"Masculinity-under-threat": Sexual Rights Organizations and the Masculinist State in Lebanon

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Abstract

This paper examines the argument of "masculinity-under-threat" as a central crisis of the present nation-state drawing from literature on hegemonic masculinity, nationalism, nation-state building and the masculinist state. Through discourse analysis of material from a desk review, interviews with activists, and the authors' own activism, political masculinity and discourses of "masculinity-under-threat" have been identified as principal forces in both women's and sexual rights struggle in contemporary Lebanon. This paper also discusses activist engagement, appropriation and compromise of what is put forward and defined as masculinity in light of trends towards NGOization and demobilization in Lebanon and discusses emergent "counter-masculinities".

Keywords: *Masculinity, Nationalism, LGBT activism, Women's activism.*

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The early 2000s saw the beginnings of Lebanon's sexual rights movement, partly evolving from left-wing organizations such as *Khat Mubashir* and *al-Yassari* (the Leftist) magazine. The beginnings of sexual rights activism in Lebanon on the public scale could be characterized as subversive activism, culminating in Khat Mubashir's Radical Film Club and it's "Man is a Woman" film festival in 2001.[1] These first developments were in the wake of the Queen Boat "panic" of 2001 in Egypt, which marked the first of many explicit targeting and highly publicized repression of sexual non-conformity in the region over the past generation[2] and inspired a regressive penal code reform in the autumn of 2002 in Lebanon, which intended to increase the scope of the anti-sodomy law (Article 534). Both the Egyptian and Lebanese repressive campaigns invoked a new public enemy of the state – the homosexual. In 2002, members of newly-formed human rights initiative *Hurriyat Khassa* (Private Freedoms) (2001-2007) formed the ad hoc group, Helem, which became an organization in 2004. This very same trajectory participated in the politicization of some feminist organizations in Lebanon, and the first formations of radical feminist organizing later in 2009,[3] which refused both the "elitism of many Lebanese feminist organization" and to allow "the NGO funding structure" a principal role in defining work by left-leaning activists.[4]

However, it is possible to trace the shift in strategy in LGBT organizing in Lebanon, where the subversive activism of the past (as was the case with Khat Mubashir's *Man is Woman* campaign in 2001[5] and the *Ana Shaz* Campaign in 2010[6]) have been largely discarded and replaced by demobilized professionalization and NGOization, following several years of quiet elimination of public spaces for gay cruising and non-conformity, in general, in favor of rampant gentrification,

[1] Ghassan Makarem, "The story of Helem", *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 3, 2011, pp. 98-112; Marie-Noëlle AbiYaghi, *L'altermondialisme au Liban : un militantisme de passage. Logiques d'engagement et reconfiguration de l'espace militant (de gauche) au Liban*, PhD thesis, Université Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne, 2013.

[2] Human Rights Watch, "In a Time of Torture: The assault on justice in Egypt's crackdown on homosexual conduct", *Human Rights Watch*, 2004, available at: http://www.hrw.org/reports/2004/02/29/time-torture [last accessed 22 November 2014].

[3] Bernadette Daou, "Feminisms in Lebanon: after proving loyalty to the "Nation", will the "Body" rise within the "Arab Spring"?", *Civil Society Knowledge Center*, Lebanon Support, Forthcoming, January 2015.

[4] Nadine Naber and Zeina Zaatari, "Reframing the war on terror: Feminist and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) activism in the context of the 2006 Israeli invasion of Lebanon", *Cultural Dynamics*, Vol. 26, No. 1, 2014, pp. 91-111.; Although these "leftist" leaning were constantly renegotiated within Helem as explained in AbiYaghi, 2013, *op.cit*.

[5] Makarem, 2011, *op. cit.*

[6] "Am I Queer? IDAHO 2010", Helem, 2010, available at: http://www.helem.net/?q=node/110 [last accessed 22 November 2014].

including the creation of imaginary queer spaces.[7] While much has been said on the politics of women's and sexual rights movements and organizations, this paper utilizes the concepts of "hegemonic masculinity" and "masculinist states" to further understand women's and LGBT activism around questions of masculinity, in particular.

The present discourse analysis draws from material collected from a desk review, interviews with activists and the authors' own experience in LGBT organizing. The first section of the paper summarizes the theoretical frameworks underlying the paper and discusses political masculinity and it's relation to the postcolonial Lebanese nation-state. The following sections respectively discuss discourses of "masculinity-under-threat" and women's and LGBT activism in relation to state masculinity, while the final section of the paper interrogates the emergence of new "counter-masculinities".

1. Masculinity and the Nation-State

In "Finding the Man in the State" (1991), Wendy Brown unravels the gendering of the state by characterizing the liberal state, at least in the United States, as a "masculinist state". She writes: "State powers are no more gender-neutral than they are neutral with regard to class and race, such an appeal involves seeking protection against men from masculinist institutions."[8] Similarly, but in another current, Robert Connell discusses a historically constructed "hierarchy of masculinities" in society, one that became more apparent with homosexual visibility, where "hegemonic masculinities" are understood as "as the pattern of practice (i.e., things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that allowed men's dominance over women to continue" and "embodied the currently most honored way of being a man [and] required all other men to position themselves in relation to it."[9] While Connell places hegemonic masculinity as a societal force enacted on and by men, an "ascendancy achieved through culture, institutions, and persuasion,"[10] we aim in this paper to begin to approach and test the interaction of the societal and the political through looking at the politically-driven ideal of hegemonic masculinity as enacted by masculinist state power.

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[7] Campaigns against cruising spaces and meeting points such as cinemas or bathhouses have persisted ever since the publicity surrounding Queen Boat; the latest example being the raid on Agha Hammam in Beirut on August 13, 2014 and related state discourse on protecting masculinity; see, for example, Sarah Wansa, "Torture at Every Stage: The Unofficial Narrative of the Hammam al-Agha Raid", *The Legal Agenda*, November 12, 2014, available at http://www.english.legal-agenda.com/article.php?id=665&folder=articles&lang=en [last accessed 5 January 2015]. This could be contrasted to the publicity regarding a more globalized gay nightlife in Beirut in "gay" themed reporting abroad; see, for example, Briand Bedford, "Beirut and Lebanon: The gay paradise of the Arab world", *Gay Star News*, 8 June 2012, available online at http://www.gaystarnews.com/article/beirut-and-lebanon-gay-paradise-arab-world080612 [last accessed 5 January 2015].
[8] Wendy Brown, "Finding the Man in the State", *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 1, 1992, pp. 7-34, available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/3178212 [last accessed 4 December 2014].
[9] Robert W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic masculinity rethinking the concept", *Gender & Society*, Vol. 19, No. 6, 2005, pp. 829-859, available at: http://gas.sagepub.com/content/19/6/829.short [last accessed 4 December 2014].
[10] *Ibid.*, p. 832.

Figure 1: Caricature of the empty presidential seat in Lebanon.[11]

A reiteration of hegemonic masculinity as political masculinity is partly grounded in Joan Nagel's interpolation of masculinity and nationalism in building the state.[12] She writes:

> "By definition, nationalism is political and closely linked to the state and its institutions. Like the military, most state institutions have been historically and remain dominated by men. It is therefore no surprise that the culture and ideology of hegemonic masculinity go hand in hand with the culture and ideology of hegemonic nationalism."[13]

Nationalism, according to Nagel, is intimately linked to masculinism, and has historical roots in the French and Industrial revolutions as part of a process of restructuring local and global politics and "[creating] a national market economy and a viable national bourgeois class."[14] Patriarchy, in Lebanese political formation, is expanded by Suad Joseph in her discussion of nations as "imagined communities" through which women are often used as a critical symbol in inventing the nation. This contributes to rendering the "state" and the "nation" into effectively masculine and feminine gendered constructs, where the male state is designated the task of "protecting" the female Nation.[15]

The on-going militarization of society can be associated with its masculinization, where, we can observe, that political strength of nationalist parties is, at least partly, drawn from the masculinity

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[11] *Daily Star*, Beirut, Editorial Cartoon, December 27, 2014, available online at
http://www.dailystar.com.lb/dailystar/Comics/27-12-2014/376715_635552371698007174_img300x200_img300x200_crop.jpg
[12] Joane Nagel, "Masculinity and nationalism: gender and sexuality in the making of nations", *Ethnic and Racial Studies,* Vol. 21, No. 2, 1998, pp. 242-269, available at:
http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/014198798330007 [last accessed 4 December 2014].
[13] *Ibid.*, p. 249.
[14] Tom Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism*, London, New Left Books, 1977, pp. 333. Cited in Joane Nagel, 1998, *op. cit.*, p. 248.
[15] Suad Joseph, "Gender and Citizenship in the Arab world", Concept Paper, University of California, Davis, 2002, available at: http://www.euromedgenderequality.org/image.php?id=487 [last accessed 4 December 2014].

of the political elite and their militias. This can be seen in the use of sports, military training, and fascist physiological development by nationalist parties (such as the Phalanges, SSNP, and others) and the Statist Left (such as the Communist Party) alike.

Nation-state formation has also come hand in hand with nuclear family formation as the central social institution,[16] and the masculine/feminine divide in labor, for example, as well as their protectionist connotations. Pro-military video clips, featured in 2014 in response to the kidnapping of Lebanese soldiers by Islamist militants on the borders with Syria, continue to depict the victims of the loss of military power as widowed wives and young boys.[17]

2. Women's Organizations: Legal Reformism and the Appropriation of Masculinity

a. Legal Reformism and the Creation of the 'Masculinity-Under-Threat' discourse

While women organizing for their rights in Lebanon could be traced back to women's industrial actions in 19th century silk factories, the women's struggle against patriarchal oppression at the beginning of the 21st century has become "limited to the representations, priorities and strategies of women's organizations, particularly NGOs,"[18] who rarely question the socio-economic aspect of the patriarchal order. The first wave of what could be called a women's movement was involved in the independence of Lebanon, however, a woman was not seen as an identity in herself, but as part of building the nation, resisting oppression, and the issues concerned with the body were forgotten.[19] The second wave, in the 1970s, saw the politicization of women through union and student movements and the engagement of women in political parties in Lebanon, parties from which they were soon sidelined or, in some cases, expelled for advancing feminist issues.

In reaction, rights-based women's and feminist NGOs in Lebanon, identified as third wave feminist organizations, marked the beginning of a transformation in feminist discourse and organizing that diverted from their predecessors.[20] Yet, the question of masculinity, does not seem to be central prior to the emergence of third wave feminist organizing, where it was formally approached in the late 1990s with the emergence of a more visible political participation of women and the beginning of formal engagement on issues of gender-based violence and violence against women, as well as direct engagement in parliamentary political campaigns.

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[16] Akram Fouad Khater, *Inventing Home: Emigration, Gender, and the Middle Class in Lebanon, 1870-1920*, University of California Press, 2001.
[17] For example, Mohamad Iskandar, "*Id Min Hadid* (Iron Fist)", available at
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7gCdTzGrqsY; and Hiba Tawaji, "*Mitl el-Shajar Mazrouin* (Planted Like Trees)", available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cGHWJdC1UXE.
[18] Riwa Salameh, "Gender politics in Lebanon and the limits of legal reformism", *Civil Society Knowledge Center, Lebanon Support,* 2014, available at:
http://cskc.daleel-madani.org/paper/gender-politics-lebanon-and-limits-legal-reformism [last accessed 4 December 2014].
[19] Daou, 2015, *op. cit.*
[20] *Ibid.*

Although third wave women's organizations adopted the tactics of legal reformism, limiting the discussions within legal and professional circles and alienated women from political participation,[21] legal reformism has achieved the provocation of discourse around gender and masculinity at the national level. Most pertinent among those reactions are the ones we identify as constituting discourses of "masculinity-under-threat", noting that this discourse takes shape as an oppositional response to the demands of the women's rights movement in Lebanon.

For as long as Lebanese women have been organizing to be allowed the right of passing on their nationality to their children, a counter political discourse has existed that implicates women's rights with demographic and confessional imbalance. Granting women the right to pass on their nationality constitutes a demographic threat to the "higher interests of the state", with marriage between Lebanese women and Palestinian men being a main concern.[22]

As Lina Abou Habib, coordinator of the nationality campaign, put it: "they are basically saying that women constitute a grave danger to higher state interests."[23] We can identify, at this point, higher state interests as not only concerned with demographics, but also intricately concerned with the gender of citizens, where the naturalization of foreign men, specifically Palestinian and more recently Syrian men, is a threat to the sectarian makeup of the nation-state.

The debates over the domestic violence law saw the most public display of masculinity-under-threat discourses and counter discourses and brought the question of women's rights and masculinity to a national level. A demonstration organized by KAFA on International Women's Day on March 8th, 2014, drew more than 5,000 demonstrators to the cause of domestic violence.[24] However, the demand for state intervention on domestic violence, including marital rape, through a draft law, constituted a significant enough threat to the sectarian state that it warranted a drawn-out campaign, a statement from *Dar al-Fatwa* denouncing the draft law, and dilution of the law in parliamentary committees.[25,26] After revision by parliamentary committees, possibly indicating a process of containment of the women's mobilization, the law was ratified in April 2014.[27] Parliamentary committees removed any special protections to women from the

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[21] *Ibid.*

[22] Olivia Alabaster, "Activist: Rejection of nationality law sets dangerous precedent", *Daily Star*, Beirut, January 16, 2014,
http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Local-News/2013/Jan-16/202419-activist-rejection-of-nationality-law-sets-dangerous-precedent.ashx [last accessed 4 December 2014].

[23] *Ibid.*

[24] *Ibid.*

[25] Tamara Qiblawi, "Women decry Lebanon's domestic violence law", *Al-Jazeera*, English, April 15th 2014,
http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2014/03/women-decry-lebanon-domestic-violence-law-201432711535248894.html [last accessed 4 December 2014].

[26] Azza Sharara Beydoun, "العنف ضد النساء وواجبات الدولة اللبنانية" (Violence against women and the duties of the Lebanese State)", *The Legal Agenda*, 2012, available at: http://legal-agenda.com/article.php?id=156&lang=ar [last accessed 4 December 2014].

[27] Nizar Saghieh, "Interpreting Lebanon's Law Against Domestic Violence: Jurisprudence as Legal Reform", *The Legal Agenda*, June 30, 2014, available at: http://english.legal-agenda.com/article.php?id=626&lang=en [last accessed 4 December 2014].

draft law, criminalized marital rape only if it leads to physical harm, and introduced the precedent of "marital right".[28,29]

Opposition to the domestic violence law, in the form of a statement issued by *Dar al-Fatwa* in April 2011, revolved around the issues of averting conflict between the civil and Islamic courts, "preserving the masculinity and manhood of the male,"[30] and refusing a law that punishes men for physically abusing or having non-consensual sex with their spouses.[31] Mounira, an academic researcher and activist on women's rights, had this to say:

> "It is because it touched upon both the civil and penal law, which often conflict, such as with issues of custody and rape. They changed the penal codes, where they were straight forward, but did not approach the civil laws. The personal status laws are the core of the sectarian state, and the civil law is one of its pillars. Changes in it threatens this construction, this is both a sectarian and masculinist state. Imagine that, if a woman gives her child her last name, everything collapses, all the sectarian connotations of that collapse also."[32]

It is through these examples that we are able to see political masculinity at play, and the role played by discourses of masculinity-under-threat. Women's rights legal reforms are opposed on a masculinist basis – it is said that women's rights not only threaten the masculinity and manhood of men themselves, but threaten the nation and the state. The interpolation of masculinism and nationalism in the formation of the Lebanese nation-state explains this aggressive resistance to the demands of the women's movement and the discourse of 'masculinity-under-threat'. As Nagel explains, "this unseemly, sometimes hysterical resistance to a diversity...makes more sense when it is understood that these men are not only defending tradition but are defending a particular racial, gendered and sexual conception of self: a white, male, heterosexual notion of masculine identity loaded with all the burdens and privileges that go along with hegemonic masculinity."[33] Masculinity is regulated by defining "good" men and "bad" men, through a standard of legitimacy revolving around gender and sex roles. The "good" man becomes the one who protects his family, sect, land and nation. Beyond this, any behavior or identity that threatens this construct can be seen as a threat to political masculinity and cast as a perversion, and morally condemned.

It is from similar experiences of the women's right movement in Lebanon that Brown warns of approaching the state as "provider, equalizer, protector, or liberator"[34] and questions and critiques

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[28] Sharara Beydoun, 2012, *op. cit.*

[29] Salameh, 2014, *op.cit.*

[30] Said by Sheikh Mohammed Bin Darwish Abu Qataa al-Naqshabandi, cited in Jean Aziz, "Islamic clerics Oppose Lebanese Law Protecting Women". *Al-Monitor*, 2013, available at: http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/07/womens-rights-activists-lebanon-domestic-violence-law.html# [last accessed 4 December 2014].

[31] *Ibid.*

[32] Interview with Mounira, November 19, 2014, Beirut. All the names of the interviewees were changes so as to respect their anonymity.

[33] Joane Nagel, 1998, op. cit., p. 254.

[34] Brown, 1992, *op.cit.*

what she calls the "politics of protection and regulation"– feminists appeals to the state for protection from violence through the gender-based regulation of private and public life, by arguing that these demands are fraught by an established, already masculinist, state, one that is "a historical product and expression of male predominance in public life and male dominance generally."[35]

b. Appropriation and the (lack of a) Challenge to Hegemonic Masculinity

Although third wave feminist organizations had strong roots in civil action, experience in political mobilization and the capacity to mass mobilize women on issues such as domestic violence, some organizations drifted towards corporatization and a disconnection from militant activism.[36,37] This shift has been accompanied by activist discourses that seek to appropriate, reshape and redeliver masculinity. One of the most obvious examples is ABAAD's "We Believe" campaign, where bulletin boards state: "Be a Man, Don't Hit your Wife" – in no way complicating what it means to "be a man". Two respondents characterized this process as "adding criteria" to hegemonic masculinity rather than reshaping it.[38] This process is in no way limited to one organization, but the 'engaging men' track can be seen as a recent direction in third wave women's organizing. Riwa, a long-time queer feminist organizer, elaborated:

> "The demand of organizations is one of rights, equality, and calling on men to stand for women's rights. But, there is no demand to think critically about gender and masculinity, and masculinity isn't being deconstructed. There are some organizations that tell men to be 'gentlemen', like the *Koun Rijjel* [Be a Man] campaign. Some organizations are working on masculinity through bolstering it, saying that it is too base for men to be violent, men are better than this, so on. This is taking us into a worse place, where we are compromising with men more than taking our rights."[39]

She also had this to say:

> "If World Vision does a campaign on cleanliness, it says "if you're a mother, close the trash bag". Now, UNICEF has a campaign directed to women saying they are responsible for their child's protection from polio. Civil society revolves more around these gendered thoughts than people themselves. […] Everyone who works on humanitarianism is concerned about cultural sensitivity, often to the point of compromising human rights. […] We don't have organizations that are really feminist, that are actually deconstructing, analyzing. And if there are such organizations, they don't have the resources. No one is interested in supporting anything that wants to do this work. They prefer to do a campaign with the police, and love the UN, love the governmental partnerships. There is also this standard of success, that every time you have an event with someone from government, this is success. The standard of success relies on institutions that are sexist,

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[35] *Ibid.*, p. 12.

[36] Salameh, 2014, *op. cit.*

[37] Daou, 2015, *op. cit.*

[38] Interview respondents Riwa and Mounira, November 19, 2014, Beirut.

[39] Interview with Riwa, Beirut, December 19, 2014.

such as the legislature and the media… this is what gets supported. […] when the UN talks about gender, they say they don't want men to be women or women to men, they want men to be men and women to be women."[40]

The above excerpts bring to light the role of funding agencies in shifting the agenda of women's organizations towards, possibly unwanted, partnerships with government and UN institutions, and therefore contains women's organizations feminist discourse within a statist program. The alternative, a strong critique of political masculinity and active engagement with it is unwanted, unfunded, and neglected.

Furthermore, a second process that can be observed is one of 'appropriating' masculinity in "engaging men" campaigns launched by women's organizations. As Riwa explained:

"There is a state of terror with men, it shows up in conferences and trainings and it is very violent. I face a lot of violence in these places, men scream at me defensively, as if someone is taking something from them. [...] The attention to women's issues is coming in such a segregative way, it is not opening any way for discussion between men and women. NGOs are approaching men and women separately and telling them they are 1, 2, 3, and 4. Programs include only men, or only women, there is no room for them to be together […] Participants are expressing that this kind of masculinity is under attack, there is a reaction of why are you targeting us men and supposing we are violent? Another statement I've heard is along the lines of 'stop comparing us to Europe, Europe isn't better', it comes along with an Arab nationalism that promotes Islam as a savior of women. They then contradict themselves, saying women are 'flowers', and need to be protected."[41]

On one hand, men identify these campaigns as threatening to their masculinity, and are, therefore, defensive; on the other, the threat to masculinity is seen as a western import and an attack on their customs. These insights into the dynamics of masculinity and its interconnection to nationalism imply that rights-based activism has been forced to develop strategies in response to the state's defense and protection of political masculinity and the reconfiguration of masculinity into a 'masculinity-under-threat' discourse by state actors. However, for women's organizations, particularly of the third wave, the tactics of subversion have largely disappeared and may have been replaced by tactics of reshaping masculinity and its appropriation.

Fourth wave feminism has not been addressed directly so far, as it's story is interconnected with that of the LGBT movement. The next section will discuss LGBT politics and political masculinity, where, while subversion marked the beginning of the first decade of sexuality organizing in Lebanon, demobilization and NGOization has marked the end of the decade and a new politics of respectability.

3. LGBT movement: From Subversion to Demobilization

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[40] *Ibid.*
[41] *Ibid.*

a. LGBT Demobilization and "Masculinity Under Threat"

In attempting to advance sexual rights in the public sphere in Lebanon, activists have struggled against the dichotomization of sexuality issues between the contested tropes of "westernized" gay identity and "national" straight identity, while at the same time participating in creating this very same binary both linguistically (*mithli/moghayer*) and discursively. The discussion on masculinity and homosexuality in Lebanon is mired in a homo/hetero political binary, which has come to be constructed, to the detriment of the movement, as a conflict between the (predominantly white) male Westernized homosexual and the Arab/Nationalist (non-white) male heterosexual. What seems to be at stake here, is less the sexual behavior than the performance of homo- and hetero- sexuality, specifically within a heteropatriarchal and capitalist system.[42] For example, while homosexual behavior is legally and socially regulated, it is done so along class lines,[43,44] where it is the poor and the underprivileged who must conform, under punitive threat, to state-sponsored morality. Similarly, transgender persons experience a more intense system of regulation and both social and state policing specifically for their defiance of performing their biologically determined gender and/or sexuality.[45] While race and class are important dimensions of oppression, this section will focus on gender-disciplining under forces of hegemonic and political masculinity, where, similar to the woman's movement, 'masculinity-under-threat' features in state discourse.

On June 9, 2013, Helem's yearly International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT), coincided with Hezbollah's military takeover in al-Qusair and its announcement of active engagement against the Syrian revolution. In its evening news, *Al-Jadeed* TV channel casually characterized the LGBT movement as one that "sings to its own tune" and "neither concerned with politics, nor with war."[46] *Al-Jadeed*'s biases aside, this constitutes a possible reflection of a noticeable demobilization of the sexual rights movement at a time of growing politicization of sexuality at the national level.[47] Following 2011, the Arab revolutions as well as the further militarization of the region, Helem and organizations based on the same framework had to confront a new dilemma, that of direct clashes with regional militarization and discourses of 'masculinity-under-threat'.

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[42] Judith Butler, "Gender as performance: An interview with Judith Butler," *Radical Philosophy*, Vol. 67, No.1, 1994, pp. 32-39.

[43] Lara Damaghi, Alena Mack and Doris Jaalouk, "A case study of the first legal, above-ground LGBT organization in the MENA region", Helem, 2009, availablee at: http://helem.net/?q=node/55 [last accessed 22 November 2014].

[44] Wansa, 2014, *op. cit.*

[45] Ahmad J. Saleh and Adriana A. Qubaia, "Transwomen's Navigation of Arrest and Detention In Beirut: A Case Study", Lebanon Support, *Civil Society Knowledge Center*, Gender Equity and Information Network, January 15, 2015, available at

http://cskc.daleel-madani.org/paper/transwomen%E2%80%99s-navigation-arrest-and-detention-beirut-case-study [last accessed on January 16, 2015].

[46] Al Jadeed Evening News, 9 June 2013, available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q4R7gk2HWOw [Arabic] [last accessed 28 November 2014].

[47] Maya Mikdashi, "Moral Panics, Sex Panics and the Production of a Lebanese Nation", *Jadaliyya*, February 22, 2014, available at:

http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/16570/moral-panics-sex-panics-and-the-production-of-a-le [last accessed 4 December 2014].

This discourse was crystallized, perhaps, in a highly-publicized incident in December 2013, when Antoine Chakhtoura, the Mayor of suburb of Dekwaneh, north of Beirut, ordered a highly mediatized arrest and humiliation of transgender individuals. The mayor's campaign condemned "moral perversions" as a threat to his municipality, characterizing Dekwaneh as a "Fortress of Resilience".[48] Chakhtoura's condemnation was linked to the preservation of militarized masculinity and sectarian pride. This public engagement with sexual politics by sectarian and nationalist political actors constitutes a development in sexuality politics in advancing the argument of masculinity-under-threat, where, previously, the repression of sexual rights through security arms did not require justification. The argument of masculinity-under-threat was more recently reiterated at the Zouk Mikhael Music Festival by a politician who opposed a gay-identifying band from performing.[49]

Figure 2: Banner raised in Dekwaneh in 2013, it read: "Let your paths be straight and do not deviate (Prophets of the Word - Dekwaneh)"[50]

The question of hegemonic masculinity, implicitly tied to political participation and mobilization, has been contentiously debated in Helem since its founding.[51] Faithful to a universalizing LGBT discourse, where the basis for Helem's mobilization was on sexual behavior and not political ideology, Helem underwent chronic political paralysis due to a political divide that progressively polarized the organization. This struggle between mobilization and demobilization led to a crisis in 2006, during the Israeli war on Lebanon, which revolved around political participation and mobilization. The rift in the LGBT movement in 2006 manifested around a leftist membership that called for political engagement with the national struggle and the opening of the organization's doors to refugees, on one end, and the more identitarian membership that called for an exclusive focus on gay rights as the ceiling for engagement.[52] The severity of the war ultimately required a forced opening of Helem's doors to the displaced refugees and political contact of Helem with national parties and the

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[48] Karim Nammour, "Dekwaneh's "No Gay Land" triggers debate on homophobia", *The Legal Agenda*, December 2, 2013, available at: http://english.legal-agenda.com/article.php?id=562&lang=en [last accessed 4 December 2014].
[49] "Mashrou' Leila's Zouk Festival "gay" performance goes ahead despite pre-concert homophobia controversy", *Daily Star*, English, Beirut, August 4, 2014, available at:
http://www.albawaba.com/entertainment/mashrou'-leila-594287 [last accessed 4 December 2014].
[50] *BlogBaladi*, 2013, available online at
http://blogbaladi.com/on-dekwanehs-incident-and-antoine-chakhtouras-wrongdoings/.
[51] Authors' personal experience as Board Members in Helem.
[52] Author's (GM) personal experience as Board Member in Helem.

anti-imperialism and anti-zionist movement, including Hezbollah. This lead to the estrangement of a number of members from the organization, and the recruitment of many others.

On another note, and similar to women's organizations, the tensions revolved around subverting political masculinity, on one end, and reshaping it, on the other. "Good" masculinity was in the process of being constructed as respectable, middle-class, educated and professionalized homosexual masculinity. The alternative, queer feminist activism in Helem, was short-lived and quickly expired in its clash with an internationalized mainstream gay agenda.[53] Queer feminist activism, at one point, did attempt to reclaim the derogatory term *shaz* (شاذ) in 2010 through the *Ana Shaz* campaign,[54] which was met with heavy resentment and backlash by a gay activist community that had spent almost a decade assimilating itself into heteropatriarchal society and rejecting being positioned as "deviant". Queer was later transliterated, in a depoliticized form, *al-kwiriya* (الكويرية), in subsequent writings and statements.

However, LGBT activism does not seem to have formulated a response to political masculinity and the nationalism that drives it, aside from a demobilized and NGOized trajectory, estrangement from political engagement, and closer relations to the international and US-based gay movements. As the region, the country, and the city, become increasingly militarized, a growing concern of protecting political masculinity from deviance can be seen. NGOization and corporatization are today global activist phenomena, closely linked with foreign and international funding agencies.[55,56] A case in point is the slow and progressive NGOization of Helem which transformed from member-based organizing around social issues into staff-based service provision in a 10 year period. It is this transition that we identify as demobilization, where political participation is stifled through instituting top-down staff-based approaches that may revolve around donor agendas and the delivery of services (such as health, legal, social, etc.) [57] and may prioritize a politics of respectability, value mass professionalization of the leadership and membership, and ultimately create activist spaces that are exclusively middle-class arenas.

c. Gender Trouble in LGBT Organizing

A second area where the question of masculinity has been most contentious in LGBT activism has been Helem's progressive disengagement with feminism, which lead to its own internal successive crisis in 2005 and 2011, both of which lead to the ostracization of almost all of the organization's women.[58]

In 2005, Helem's prioritizing of gay male issues over women's led to the formation of Helem Girls, which dissociated itself from Helem soon after. This coincided with engagement with the

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[53] Authors' personal experience as Board Members in Helem, and also AbiYaghi, 2013, *op.cit*.

[54] Helem, 2010, *op. cit.*

[55] Aziz Choudry, "Global justice? Contesting NGOization: Knowledge politics and containment in anti-globalization networks", in Dip Kapoor and Aziz Choudry, *Learning from the ground up: Global perspectives on knowledge production in social movements*, 2010, pp. 17-34.

[56] Islah Jad, "The NGO-ization of Arab women's movements", *Feminisms in development: contradictions, contestations and challenges*, Zed Books, 2007, pp. 177-190.

[57] AbiYaghi, 2013, *op.cit*.

[58] Authors' personal experience as Board Members in Helem.

relief efforts following the 2006 Israeli invasion saw, notably, the presence of the Feminist Collective. Naber and Zaatari (2014) portray this position, saying "[it] was a feminist and LGBTQ movement fighting for the option to live and the possibility of a future. Fighting with and for families and children was part of a struggle aimed at keeping people – all people – alive" in participating in the anti-imperialist movement and in "countering military violence and heteropatriarchy."[59] The core membership of Helem Girls went on to create two platforms, an underground group, Meem, and an above-ground Feminist Collective, a predecessor to Nasawiya, in 2009. This constituted the trajectory of fourth wave feminist organizing, radical feminism, that distinctly diverted from earlier women's organization in relation to masculinity.[60]

While the first schism, in 2005, is part of the narrative of radical queer feminist political organizing, the second schism, in 2011 revolved around a sexual harassment incident and saw a mass leftist withdrawal from organized LGBT activism.[61,62] "Identity politics" was largely implicated in the crisis, where the LGBT framework, seen to be imposed by international frameworks of LGBT organizing, in its dismissiveness of male privilege and its equalization of men and women's struggles, organically favored gay-male centered organizing and alienated women.[63]

The formation of NGOs around sexuality and gender have had a mixed legacy.[64] However, it played a pivotal role in both contesting and reshaping masculinity – in its hegemonic and non-hegemonic forms. The next section discusses, in more depth, this reshaping of masculinity in the form of an emergence of a professionalized, respectable, "counter-masculinity", which challenges hegemonic notions of "good" and "bad" men.

4. NGOization: the Emergence of a Counter-Masculine Identity

The political turmoil of the Lebanese state has met the conditions of formal organizations that contest political masculinity. Although the type of confrontations range from subverting masculinity, to appropriating it, and, in several cases, embracing it, the rise of sexuality and gender non-governmental organizations (NGOs) may have perpetuated a shift in masculinity discourse and new standards of legitimacy of what constitutes the "good man" and the "bad man". As Robert Connell notes, as in any other gender construct, hegemonic masculinity is

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[59] Naber and Zaatari, 2014, op. cit.

[60] Daou, 2015, *op. cit.*

[61] Chloe Benoist, "Lebanese gay rights organization Helem marks 10 years with a mixed legacy", *Al-Akhbar English*, September 30 2014, available at: http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/21786 [last accessed 4 December 2014].

[62] "Where do we stand?", *Nfasharte*, 2011, available at: http://nfasharte.wordpress.org [last accessed 4 December 2014].

[63] *Ibid.*

[64] Please see, Makarem, 2011, *op. cit.*; Salameh, 2014, *op. cit.*; Daou, 2015, *op. cit.*; Benoist, *op. cit.*; and Chloe Benoist "Lebanese gay rights organization Helem marks 10 years with a mixed legacy, Part II", *Al-Akhbar English*, October 2nd, 2014, available online at:
http://english.al-akhbar.com/content/lebanese-gay-rights-organization-helem-marks-10-years-mixed-legacy-part-ii
[last accessed on January 5th, 2015].

dynamic, where struggles for hegemony may displace one form of masculinity by another.[65] Insofar as political masculinity prizes militarism, the "new" masculinity advances, in one instance, sexual identity politics as a legitimizing standard, and, on another, professionalization and a politics of respectability, both of which are spread across class lines.

Fawzi, an activist and researcher on LGBT issues, also elucidates the influence of state discourse through international institutions:

> "UNHCR has recently stated what it means to be LGBTIQ in a formatted and standardized way. Now, when assistance is needed, organizations such as UNHCR and Makhzoumi Foundation [a local NGO], that do shelter and cash funding, cross-check people against their understanding of what gay is. If they are effeminate, they then receive the services as their mannerisms qualify them as LGBTIQ. But if they're masculine, then they need to verbally state that they are gay, otherwise they will not receive services. They also try to put them all in one place, as if that means they should all automatically get along. They also ask them intrusive questions, who did you date? For how long? They want to check if they"re always gay; long-term relationship is a criteria."[66]

This excerpt underlines the critical role of masculinity and femininity in both mannerisms and identity, and the shift towards identity-based sexual politics. This emerges as another kind of masculinity, one that is not professionalized, and not yet respectable, but very vulnerable. Additionally, this delineation is not separable from the demobilization previously discussed: the subject, who was previously cast as a member, a participant, has become cast as a service receiver.

Through this process the "gay man" becomes also cast, based on sexual behavior alone, as the "good man". This is duplicated through another signifier, the "activist man", a common emergent masculinity in both LGBT and women's organizing. These configurations, which blur male privilege, may have contributed towards collapses of both Helem and Nasawiya in 2011 and 2012, respectively.[67] The "good" activist man has also come hand in hand with creating a male "activist hero", as Riwa put it:

> "Some of the male activists who work in NGOs, their sexism is a lot more than those I see in trainings. Some organizations like to turn men into the "hero". […] There is no celebration of anything feminine, the ideal is the masculine. All the work is women trying to gain these masculine attributes. If a woman wants her rights, she has to act like a man to get her demands heard. What we see in this whole struggle is that feminine needs to become

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[65] *Ibid.*, p. 833.
[66] Interview with Fawzi, Beirut, 21 November, 2014.
[67] In 2012, both organizations imploded after allegations of mismanagement related to separate sexual harassment incidents, where the male harasser was protected; on Helem, please refer to *Nfasharte* Blog, 2012, *op. cit.*; on Nasawiya, please see Farfahinne, "Feminism and self-criticism: notes from my personal experience", Farfahinne Blog, September, 2014, available online at:
http://farfahinne.blogspot.com/2014/09/feminism-and-self-criticism-notes-from.html [last accessed January 5th 2015].

masculine to be good. I have to prove myself with the same tools as men to get my rights or succeed at something."[68]

On militarization and masculinity, she continued:

"Weapons are masculine, they're not feminine. This is very important, there is a trend of fetishizing women who 'defend the land' in the way men do. There are thousands of initiatives that women have started, but none are acknowledged. Why? Because they didn't carry guns? It's only weapons that count". [69]

The above transcripts draw attention to contested conceptions of masculinity within sexual rights organizing, and a concern about the feminine. While women's rights organizations struggle against a patriarchal state, the (lack of) a critical challenge to hegemonic masculinity may have, at least for one interviewer, led to the appropriation of masculinist tools, instead of subverting them.

NGOization is, arguably, contained within a nationalist framework, of struggling towards a better, secular, Lebanon. It is also the case that NGOization itself plays a political and economic role, it contains political activism within cause-based social activism and creates employment for university graduates. The creation of the counter-masculine identity, the middle-class respectable and professional gay man, or the male "hero" of women's organizations, are part and parcel of this transformation. The movement from cross-class alliance organizing to middle-class/urban corporate arrangements is not solely the result of foreign intervention. Rather, just like the modern nation-state building project, it goes in tandem with privatization, retreat of the state and, consequently, major political forces from social issues, and engendering the free market discourse.

Conclusion

Masculinity-under-threat, as this paper has shown, has appeared as a political response to both LGBT and women's activism. Third wave feminist politics have, to this date, time and again, challenged sex and gender discrimination, violence against women and the lack of social and political rights for women. The Lebanese state's response, as we argue, has consistently been one of "masculinity-under-threat", where the demands of the women's movement are seen as an attack or threat to the nation-state. Meanwhile, the LGBT movement has faced similar state discourse of "masculinity-under-threat", that has only increased with the growing militarization of the region. Discourses of "masculinity-under-threat" are deployed to justify repressive policies towards both women and people with non-conforming genders and sexualities.

Concurrently, women's organizations have undergone a shift of focus towards appropriating masculinity and have begun the process of delineating the "good" and "bad" man according to new standards. However, the degree to which reshaping masculinity has contested hegemonic

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[68] Interview with Riwa, Beirut, December 19, 2014.
[69] *Ibid.*

and political forms of masculinity is not yet clear. Similarly, the LGBT movement has experienced a "mixed legacy", partly attributed to tensions around male privilege and gender politics. Consequently, a formative challenge to political masculinity has been substituted for a politics of respectability, mass professionalization, and service provision. Furthermore, this same direction may have contributed towards the possible emergence of a "new" or "counter" masculinity.

Contrary to the simplistic construction of the 'masculinist state' used in this paper, it should be noted, as Brown (1991) argues, that the masculinist state is not monolithic, not "a thing, system, or subject but a significantly unbounded terrain of powers and techniques, an ensemble of discourses, rules, and practices, cohabiting in limited, tension-ridden, often contradictory relation with one another."[70] Future research could focus on unwrapping these many, and often contradictory, dimensions.

Lastly, the arguments presented in this paper are not complete. While we have outlined political masculinity and activist engagement and disengagement, we have not discussed the global and regional forces at play in these processes, where we find the geopolitics surrounding the War on Terror to play a central role.

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[70] Wendy Brown, 1991, *op. cit.*

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