Set in Stone

*Power Mediation through French Colonial Architecture in Lebanon’s Majlis an-Nuwwab*

Chaton Smedra Georgies-Boulos Chamoun

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Abstract

This thesis will provide an analysis of the current Parliament building in Beirut, which is called Majlis an-Nuwwab, and was built by the French colonial state that ruled over Lebanon. It will examine to what extent it has theoretically contributed to the mediation of the French colonial power over Lebanon, through the analytical framework provided by Njoh and Bigon, along with a theoretical framework offered by Kim Dovey. The data was obtained first-hand during a ten-day visit to the city of Beirut, employing primary observation and is in the form of personally obtained photographs of the object of analysis, namely Lebanon’s Parliament building. Further, this research has been conducted due to the lack of academic discussion and literature regarding the relationship between colonial power structures and colonial architecture in the Middle East.

In accordance to the analytical and theoretical framework, this study demonstrates that Lebanon’s Parliament building, along with its urban context, can theoretically be understood as operating as the mediator for military, cultural and socio-psychological power as the most prominent ones. Additionally, traits of economic and politico-administrative power were also found to be theoretically mediated through the designs of the Parliament building, although not to the same extent as the previously mentioned powers.

Key words: Architecture, French colonial architecture, Lebanon, Majlis an-Nuwwab, Colonialism, Power.
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1. Introduction

1.1 Research Problem

Architectural built form is essentially political. This claim is articulated by the architectural theorist Kim Dovey (1999), as his theory of ‘power mediation through built form’ is based on the argument that physical structures are visual communicators that silently present messages through their designs (p.1). This means that buildings consist of compelling symbolic and literal components, and each built structure has different symbolic meaning. This makes architecture a way for socially constructed power structures and state practices of encapsulation to be silently transmitted through architectural features. Thus, architecture can be used to legitimize an authoritarian control (ibid., 3). In fact, Ambe J. Njoh and Liora Bigon (2015) claim that mediating messages through architecture was a common practice among colonizers, where the designs of colonial buildings were used as a way to mediate colonial political power (p.10). The use of such practices was due to the colonial regulatory state’s intention to demonstrate superior control and ownership over the colonized land and its population (ibid., 11).

For this reason, colonialism has impacted post-colonial countries’ urban environment (King 2007: 25). This study is, however, limited to focusing on the colonial case of Lebanon. During French colonization of Lebanon, colonial buildings were intentionally built for the purpose to maintain control over the Lebanese region (Nasr and Verdeil 2008: 1119). These French colonial buildings, such as Lebanon’s Parliament building, is still being used as the Parliament building in the contemporary setting of Lebanon (Kandiyoti 2002: 284). Thus, while French colonization of Lebanon ended in 1943, the French colonial power practices are still being conveyed through the remaining colonial buildings in post-colonial Lebanon, as theorized by Dovey (1999: 1).

These power mediating buildings are important to study, as architecture freezes the colonial paradigm of a post-colonial society, which essentially preserves the hierarchical differences between the colonizer and the colonized (Hamadeh 2005: 4). Therefore, examining to what extent French colonial architecture mediates power in Lebanon, will contribute to the
understanding of how colonial buildings current existence can reveal the once-existing former superpower, as well as continuing to serve as a symbol of the past inferiority of the local population.

1.2 Aim of Study and Research Question

At large, this thesis seeks to reveal greater insight on how the physical colonial elements had contributed to the maintenance of the hierarchal power structures between the colonial authorities and their colonized territories. Thus, the aim is to gain a greater understanding of the extent in which physical colonial features of Lebanon’s Parliament building, called Majlis an-Nuwwab, are theoretically mediating French colonial power. Therefore, not only will the architectural features of Lebanon’s Parliament building be analyzed, but also the context of the building’s surroundings. This study will be conducted in order to understand in what forms power can be utilized through architecture, to maximize an authoritarian power.

The research question of this study is:

To what extent does Majlis an-Nuwwab’s architectural design theoretically mediate different forms of French colonial power?

The theoretical framework which will be used in this thesis is Kim Dovey’s (1999) theory of ‘power mediation through built form’. The analytical tool which will be utilized is Ambe J. Njoh and Liora Bigon’s (2015) five categories of power, which are: (I) military, (II) economic, (III) cultural, (IV) socio-psychological and (V) politico-administrative power. These powers are specifically made for analyzing power mediation through colonial architecture, which is why they have been selected as the analytical tool.

Additionally, one operational question will be applied, to examining what structures mediate power, as theorized by Dovey. This operational question is based on Njoh and Bigon’s five categories of power, and the question reads:

- What architectural features of Majlis an-Nuwwab are associated with the mediation of [insert military/ economic/ cultural/ socio-psychological/ politico-administrative power]?
1.3 Relevance to Peace and Conflict Studies

First, as this thesis looks at colonial power, it can be linked to the academic literature within the peace and conflict discourse, which speaks on power and colonialism, and how they relate to conflict. In fact, former colonized countries are, both during and after independence, more prone to several types of civil violence, and colonialism is inherently the cause of this (Lange and Dawson 2009: 785ff). For instance, in the case of Lebanon, the French colonial authority aimed to segregate the local population through urban planning, which caused tension between the Christian Maronites and the Muslims. This segregation was intentionally planned, as dispute between the local population would mean that local Arabs would be too busy fighting each other to try to overthrow the French colonial authority. This segregated urban planning eventually sparked a 15-year-long civil war between the Maronites and Muslims, which ended in 1990 (Abu-Musa, Nassar, Hannoun and Usta 2007: 1579).

Second, colonial sovereignty is best understood through viewing it as relations of violence, rather than power relations (Maze 2018: 121). This way of viewing sovereign power is through a Foucauldian paradigm, as sovereign power is conceptualized as relations of violence (Edkins and Pin-Fat 2005: 3). Thus, conducting further research on French colonial power mediation in Lebanon’s built form, will broaden the understanding of the mechanisms used to continuously and successfully exercise power through built form, and its relation to violence.

Third, colonial studies fit well into the political basis of peace and conflict studies. This is made clear by Edward Said (1977), as he argues that relations between colonized states and the dominating powers are not equal, due to the fact that they are solely carried out on the premises of the anticipated power imbalances between the ‘West’ and the ‘East’ (ibid., 7). This hierarchical mindset was often used as a justification for colonialism, as it was claimed to be a ‘civilizing mission’ that was carried out by the “civilized” for the benefit of the “heathen”. These ‘liberation movements’ and its superior attitude, are still present in today’s state relations, and the colonial physical structures contribute to the maintenance of this power hierarchy, as buildings are still preserved and mediating colonial power in post-colonial states (Steinberg 2007: 792). Essentially, unequal power relations are a great obstacle for global political stability. Thus, the Western world becomes the primary stumbling block for achieving world peace (ibid., 793f).
As such, the peace and conflict relevance of this research lies in the argument that colonial architectural buildings embody colonial ideas of supremacy and power.

1.4 Limitations

As this study specifically focuses on the mediation of French colonial power through Lebanon’s Parliament building, the results of this study are only limited to that Parliament building, and can, therefore, not be directly applied onto other colonial buildings in Lebanon. Comparisons and/or generalizations can, however, be made between the findings of this study, and other similar structures in colonial buildings in Lebanon, as most buildings that were built by the French used similar structures and were often designed by the same architects (Saliba 2013: 10). Further, the findings of this study cannot be applied to other non-colonial buildings, as Njoh and Bigon’s analytical framework specifically focuses on certain features that concern power that is mediated from a foreign invasive authority. Therefore, the discoveries of this thesis are highly limited to the colonial power, which is mediated through Lebanon’s Parliament building, as it was built by the French.

Additionally, this study cannot address whether Njoh and Bigon’s five identified categories of powers were intentionally implemented in the designs of Lebanon’s Parliament building. This is due to the fact that this thesis is only looking at the physical elements of Majlis an-Nuwwab, and not on archives concerning the architects that were involved in the design of the building. Therefore, although the findings may conclude that the Parliament building is theoretically mediating the five categories of power, it cannot prove intentionality. However, Dovey argues that elements of power that are mediated through built form are not always based on intentionality, rather, power mediation can be as a result of the architects’ subconscious ideas (Dovey 1999: 145). Additionally, as this study’s Literature Review will discuss, there is an abundance of literature regarding the fact that architecture was used as a tool by the colonizers to maintain dominance and control over a colonized territory. As such, in accordance to the academic writing used in the Literature Review, it can be argued that colonial architecture was intentionally used as such a tool. For this reason, as theorized by Dovey, I will limit my study to determining what architectural structures of Majlis an-Nuwwab’s mediate power, in order to understand the extent to which the power mediation is accomplished.
1.5 Thesis Outline

This thesis consists of a total of seven chapters. This Introductory chapter presents an overview of the underlying information for this study. Following, the second chapter is the Literature Review one, where academic literature regarding architecture in connection to power and conflict is presented. The third chapter is the Background, where necessary background information is provided on French colonization of Lebanon, and general information concerning Majlis an-Nuwwab. The fourth chapter is the Theoretical and Analytical Framework, where Njoh and Bigon’s five categories of power, along with Dovey’s theory of ‘power mediation through built form’ are outlined. The fifth Methodology chapter is composed of five sub-chapters, which are: Choice of Analytical Tool, Object of Analysis, Data Collection, Research Design, and Researcher’s Position. The sixth chapter is the Analysis, where the architectural features of Majlis an-Nuwwab are analyzed. Lastly, the final seventh chapter is the Conclusion one, where the findings of the analysis, along with a discussion concerning the findings will be provided. Additionally, an Appendix will be comprised of all gathered photographs, including such which have not been used in the analysis.
2. Literature Review

This chapter will explore literature regarding colonial architecture. Upon examination of this literature, there is an abundance of scholarly articles concerning colonial architecture in connection to power. However, as argued by Kandiyoti (2002), the literature on this topic has mostly focused on South Asian and African countries, and very little mentioning of Middle Eastern countries (p.189). As such, this gap in literature is the reason for this study being conducted, seeing that colonial power through built form is usually not discussed in regard to the Middle East.

2.1 Colonial Architecture and Power

Several scholars have written on the intentions behind colonial architecture, and drawn links between architecture, colonialism and power. One of these scholars is Anna P. Gawlikowska (2015), who discusses how colonialism was a way for European superpowers to show its superior possession over a region, its natural resources, and the local population during the late 18th century. Gawlikowska further discusses how the colonial administrators enforced their culture onto the indigenous population, through architecture. The enforcement of European culture was primarily done to gain control and dominance over the colonized society (p.43f).

Mia Fuller (1988) writes on Italian colonial architecture, particularly in regard to colonized Libya and Ethiopia. Fuller discusses that the Italians saw their colonial dominance in these countries as an opportunity for conducting urban and architectural experiments, essentially viewing Libya and Ethiopia as a colonial laboratory (p.455). Similarly, Joe Nasr and Eric Verdeil (2008) also describe how the French used their colonial dominance in both Syria and Lebanon to experiment with architectural buildings, particularly during the 1930s (p.1119).

Further, Fuller describes that the Italian colonial architecture began to express the Italian’s powerful characteristics to the rest of the European countries. Thus, architecture became a tool for the Italians to regain their high status, as they once had been powerful in the ancient past,
however, were now seen as a fallen state, in comparison to other European nations (p.455). Yet another evolvement of the Italian colonial architectural discourse happened in 1936, which was the year of the declaration of the Italian Fascist Empire. The focus shifted from that of Italians wanting to gain a higher status as a European country, to that of rather focusing on confronting the local population with Fascist power. Therefore, the architecture in the Italian colonies were redesigned to mediate Italian control, regulation and power. This was done through implementing Italian cultural architecture into the designs of the buildings. Particularly, Fuller discusses that the urban design was aimed at facilitating a juxtaposed city, which was intended to create a distinction between the metropolitan ‘Self’ from the colonized ‘Other’ (ibid., 455f).

Gwendolyn Wright (1991) discusses what features of colonial buildings derive from French colonial architecture. However, he also talks about the meaning behind the intricate detailing that could be found in French colonial architecture. For instance, in the case of Morocco, colonial buildings consisted of architectural features from both French architecture, and indigenous designs. The French managed to achieve this combination of architecture through the help of indigenous Moroccan muftis\(^1\) (Wright 1991: 1). Robert Saliba (2013) argues that this essentially made colonial built form a hybridization between indigenous designs and colonial plans (p.9), and Wright claims that this combination of architecture was a tactical way of making it seem as though France was paying their respects to the Islamic culture. This allowed France to suppress the local Moroccans and to express dominant power. As Marrast wrote “And thus, little by little, we conquer the hearts of the natives and win their affection, as is our duty as colonizers” (Joseph Marrast; Wright 1991: 1).

Fassil Demissie (2012) also talks about this tactical practice of incorporating the indigenous population and their aesthetics into built form, specifically looking at the case of New Delhi. Demissie argues that indigenous aesthetics were mixed with European classical idioms to form hybrid buildings, all for the purpose of legitimizing colonial control (p.1). Further, Siddhartha Sen (2010) claims that the British built colonial buildings in India, to depict the indigenous architecture as inferior while portraying themselves as superior, essentially creating a distinction between the ‘Self’ and the ‘Other’ (p.203). This is similar to what the Fascist colonial architecture was trying to achieve in the Italian-ruled colonies (Fuller 1988: 455).

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\(^1\) A mufti is an Islamic ‘leader’ who can issue fatwas, in relation to Sharia law matters
Sen further argues that the showcasing of British dominance and power was also achieved through the urban environment, particularly in regard to the placement of the buildings. He argues that buildings were intentionally placed in a way to make it seem as though the built form was looking over the colonized territory, essentially mediating great colonial power to the colonized population by placing such buildings geographically higher in relation to pre-colonial ones. Further, for the mediation of power to properly be conveyed, nothing could block the building, such as other buildings or trees, as it would diminish the powerful impression that the building was intended to transmit (p.203).

Ambe J. Njoh and Liora Bigon (2015) also discussed power mediation through colonial architecture. Specifically, Njoh and Bigon conducted a study on the power which was mediated through German colonial architecture in the case of Cameroon. They argued that architecture and urban planning was used to mediate colonial power over colonized Cameroon and its population, and this colonial power was mediated through five overlapping forms of power, including military, economic, political, cultural and socio-psychological power (a detailed description of these powers can be found in the Theoretical and Analytical Framework chapter). Thus, as argued by Yvonne Whelan (2002), urban planning and landscape was used in a way to portray a magnitude of power over a territory and a population (p.508) and, as argued by Sen, it was used to discourage other European colonial powers (2010: 204).

Counterarguments have been made in accordance to the claims mentioned above, particularly on the premises of the ‘civilizing mission’. Some political philosophers argued for colonialism (see for instance; Alexis de Tocqueville’s ‘Second Letter on Algeria’, 1837 and ‘Essay on Algeria’, 1841) and believed that colonialism was a necessary act (Tocqueville 1841; Pitts 2001: 60). Bruce Gilley (2017) also argues for colonialism and believes that it was a beneficial facilitator for development (p.1). Gilley even goes as far as to argue that colonialism should be recovered, stating that “in some instances it may be possible to build new Western colonies from scratch” (Gilley 2017: 2). This argument of recovering colonies is based on the idea that colonialism is a sustainable tool for development and can bring modernity to countries, both in terms of culture, and the urban environment. Essentially, in Gilley’s view, colonial architecture was an act of development, and not an act of domination (Gilley 2017: 7).

However, to claim that colonialism is a facilitator for development, without critically assessing the Western-centric classifications of what development is, is unrealistic (Mutua 2001: 202).
Gilley is a classic example of having a western superior attitude, where the ‘civilizing mission’ is carried out by the ‘developed West’. Therefore, I ask, on what premises does one constitute being developed, while the other is considered to be underdeveloped? Thus, in regard to the scholarly writings presented in this Literature Review that speak of architecture as a form of conveyer, it is an understatement to claim that architecture has not been used as a tool by the colonizers to dominate, control and mediate power over the colonized population.

### 2.2 Architecture as an Indicator of Conflict

There is a great deal of academic literature on physical structures, buildings and urban planning concerning how they can be indicators of conflict. Particularly, the connection between direct violence and segregation (which is a form of structural violence) (Galtung, 1990) seems to be a central theme in this subject. In fact, Edward Shihadeh and Nicole Flynn (1996) claim that there is a link between direct violence in regard to the structural violent planning of residential segregation (p.1325). This link is based on the fact that the intended urban planning aims to achieve a geographic isolation between low-income people and high-class white-dominated neighborhoods, which essentially causes a barrier in the social mobility. They further argue that the outcome of segregation is social isolation, which often leads to an increase in civil violence due to a particular group feeling excluded from the rest of society (ibid., 1326f).

However, Cecilia Jensfelt (1991) argues that segregated areas are not always intentionally created to cause a division. She talks about Sweden’s case of *milijonprogrammet* (the million program), where during the period of 1964 to 1974, one million homes were built in Sweden in order to provide housing for the new wave of labor force migration (p.12). Jensfelt discusses how this housing project led to segregation, as low-income labor force migrants predominantly populated the area. As a result of this, high-income native Swedes lived segregated from the low-income migrant workers. Jensfelt claims that this essentially led to a higher increase in civil violence and crime rate in the segregated areas, due to the experience of racism and exclusion, although violence was not an intended outcome (ibid., 22f). However, as argued by Johan Galtung (1990), cultural, structural and direct violence are interconnected (p.292). In this case, labor force migration is essentially cultural violence, as migrants were seen as cheap labor, thus considered to be less worthy than the native Swede. This led to segregation, which is a form of structural violence, and could be why direct violence was, and still is, present in these
segregate areas, seeing that racism and exclusion is the premises for these areas’ existence in the first place (p.292f).

Another case is the Israel-Palestine conflict, specifically in regard to the separation wall that has been implemented around the West Bank. Graham Usher (2005) argues that this wall has caused imbalances in both places and spaces and has divided societies, making built form one of the causes of further aggregating the conflict. Thus, this wall is yet another component to the Israeli governments prolonged exclusion, containment and control over the Palestinian population, and is essentially a continuum of the Israel-Palestine conflict (p.25). Usher argues that rather than moving towards a unified Palestine-Israel, this wall has physically separated and further segregated the two, causing more layers of issues being added to the conflict (ibid., 31).

Many cities in the West Bank embody architectural structures that contribute to the containment of the Israel-Palestine conflict and the Israeli governments control over the region. Other than the separation wall, Brigitte Piquard and Mark Swenarton (2011) also talk about the checkpoints, settlements, walls, blockades, symbolic violence and the urban planning that is intended to create void and segregation. They argue that this is essentially terror, harassment, humiliation and control through the use of space and infrastructure (p.1). These architectural practices contribute to the conflict transformation in the region, as buildings and structures become the representation of Israeli power over the Palestinian population (ibid., 2).

Despite these claims, the State of Israel argues that the separation wall is rather a ‘security barrier’, where the Israeli population is protected from the terror that comes from the West Bank (Lagerquist 2004: 6). In fact, the Israeli government claims that the ‘security barrier’ has reduced the terrorist attacks made by Palestinians inside Israel (Jones 2009: 7). Further, checkpoints and segregation are also being justified on the premises of Israeli security (Lagerquist 2004: 6). However, Clive Jones (2009) argues that the Israel-Palestinian conflict was further inflamed due to the contentious border being implemented. This is due to the exclusionary effects that the wall has had on the Palestinian population who are living in the West Bank, along with the wall being a physical reminder of the occupation. The separation wall has, therefore, increased tension and violence. Jones further argues that the separation wall is rather a way for the Israeli government to contain and protect its state legitimacy in the
Middle East (p.7). Essentially, the security barrier is one of the most imposing parts of the occupation (Jones 2009: 11ff).
3. Background

In order to obtain a better understanding of the overall study, some background information is required. Therefore, this chapter is dedicated to presenting information concerning the colonial history of Lebanon, as well as some background knowledge on Lebanon’s Parliament building.

3.1 Colonial History of Lebanon

3.1.1 Pre-Colonial Lebanon

The Ottoman Empire ruled the Middle East for more than 600 years, beginning in the late thirteenth century until its fall between 1918-1920 (Quataert 2000: 3). Therefore, similarly to the case of Palestine, Jordan, Iraq and Syria, colonialism in the case of Lebanon only began after the fall of the Ottoman Empire. However, French presence in the Middle East began long before the Empire fell. During the nineteenth century, the Syrian and Lebanese region had experienced the establishment of French hospitals, orphanages, schools, and asylums, along with French missionary work. Further, in the beginning of the twentieth century, the locals in al-Mashriq\(^2\) were increasingly expressing dissatisfaction with the Ottoman rule. Therefore, France took the opportunity to send official French governmental representatives, such as diplomats, to both Syria and Lebanon. This was for the purpose of seeking political influence in the region by making the local indigenous population believe that the French were going to ‘liberate’ Arabs from Ottoman rule (Shorrock 1970: 133). As such, French presence in Syria and Lebanon was primary for the purpose to gain a secure claim over the territory, if there ever was a possibility that the Ottoman Empire were to collapse (ibid., 134).

Countries such as Italy, Great Britain and Germany also tried to influence Syria and Lebanon in order to establish predominance, which led to France increasing their financial investment into Syria and Lebanon through building railroads. The French and the British also managed to penetrate the economic system of the Ottoman Empire, and by the time of the beginning of the

\(^2\) Is equivalent to the Middle Eastern area, sometimes also includes North Africa
First World War, the Imperial Ottoman Bank (the Ottoman Empire state bank) was entirely owned by French and British capital (Shorrock 1970: 134f).

Further, in the beginning of the twentieth century, a secret treaty called the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916 was signed between the British and the French, concerning the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire (Fitzgerald 1994: 698). Due to Britain’s and France’s successful influence in al-Mashriq, and the promise of self-determination made by the French to the local population, Arabs were prepared to fight alongside the British and the French, in order to defeat the Ottoman Empire. However, after the Ottoman empire collapsed, the French diplomat François Georges-Picot and his British counterpart Mark Sykes agreed to carve up most of the region between the British and the French (ibid., 699ff).

The Sykes-Picot Agreement was made official through the League of Nations Mandate system, which was a colonial policy that came to exist following World War I. This legal instrument was created in order to prevent future World Wars from happening. Essentially, if it was believed that an area could not maintain itself, as it was in the case after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, then the League of Nations Mandate would legally allow colonial powers to gain control over that territory. As such, due to the combination of this colonial policy being perceived as a way to achieve future peace, and the Ottoman Empire was believed to be spoils of war, it enabled the Sykes-Picot Agreement to be finalized (Matz 2005: 52).

3.1.2 French Mandate of Syria and Lebanon

In 1920, on behalf of the League of Nations, the French were allocated a Mandate of Syria, where it included Lebanon³, and the British were granted a Mandate of Iraq and Palestine, including Transjordan (Matz 2005: 72). However, due to the locals’ dissatisfaction with the French, the indigenous population of the Syrian region created an Arab nationalist movement and revolted against their colonial administrators on numerous occasions (Fildis 2011: 131). In order to prevent the population from revolting, France increased their support for the Arab Christian Maronites, which essentially resulted in a religious separation between the local population, thereby weakening the Arab nationalist movement, as local Arabs were instead in conflict with each other (ibid., 133).

³ While the region that was colonized by the French was usually referred to as Syria, there was an autonomous Lebanese territory
3.1.2.1 The Greater Lebanon

The Maronites were a compact minority, situated in a particularly well-defined territory of Mount Lebanon. They had a very distinct sense of identity as Christian Catholics, in reference to other religious communities in al-Mashriq, who were either Muslims, or Eastern Christians. The Maronites link to the Catholic Church caused a sense of affinity between them and the French. As such, the same year as the French Mandate was established, as a way for the French to show their support for the Maronite Christians, Lebanon gained recognition as a region under the French Mandate. The affinity with France required the Maronites to control the coastal cities which were not originally included in the Lebanese autonomous area. Cities such as Beirut, Tripoli, Sidon, and Tyre, all became part of Greater Lebanon (Fildis 2011: 133). However, this support of the Christian Maronites by the French was of a tactical nature, as it was believed that:

First, Syria should be divided into segments to block nationalist sentiment and action. Second, there should be an indigenous façade behind which the French would be in control (Fildis 2011: 133).

Thus, the division of the local population was aimed to cause regional separatism in Syria, where the Syrian area had a religious difference from that of the Lebanese area, resulting in tension between the two. This allowed the French to maintain its dominance in the region, as the local population were too busy fighting each other, thereof shifting focus from the French colonial rule (Fildis 2011: 134).

3.1.3 Lebanese Independence

During World War Two, France was invaded by Nazi-Germany on 14 June 1940. This caused France to be in a subordinate position to the Nazis, leading to Syria and Lebanon being governed by a French Nazi-controlled government. However, on 8 June 1941, British and Free French forces invaded Syria from Iraq, Transjordan and Palestine, which resulted in Syria and Lebanon becoming free from Nazi rule on 14 July, that same year. Whereby, the general of the Free French forces proclaimed Syrian and Lebanese independence from France. However, the transfer of power to the Lebanese newly established states was not accomplished until 1943, and by 1946, French and British troops left the Lebanese and Syrian region (Ginat 2002: 100).
During French colonization of Lebanon, a so-called ‘Frenchization’ was carried out in the Lebanese area, particularly in Beirut. A range of projects and experiments were conducted, and Lebanon’s Parliament building (see Figure 1 or Appendix) was one among many of the architectural projects that were built during the French Mandate of Syria and Lebanon (Nasr and Verdeil 2008: 1118). The French had the aim of both modernizing the city, as well as using built form and urban planning as a way to symbolize French power over Lebanon (ibid., 1119).

The Parliament building is located in Beirut and is currently used as Lebanon’s Parliament building. The building was designed by the French-Armenian architect Mardiros Altounian (1889-1958) and was built during the French colonization of Lebanon (completed in 1934) (Saliba 2013: 10). Similarly to Lebanon’s Municipality building, the Parliament building was designed in accordance with the new Levantine4 architecture, which was a hybrid of architectural forms between indigenous design and French architecture (see Figure 1) (Ragette

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4 *al-Mashriq* is called the Levant in French.
2012: 45). Therefore, the architectural structures of the building consisted of local structural elements, along with a Beaux-Arts design, which was a French architectural style. The intention behind the Levantine architecture was to make the local population feel as though they were included, while simultaneously glorifying the French colonial presence in Lebanon (Saliba 2013: 9).

Further, it is important to note that Lebanon has experienced several wars, and although the Parliament building did not get completely destroyed, it did get affected by the war. Thus, the building was fixed, but there have been no changes in terms of the architectural design (Saliba 2013: 13).
4. Theoretical and Analytical Framework

Njoh and Bigon are surely not the first to claim that buildings mediate power. In fact, Dovey both theorizes and offers an analytical framework to analyze the power that is mediated through built form. Similarly, philosopher and social theorist Michel Foucault (1977) also discusses power in relation to architecture. Foucault particularly analyzed the regulatory modes of power/knowledge that could be found in the Panopticon design, which was a form of architecture specifically made for prisons and insane asylums (see; Foucault 1977).

While both Dovey and Foucault are relevant to use as the analytical tool, Njoh and Bigon’s five categories of power are more suitable for this study, as they offer a more precise way of particularly analyzing power mediation in colonial architecture. Therefore, Njoh and Bigon’s five analytical categories of power will be used as the analytical tool for this thesis. Along with this, Dovey’s theory of ‘power mediation through built form’ will be used to explain how architectural features relate to mediation of power, seeing that Dovey theorizes how our built environment relates to social power structures. Thus, this chapter is dedicated to explaining Dovey’s theory, along with Njoh and Bigon’s five analytical categories of power.

4.1 Theoretical Framework

4.1.1 Dovey’s Theory of Power Mediation Through Built Form

Kim Dovey’s theory of ‘power mediation through built form’ focuses on how our physically built environment is inherently connected to social power structures. He argues that buildings are mediators and visual communicators, thus, making built form inherently influential as they have the ability to mediate power (Dovey 1999: 1). Additionally, Dovey suggests that power mediation operates on a subconscious level, thus, intentionality is not necessarily a central element concerning power that is mediated through built form (ibid., 145). Dovey also offers an analytical framework, however, as has been stated previously, his analytical framework will
not be used in this thesis, only his theory. Lastly, to better understand Dovey’s theory, and to
gain a greater understanding of what Njoh and Bigon’s analytical framework builds on, the
following section is going to examine what is meant by power, mediation, and built form.

Beginning with describing power, Dovey views power in terms of *power over* and *power to*. *Power over* is a hierarchical relationship, where, for instance, a hegemonic party exercises their *power over* the population’s actions and behaviors. Whereas *power to* is the hegemon’s *power to* influence, shape and control an environment. Meaning, power refers to the *power to* exercise their *power over* something (Dovey 1999: 11). This is similar to Foucault’s idea of power, as he views power as a type of relationship between people, where power is an ability to secretly shape people’s behaviors (1977: 194).

Further, in terms of mediation, Dovey’s theory claims that built forms are visual communicators, and this makes it possible for built form to be mediums. In other words, the designs and structures of buildings give room for information and meaning to be conveyed. Ultimately, buildings allow for information to be mediated through their designs and structures (Dovey 1999: 17). For instance, *power over* uses architecture as a way to mediate control over the population. Dovey particularly claims that power is mediated in four ways through built form. These are: *authority*, *force*, *coercion* and *seduction power*. *Authority power* can be mediated through the location of the building. For instance, positioning the building in a central location would mediate the power of a central authority. Further, the mediation of *force power* are structures such as walls or gates that encapsulate the buildings. Similarly, *coercion power* is mediated through structures that only grant accessibility to certain individuals, such as fortifications. Lastly, *seduction power* tries to ‘seduce’ the population into being controlled, by, for instance, using indigenous structures and designs when constructing buildings (Dovey 1999: 3).

These four powers can be used as an analytical tool to analyze power that is mediated through a building. However, as has been mentioned previously, this thesis is going to use Njoh and Bigon’s five categories of powers instead, seeing that they focus on colonial architecture, which makes their concepts of power a more suitable analytical tool to use for answering this thesis’ research question.
Finally, built forms, according to Dovey, are any architectural structures, and can range from a room, to an entire city. Built form refers to the man-made built environment, and the intentions behind the physical structures in that environment. Built form range from buildings; houses; apartment buildings; a tower, such as the Eiffel Tower, a maze; a clocktower, such as the Big Ben; a wall, as the West Bank separation wall; and even statues. As such, Dovey’s theory can be used to describe power that is mediated through many spaces, places and physical structures (Dovey 1999: 1).

4.2 Analytical Framework

4.2.1 Five Categories of Power

Njoh and Bigon’s analytical framework consists of different forms of powers that are mediated through colonial architecture. As theorized by Dovey, power is mediated through built form. However, colonial power that is mediated through built form differs from that of the power that is conveyed through non-colonial architecture. This is due to the fact that colonizers used architecture as a tool to demonstrate foreign dominance over their colonies, whereas power mediated through non-colonial buildings are not mediating foreign invasive power (Njoh and Bigon 2015: 10). As such, Njoh and Bigon’s analytical framework builds on Dovey’s. However, they have altered his analytical framework to specifically only focus on the power mediated in colonial architecture, seeing that Dovey’s framework is broad, and analyzes power in all built forms.

Thus, Njoh and Bigon have chosen to focus on the several overlapping ways that colonial power can be mediated through the features of colonial buildings and urban planning. These overlapping forms of power are: (I) military, (II) economic, (III) cultural, (IV) socio-psychological, and (V) politico-administrative power. It is important to emphasize that these powers are overlapping, meaning, different features of the building can, for instance, insinuate both military power, as well as cultural power. More information on each individual power will be further discussed down below.
4.2.1.1 Military Power

*Military power* in colonial architecture usually resembles and incorporates attributes from military fortifications, barracks, and military trenches. The color, the material, the surrounding and the location of the built form matters here. Particularly, features of military power in colonial-built form can be if the building:

a) Has colors that are classified as camouflageable or ‘earthy’ and are usually used in military, such as grey, brown, green and beige colors;
b) Has earth-based defense structures, such as surrounded by a wall or water (similar to trenches);
c) Empty space in front of the building (these spaces were usually used for military assembly);
d) Is made of brick or stone-like material (or similar material to fortifications and barracks);
e) Location is on a higher ground, where the building is overlooking a low-lying area;
f) Has observational posts;
g) Has tower-like/ pillar incorporated design (similar to fortifications);
h) Is tall, broad and has a stable ground (this insinuates stability, control and power) (Njoh and Bigon 2015: 13ff).

All of these architectural military features essentially contributed to the reinforcement of the military power of the colonial authority (ibid., 14f). Military power helped the colonial authority to maintain dominance and control over the colonized region and its population. Additionally, it was a way to demonstrate dominance and strength towards other colonial powers, to prevent them from possibly trying to take over the colony (ibid., 14).

4.2.1.2 Economic Power

Colonial economic power can typically be seen in urban planning, particularly through plantations and transportation groundwork. As the purpose of colonialism was for the colonial authority to gain economic prosperity, groundwork was built to transport the extraction of the colonized country’s natural resources. These natural resources were extracted through the establishment of different kinds of plantation facilities, such as agricultural plantations, where large-scale fertile land was used (Njoh and Bigon 2015: 14f). This urban economic power planning affected the urban fabric of the colonized countries, and also restricted the local’s
accessibility to their natural resources, which essentially weakened the indigenous populations ability to push out the colonial authority (ibid., 15).

Economic power can be seen through:
   a) Railroads and roads (used by the colonizers to transport goods);
   b) Plantation facilities;
   c) The location of the building;
   d) The material of buildings, if it is brick walls, masonry walls, wall pavers or decorative walls (insinuates wealth and economic stability as the material is expensive and/or time consuming to construct);
   e) The height of the building (mediates economic wealth due to its intimidating height) (ibid., 14f).

4.2.1.3 Cultural Power

Cultural power is the enforcement of the colonial authority’s culture onto the colonized indigenous population. This imposition of foreign culture was demonstrated through the European style architecture in the buildings and the urban environment (Njoh and Bigon 2015: 16). Additionally, erasing indigenous buildings and replacing them with colonial buildings was also a way to impose foreign culture onto the local population. Cultural power can, therefore, be seen through:
   a) Modernization of the urban sphere (such as streets that are laid in a vintage grid pattern);
   b) European architectural designs;
   c) The layout of the urban environment (e.g. if the surrounding has vivid footprints of the colonial past) (ibid., 16f);
   d) Urbanization (some colonized countries were agrarian societies; thus, urbanization was considered to be modern and western);
   e) French style roundabouts;
   f) Driving on the left side of the road (ibid., 17).

4.2.1.4 Socio-Psychological Power

Socio-psychological power was when the colonial authority intentionally framed itself to seem more superior and knowledgeable, in comparison to the inferior colonized, essentially
connecting power to knowledge. The global portrayal of the West was that they were more developed and advanced, in comparison to the unadvanced and underdeveloped colonized territories. This legitimized the European presence in the colonized region. In essence, socio-psychological power derives from the idea that race is the characterized distinguisher between developed and underdeveloped (ibid., 18).

The way in which this power was acted out in relation to architecture and the urban environment, was through:

a) Combining indigenous and European architectural styles into the building;

b) Using segregation as an instrument to insinuate superior power (the colonial authority legitimized segregation by presenting Western ‘scientific’ knowledge on how segregation prevented diseases to spread between the colonized and the colonizers);

c) Juxtaposed cities (insinuates that colonial buildings are more advanced and developed, in comparison to the small underdeveloped and unadvanced indigenous buildings);

d) Modernization of streets and buildings (ibid., 18).

4.2.1.5 Politico-Administrative Power

The colonial authority’s usage of the public infrastructure allowed the colonizers to mediate administrative power over the indigenous population. This administrative power was mediated through:

a) Administrative infrastructure (as the Westphalian institutional system originates from Europe and was introduced in most colonized states through colonialism. Therefore, the political culture of post-colonial states has been affected by colonialism) (Newton and van Deth 2010: 24);

b) Building authority buildings, such as Parliament or Municipality buildings as the governmental system is based on a central authority. Before colonialism, non-European areas were governed in other ways, and usually had an absence of a central government. Therefore, the implementation of governmental buildings mediated colonial central monopolized control) (Dempsey 2006: 18);

c) Positioning all authority buildings together at the center of the city (Njoh and Bigon 2015: 19).
5. Methodology

The following information which will be provided in this chapter regards how the analysis will be conducted, seeing that it will be the underlying basis for answering the following research question, which is:

*To what extent does Majlis an-Nuwwab’s architectural design theoretically mediate different forms of French colonial power?*

### 5.1 Choice of Analytical Tool

As demonstrated in the Literature Review of this thesis, there is an abundance of literature on colonizers that used architecture as a tool for mediating their colonial power. Similarly, Dovey theorizes that architectural structures are used as mediums for conveying societal power structures. For this reason, this study aims to uncover what features of the Parliament building are theoretically mediating French colonial power, in order to understand to what extent that is accomplished. Therefore, the physical structures and features of the building is going to be analyzed, along with its relation to its own surrounding. Thus, the selected analytical tool which will be used in this study is Ambe J. Njoh and Liora Bigon’s (2015) five overlapping categories of power, which are; (I) *military*, (II) *economic*, (III) *cultural*, (IV) *socio-psychological*, and (V) *poliico-administrative power*.

Seeing that this study concerns colonial architecture, Njoh and Bigon’s five categories of power as more suitable to use as the analytical tool, due to their applicability for analyzing power in colonial architecture, as Lebanon bears the status of a former French colony. In summary, the architectural features of the Parliament building of Lebanon is going to be examined in accordance to these five categories of power.
5.2 Object of Analysis

As colonial buildings are still remaining in post-colonial states, they are continuously mediating various forms of colonial power. Therefore, the embedded colonial power still remains in the design of the colonial building, and, thus, renders itself as a suitable object of analysis (Njoh and Bigon 2015: 10). Further, there were a variety of buildings in Lebanon to choose amongst, as there are many buildings built by the French during the colonization of Lebanon (Saliba 2013: 9). However, this thesis uses Lebanon’s current Parliament building Majlis an-Nuwwab as its object of analysis. The reason to why I decided to specifically do a study on the colonial power mediation in Majlis an-Nuwwab, is due to the fact that during the time when Lebanon was colonized, this Parliament building was used as France’s colonial Parliament building. Additionally, Majlis an-Nuwwab is also currently used as the Parliament building of Lebanon. Moreover, Parliament buildings are, in general, considered to be powerful, as they embody and represent the state. In other words, by just labeling the building to be a ‘Parliament’, will on its own insinuate a sort of authoritarian power (Dovey 1999: 15).

Further, the primary source of data of this analysis is personally obtained photographs of the building through primary observation, while additionally using historical photographs of the building to complement the collected data.

5.3 Data Collection

The obtained data for this study was collected through a ten-day visit to the city of Beirut, where a small field work was conducted. This trip provided context to the various scholarly arguments and claims that were made in the sources that were used in this study, but most importantly, it granted a possibility to make primary up-close observations of the physical structures of the building, and its surroundings.

Additionally, as explained by Dovey, Njoh and Bigon, power mediation through built form is a multifaceted and complex phenomenon (Dovey 1999: 1) (Njoh and Bigon 2015: 10). Njoh and Bigon specifically argue that there are various interacting forms of powers that can be found in colonial-built form, and these powers are, at times, overlapping with one another (2015: 11). Therefore, observing the building and its intricate details up-close, allowed me to better examine these powers. Further, physically seeing the building enabled me comprehend minute
details that would have been, otherwise, difficult to mark and analyze, as opposed to data obtained second-hand. I gained knowledge on rules that were implemented in regard to the building, such as that only certain people were allowed to drive into the area where the Parliament was located. Observing the building also allowed me to physically “feel” the building, see small details, understand the scale of the building, its material and its surroundings. I also obtained a greater understanding of its location, of other buildings which were located next to it, and I took my own photos to my own liking. This adds to the genuineness of the thesis, since the photos are obtained first-hand during my visit, and allow me to observe details which would have been overlooked or lacking otherwise, if I did not have the opportunity to physically examine the building. All of these photos will be attached in the form of an Appendix, which can be found at the end of this thesis.

5.4 Research Design

The analysis will consist of the application of Njoh and Bigon’s five categories of power onto the features of Lebanon’s Parliament building. This will be done through applying the operational question, which is based on Njoh and Bigon’s five categories of power. They are (I) military, (II) economic, (III) cultural, (IV) socio-psychological, and (V) politico-administrative power, and the operational question reads:

- *What architectural features of Majlis an-Nuwwab are associated with the mediation of [insert military/ economic/ cultural/ socio-psychological/ politico-administrative power]?

This operational question will allow Njoh and Bigon’s identified powers to individually be applied onto the architectural structures of Lebanon’s Parliament building, in order to examine what kinds of powers can be identified in its design as the most predominant ones. Further, Dovey’s theory is going to be used throughout the analysis, in order to explain what identified features of Majlis an-Nuwwab theoretically mediate power. To clarify, the five categories of power are going to be applied onto the architectural features of the Parliament building, and Dovey’s theory is going to assist in explaining what symbols are associated with power in the buildings imbedded structures. As such, the analysis of this study is going to be a theory-based analysis and will be composed through Njoh and Bigon’s five categories of power.
5.5 Researcher’s Position

In constructivist tradition, knowledge is a constructive process that is based on an individual’s own experience. Therefore, individuals constantly construct their own subjective ideas of the objective reality. For this reason, it is nearly impossible to be objective, and it is better for the researcher to instead admit their biases, rather than to deny its existence, so that the reader knows the position of the researcher and can critically assess the research (Woolgar and Pawluch 1985: 161). As such, it is important to discuss the researcher’s own position and standpoint on the issue in order to demonstrate for the reader if there are any potential biases in the research.

I am an individual that is born and raised in Gothenburg, Sweden, thus, my nationality is Swedish. However, my background is Syriac-Aramean Arab, which is a small ethnic-tribal group that originates from all over al-Mashriq, and this is what I mostly identify with. Further, all of my grandparents grew up during the French Mandate of Syria, and both of my grandfathers served in the French military during colonization. I grew up hearing stories of how my grandfathers were treated badly by the French, and how they fought for Syria’s freedom. This has caused me to frown upon colonialism, and I view it as being something invasive, exploitative and encapsulating. Nonetheless, the thesis would attempt to follow the proposed theoretical and analytical framework in a strict manner.
6. Analysis

In this chapter, the analysis of the colonial power that is theoretically mediated through the architectural features of Majlis an-Nuwwab is going to be conducted. This will be done through the application of Njoh and Bigon’s five overlapping categories of power onto the architectural structures of Lebanon’s Parliament building. These five categories of power are: (I) military, (II) economic, (III) cultural, (IV) socio-psychological, and (V) politico-administrative power. The way in which these categories will be applied is through the usage of one operational question, which reads:

- What architectural features of Majlis an-Nuwwab are associated with the mediation of [insert military/ economic/ cultural/ socio-psychological/ politico-administrative power]?

Throughout the analysis, the personally obtained photographs, which are going to be utilized are those that exhibit the most characteristics crucial for the analysis. However, all other personally obtained photographs can be found in the Appendix section of this thesis.
6.1 What architectural features of Majlis an-Nuwwab are associated with the mediation of military power?

It appears as though military power has been quite significant in the architectural design of Lebanon’s Parliament building, as there are many ways in which Majlis an-Nuwwab’s architectural structures can be interpreted as mediating military power. Firstly, Dovey argues that the color of a built form can be used to convey a sense of authoritarian power. Colors can also be used in a way to represent a national identity. For example, Greece can be used as an example, as Greek buildings often embody the same colors as the Greek flag (Dovey 1999: 115 and 174). In the case of Lebanon’s Parliament building, the overall colors of the building particularly lie in the color spectrum of beige and brown (see Figure 2). These colors are earthy shades that are often used in military senses, both in the case of military buildings (e.g. military barracks and fortifications), and in the clothes that are worn by soldiers. The reason for using such colors in military is due to their disguising, concealing and camouflageable abilities (Brice 1985: 159). Thus, in accordance to Dovey’s argument concerning color, the color of Majlis an-Nuwwab can be interpreted as mediating French military power, due to its association with camouflageable colors (Dovey 1999: 115).

The physical elements that Majlis an-Nuwwab is composed by can also be understood as mediating military power. The Parliament building is composed by brick material, which is a very commonly used material concerning the composition of fortifications and barracks. The reason for the usage of such material in military fortifications, is due to the fact that brick material makes the building impenetrable, since the brick material can serve as a defense system (Brice 1985: 159). Thus, in the case of Majlis an-Nuwwab, the brick material gives the building an illusion of stability and strength, as well as making it impenetrable (Dovey 1999: 21). This can be an insinuation of military power, as argued by Njoh and Bigon (2015: 14). Apart from this, the majority of the windows of the Parliament building have bars on them (see Figure 3), which according to Dovey, relates to
power of force, as bars are a way to enclave and encapsulate the building, and are used as a security device to hinder unwanted enforced access (1999: 10). This practice of encapsulation is seen on a larger scale in the principle of fortifications, to prevent access to unwanted subjects. As such, the bars on the windows of Majlis an-Nuwwab can be understood as defense, as they enforce spatial exclusion, which can be interpreted as *military power* (Njoh and Bigon 2015: 13f).

Further, while the Parliament building is not deliberately surrounded by walls or water, which fortifications sometimes are (Brice 1985: 159), *Majlis an-Nuwwab* does have fortification architectural features imbedded in its design. This is explicitly vivid through the way in which the buildings entrance is designed. Firstly, the Parliament buildings door is rounded, similarly to fortification entrances (see comparison made between Figure 4 and 5, particularly the green boxes). Secondly, the tower-like/pillars design that the Parliament building has by the sides of the front part of the building, is also common in fortifications (see comparison made in Figure 4 and 5, particularly the red boxes).

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*Fig 4. Lebanon’s Parliament building (Source: own photography)*

*Fig 5. The French fortification Carcassonne. (Source: Frenchmoments.eu)*
Other comparisons can be drawn between *Majlis an-Nuwwab* and other fortifications, in order to show its military power. For instance, buildings in most fortified towns, when viewed from above, are arranged in a spatial syntax, with buildings faced inward. Similarly, when viewing Lebanon’s Parliament building from above, one can see that the urban planning of *Majlis an-Nuwwab*’s location is particularly planned in a way so that all surrounding buildings are facing each other inward, where a clocktower is at the center of it all. Planning streets to have all buildings arranged, is very common in fortified towns (Brice 1985: 165).

Additionally, the center where the French colonial built clocktower is located, also has quite a lot of empty space (see Figure 7). This layout of the streets somewhat resembles the same closure that exists in a militarized fortified town (see similarities between Figure 6 and 7) (Dovey 1999: 187).

The way in which this can be understood as mediating French military power, is due to the fact that fortifications are historically related to military (Brice 1985: 166). Additionally, “The character and layout of fortifications vividly reflect the armament and tactics of the builders” (Wheeler 1954: iv). Thus, a building with military fortification style architecture can insinuate that the owners of the buildings are military powerful, which causes the building to mediate a sense of military capacity (ibid.). As such, these features can mediate military power, due to
the fact that fortifications used to serve as buildings of territory defense during warfare (Brice 1985: 166).

Further, as said above, the central point of the street that the Parliament building is located in, causes Majlis an-Nuwwab to have quite a lot of open space in front of it. Dovey argues that empty space essentially causes the height and width of a building to be intensified and, therefore, makes the building more intimidating (Dovey 1999: 183). Thus, infrastructure in regard to intimidation is associated with military power, due to the fact that intimidation in built form aims to showcase strength (Njoh and Bigon 2015: 14).

An additional characteristic in regard to open space, is that empty space in front of a building can have militaristic significance, as empty spaces were used as a place for military assembly (Njoh and Bigon 2015:13). While empty space, to some extent, exists in front of Lebanon’s Parliament building, it was not used for military purposes. This is especially evident when looking at historical images of the building, as one can see that the streets surrounding the Parliament, were rather roads where cars used to drive, and the central clocktower was a roundabout (this may be possible to see in Figure 8). This is not the case anymore, as the roads are rather currently pedestrian zones, and only some cars are allowed to drive into the area.

An additional feature worth mentioning, regards the urban construction of where Majlis an-Nuwwab is located. The urban sphere of the Parliament buildings location is constructed after Place Charles de Gaulle, which is a large open space in western Paris that consists of avenues and is where Arc de Triomphe is located (see Figure 14) (Saliba 2013: 17). The clocktower that is located in front of Lebanon’s Parliament building (see Figure 8), is designed by the same architecture as Majlis an-Nuwwab (ibid., 18). Further, the name of the clocktower is, in and of itself, called Place de L’Etoile, which is the historical name of Place Charles de Gaulle. In this sense, Lebanon’s clocktower is named after Paris’s then called Place de L’Etoile (ibid., 18f). The way in which Lebanon’s Parliament buildings location can be understood as mediating military power, is based on the fact that Place Charles de Gaulle was constructed for the purpose to signify France’s courageous military capacity. Therefore, Arc de Triomphe was, and is still, a symbol of France’s military superiority, and the colonial nation’s height of power (Bernazzoli and Flint 2009: 401). For this reason, Majlis an-Nuwwab’s urban construction is also symbolizing France’s military power, as it is constructed after Place Charles de Gaulle, that is symbolically intended to represent France’s military capacity.
Lastly, Lebanon’s Parliament building is not located on a higher ground that insinuates a position of superiority, which fortifications tend to be (Wheeler 1954: 29). However, there are stairs by the entrance of Majlis an-Nuwwab (see Figure 2), which makes the Parliament building to seem as though it is higher than the rest of the buildings, located next to it. Thus, the stairs slightly elevate the buildings platform, which gives the illusion that Majlis an-Nuwwab is in a superiority position that is overlooking a low-lying area. Therefore, the stairs can be understood as mediating military power, due to the fact that the stairs insinuate that the Parliament building is superior (Njoh and Bigon 2015: 13). Similarly, it has been discussed in the Literature Review, where Sen (2010) argued that colonizers used to place colonial buildings on a higher ground, in order to demonstrate their colonial dominance and power (p.203).

Njoh and Bigon explain that there are many reasons to why military power is mediated through colonial buildings (2015: 13). In the case of Lebanon’s Parliament building, if we take a look at the historical context of when Majlis an-Nuwwab was built, one may understand why military power is so present in its architectural design. As has been explained in the Background section of this thesis, the period during Lebanon’s colonization by the French, which was in the early 1900s, was during a time when there was a lot of intensive rivalry between the European superpowers, as the First World War had just been experienced (Fildis 2011: 130). For this reason, military power, in the case of French colonization of Lebanon, may possibly be related to the First and Second World War. To elaborate, the World Wars weakened the colonial
administrators and put them in a vulnerable position. This vulnerability could easily be taken advantage of by both the local colonized population, as well as by other colonial powers that were looking for a colonial expansion (Fuller 1988: 454). Thus, architectural *military power* structures may have been implemented in colonial buildings, for the purpose of granting France the ability to show its strength, dominance and stability in colonized Lebanon, towards other European colonial powers.

Additionally, *military power* might have been implemented in colonial buildings in Lebanon, due to France taking Syria and Lebanon as colonies, despite the fact that France had promised the local population independence after the overthrow of the Ottoman Empire. Local Arabs were unhappy with the new foreign rule, and formed an Arab nationalist movement, with the aim of overthrowing France’s colonial rule. For this reason, France wanted to maintain the local population from revolting against them (Fildis 2011: 133). Therefore, seeing that architectural structures could be used as a tool to show France’s military strength, *military power* may be seen in the designs of the French colonial buildings in Lebanon, for the purpose of keeping the local population from revolting.

Thus, as has been discussed in the Literature Review of this thesis, it was common for the colonial authorities to build colonial buildings for the purpose of maintaining dominance in a colonized region (see for instance, Fuller 1988). Additionally, Njoh and Bigon also argue that a way to intimidate and mediate dominance, is through implementing military architectural structures in the colonial buildings (2015: 13). For this reason, military architectural styles may have been implemented for France to convey their dominance and strength toward the colonized population and other European powers.

### 6.2 What architectural features of *Majlis an-Nuwwab* are associated with the mediation of *economic power*?

Although the promotion of economic prosperity is, arguably, the greatest reason to why countries colonized different territories (Njoh and Bigon 2015: 14), there seem to be few architectural features of Lebanon’s Parliament building that can be interpreted as mediating *economic power*. This does not mean that the mediation of *economic power* is not present in post-colonial Lebanon’s French colonial buildings, as it is. However, *economic power* is usually not deliberately found in buildings designs, rather, it is instead vivid through the urban layout.
In fact, Njoh and Bigon argue that the predominant way that *economic power* is often visible, is through urban planning, and less through actual architectural structures of colonial buildings (ibid., 15). Nevertheless, certain points can still be made concerning *economic power* mediation in *Majlis an-Nuwwab*’s features. For instance, as has been stated above in the analysis, particularly in section 6.1, there is an empty space in front of the Parliament building. This space, in contrast to the width and height of the Parliament building, can also be a symbol for capital, as it signifies stable dynamism, which contributes to the portrayal of a state as having economic prosperity (Dovey 1999: 119). Thus, while the space intensifies the building's mass, which can be interpreted as mediating military power, it can also be interpreted as a signifier of economic power.

Additionally, the brick material that *Majlis an-Nuwwab* is made out of, can not only be interpreted as mediating military power, as brick signifies buildings to be impenetrable, but it can also be understood as mediating economic power. Buildings were often made out of brick material, due to the fact that this type of material did not only look more expensive, brick was also costlier to use than if a building was made out of *bousillage*[^5]. Although, *bousillage* was also very common to use in French colonial buildings (Wright 1991: 288). However, the usage of brick was especially the case when it regarded a colonial authority building, as they are often considered to be representations of the colonial state (Dovey 1999: 91). For this reason, the usage of brick material insinuated that the colonial administrators were economically wealthy, which signifies power (Njoh and Bigon 2015: 15). Thereby, looking at the case of Lebanon’s Parliament building, which

[^5]: This is a cheap building material made out of a mixture of mud and animal hair
was built as a colonial authority building, its brick material can be interpreted as mediating *economic power*, as conceptualized by Njoh and Bigon (2015: 15).

Further, taking a look at the location and the surrounding of the Parliament building, one can see that there is a proximity to Beirut’s sea (see Figure 9). This closeness to the sea can be an indicator of economic dominance, as the sea was often used as a trade route of import and export of goods (Newton and van Deth 2010: 24). Thus, placing authority buildings near the sea, can insinuate colonial economic control and power (Dovey 1999: 159). Additionally, the French style roundabout that is in front of Lebanon’s Parliament building can also be understood as mediating *economic power*, as Njoh and Bigon argue that roads can relate to *economic power*, due to the fact that roads were used in a way to transport goods (2015: 15).

### 6.3 What architectural features of *Majlis an-Nuwwab* are associated with the mediation of *cultural power*?

*Cultural power* is a very obvious power that can be directly seen in *Majlis an-Nuwwab*’s architectural features. This power is especially vivid through the different ways that French architectural designs are intertwined into *Majlis an-Nuwwab*’s features. Additionally, *cultural power* can also be understood as being mediated through the Parliament buildings structures that are associated with modernity. In fact, according to Njoh and Bigon, modernity is considered to be an aspect of Western characteristics and was used as a way for colonizers to manifest western cultural superiority over the colonized territory. For this reason, *cultural power* can also be mediated through structures that are associated with modernization (Njoh and Bigon 2015: 17).

In order to examine the different ways in which Lebanon’s Parliament buildings features are mediating *cultural power*, the characteristics of French architectural features firstly need to be identified. Architectural characteristics can, for instance, be seen through the shapes and designs of the building’s windows and doors, as French windows typically have opened shutters/window barn doors, which are very

![Fig 10. The windows which are located on the side of the Parliament building (Source: own photography)](image-url)
commonly used in French architecture (Wright 1991: 98). Such windows are present in Majlis an-Nuwwab, and are the most obvious French architectural styles that can be identified in Majlis an-Nuwwab’s architectural features (see Figure 10), as these barn doors exist on almost all the windows that are located on the side of the Parliament building (see the side windows in Figure 2). Additionally, French doors and windows tend to consist of multiple small panes, as well as wrought iron (ibid., 99), and such designs can also be found in Majlis an-Nuwwab’s design (see Figure 11 and 3).

Additionally, although it has been argued in section 6.1 in this Analysis, that stairs can mediate military power, exterior stairs are also a common French architectural feature (Wright 1991: 99). These stairs can be found by the entrance of Lebanon’s Parliament building (see Figure 2). Therefore, as exterior stairs are common in French architecture, they can also be understood as mediating cultural power, as they are a typical French architectural feature (ibid.). Moreover, there are streetlights that are surrounding Majlis an-Nuwwab. The designs of the streetlights are very much inspired by French style wrought iron (see Figure 12), and can, thus, also be interpreted as mediating cultural power.

Majlis an-Nuwwab’s urban construction has been discussed in this Analysis as mediating military power, due to the fact that it was built after Place Charles de Gaulle, which is supposed to symbolically stand for France’s military power. However, cultural power can also be mediated through Lebanon’s Parliament buildings urban construction, due to the fact that it is built after a location in France. Particularly, when looking at the Parliament buildings urban environmental structure from above, one can see that there is a big resemblance between the urban construction where Majlis an-Nuwwab is located, and Place Charles de Gaulle’s urban fabrication. The resemblance between these can especially be seen through the layout of the compartmentalization of the buildings, as well as that the area has a ‘centerpiece’, which in the
case of Lebanon is the clocktower, and in the case of Paris, it is *Arc de Triomphe*. In addition to this, both ‘centerpieces’ are also used as roundabouts (see similarities in Figure 13 and 14).

As has been discussed in section 6.2 concerning Lebanon’s *Place de L’Etoile*, the roundabout can be understood as mediating *economic power*. However, as French roundabouts are known for being unique to France, due to the unusual driving rules that applies in French roundabouts (Tollazzi 2014: 152ff), they can also be interpreted as mediating *cultural power*. Thus, not only is the roundabout in front of Lebanon’s Parliament building insinuating *economic power*, it can also insinuate *cultural power*, seeing that French roundabouts are quite unique and specific to France’s national cultural identity (ibid., 150).

Yet another way that *cultural power* can be seen in regard to *Majlis an-Nuwwab*, is through the modern structures and features that can be found in connection to the building. Dovey argue that the way in which modernity can be present in architectural designs, are through structures such as vintage grid pattern that streets are laid in (1999: 130). Such vintage grid patterns can be found around the entire area that surrounds *Majlis an-Nuwwab* (see Figure 15), which can be indicators for *cultural power*, due to its connection to modernization.

In regard to what has been discussed above in this section, architecture can be representations of socially constructed identities. This is claimed by Dovey, as he argues that architectural
structures of buildings represent certain identities, such as cultural, national or institutional identities (1999: 16). Thus, by France using French architecture and modern architectural features in the case of Majlis an-Nuwwab, it is perpetuating France’s colonial identity as being a modern and developed nation. This may be a reason for France using modern architecture, which may be why cultural power is present in Majlis an-Nuwwab’s features.

Additionally, Njoh and Bigon argue that incorporating cultural European architectural design into the buildings, was a way to enforce the colonial authority’s culture onto the local population. The incorporation of European architectural design essentially allowed cultural superior power to be mediated through the buildings design, and, therefore, gave room for the colonial administrators to convey cultural dominance over the colonized population (2015: 15). In connection to this, as has been discussed in the Background section of this thesis, France wanted to maintain dominance and control over colonized Lebanon, and made numerous attempts to both proclaim its dominance, and also pinning the local population against each other, in order for France to maintain Lebanon as a colony (Fildis 2011: 133). Thus, the reason to why French architectural designs can be found in Majlis an-Nuwwab’s designs, may be due to the fact that France wanted to maintain its dominance.

6.4 What architectural features of Majlis an-Nuwwab are associated with the mediation of socio-psychological power?

In the case of Majlis an-Nuwwab, the most evident features that can mediate socio-psychological power, are through the combination of Arabic indigenous designs, and French architecture. This is due to the fact that the Parliament building was designed in accordance to a Levantine architecture, which is that architectural styles of al-Mashriq indigenous designs, and French colonial architecture, are combined in the buildings design (Ragette 2012: 45). Such architectural hybridization can be seen in the case of Lebanon’s Parliament building, as the French architecture that can be found in the building, is intertwined with al-Mashriq architectural design. Henceforth, this Levantine architecture will be demonstrated in this section of the Analysis.
Firstly, Arabic architectural design can particularly be seen in the circular vault shapes that are found in Majlis an-Nuwwab’s structures. For instance, the three windows that are located above the entrance door of the Parliament building, have a vaulted shape to them (see Figure 2), as well as some of the windows that can be found on the sides of the building (see Figure 3). Vaulted structures are a very common architectural structure that can be found in many indigenous buildings throughout the Middle East and North Africa (Ragette 2012: 41). In addition to this, the stripes that can be found along the perimeter of the vaulted shape in Figure 16, are also a highly common feature of Arabic architectures (ibid., 43). In combination to these Arabic designs, there are also many features of Majlis an-Nuwwab that are French architectural styles. Such features have already been discussed in section 6.3 of the Analysis, however, some can be quickly mention again, for clarification purposes. Features such as the barn doors that are located at the side of the building, along with French style wrought iron (see Figure 17) are a common characteristic in French architecture.

Further, although it was argued in section 6.1, that the color of the building could be understood as mediating military power, it is, however, not impossible to interpret the color to be mediating socio-psychological power as well (Dovey 1999: 17). This is due to the fact that the beige color is a warm toned color, which often makes subjects feel welcomed and/or uplifted (ibid., 115). Additionally, not only could modern architectural design show that the French culture was more developed, hence, mediating cultural power, it could also be understood as mediating socio-psychological power. This is as modernization was a way to justify the French colonial presence in Lebanon, as it was indicated that colonialism could help bring development and modernization to the region. Thus, certain architectural features are intentionally made so that
the local population would think that the colonial authority was there for the purpose of helping the colonized territory to develop. Therefore, socio-psychological power can be mediated through architecture for the purpose of showcasing that the colonial authority is present in the colony for the benefit of the local population (ibid., 18).

In addition, as has been explained in the Literature Review of this thesis, this hybridization of architecture was often done for the purpose to manipulate the local population into thinking that the colonial authority was paying their respect to the indigenous culture (Wright 1991: 1). Njoh and Bigon argue that by using manipulative architecture, it allowed the colonial authority to better control the local colonized population (2015: 17). In the case of French colonial buildings in Lebanon, the usage of Arabic design can be understood as ‘seducing’ the local Arabs. Dovey speaks on ‘seduction’ and theorizes that it is when buildings manage to adequately convey authoritarian power over the subjects in a ‘softly’ or ‘friendly’ way (1999: 137). Thus, ‘seduction’ is in the sense that by using indigenous design, the local Arabs were believed to think that the French were their ‘friend’, rather than foreign invasive rulers.

Moreover, looking at the historical context of French colonization of Lebanon, may offer some pretext to why some features of Majlis an-Nuwwab can be understood as mediating socio-psychological power. As has been explained in the Background section of this thesis, in order for France to control the Arab nationalist movement’s uprisings, and to maintain its dominance over Syria and Lebanon, France increased their support for the Christian Maronites that were predominantly populating Lebanon, which essentially caused tension between the different religious groups that could be found in al-Mashriq. Thus, the support that the Maronites gained was only in order for France to maintain its colony (Fildis 2011: 133). For this reason, France may have been incorporating indigenous design into Majlis an-Nuwwab’s architectural features, in order to show its support for the Maronites. Thereby, socio-psychological power may be mediated through Majlis an-Nuwwab’s architectural structures, due to France’s relationship with the Christian Maronites. Thus, the combination of indigenous design, and French architecture, which is also referred to as Levantine architecture, can be understood as mediating socio-psychological power.
6.5 What architectural features of *Majlis an-Nuwwab* are associated with the mediation of *politico-administrative power*?

There are certain aspects to *Majlis an-Nuwwab*’s architectural features that can be understood as mediating *politico-administrative power*. For instance, Njoh and Bigon speak of colonizers erasing indigenous buildings and replacing them with colonial buildings (2015: 17), and this is evident in the case of Lebanon. This can especially be seen through looking at how the urban structure of *Majlis an-Nuwwab*’s location is constructed. Specifically, comparing how the urban sphere looked before and after colonialism, one can see that the French had made significant changes to the urban layout of where Lebanon’s Parliament building is located (see differences in Figure 18 and 19). The urban sphere changed in the sense that during colonization, there was an implementation of governmental buildings into the central part of Lebanon, where Lebanon’s Parliament building and other governmental buildings, such as Lebanon’s Municipality building were built next to each other (Saliba 2013: 19). This can be understood as conveying *politico-administrative power*, as placing the colonial authority buildings at the center of a city, can be a representation of colonial central monopolized control (Dovey 1999: 159).

*Fig 18. Beirut’s central district in 1920 on the Left (Source: Saliba 2013: 10) and Fig 19. Beirut’s central district in 1932 on the Right (Source: Saliba 2013: 10)*


Additionally, the removal of pre-colonial buildings and the change in the urban structure can also be understood as mediating *polito-administrative power*, as the Westphalian institutional system derives from Europe, and this governmental system is very much based on a single central government that has monopolized control (Newton and van Deth 2010: 24). The reason to why placing the building in a central position can be understood as mediating *polito-administrative power*, is due to the fact that during pre-colonial times, it was uncommon in non-European areas to have a central government (ibid., 22). Therefore, Dovey argues that by situating governmental buildings in the same area, and at a central location, will essentially central control (1999: 159). Thus, as conceptualized by Njoh and Bigon, this can mediate *polito-administrative power*, as the buildings location represent the centrality and monopolization of the government (2015: 19). In this sense, changing the central part of Lebanon’s urban sphere to be dedicated to all governmental buildings, can insinuate central control. Therefore, this can mediate *polito-administrative power*. 
7. Conclusion

This research was conducted through the usage of Kim Dovey’s theory of ‘power mediation through built form’, for the purpose of identifying certain designs of Majlis an-Nuwwab that could symbolically mediate power. Along with this, Ambe J. Njoh and Liora Bigon’s five analytical categories of power have been used as the analytical tool, to determine what features of Majlis an-Nuwwab mediated power, which contributed to the understanding of the extent to which the power mediation is accomplished.

Seeing that colonialism reinforced and rested heavily on the unbalanced power relations between the colonizers and the colonized, this study, at large, sought to gain a greater understanding on the extent to which the physical colonial elements may have contributed to the retention of the colonial authority’s power in their colonized region. Therefore, the aim of this thesis was to uncover to what extent the architectural features of Lebanon’s Parliament building could mediate French colonial power, as theorized by Dovey.

7.1 Findings

This research study strived to answer the following research question:

To what extent does Majlis an-Nuwwab’s architectural design theoretically mediate different forms of French colonial power?

The analysis has, overall, theoretically signified that military, economic, cultural, socio-psychological, and politico-administrative powers are mediated through the architectural designs of Majlis an-Nuwwab, as well as through the building’s urban context. The building is, mostly prominent, a mediator for military, cultural and socio-psychological power. Additionally, traits of economic and politico-administrative power were also found to be mediated through the designs of the Parliament building and its urban context, however, not to
the same extent as the other three powers. Overall, it can be concluded that Lebanon’s Parliament building is mediating French colonial power through its architectural design.

Further, the analysis seems to corroborate with Dovey’s claim that buildings are mediators of power, as well as Njoh and Bigon’s argument concerning the fact that the five categories of powers overlap. Meaning, a single architectural feature in a built form does not necessarily only have to mediate one specific power, rather, features can be mediators for several powers simultaneously, as was in the case of cultural and socio-psychological power, and cultural and military power. Additionally, this study did not invalidate Dovey’s, Njoh and Bigon’s claims, as this research demonstrates to what extent colonial power was mediated and reinforced through the different architectural components of the Parliament building. Thus, the findings of the Analysis are corresponding to this study’s aim and research question.

7.2 Discussion

Despite the limitation of this study being that it cannot prove intentionality, as it is a theory-based analysis, presuppositions can, however, still be made, especially when looking at the historical context, in relation to the findings of the analysis. For instance, during the colonization of Lebanon, there was tension between the European superpowers while simultaneously an Arabic nationalist movement was formed to resist the French colonial rule. This may be a reason to why Majlis an-Nuwwab’s designs are mediating power, as it portrayed France’s national identity as a military powerful, economically wealthy, modern and developed nation, both to the local population, but also to its colonial peers.

Additionally, the Literature Review has examined some academic writings that speak on France using architecture as a tool to maintain dominance, particularly during the 1920s, which was during the time of French colonization of Lebanon. These writings demonstrate that the usage of architecture to convey power was not an uncommon practice by the French, but also other colonial powers of that time. For instance, the Literature Review discussed the French colonial architect Joseph Marrast, which claimed that France used architecture as a way to express dominant power and to control the local population. Therefore, due to these academic writings, it is not impossible to assume that the case was not similar regarding French colonial buildings in Lebanon. However, these arguments are only assumptions. Therefore, this study cannot answer what the architectures had in mind when designing Majlis an-Nuwwab.
Nevertheless, research such as this study is still important to conduct, as architecture can visually communicate and reinforce socially constructed power structures and encapsulation practices. Along with this, as colonial buildings still exist in post-colonial states, they are essentially freezing the image of the colonial society, which physically preserves the hierarchal power differences between the colonizer and the colonized. Therefore, in the broader sense, it has influenced the current hierarchical power imbalances between the former colonizer and the former colonized.

For this reason, the application of the utilized analytical and theoretical framework onto further similar cases, will result in beneficial and educational findings, which will contribute to a broader understanding of colonial architecture, and how its current existence can manifest the once-existing former superpower and continue to serve as a symbol of the past inferiority of the local population.
8. Bibliography

8.1 Academic Literature


### 8.2 Online Sources for the Used Images

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9. Appendix

9.1 Figures used in the Analysis

Figure 1 and 4: 

Figure 2: 

Figure 3: 

Figure 10:
Figure 17:

9.2 Other Photographs

Figure 18: