secular state, nationalism and sectarianism pervaded the government's position, though the eventual social disintegration along religious and ethnic lines was perhaps not worsened by the rigid legislature which sought to promote religious equality.

### Lebanon: A Brief History

In order to fully grasp the roots of social unrest in Lebanon, it is necessary to first consider the country's complex historical trajectory, particularly its colonial foundations and entrenched religious divisions. Lebanon's modern political and social fabric has been shaped by its experience under French Mandate rule and the subsequent institutionalization of sectarian divisions. The following section provides an overview of these developments, laying the groundwork for understanding how colonial legacies have shaped patterns of conflict and instability in the Lebanese state.

From the early 16th century, the territory known as Lebanon was under the rule of the Ottoman Empire. Towards the middle of the 19th century, Ottoman rule was weaker than it historically had been, leaving Lebanon susceptible to invasion by the ruler of Egypt, Ibrahim Pasha. His rule led to the passing of the Tanzimat - a significant period of reforms and attempted modernization of the Ottoman army, governance, and society in

accordance with the European model (Mallo 2019, 2). Because it made Christians equal to Muslims under law, the Tanzimat had a part in cultivating tensions between their respective ethnic groups in Lebanon. The escalation of religious and ethnic tensions at this time was met with European powers wanting to establish themselves as protectors of certain religious groups - France sought to protect Catholic Maronites, Britain the Druze, and Russia involved itself with the Lebanese Greek Orthodox population (Mallo 2019, 3). There was a great deal of western intervention in the Middle East during the 19th century and early 20th century, but with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire after World War 1, Middle Eastern populations hoped that they would be free from colonial rule. However, the Sykes-Picot agreement between the British and French empires ultimately decided how the Ottoman Empire's Arab lands would be split (Gettleman and Schaar 2012, 105).

Under the Sykes-Picot agreement, France relied on the support from the Maronite Church in Lebanon in order to secure the state. Not all of Lebanon agreed with the Maronite Church, however, and where part of the Lebanese Administrative Council tried to declare independence for Lebanon, the French continued to pressure them to seek mandated French protection (Mallo 2019, 5). A compromise was promised to delegates wherein Lebanon would have independence and territorial integrity under French rule, but the definition of territorial boundaries remained unclear (Traboulsi 2012). Because the borders of Lebanon were created without the

input of native populations, French and European interests took precedence, which fostered sectarian divisions in the nation from early on in the state's history. The Muslim population in the newly created Lebanese nation protested the Mandate and instead wanted to see the formation of an Arab state that was independent from the current state that gave the most power to Maronite Christians (Traboulsi 2012, 80). Orthodox Christians and Greek Catholic inhabitants of the new Lebanese nation also largely sided with the Muslim population as they too saw how the system favored the Maronites (Traboulsi 2012, 80). The French administration recognized the growing frustrations of the native populations and drew up a constitution that would appease their frustration by facilitating a government of the native population. The meeting to create a draft of this constitution occurred in 1926, though about thirty-seven prominent Sunni Muslim leaders refused to participate in its creation. Thus, the French founded a parliamentary system that gave themselves full control over the legal and political system of Lebanon (Kanaan 2005, 130). Government posts of the Lebanese Republic were distributed according to sects, and though the president would have executive power, he would ultimately still be answering to the French government, whose presence persisted (Traboulsi 2012, 90).

In 1946, after years of rising pressure, Lebanon gained its independence from France, though the framework that was implemented during their colonialism continued to influence the Lebanese political

system. Maronites were still the dominant leaders in the system and did not want to see political changes which would promote an Arab Lebanon. It was also during this time that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict began to spread into Lebanon, which only furthered the already growing sectarian differences, as some sects sided with the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), and some with Zionists (Gettleman and Schaar 2012, 294). With the establishment of the Israeli state in 1948 came a wave of Palestinian refugees into Lebanon, which would pull it into the conflict between the surrounding states. Initially, the first Prime Minister of Israel, David Ben-Gurion, wanted to try and establish a Christian state in Lebanon and form an alliance with this state, though these plans were not carried out (Hirst 2010, 51). Sectarian tensions increased, especially as Egypt led the Arab nationalist movement, a movement that many non-Christian Lebanese subscribed to, and while the Christian sects continued to support their President Camille Chamoun, the Muslim sects were angered by his continued close relations with Britain and France and pro-Western views, which they viewed as an insult to Lebanese Arab identity (Mallo 2019, 8). A brief civil war occurred when Sunni Muslims in the north of Lebanon rose up against the government, backed by Syria. Maronite Christians fought against the Sunni, and this brief war ended in Muslims controlling the area of Mount Lebanon and Christians controlling the east side of Beirut (Hirst 2010, 70). Conflict occurred again in 1958 in the split capital city of Beirut

between Muslims and Christians, with the United States involving itself by sending marines into the city to protect the Christians (Hirst 2010, 71).

The period of time before the Civil War in 1975 was riddled with sectarian divides as each group sought more power and had different ideas for what Lebanon should look like. Christians wanted a Lebanon influenced by the West where Muslims were in support of Pan-Arab Nationalism and wanted an Arab Lebanon. The Lebanese National Movement, composed primarily of Muslims, wanted to see political change and had support from the Palestinian Liberation Organization, Syria, and Libya. In the fall of 1958, the new president Faud Shihab was elected and collaborated with Prime Minister Rashid Karami to create a government which would shut out Chamoun loyalists, though this incited the Maronite Christian population who still supported the former president towards violence. In response to this violence, Karami and Shihad formed an emergency cabinet consisting of two Muslims and two Christians who were able to achieve a ceasefire (Harris 2012, 212).

In order to avoid the same tensions that occurred in 1958, President Shihab sought to implement social welfare into the state in order to more adequately incorporate Muslims into the Lebanese state. Principally, he wanted to create a balance between Christian and non-Christian politics, hoping to see an erosion of sectarianism within the Lebanese government (Harris 2012, 213). In order to achieve this, Shihab utilized the military and other bureaucratic associates to grow the size of the parliament from sixty-

six to ninety-nine members which included a number of his own loyalists as well as some senior politicians that Chamoun had displaced during his presidency (Harris 2012, 214). His politics, called “Shihabism”, ultimately did not succeed in lowering sectarian differences in Lebanon. There was still a Maronite advantage in government, and political grievances about this advantage continued. 1967 saw a tipping point of these grievances during the Six Day War between Israel and the Arab States. The Six-Day War intensified sectarian tensions in Lebanon by deepening the divide between Maronite Christians, who feared the growing influence of Palestinian militants, and Muslims, who increasingly supported the Palestinian cause, thereby exacerbating existing political and social grievances, and these tensions culminated in the Civil War.

The Civil War commenced after acts of violence occurred early in the year 1975, such as an anti-government protest in Sidon where two were killed by the Lebanese Army, including a prominent Sunni leader. A few months later, an attack on a Palestinian bus in Eastern Beirut added to the outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War, which occurred over a fifteen year period (Rowayheb 2011, 417). The Lebanese state lost independence in 1975, and the Syrian army intervened in June 1976. Palestinian, Syrian, and Israeli interests in the state persisted during this time early in the war, and they continuously intervened (Harris 2012, 232). A brunt of the violence occurred between the Muslim and Christian sects, though the PLO added to the strife, by waging war on Israel from within Lebanon (Harris 2012, 239).

Fighting continued between the sects as well as with Israel, and in June of 1982, Israel laid siege on Beirut. Shortly thereafter, in August of 1982, the United States negotiated an agreement with the PLO to withdraw them from Beirut (Mackey 2006). Combined factors of sectarian differences in Lebanon, intervention by Syria, and the Arab-Israeli conflict became a recipe for disaster for the Lebanese state (Harris 2012, 258).

The Taif Accord, negotiated in 1989 in Saudi Arabia, was credited with ending the civil war through its wanting to reconcile the Lebanese sects, and it was endorsed by Syria and other Arab states as well as the international community (Rais 2005, 58). The accord wanted to rebuild the state of Lebanon and rectify the causes of the civil war which were recognized then as conflicts over national identity and socio-economic divides. Still, throughout the 1990s, Lebanon struggled to rebuild the state which had gone through nearly two decades of violent war (Harris 2012, 259). The Taif accord defined Lebanon as having an “Arab affiliation and identity” and emphasized co-existence by deciding that parliament seats would be distributed equally between Christians and Muslims (Rais 2005, 62). Though the intended goal of the Accord was to decrease sectarian divides, it had somewhat of the opposite effect. The role of President was still given to a Maronite, but the dominant power that came with this role was decreased. The role of Prime Minister was strengthened and given to a Sunni Muslim, and the speaker of Parliament also saw an increase of power and was given to a Shia Muslim (Rais 2005, 65). Because it solidified

sectarian representation, it also created the opportunity for further sectarian fragmentation (Rais 2005, 65).

Sectarian divides persisted in Lebanon through the early 2000s, notably when Lebanon's Prime Minister Rafik Hariri was assassinated by car bomb in Beirut in 2005, leading to Lebanese protests against Syria's involvement and calls for independence (Harris 2012, 269). Since 2011 there have been further violent clashes, a large part having to do with the Syrian civil war and some spillover fighting and civilian deaths in Beirut and Tripoli. Currently, Lebanon has witnessed over a year of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah, a Shia political and military group, erupting in October 2023, the start of the genocide in the Gaza Strip, though a ceasefire deal was signed in November 2024 between Israel and Hezbollah in hopes of halting the growing death toll (Al Jazeera 2025).

### *The Sects*

The sects that will be examined in this case study will include Sunni and Shia Muslims and Maronite Christians. These are the most prominent religious groups in Lebanon, and they have long histories in the region. In the last official census conducted in Lebanon in 1932, the population consisted of 32% Maronite Christians, 18% Sunni Muslims, and 16% Shia Muslims (Pearlman 2013, 114). An unofficial census conducted in 1956 estimated the population to be 54% Christians and 44% Muslims (Raji et al 2018, 123). The Druze are another religious sect of Lebanon who have been involved in conflicts, though for the purpose of this research they will not be

examined as the other sects are. The Maronite population of Lebanon has historically been predominantly situated in the area around Mount Lebanon, the Sunnis being located mostly in central and north Lebanon, and the Shias have been primarily situated in the south of Lebanon. Because of the sectarian divisions in Lebanon and the pressure that could be faced if statistics present a wide shift in population demographics, conducting a census here is a very sensitive issue (Raji et al 2018, 123). Emigration has also played a large role in the ethnic and religious makeup of Lebanon. From 1945 to 1960, emigration was at about 3,000 people per year, and from 1960 to 1970 this number jumped up to 9,000 people per year due to increased Arab-Israeli tensions. From 1970 to 1975, emigration reached a high of about 10,000 people per year, all of these shaping the makeup of Lebanon across decades (Raji et al 2018, 124). Due to French colonialism and the creation of a sectarian government by the French, these groups were effectively pitted against each other in a fight for power. The political system was designed to put the interests of one group above another, which is why the Christian population held more power than either of the Muslim groups for decades.

### *Independent Variables*

The independent variables of economic inequalities, foreign intervention, religious presence in government, and cultural similarities will be explored in the following sections in relation to how they contributed to social unrest in Lebanon. Economic disparities between the groups as well

as multiple foreign powers having a hand in Lebanese politics played an important role in the lead up to the Civil War in 1975. The colonialism of the French government as well as Ottoman Empire reforms will be explored to see how their influence contributed to the creation of an unstable society.

### *Foreign Intervention*

Foreign intervention in Lebanon has varied from colonialism to military intervention to diplomatic pressure. As has been previously mentioned, the French Mandate created a system which purposefully gave the Maronite population a slight majority with the intention that Lebanon would remain a Christian state (El-Khazen 2000, 243). When the Muslim population began to grow it highlighted the disparities inherent in the system and there was no viable space for Muslims to air their grievances in a peaceful manner (Kanaan 2005, 77). The Lebanese constitution of 1926, in conjunction with the French Mandate, placed Lebanon under French control and greatly limited the ability of the state to have control of its own political system. Sunni leaders opposed the Mandate and refused to cooperate, but some began to interact with it advantageously in order to increase their social standing (Kanaan 2005, 132). Despite some leaders cooperating with the Mandate, it was not well received by the rest of the community, so the French continuously extended the constitution and appointed people they hoped would invigorate Sunni participation (Kanaan 2005, 135). Rising grievances against French and colonial rule as well as increased Syrian and British interest in Lebanon led to the National Pact

being created in 1943 in order to deal with the problem of the Lebanese national identity (el-Khazen 1991, 5). The Pact gave Maronites a political advantage with unclear checks on power, including making it so that the president is always a Maronite Christian (Naor 2013, 990). The first president, Bishara al-Khuri encouraged sectarian power in government by limiting Sunni and Shia politicians, and the second president, Camille Chamoun used presidential power to continue to keep sectarian groups apart and limit cooperation (Harris 2012, 202-208). Tensions between Maronites and the Muslims sects increased, and the fighting which occurred in 1958 was a direct result of Christian and Muslim discordance on the balance of power asserted by the National Pact. Outside interests initially refused to involve themselves in the sectarian conflicts, though the United States eventually intervened in the fighting in 1958 by sending 14,000 troops to Beirut - something that acted more as a way to demonstrate that the US was willing to aid its "Middle Eastern friends" as opposed to a selfless act of aid (Harris 2012, 212). This presented itself as an opportunity for the United States to deal with Lebanon's crisis in a way that would quickly and credibly extricate itself from further involvement (Harris 2012, 212).

Syria has also been a major actor in Lebanese history. Its involvement in Lebanon progressed from early mediation in conflicts to interference by proxy, then to direct military and political intervention (Abdul-Husn 1998, 65). Both geographical closeness and historical ties have contributed to

Syria's involvement in Lebanese politics and history. Following the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire, both Lebanon and Syria were under the French Mandate, and consequently achieved their independence at the same time in 1943. Both states, however, went their separate ways in regards to foreign policy. Where Syria opted out of the French currency zone in 1949, Lebanon remained a part of it. Further, the countries shared a central bank, customs union, a single railway administration, and a common labor market, though these institutional ties were severed by 1951 as each country sought to create its own infrastructure (Abdul-Husn 1998, 65). Lebanon remained as a Western-style multiparty system while Syria saw a succession of coups that turned it into a one-party state (Abdul-Husn 1998, 65). Syria's involvement in Lebanon became more and more central to the Lebanese conflict, and later, in regional efforts for conflict resolution, a result of the states' shared histories.

In 1976 when Muslim and Palestinian forces took control of the Matn district north of Beirut, the Maronites feared their position of power was slipping, and despite their fear of Syria, the Maronites recognized that it was Syrian power that kept Muslim forces at bay (Harris 2012, 237). The Syrians also did not want to lose their influence in Lebanon so they collaborated with Maronites to keep President Faranjiya in office for some time during this period of conflict. Syrian involvement led to disputes however, such as when, in 1977, a Syrian assailant shot a Druze leader, inciting the Druze against the Maronites, leaving 170 of them dead (Harris

2012, 239). Syria had heavy involvement in the civil war of Lebanon, with President Hafez al-Assad stating that he intended to “thwart the establishment of a radicalized region in Lebanon” that would have the potential to destabilize Syria or draw it into war with Israel, for which it was unprepared (Abdul-Husn 1998, 65). This coupled with the intervention of other actors including Israel, Iraq, and Iran, furthered the polarization of the conflict environment. Syria’s support was initially given to the status quo coalition - a loosely defined Lebanese coalition that sought to preserve Lebanon’s existing political and sectarian balance - then shifted to the reformist group in late 1976 (Abdul-Husn 1998, 66). The Lebanese Civil War, which officially lasted from 1975 to 1976, though conflict occurred until 1990, can be seen through four stages with Syrian involvement increasing through each stage. The first two stages saw Syria act as an intermediary and in the third stage, Syria introduced members of its own military, as well as the Syrian based Palestinian Liberation Army to prevent the separation of Lebanon (Abdul-Husn 1998, 66). Through this step, Syria was able to continue mediation and convince the status quo coalition to accept some reforms for power sharing. The fourth stage of the civil war saw larger military intervention from Syria, as was requested by Lebanese authorities. In June 1976, approximately 15,000 Syrian troops entered Lebanon which temporarily gave the coalition an advantage, and they achieved considerable gains primarily against the Palestinians (Abdul-Husn 1998, 66). Syria’s involvement in Lebanon and its goals presented an

interesting contradiction in the Civil War. By siding with Maronite Christians, a result of their shared goal to prevent the separation of Lebanon, and by wanting to preclude a Palestinian backed leftist regime to achieve peace in Lebanon, Syria actually worsened the tensions between Christians and Muslims as it backed one sect and not the other, and thus nullified the ultimate goal of peace and instead increased conflict (Heller 1980, 67). Syria's continued involvement in Lebanese politics and conflicts contributed to the intensity of war and heavily influenced its direction.

Lebanon's vulnerability to civil war has roots in both its Ottoman past and French colonialism. Under Ottoman rule, Lebanon was governed through a system that granted religious communities a high degree of autonomy in personal and communal affairs. While this system allowed for relative coexistence, it also reinforced sectarian boundaries by solidifying religion as a central feature of political and legal identity. This laid the groundwork for a political culture in which sectarian affiliation became the primary mode of organization and representation. Following World War I, French colonial authorities expanded on this structure during their mandate, formalizing Lebanon's confessional political system, which allocated power among sects rather than individuals. While intended to balance communal interests, this system engrained sectarian divisions in the state's core institutions, weakening national cohesion and encouraging political competition along communal lines. Even after independence, the Lebanese state remained fragile, vulnerable to both internal and external

shocks. Regional actors, including Syria, Israel, and Iran, as well as global powers like the United States, intervened through proxies, further polarizing sectarian communities and exacerbating conflict. The Lebanese Civil War was a reflection of both the long-term institutionalization of sectarian identity under the Ottomans and the geopolitical manipulation of those divisions by outside powers.

### *Economic Inequality*

From the time of Ottoman rule in the area that is present day Lebanon, the different sects dealt with economic disparities. Under the Ottoman Empire, the Shia were targeted by having to pay high taxes to the government as well as facing violence from governor Ahmed Pasha who targeted the Shia and destroyed their libraries as well as agricultural stores (Siklawi 2014, 280). After a civil conflict in 1860 between the Druze and Maronites, the French turned their support toward the Maronites, the British aided the Druze, and Russians and Austrians supported other Christians groups such as the Greek Orthodox population and the Armenian Christian sects. Because the Shia did not receive any help from colonial powers and held little influence in the new government system, it put them at an economic and political disadvantage - a trend which remained for decades to come (Siklawi 2014, 281). Following Lebanon's independence in 1943, the Shia remained a political minority, and even the role of the Shia as speaker of the parliament served a more symbolic role than it did a significant one. While upper class Shia families were able to remain wealthy

through land ownership and governmental positions, much of the Shia population was impoverished. This poverty led to the increased involvement of Shia Muslims in left-wing movements and groups that had Palestinian ties (Siklawi 2014, 286). Shia cleric, politician, and revolutionary Sayyid Musa al-Sadr saw these political and economic grievances and created the Supreme Islamic Shia Council which he hoped would decrease inequalities between groups (Arsan 2006, 16). This council was established to give Shia Muslims more say in government, but al-Sadr's ideas became increasingly more incendiary as he urged Shias to take up arms against the Maronite dominant government (Arsan 2006, 17).

Much research done during this era shows that Maronite Christians not only dominated the government but also the economy as a result. Marxist writers B.J. Oden and Samih Farsoun argue that the economic disparities between the Lebanese sects could be interpreted as "class distinctions within the social structure" (Abdul-Husn 1998, 15). This suggests that the very structure of Lebanese society and economy elevated the Maronite population. Further, the average income of Christians was 16% higher than that of the Druze and 58% higher than that of the Shia (Abdul-Husn 1998, 15). The Christians dominated almost every industry in Lebanon, which can be explained by the very economic structure of the state. A national income study conducted in 1975 showed that the Christian Lebanese were far better off than their Muslim civilian counterparts, only increasing the sectarian divide (Abdul-Husn 1998, 55). During the colonial

regime of France, most economic activity was in the hands of Lebanese Christians, and this economic system was deregulated and privatized to create considerable disparities between sects (Abdul-Husn 1998, 55). Even after independence from the French, the Islamic representation in the economy was largely in the form of small businessmen and “petit bourgeois peasants”, where the Christians had a larger middle class, higher literacy rates, and were heavily involved in public sector companies and banking (Abdul-Husn 1998, 55).

In the few years before the Lebanese Civil War, Lebanon had great economic success. The state had a vibrant merchant class and high per capita incomes with expanding employment opportunities (Makdisi and Marktanner 2009, 5-6). While a growing, booming economy falls against the causes for social unrest, it was economic inequality that would contribute to the cleavages in the social system. Economic development was horizontally and regionally unequal, with areas that had a dominant Shia population generally being the poorest (Makdisi and Marktanner 2009, 6). Because economic inequalities overlapped with religious divides, Muslim political leaders regularly echoed their grievances and called for a greater share of power with the Christian Maronites. Muslim leaders also called for more sharing of economic benefits with Maronites, greater access to public sector employment, and opportunities to participate in or control private economic enterprises, though they did not see any change in how they were treated (Makdisi and Marktanner 2009, 6). Despite the disparities that existed

during this time before the Civil War, this was considered to be the “Golden Age” of Lebanon due to it being the center of banking, commerce, and tourism, especially tourists from Western countries. Thus, economic conditions alone can not explain the outbreak of social unrest in Lebanon, rather, economic inequalities and other variables must be evaluated.

### *Religion in Government*

The state of Lebanon has seen a variety of religious reforms within its government both from internal implementation and that of the Ottoman Empire, French Mandate, and the Taif Accord after the Civil War. Under the Tanzimat, a period of Ottoman reforms that sought to modernize the administration, society, and military of the empire, Maronites took advantage of their equality to Muslims by law which they did not previously have. It heightened tensions, primarily between the Druze and Maronites, as European influence grew in the region (Mallo 2019, 3). The French Empire was seeking expansion across the globe, and saw in Lebanon a way to politically promote the Catholic Church. As sectarian tensions within Lebanon increased due to unequal treatment, the Ottomans tried to act as mediators between the growing European order and old, tribal ways (Mallo 2019, 4). Despite their attempts to mediate sectarian divides, the sects saw the unequal positive treatment of Maronites in the political sphere as well as the protected status they gained from other states, and further strained their relationships.

Under the French mandate, Maronite Christians were used to try to achieve the French goals of creating a greater Christian nation state. As was previously stated, the National Pact was also established under French rule which served pro-Western Arab interests (el-Khazen 1991, 5). In order to appease the Muslim factions, the Pact secured that the Prime Minister should always be a Sunni Muslim and the speaker of Parliament, a Shia Muslim, while solidifying permanent control of the presidency to a Maronite Christian, which was previously available to any Christian sect (Ghosn and Khoury 2011, 383). The Pact also asserted that Lebanon should remain neutral between any Western or Arab agenda, though the already established sectarian divides as well as other factors such as foreign influence prevented Lebanon's neutrality (Harris 2012, 197-198).

Lebanon's Civil War ended with the 1989 Taif Accord that was created to act as a compromise between Lebanese political groups, militias, and leaders, as well as with Syria. The main purpose of the Taif Accord was to equalize power between the Muslim and Christian groups, and call for the eventual abolishment of the confessional system (Lundholm 2021, 36). Part of the Taif reforms expanded the National Assembly through a fixed percentage of seats to be equally divided between the two religions, along with a fixed percentage for all official sects (Lundholm 2021, 36). The roles of Prime Minister and President had their responsibilities equally divided, and the role of the Parliament Speaker was strengthened (Ghosn and Khoury 2011, 384). Despite these reforms, Lebanon remains a country

divided on sectarian lines, and the redistribution of power only strengthened sectarian identity rather than a national Lebanese identity.

### *Cultural Distinctness*

The state of Lebanon has been highly divided on sectarian lines, and additional historical context provides reasons as to why there has been contention in regards to a Lebanese national identity. From the 1920s, there have been two main contrasting ideas surrounding a Lebanese identity (Dagher 2000). The first of these is the idea of “Lebanonism”, mostly echoed by Maronites, which views Lebanon as detached from the Arab world, and the second is “Arabism”, an idea mostly backed by Muslims, which views Lebanon as integral to the surrounding Arab neighborhood (Salibi 1988; Harris 2006). These differences can be traced back to both of these main sects feeling simultaneously superior to and threatened by one another (Hudson 1985, 91). These conflicting ideas undermined the formation of a unified Lebanese national identity by fostering sectarian divisions, competing allegiances, and a fragmented vision of the nation's cultural and political future.

Language is one of the biggest markers of cultural and ethnic distinctness, and Lebanon’s history of colonialism and religious divides is reflected directly back into its multilingualism. Where Christian sects adopted French language, traditions, and customs, Muslim sects continued

to speak to and teach their children in Arabic (Akl 2007, 97). Pro-Western sentiments have also shaped the society of Lebanon, outside of purely French influence. There exists an institutionalized American cultural presence, largely rooted in educational systems. The American University of Beirut founded in 1866 continuously received funds from the US, and the United States agency for international development remains active in Lebanon through the provision of educational opportunities (Soubra et al 2014, 3). The pervasiveness of American education has been described by some as academic colonialism, through the import of US standards onto international institutions, which may conflict with Lebanese cultural values and practices (Altbach 2003). The English language is also widely spoken in Lebanon, particularly in urban areas, which is also a result of historic American presence. Cultural fragmentation in Lebanon exists with its roots predominantly in colonial history and religious divides.

## Switzerland: A Brief History

While much of this thesis focuses on states marked by instability, the case of Switzerland offers a valuable contrast through its long standing political stability and effective conflict management. To understand how Switzerland has maintained cohesion despite linguistic, religious, and regional diversity, it is important to first consider the historical developments that laid the foundation for its unique governance model. This historical overview will trace key moments in the formation of the Swiss

state, and in evaluating Switzerland's evolution we can better understand the institutional and social factors that contributed to its resilience.

Switzerland is a modern European nation-state made up of seven million inhabitants, and one of much heterogeneous complexity. There are four distinct languages and ethnic groups that make up Switzerland - French, Italian, German, and Romansh - and each group has its own deep geo-historical history within Switzerland. Swiss nation building dates back to the Middle Ages, with the formation of the Swiss Confederation initially made up of the cantons of Uri, Schwyz, and Unterwalden in 1291 (Wilner 2009, 5). This Swiss Confederation of mini-states, known as cantons, was initially established as a military alliance to deter the expansionist ideas of Rudolf of Habsburg, the new King of Germany (Wilner 2009, 6). What was unique about the Treaty of 1291, which formed the earliest Swiss union, was that the parties of the treaty agreed to accept nor recognize any leader or ruler "if he exercises his office for any reward or for money or if he is not one of our own and an inhabitant of the valleys [of Uri, Schwyz, and Unterwalden]" (Steinberg 1976, 13). Thus, the idea of an incipient Swiss Union was introduced.

The early Swiss Confederation put up a strong front against enemy kingdoms, and success in war expanded the union to include the cantons of Lucerne in 1332, Zurich in 1351, Glarus and Zug in 1352, and Bern in 1353, each of whom agreed to the terms of political equality set by the Treaty of 1291 (Steinberg 1976, 16). By the sixteenth century, the Swiss

Confederation reached thirteen cantons and was a well respected European military power. Despite its military prowess, the Swiss Confederation preferred to protect their own way of life rather than be lured to greater European political power (Kohn 1956, 20-21). This trend continued in the seventeenth century when the Confederation refused to follow rising “power-states” and rejected centralized authority, which forced the state into a policy of neutrality. This policy of neutrality is regarded as the framework that would preserve the unity of Switzerland through the Reformation years and through the internal religious warfare that followed (Wilner 2009, 7). The Reformation years saw the Swiss Confederation split between Catholicism and Protestantism, and both internal bloodshed and religious warfare between these two churches across Europe were reflected in religious tensions in Switzerland. The Protestants looked to France and the Catholics looked to Spain as the defenders of their faiths (Gilliard 1955, 42), but it was neutrality that kept the Swiss Catholics and Swiss Protestants at peace with each other. Bern, a Protestant canton, became a formidable power which helped to balance out the fact that Catholic cantons had a numerical majority, but less men and resources at their disposal (Gilliard 1955, 44). While Europe grappled with Reformation-era religious warfare, neutrality amongst co-religionists and the two faiths being treated as equal allowed Switzerland to remain tranquil. During the Thirty Years War in the seventeenth century, both Protestants and Catholics asked for aid from the Swiss, but a fear of civil strife kept the Swiss

federation from providing it, thus further solidifying the Swiss policy of neutrality (Gilliard 1955, 45).

During the French Revolution and Napoleon's 1789 invasion of Switzerland, where most European countries rejected the ideals set forth by the French Revolution, the Swiss reaction was to adopt and accept the lessons of the Revolution and include them in their existing national ideals of liberty and freedom (Wilner 2009, 9). Napoleon's reforms paved the way for the Swiss to rebuild their nation as a strong, modern democracy, insofar as the Confederation was dismantled under Napoleonic rule, and the new Swiss entity in 1803 was proclaimed the Helvetic Republic (Kohn 1956, 34). The new Swiss Republic became enshrined in a new constitution that was rooted in French ideals of a centralized government and authoritarian executive power, and subsequently turned Switzerland into a modern federalist state (Wilner 2009, 9). The 1803 Constitution got rid of pre-existing social privileges, established legal equality of all citizens and territories, and accepted Italian as a third official language, and created a centralized parliamentary system (Schmid 1981, 3-4). After Napoleon's downfall, a new Swiss Constitution was written in 1815, this one reverting to the decentralization of the cantons, though it proved to be too decentralized, and by 1846 divisions between the cantons emerged, coming to a climax during the War of the Sonderbund in 1847. The Sonderbund was an alliance composed of the seven Catholic cantons, and they sought to protect their interests around the centralization of power occurring. The

war, only lasting twenty five days with a loss of 128 men in total, did achieve a compromise between the excessive centralization of the Federation and the weakness of the Confederation through the creation of a new constitution in 1848 (Wilner 2009, 10). This constitution established necessary political and institutional balances that dealt with the linguistic and ethnic differences of Switzerland, as well as created a unified federal system that maintained the power of the cantons.

From the constitution of 1848 to the 1970s, Switzerland underwent a slow but steady process of centralization, often explained by three main elements. First, the low levels of initial centralization helped to create a centralized government later on by allowing the cantons to establish themselves within the Swiss federal state. This worked especially well in facilitating strong economic activity by creating a single economic space with harmonized regulation. Second, centralization stuck to legislation while simultaneously leaving policy implementation up to the individual cantons. This has maintained the equality of citizen's rights within social and political spheres. Lastly, centralization of the Swiss state, while significant, has not ventured as far as it has in other federal states, and Switzerland remains the least centralized of all the main federations which has built strong Swiss citizenship, national ethos, and a functioning welfare state (Church 2003, 12-13). Swiss neutrality has been its national marker, with the relative decentralization of the state allowing it to reject Nazism during World War II and growing European fascism in the 20th century.

Specifically during the second world war, where most other European nations had central authorities with a central elite figurehead which could surrender sovereignty to Hitler, Switzerland was the only country in Europe without a single political leader which meant that no one person could surrender the power of Switzerland (Halbrook 1998, 3). This combined with strong national ideals surrounding protecting Switzerland as well as timely anticipation of conflict effectively made Switzerland a “strategic stumbling block in the heart of Europe”, and it maintained neutrality among the powers of World War II (Halbrook 1998, 6). Switzerland remains a neutral state in the heart of Europe, and its ethnic groups live harmoniously and independently from each other.

### *The Sects*

The multi-ethnic composition of Switzerland is unique in that it has three very distinct major groups. Germans make up the majority with a 1970 census showing 74.5% of Swiss citizens being German by mother tongue, followed by 20% French, 4% Italian, and 1% Romansh (Steinberg 1976). Of the 26 cantons, seventeen are officially German speaking, four are French speaking, one is Italian speaking, and the other four are linguistically divided such that they have two to three official languages (McRae 1983, 42). The linguistic and ethnic divisions are only one part of the social complexity of Switzerland. Religious affiliations have remained

steady in size since the Reformation era, with the 1970 census showing a 55% Protestant majority, 43.4% of Catholic denomination, and 1.6% falling into the “Other” category (Steinberg 1976). The 2004 census reveals that the Catholic population swelled between these years due to higher birthrates and a higher entry rate of Catholic workers primarily from Italy into Switzerland. The “Other” category also swelled by about 12% due to an influx of non-European workers introducing their own religious denominations and a turn to greater secularism in urban areas (Wilner 2009, 12).

What is of particular importance about Switzerland is that linguistic and religious boundaries do not coincide with each other. Rather, members of each linguistic group practice both major religions, to varying degrees, creating cross-cutting cleavages within the country (Schmid 1981, 7). This means that religion actually acts against linguistic loyalties and creates a commonality between the distinct ethnic groups. In French-Switzerland, Protestant majorities exist in two cantons, Vaud and Neuchatel, Geneva is divided almost evenly by the two faiths, and Valais and Fribourg have a strong Catholic majority. In German-Switzerland, there are nine predominantly Protestant cantons which are offset by seven predominantly Catholic ones. Ticino, the only Italian speaking canton, is Catholic, and the Romansh areas are divided almost entirely equally into religious sections (Wilner 2009, 13). These cross cutting cleavages make it so that no one linguistic or religious group has a strong enough majority to impose its own

political will or interests in federal processes. Despite this, there have been some language based divisions observed in Swiss history. During the First World War, political alliances were created based on language with the “Linguistic Trench” that divided Swiss support between the pro-Axis German Swiss and the neutral oriented French Swiss, though these alliances did not materialize past verbal or symbolic support (Wimmer 2002, 236). There was a similar linguistic division which occurred during the Second World War, albeit much more short lived than the aforementioned occurrence, wherein Swiss Germans sympathized with Germany, and the Swiss French sympathized with France. This was quickly dissolved when Germany invaded Belgium, and Swiss German support to the Axis powers evaporated due to their actions being seen as “anti-democratic” and opposing the Swiss ideals of liberty and democracy (Halbrook 1998, 20). Language, which has been previously presented as one of the biggest markers of ethnic and cultural distinctness, is reflective of the prominent ethnic group of a certain canton, and Swiss culture in regards to food and music is a mosaic of these different ethnic groups.

### *Additional Considerations*

Switzerland is a much wealthier state than the former two cases of Yugoslavia and Lebanon both today and how it fared economically in the latter half of the 20th century. For this reason, it can be argued that Switzerland’s financial resources are the reason for its avoidance of social unrest to the same extent as Yugoslavia and Lebanon. In order to work

against this claim, this case study will still include some contextual information from the 20th century, but there will be a greater focus on an earlier time period in Swiss history when it was not as wealthy and faced some degree of social dissatisfaction, yet avoided all out war or state dissolution.

Further, despite it being a state with three different primary ethnic and linguistic groups, the Swiss state has not seen ethnic violence unfold in the same manner as the previous two cases, and most tensions and fighting have been along religious lines, most notably the Sonderbund Wars. Part of what has classified Swiss conflicts as religious ones is that in this case, religion does not fall along starkly ethnic lines, but also in how Swiss nationalism was formed. Swiss nationalism was not built on ethnic attachments, rather it was built on political and military cooperation early on, and Switzerland has for much of history been regarded as a network of groups and communities agreeing to cooperate. Swiss geography also encouraged localism but discouraged large-scale ethnic dominance. This is an important context to bear in mind when making comparisons with the Swiss case and the others because it provides clarity to the nature of historic social unrest in Switzerland.

### *Economic Conditions*

Switzerland was one of a number of European countries which saw growth-stimulating political and economic institutions in the 20th century, though it was between 1870-1950 that Switzerland exhibited the highest

level of economic growth of all European countries. Before the turn of the 20th century, this was primarily due to its strong positioning in the most prominent sectors of the First Industrial Revolution, these being textiles and watch making, and in chemical, machine, and electrical industries at the end of the 19th century (David and Mach 2006, 5). During the decades leading up to the First World War, Switzerland also boasted a strong financial sector from bank activity, facilitating investment opportunities and growth of its industrial sectors (David and Mach 2006, 5). Changes in the industrial sector after the First World War saw the once leading textile market decline and instead the metal and machine industry become important to the Swiss economy. The success of these industries is attributed to its capacity to integrate foreign technologies and adapt them to fit Swiss functions (Paquier 1998). The Swiss banking sector also continued to grow in the 20th century, and the stability of the Swiss franc was crucial to an otherwise unstable international financial order. Swiss banks benefited heavily from the neutrality of the state, especially during the two world wars (David and Mach 2006, 6).

Before Switzerland expanded its economy to include its modern associations of high quality chocolate, watches, and banking, the country was relatively poor with little natural resources. In 1820, Switzerland was on the low end of countries based on GDP, with the Netherlands having a 70% higher GDP per capita than Switzerland (Weder and Weder 2009, 5). By the eve of the First World War, however, Switzerland's GDP per capita

was surpassed only by the United States and the United Kingdom (Weder and Weder 2009, 5). The time before the twentieth century is seen as a “pre-statistical era” wherein necessary data about wages and living standards is missing or largely theoretical. Despite this, research has attempted to fill some gaps in data, and it is an accepted idea that agriculture and farming incomes were crucial for the lower classes of rural Switzerland and that it was the textile industry that employed more than half the workforce in the middle of the nineteenth century (Weder and Weder 2009, 7-9). Though the economy was shaky in the nineteenth century, there was a poor rural population, and emigration was quite high, it is said to be political factors that contributed to the stability of the state through this period. Further, the transformation of the Swiss economy is attributed by Beatrice Weder and Rolf Weder to a combination of economic competition, which encouraged innovation and efficiency, and political stability which stabilized the government with effective checks and balances (Weder and Weder 2009, 8). A high degree of competition came from the internationalization and openness of the Swiss economy. Because Switzerland had a small domestic market, it had to internationalize early on, with most of their domestic products such as chemicals, watches, silk, and chocolate being exported (Himmel 1992, 2). Swiss firms also sought to increase foreign investments at the end of the nineteenth century, with a growing number of multinational firms being based in Switzerland (Weder and Weder 2009, 9).

As was previously mentioned, the success of the Swiss economy is backed by its political stability. A depression hit Switzerland, and the rest of Europe in the 1870s, but through the establishment of a referendum which integrated all major political actors into decision making processes, Switzerland was able to come out of the depression with an environment that was favorable to investments and growth in the early 20th century (David and Mach 2006, 6-7). Two other political institutions were important to the economic growth of Switzerland - institutions of conflict resolution, which supported social stability of the Swiss economy, and the weakness of the central state. The latter promoted the institutionalization of public and private partnerships, which provided various goods at both the federal and cantonal level (David and Mach 2006, 7-8). Along with the referendum, the early democratization of Switzerland in the 1880s helped weaken political and economic polarization. The Swiss form of democracy and decision making processes restrict the abuse of power and guarantee high degrees of stability, and is highly skilled in finding compromises for all potential players (Weder and Weder 2009, 13). Though it had a history of being one of the poorer countries in Europe, Switzerland saw a reciprocal relationship form between political stability and economic growth. Economic growth came as a result of political stability and political stability only increased with higher economic growth as people experienced less dissatisfaction with the governance system and other groups.

There has been very little foreign influence on the Swiss state, with the most notable instance of this being Napoleonic rule of the federation, beginning in 1798. The French army occupied Switzerland within just a few days, and this was the first and only time in the country's long history that it was ever occupied by another country. With the ideas of the Enlightenment, several Swiss cantons experienced small scale rebellions demanding various rights and changes to the constitution, and looked to the French revolution and the prominent Helvetic Club in Paris for inspiration. The Helvetic Club was made up of Swiss exiles in Paris who sought to support and bring ideas of the French revolution to the Swiss Confederation. Napoleon saw the rebellion taking place and used the pull towards the Helvetic Club to influence further rebellions in Switzerland (de Syon 2018). A Helvetic revolution followed, with Basel, Zurich, and Schaffhausen being the first cantons to experience governmental change, and French troops invaded so as to occupy the Catholic cantons. The French maintained control over Switzerland during this time, including the control of some strategically important alpine passes, and because of its control remodeled Switzerland into the Helvetic Republic. Austria challenged the French army in Switzerland in 1799, but French troops triumphed and retained control of the republic (de Syon 2018). From this point until 1802, the Helvetic Republic witnessed a major struggle between two Swiss parties: the "Unitarier", a party that wanted to maintain a centralized state, and the Federalists who wanted to see a looser union. Small scale confrontations

occurred until Marshall Ney, a negotiator, was able to get representatives of the thirteen cantons to reduce the number of states to just six. This allowed for standardized currency and less press censorship (de Syon 2018). This time period became known as the Mediation Period in Swiss history, wherein there was peace but not independence.

The Act of Mediation of 1803 restored the Swiss Confederation by bringing with it a new constitution, though Switzerland remained a part of the French Empire until 1815. The Act was a compromise between old and new ideals of the Swiss confederation. It sought to bring back traditional Swiss institutions and governance whilst also embodying ideals of the Enlightenment through its ending the class system and calling for equality between cantons (Marabello 2023, 49). Napoleon himself recognized the uniqueness of Switzerland as a federal state with such extreme differences in customs and religion, so he sought to placate leaders by reflecting ideals of the Old Swiss Confederation within the new constitution (Marabello 2023, 49). Following the Act of Mediation, Switzerland did not experience intense nationalism against Napoleon, as was seen particularly in Spain and Russia, and it was not until Napoleon's defeat in Russia in 1812 that the Swiss finally turned against him (Marabello 2023, 50). It was following Napoleon's abdication in 1814 that Switzerland returned to its federal status. The Congress of Vienna sought to reinstate Swiss independence and agreed, with the other European powers, to permanently recognize Swiss neutrality, and affirm it as a state independent from any foreign influence

within European policy (Sherman 1918, 249). This recognition from the Congress of Vienna as a buffer state effectively redesigned Switzerland into a neutral, federal democratic state. Switzerland also created the Federal Pact of 1815 which recognized the equal powers of the cantons while the central government lost power, though this new weakened federal government did not last long.

Napoleon's changes to the Swiss constitution caused decades of continuous constitutional updates and further changes, even when he was no longer in power. Revolutions swept through Europe in 1848 and Switzerland was no exception - seven Catholic cantons were set to secede, but Protestant cantons united to squash this endeavor and unify to create a new constitution. The creation of a new constitution would have to follow a similar foundation as that of the United States, with two houses in legislature, one being dominated by the cantons and one by the people (Everdell 2000, 83). Thus, the constitution granted cantons much independence including their right to having their own constitutions, governments, judiciary systems, and implementation of taxes and policies, though overall, supreme powers were vested in federal institutions (Tsachevski 2014, 36). This constitution that followed intense religious tensions saw Switzerland become a modern, unified nation whilst keeping its traditional ideals of neutrality and "quasi-independent cantons" (Marabello 2023, 53). Ultimately, this unique system of government in Switzerland has roots in the French Constitution of 1795, and Napoleon's

reign, being the only instance of foreign intervention in Swiss history, has had long lasting, albeit positive, impacts on the Swiss state.

### *Religion in Government*

Neutrality is not the only prominent feature of the Swiss federal government - the federation also has an extensive legislature relating to religious freedom, which is seen as part of the reason for Swiss peace. Religion underwent major reforms in nineteenth century Switzerland, much having to do with contradictory movements regarding the role of the state in religion. The first movement sought to nationalize religion much in the same way that education was - to make it a public service of the welfare state. The second movement wanted to make the religious institutions independent of governments and their decisions (Scholl 2020, 336). These two movements did not fall along starkly Catholic or Protestant lines, rather they divided those within confessional communities themselves. During this time period, known as the *Kulturkampf*, Swiss-Protestants and Catholics of the Liberal-Radical movement did not want to completely demote religious matters to their private lives through the separation of church and state. Rather, both sides recognized that Christianity was an important element of their personal and national identity, but that in order to modernize the state, there needed to be some deprivation of the outdated authority of the church, and religion itself needed to be transformed into individual freedoms (Scholl 2020, 347). On the other hand, Evangelical Protestants and Roman Catholics promoted independence of the church from the state

through the spread of conservative theological worldviews. Evangelicals held this belief so that they could better promote communities of converts, and Roman Catholics held fast to this idea so as to avoid political influence in the organizational structure of the church (Scholl 2020, 347). It is this historical context that paved the way for the enshrining of religious freedom into the 1874 Swiss Constitution. The objective of this constitution was to restrict the influence of conservative ideas on Christianity by preserving the freedom of conscience and belief - both of these being individual rights - into the constitution. Freedom of worship and the guarantee that one could choose their own religion was enshrined within this constitution, and this 1874 legislation sought to encompass as many of the conflicting background ideas as it could whilst remaining steadfast in ensuring religious freedom (Scholl 2020, 347-348). This history shows how confessionalism and secularism were not two contradictory movements in Switzerland, rather they were both a part of the modernization of the state. This constitution opened the way for the state to recognize a plurality of religions, including those that were non-Christian or atheist. This confessional system diminished the religious battles found in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and birthed the still present freedom of religion in Switzerland.

Historically a confessional state which allowed each canton to determine the religious denomination of its inhabitants, much of the religious affairs in Switzerland are up to the discretion of the individual

cantons. On this level, the state recognizes different privileged statuses for certain religious communities, and has, in more recent history, had to grapple with the rise of religious plurality from non-Western religious communities that are growing in the state (de Mortanges 2015, 687). In the constitution following the War of the Sonderbund, religious freedoms were restricted to Christian denominations, though this changed with the 1874 constitution which recognized a broader set of religions. The confederation of Switzerland does not favor any religion, and further, due to the cantons having their own laws regarding a state church, there technically exist 26 different systems of state church law. Despite this, it is up to the Confederation to establish legislation on religiously relevant issues such as asylum and refugee laws, pastoral care in the military, and development aid (de Mortanges 2015, 698). There exists no federal administrative office which deals with religion in Switzerland. The various religious communities must seek different people to contact in the federal government depending on the nature of their question. Further, it is common for a delegation of members of all major religious communities to meet if a member of the Federal Council receives religious communities (de Mortanges 2015, 689). The purpose of this is to avoid one religious community having privileged access over the others between religious sects. Political parties also tend to avoid any religious affiliations. The major party platforms in Switzerland have neutral philosophies of life, and though some smaller parties have platforms with religious characteristics, these parties are of little

importance to Swiss political processes (de Mortanges 2015, 698). The state does everything in its power to maintain neutrality in most political, foreign, and religious affairs, in order to maintain the internal stability of the Swiss state.

## Analysis

As the cases of Yugoslavia, Lebanon, and Switzerland, have demonstrated, the drivers of social unrest constitute complex variables and can have intricate linkages to religion and ethnicity. Social unrest can have different contributing variables wherever it occurs, and even similar conditions can have vastly different effects. As is seen in the literature, social unrest has a wide range of defining characteristics, and not all are linked to religious and ethnic ties, though these can be used by either internal and external forces to incite social instability. In the former Yugoslavia, religion was used as a tool to separate otherwise closely similar ethnic groups, and factors such as foreign intervention and economic disparity had a larger role in the dissolution of the state in the late 20th century. In Lebanon, foreign interests played a very important role in the stability, or lack thereof, of the state, as well as the pervasiveness of religion in government. Unlike the situations in the former Yugoslavia and Lebanon, Switzerland has not been marred by continuous social unrest. Though cases of unrest and conflict have been observed in the history of the country, particularly during its formative eras, this violence has stemmed

primarily from linguistic differences, with some major conflicts and tensions arising from religious alliances. As has been seen in the historical background of the nation, the strength of the federation and various constitutional changes as well as fluctuation of the centralization of the state have had impacts on the levels of social unrest. In each case, the independent variables had varying levels of importance, and could be emphasized or diminished depending on the presence or absence of another.

### *Alternative Hypothesis*

Both the former Yugoslavia and Lebanon were former territories of the Ottoman Empire. One could hypothesize that their tendency towards social unrest is a result of their shared Ottoman roots as opposed to resulting from any of the previously mentioned independent variables. To negate this, one can look to the multi-ethnic state of Egypt as another basis for comparison. Also a former Ottoman Empire country, this nation experienced significant political and social transformations in the 20th century, including gaining independence from British rule and dealing with the rise of pan-Arab nationalism. Additionally, Egypt is a diverse state with a population composed of Egyptian Arabs, Nubians, and Bedouins, with the primary religious denominations being Sunni Muslims, Coptic Christians, Shia Muslims, smaller Christian denominations, and a small population of Baha'is.

Although Egypt, Yugoslavia, and Lebanon all emerged from the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, their experiences with social unrest in the 20th century diverged significantly. While Yugoslavia and Lebanon both suffered deep ethnic and sectarian fragmentation—culminating in civil war and state collapse in the former and prolonged political instability in the latter—Egypt maintained a comparatively unified national identity and avoided large-scale social unrest along communal lines. This difference lies largely in the state-building strategies adopted after independence. In Egypt, leaders such as Gamal Abdel Nasser promoted a strong, centralized state rooted in Arab nationalism, which downplayed ethnic and sectarian distinctions in favor of a cohesive Egyptian identity.

Following the defeat of the Ottoman Empire after World War I, the British, who had already heavily involved themselves in Egyptian political affairs, saw this nation as one that was becoming increasingly strategically important. There was a rising nationalist sentiment during the war when Egypt was declared a British protectorate in 1914, and the end of the first world war only intensified Egyptian calls for independence. The key turning point came when the Wafd Party led by Saad Zaghlul demanded Egyptian representation at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference (Ikeda 2022, 400). The British exiled Zaghlul and other nationalist leaders which sparked the Egyptian Revolution, and widespread protest and civil disobedience forced the British to reconsider their position. In 1922, the British unilaterally declared Egypt's independence and ended the formal protectorate (Ikeda

2022, 400). The declaration was limited, however, and Britain retained control over Egyptian foreign affairs, defense, communication, and the protection of foreign interest and minorities (Desplat 2022). Egypt became an independent constitutional monarchy following the declaration, and its state building efforts were marked by attempts to establish constitutional governance and assert national sovereignty, but these efforts were continuously challenged by residual colonial influence (Desplat 2022).

What allowed Egypt to remain a unified state despite British involvement was its well-established sense of territorial and historical identity rooted in long, continuous civilization (Doran 2006, 97). Unlike Yugoslavia with its federal ethnic republics or Lebanon with its confessional system, Egypt did not institutionalize sectarian or ethnic differences within its political system. While Coptic Christians and other ethnic minorities existed, they were not granted separate political representation or autonomy. Egypt also had central institutions such as a national bureaucracy, judiciary system, and an education system that helped reinforce state authority. Though the British maintained significant control over some of these institutions, their centrality provided a framework for internal governance that was not fractured along ethnic or sectarian lines. Additionally, it was actions taken by British forces such as forcing the King Faruq to appoint a Wafdist government in 1942, which was seen as a humiliation of the king, that made Egyptians view the complete and unconditional evacuation of the British as the only way to secure

independence (Doran 2006, 98). Finding little support in the international arena, Egyptians sought solace in inter-Arab politics, and Cairo leading the movement to establish the Arab League extended its regional influence in such a way that it weakened Britain (Doran 2006, 100). Gamel Abdel Nasser of Egypt was also the leader of the rising Arab nationalist movement which gave Egypt a strong sense of unity (Hirst 2012, 69). The rise of Egyptian nationalism, particularly through movements such as Nasserist pan-Arabism served as a rallying point across class and community lines. This nationalism was successfully framed as independence without ethnic or religious terms, but as a shared national project which united Egyptians against foreign domination rather than each other.

Egypt's economic conditions in the 20th century also played a role in both supporting state stability and fueling underlying tensions. Egypt's economy was historically anchored in agriculture and particularly cotton production which was in high demand on international markets, especially in Britain. It was cotton as an export in the international economy that had impacts not only on the modernization of the Egyptian economy but also on political institutions, social relations, and economic organization (Owen 1993). The modernization and transformation of Egypt's economy led to unprecedented improvements in Egyptian living standards relative to the early history of the country and to peripheral Middle Eastern countries (Yousef 2002, 561). This era of rapid growth in the late 19th century came to an end in the early 20th century, however, when labor productivity

decreased (Issawi 1961). This decline in productivity led to rural incomes either stagnating or falling, a pattern seen first in the early 20th century, then again at the outbreak of World War II. In both cases, the wages and living standards of rural workers were hit the hardest (Yousef 2002). Rural inequality remained extreme, and agrarian unrest occasionally flared, particularly in the 1930s and 1940s. This inequality was so extreme that in 1952, before agrarian reforms took place, the top 1% of landowners controlled over 42% of privately owned agricultural land (Moshrif 2025, 1). Through strong reforms, this figure was reduced to just 27% by 1980, with the most notable gains being achieved by middle landowners (Moshrif 2025, 1). Agrarian reforms were integral to reducing inequalities and the concentration of wealth in the hands of top landowners.

What the case of Egypt shows in comparison to the former Ottoman states of Yugoslavia and Lebanon is that these shared historical roots do not explain the divergent patterns of social unrest in these states. Egypt demonstrates that Ottoman administrative heritage does not predetermine instability, as Egypt maintained territorial cohesion and avoided the widespread sectarian or ethnic conflict seen in Yugoslavia and Lebanon. This suggests that the roots of unrest lie less in Ottoman institutional legacies and more in how states managed identity, economic inequality, and power distribution in the post-imperial period. Egypt's centralized governance, strong national identity, and lack of institutionalized

sectarianism were key in maintaining stability, even amid external pressures and internal disparities.

### *Comparisons/Results*

Of my findings, I found the comparisons between the independent variables of foreign intervention to be quite illuminating in regards to the subject matter. Though all three cases historically experienced levels of foreign intervention and influence in their states, the depth of influence had greater impacts on Yugoslavia and primarily Lebanon. Upon conducting the Lebanese case study, I found that the French Mandate and creation of the government system as divided on sectarian lines played a significant role in exacerbating social tensions among ethnic and religious lines. The system created by the French gave more power to Maronite Christians over the other sects and made unity and cooperation between them unobtainable, thus social unrest reached its peak in the 1975 at the start of the civil war. During this war Israel and Syria both continued their involvement which added a layer of conflict between the spread of pan-Arabism and continued attachments to the West into the mix. Both of these countries sought to advance their own interests while Lebanon struggled under the war which raged within its borders. The Shia and Sunni Muslim populations were not able to peacefully express their grievances within the framework of the sectarian system, and foreign entities only made this worse, as also exemplified by President Camille Chamoun repressing these sects. This repression led to the violent outbreaks in 1958 that saw U.S. intervention in

order to prevent civil war from breaking out at this time. The acts by Chamoun as well as the early involvement of the French, then from Israel and Syria contributed to long standing social instability in Lebanon, and following the war, though the Taif Accord sought to solve the sectarian nature of the Lebanese governance system, tensions remained unchanged.

Comparatively, the foreign intervention in Yugoslavia, while a very important factor in creating early religious and ethnic divides between sects, was not the only prominent variable- economic inequalities also had a hand in social dissolution. Economic challenges, particularly leading up to the Yugoslav Civil Wars were taking place alongside political reforms which slowly saw the single country of Yugoslavia become more and more decentralized. The economic recession throughout Europe in the 1970s created structural inequalities within Yugoslavia which destabilized the population as people turned to religious differences as an explanation for disparities between the republics. It was not merely the fact that Yugoslavia was in an economic recession that spurred it towards state dissolution, but where other countries in Europe were able to adapt their economic systems to push them out of recession, Yugoslavia's economy was poorly managed, and gaps in investments in technology put it behind other countries. Switzerland, for example, was able to adapt its economy during this recession to manage inequalities and maintain social cohesion in the state. Economic instability in Yugoslavia led to people of one religious or ethnic sect blaming others for their troubles rather than state leaders, and

weakened the social cohesion of the state. This combined with the historical context of religion being used as a tool for division by foreign powers led up to the dissolution of the state in the 1990s.

One pattern that I found compelling throughout my research was the draw of the Western world and idea of it as rich and prosperous. Yugoslavia and Lebanon were in unique regions of the world being called the bridge and the gateway to the Middle East, respectively. This is a delicate position to be in, particularly when it comes to foreign powers seeing the benefit in controlling these areas to advance their own interests. Christianity plays an intricate role here, with the Christian sects in both Yugoslavia and Lebanon holding the majority of pro-Western views, and wanting to see their countries integrate with Western ideals. Croatia and Slovenia are prime examples of this pull, having a majority Christian population, as well as being previously ruled by the Habsburg Empire, giving them strong attachments to Western Europe where Serbia, Montenegro, and Macedonia favored Russia and the East, and Bosnia was associated with Islam and the far east. This divided sects between those that were wanting to see themselves integrated to the idea of the prosperous West, and those that were weary of it. A similar case is seen in Lebanon, with Christian sects wanting to adopt the ideals spurred by the French and the West. This is exemplified further in the friction between pan-Arabism and integration to the West. Switzerland being situated in central Europe, as well as its major sects falling under the umbrella of Christianity, did not have this push and

pull between East and West, and this facet perhaps offered more in terms of social cohesion and avoiding major unrest than is credited for.

In regards to the religious freedom and presence of religion in government in each state, there are some worthy comparisons to point out. In the former Yugoslavia, freedom of religion was written into the constitution, but there was often discord among state leaders about the establishment of a state religion, and differing religious identities between Serbs and Croats tended to pervade the so-called secular government. This is an interesting case because though there was an extensive legislature to solidify religious freedom, it was a very large part of identity for many citizens across every republic of Yugoslavia, and it was not able to be diminished in societal importance. Lebanon and Switzerland on the other hand both enshrine religious freedom in their constitutional frameworks and formally recognize the rights of religious communities to exist. However, the outcomes of these similar legal principles diverge sharply as a result of the broader political and institutional contexts in which they operate. In Lebanon, religious freedom is embedded within a confessional system that allocates political power along sectarian lines with the distinction of President, Prime Minister, and Speaker of the House being given to a Christian, Shia Muslim, and Sunni Muslim, respectively. While this model ensures representation for various religious groups, it also entrenches sectarian identities and fosters competition between communities, contributing to political paralysis and periodic unrest. In

contrast, Switzerland's model of religious freedom functions within a decentralized federal system that emphasizes individual rights, civic integration, and cantonal autonomy. While religious communities are acknowledged and respected, political identity is not formally tied to religion, allowing for greater flexibility and cohesion within the state. This contrast illustrates that constitutional guarantees of religious freedom alone are not sufficient to ensure stability, rather how religion is embedded in the political system significantly influences whether diversity leads to conflict or coexistence. It is also important to note that while Switzerland remains very secular in how they treat religion, it is not a utopia for religious freedom - religions outside of the umbrella of Christianity, primarily those under Islam, face heavier restrictions for public practice and the kinds of religious garb they can wear in public, and Islamophobia pervades some aspects of Swiss society, particularly in recent years.

Homogeneity as it relates to each case tended to be an interesting factor, particularly when examining the independent variable of cultural distinctness. When looking purely at the makeup of the ethnic groups, Switzerland is the country with the most distinctly separated ethnic groups over Yugoslavia and Lebanon. The Swiss sects did not often have to intermingle for prolonged periods of time, and none of the groups had more power over the other because of their cantonally separated governments. Where Lebanon has ethnic groups living in close proximity with each other, if not entirely mixed in some parts such as Beirut, Switzerland's geographic

features keep it largely separated between its French, Italian, and German cantons. To further illustrate the impacts this could have had on fighting, one can turn to the Yugoslavia case. The most intense fighting occurred in Bosnia and specifically Sarajevo which had substantial populations of all three sects living there. Conversely, the areas of Serbia and Croatia that were homogenous did not experience severe fighting though still being involved in conflict. Where the ethnic groups in Switzerland were kept separated both by cantons and also by geographic features, the ethnic makeup of Lebanon and particularly Bosnia could have contributed to the level of social unrest and severity of conflict.

Language also plays a crucial role here in shaping ethnic identity and is often a central marker distinguishing one group from another in multi-ethnic states. It is also a key factor in political inclusion, cultural recognition, and social cohesion. In Yugoslavia, the politicization of ethnic and linguistic divisions contributed to its fragmentation and conflict, as language became aligned with nationalist sentiments, eventually leading to the state's disintegration. Lebanon's sectarian framework, which includes both religious and linguistic divides, institutionalizes group identity but often reinforces divisions rather than promoting integration. In contrast, Switzerland demonstrates how language can be acknowledged and accommodated through federalism and inclusive governance, allowing multiple linguistic and ethnic communities to coexist with relative stability. Thus, the intersection of language and ethnic identity is not merely

symbolic—it shapes access to power, resources, and recognition, making it a critical factor in either mitigating or amplifying social unrest. These three cases all illustrate how the connection between ethnicity is not solely cultural, but deeply political, influencing both the risks and resilience of multi-ethnic societies. Overall, though no one factor in each case alone could have swayed peace of unrest, there exist differences in which variables were more prominent in their tendency towards social unrest.

## Conclusion

The development of social unrest is a highly complex issue, and one that must be explained through the analysis of multiple variables. As has been seen in the cases of Yugoslavia, Lebanon, and Switzerland, multi-ethnic states are susceptible to social unrest due to both their status as heterogeneous states, and other factors such as economic inequality and foreign influence. Despite this, as the case of Switzerland shows, it is possible to minimize the severity of, or even entirely avoid, social unrest. In all three cases, religious and ethnic differences played an intricate role in the development of social unrest. Instances of social unrest exist worldwide at varying levels, thus the question explored in this paper focused on the causes of social unrest, particularly in multi-ethnic states where ethnic and religious differences impacted the severity of unrest. This question was examined using cases from three distinct regions, which made it possible to examine the similarities and differences among the regions as well as the

states. Ultimately, the conclusion I arrived at after examining the cases of Yugoslavia, Lebanon, and Switzerland, was that while there exist many observable relationships between independent factors and social unrest, it is quite difficult to determine which single factor would have set off an outbreak of social unrest. Rather, many factors must be in place to create conducive conditions to high levels of social unrest such as civil war or state dissolution.

### *Hypothesis*

The primary hypothesis that was tested in this study was that high levels of foreign intervention lead to social unrest in multi-ethnic states. Through research and qualitative analysis, I found support for this hypothesis, though as has been previously mentioned, this variable alone is not sufficient in explaining the causes of social unrest in multi-ethnic states. While foreign influences often increase divides among ethnic and religious groups, there must be other factors present to push people towards social violence. The other independent variables must be present along with the ability of groups to organize and communicate, and strong, charismatic leadership to promote group mobilization. These are two variables that could be further investigated.

My research confirmed that there is a relationship between high levels of foreign intervention and influence and social unrest within multi-ethnic states. Across time periods and regions, times of high foreign interference fostered more social instability and increased internal tensions.

In Lebanon in particular, much violence was borne from foreign regimes and the severity of conflict in this state was heavily influenced by surrounding regional conflicts such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the 20th century. There is some difficulty with this hypothesis in the case of Switzerland, however. Though it was under French rule in the 19th century and ethnic and religious tensions were heightened, the state avoided widespread violent social unrest. Additionally, despite the state's majority German population, it did not involve itself in the Second World War, and remained neutral. A strong, secular government seems to be an important factor in this case, though further investigation is needed to evaluate how the state is able to maintain its aggressively neutral foreign policy.

#### *Additional Findings*

In completing the case studies for this paper, I was able to make two strong conclusions about the causes of social unrest in multi-ethnic states. First, religious and ethnic differences play a more nuanced role when applying them to economic and political disparities. I expected to find strong ties between how religious beliefs determine political affiliations, and while this is a factor in social unrest, the role is not what I had initially thought it to be. Islam and Christianity certainly play large roles in the life of an individual, though by themselves they do not spur a person towards violence. Rather, these are facets of a person's identity that can be manipulated into justifications for political and economic inequalities either by a state's own government or by others. In Yugoslavia, political leaders

and the churches themselves blamed economic inequalities on religious differences, with the Orthodox church arguing that the economic prosperity of Croats and lack thereof of Serbs, for example, was due to the fact that they were Catholic, and vice versa. In Lebanon, the political representation of Christian groups over Muslim ones was used to justify hatred between groups, when it was the work of foreign regimes that created this divide. This complicates the role of religion and ethnicity into a pawn to lead people towards violence when the grievances themselves might stem from socioeconomic inequalities.

Second, I found that foreign intervention, even if not its initial purpose, can quickly grow into years or decades long impacts and effects. Western colonialism in the Middle East created borders which at times divided people among ethnic lines or established nations of different sects, such as in Lebanon, that opened the doors for social unrest and instability. Further, interventions in the post colonial period were based on Western economic interests which further exacerbated social tensions. Their interventions either ignored sectarian divides altogether which implies that the long standing effects of intervention were not considered or disregarded, or there was a proclivity towards an ally being in power. This was seen most notably in the case of Maronite Christians in Lebanon. In the former Yugoslavia, the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires being against each other led to decades of Croatia and Slovenia associating themselves with Western Europe, and Serbia, Bosnia, Montenegro, and

Macedonia seeing themselves more in the Eastern sphere - identities that can still be observed in the region. Thus, the effects of Western colonialism and continued foreign interest in these critical regions have had long standing implications for social unrest.

### *Limitations and Further Research*

Though some limitations were discussed in the earlier sections of this paper, there are some important considerations to reexamine. First, because this study focused on only three cases from different regions, the findings can not be generalized or applied to any one specific region. Though it can offer a more global perspective, cases from the same region would allow for a better understanding of the kinds of factors that pertain to that specific area and would narrow the scope of research for a more comprehensive understanding. Since the study looks at different religious divides such as Islam and Christianity, Catholic and Protestant, and Catholic and Eastern Orthodox, it is able to give a glimpse into the historical tensions between them, but a paper focusing on just one of these fractures would allow for a deeper analysis. Further, it is important to understand the entire history of each of the cases in order to properly examine the factors that led up to violent social unrest, and while my paper does offer a brief history of each state with context that relates to war or state dissolution, there is room for overlooked events or facts that might have contributed to the outbreak of social conflict. Each of these cases could warrant an entire

study in order to understand the breadth of conflicts and flows between peace and violence.

There are some areas for further research that I believe warrant attention. Further attention and research should be given to the question of religion in politics. Though there are cases wherein highly secular governments have very low levels of social unrest, policy should still adhere to religious freedoms for citizens. Though there are cases wherein highly secular governments have very low levels of social unrest, attention should be given to how the pervasiveness of religion in government can influence or circumvent social unrest. Research could also look further into how cultural similarities impact social cohesion, and the relationship between cross-cultural understanding and social unrest within a multi ethnic state. This could help to better understand how a general understanding for other sects could seek to diffuse or shift how social unrest develops.

### *Final Thoughts*

In conclusion, the development of social unrest in multi-ethnic states is a complicated process of social, political, and economic factors. Multi-ethnic states are incredibly rich in cultural diversity and history, but it can also make them susceptible to higher levels of social unrest along religious and ethnic lines. Though I believe this thesis offers a solid overall picture of the drivers of social unrest, further specialized research and investigation can be conducted for increased understanding of the subject. This thesis confirms that factors such as economic inequalities and foreign

interventions play key roles in social unity and how different sects see each other. It is my hope that this thesis will contribute to research that seeks to foster global peace and unity to multi-ethnic states so that their peoples can live together with cultural understanding and recognition of shared history.

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