2.1.3 The Poster-Based Transmission of the Martyr as a Figure That Escapes Definition

The figure of the martyr is difficult to grasp. In today's Lebanon, there are five main ideas of martyrdom. Shia and Christian narratives are closely linked to each other, as each includes an archetypal shahid (Hossein or Jesus) who, despite having a choice, decided to die at the hands of evil in a state of injustice. The Sunnis also imagine an afterlife for the shahid, but do not centralise martyrdom. The Druze, on the other hand, believe in the continuation of the soul on Earth, while in the secular concept of martyrdom, the realm of the afterlife is absent.

In general, there are two concepts of martyrdom that, as we will see throughout the book, function independently from religion. The narrow concept only considers those who have heroically chosen death as martyrs, while the broader concept also considers passive victims as shuhada. Importantly, martyrs are always constructed, and their stories need to be transmitted to an audience. This can be done via martyr posters, which are political posters that often emerge in contexts that have a need to make sense of many deaths. The medium in general is a mode of communication that is put up in multiples on the streets and online and is therefore able to reach a broad audience. Martyr posters are also very present on the walls in Lebanon, the country to which I will turn now.

2.2 The Dead Are on the Walls: Re-Tracing Images of Martyrs in Lebanon

Images of the dead, in particular martyrs, are widely visible in Lebanon. I will here introduce the roots of the image of the martyr in that country and begin with a wider historical view to provide background information that is connected to the emergence of the country as well as to its martyrs. In 1920, after the defeat and partition of the Ottoman Empire (of which Lebanon was a part from 1516 until 1918) in WW1, Great Britain and France divided some of the Ottoman Empire's former territories. This partition was previously decided in the infamous Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916. Lebanon became a part of the French mandate. During WW2, the pro-Vichy administration in Lebanon was overthrown by Free French and British troops, and due to fears that Lebanon would fall under British control, France agreed to grant Lebanon independence, which it gained in 1943.[73]

73 Fawwaz Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon* (London: Pluto Press, 2007), 75–80, 104–08. For the Sykes-Picot agreement, see also Kamal Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions* (London et al.: I.B. Tauris, 2024 [1988]), 20–21.

Today, there are eighteen sectarian groups in the country. The political sphere is also highly sectarianised, with the parliamentary seats divided among the sects.[74] According to the National Pact, the president must be a Maronite Christian,[75] the speaker of parliament a Shiite, and the prime minister a Sunnite. Therefore, it is not surprising that the ideology of most of the Lebanese parties is deeply intertwined with religion and that sectarian strife is still taking place on a regular basis. The history of these conflicts can be traced back at least to the 19th century, with the first big wave of killings happening in the 1860 Shuf Wars, a violent dispute between Druze and Christians in Mount Lebanon that resulted in massacres, displacements, and killings based on religious affiliation.[76]

It seems that the people who died in the conflict of 1860 have never been elevated as martyrs. As Lucia Volk has shown, the first people who were remembered as shuhada in Lebanon were a group of men of different confessions who staged an insurgency against the Ottoman rulers. This led to the public hanging of fourteen of these men in 1916 in Beirut, in today's Martyrs Square. According to Volk, the Ottoman rulers spread photographs of the dangling bodies shortly after their execution as a warning sign for other possible insurgents. In 1955, a book was published in Beirut that narrated the events that led to the deaths of these men and included portraits of the killed, presenting them as martyrs.[77] However, not everybody in Lebanon agreed that the insurgents were martyrs, as they were sometimes viewed as French collaborators who supported colonialism. This, Bonsen argues, is an early symptom of what happens often in Lebanon: martyrs of one group are viewed as betrayers by another sect.[78]

In 1930, a sculpture remembering the dead of 1916, designed by Yussef Hoayek (*Fig. 1.1*), was inaugurated. As I outlined in the introduction, this work shows a Christian woman and a Muslim woman facing each other, mourning the ashes of the martyrs, symbolically placed in an urn between them. Many people thought this sculpture, which represented loss and sorrow, was not heroic enough, and after it was vandalised several times, it was replaced with a new monument in 1960.[79]

74 Lucia Volk, *Memorials and Martyrs in Modern Lebanon* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 6.

75 The Maronites are a Christian subgroup with wide political influence in Lebanon. For details on the Maronites, see Salibi, *A House*, 72–107.

76 Traboulsi, *History*, 33–35.

77 Volk, *Memorials and Martyrs*, 41, 47, 73. In 1972, the title page of the Lebanese newspaper *An Nahar* featured eleven portraits of the dead. I encountered the issue in Alfred Tarazi's exhibition *Memory of a Paper City* at UMAM, which took place from 10 June 2022 to 15 July 2023.

78 Bonsen, *Martyr Cults*, 60–62.

79 Volk, *Memorials and Martyrs*, 54–69. As Volk has shown, Hoayek's statue disappeared for more than fifty years, before being mysteriously found again in a warehouse in 2001. It has since been placed in front of the Sursock Museum. The original pedestal is missing and the Christian woman's nose is absent.

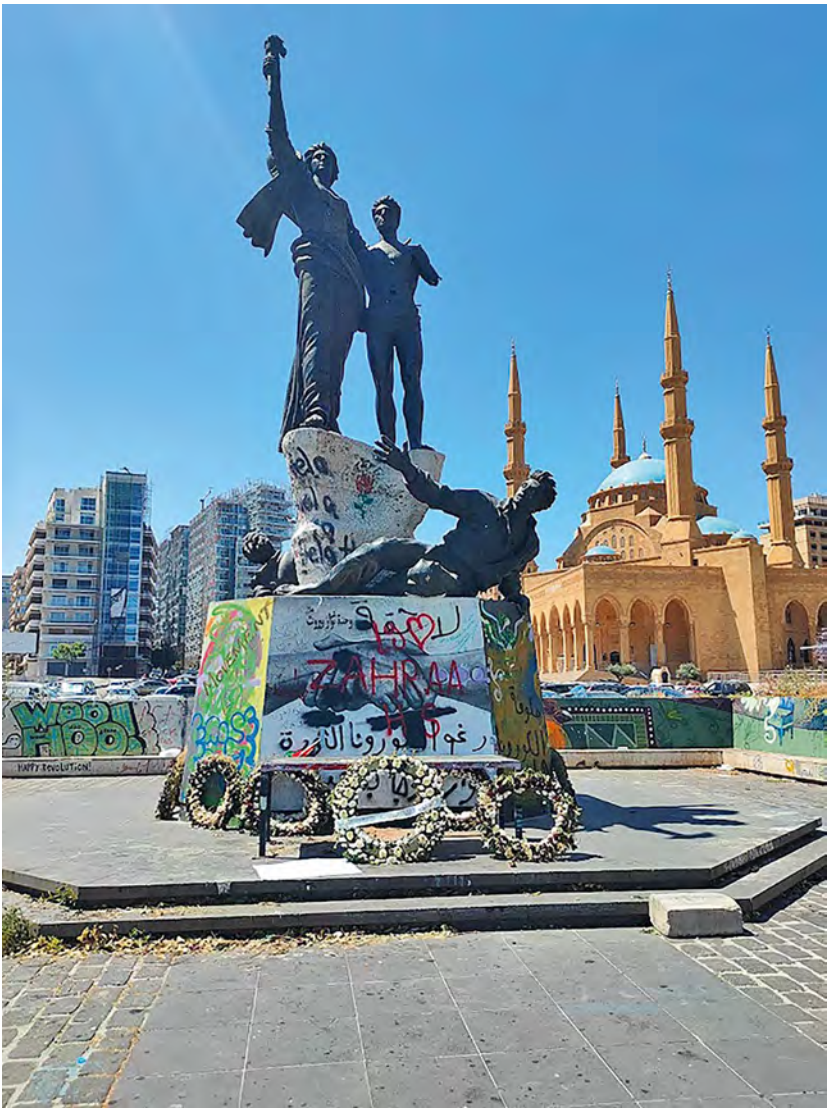

Fig. 2.1: Marino Mazzacurati, *Martyrs Statue*, 1960, Bronze, Beirut – Downtown, May 2021, Photograph AR.

It was built by the Italian Marino Mazzacurati and consists of four bronze figures (*Fig. 2.1*): a standing woman holding a torch, a standing man, and two recumbent men below.[80] The youthful, strong, muscular, and athletic bodies of all four figures represent victory and heroism.[81] Replacing the sculpture shows us how contested the representation of martyrdom was and embodies the question of whether the dead should be depicted as victims or heroes.

Both monuments represent but do not portray the deceased.[82] This would change with the *Wars in Lebanon*, which officially started in 1975 and ended in 1990, when posters of martyrs entered Lebanon's walls widely.[83] Usually referred to as 'the Lebanese civil war', I prefer to speak in terms of the *Wars in Lebanon* (henceforth, *Wars*). First, I use the plural because there was not constant fighting throughout the fifteen years, but armed confrontations that alternated with periods of relative peace. Second, I do not use the term 'civil war' because not only Lebanese militias, but also factions of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), such as Fatah and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), and armies of other countries, such as the Syrian, Israeli, French, and US armies, participated in the *Wars*.[84] Although I will offer greater detail on the conflict in the Chapter 3 and occasionally throughout the book, I do not intend to write a history of the *Wars*, as other books exist on this subject.[85] Furthermore, the collection of the American University of Beirut (AUB) holds both scientific and non-scientific literature about, as well as

80 Ibid., 97–103.

81 The inauguration of the new statue happened two years after a violent episode in 1958, which is sometimes referred to as 'the first civil war'. These armed clashes between Christians on the one side and Muslims and Druze on the other lasted several months and were caused by debate over a proposed change to the constitution and the question of whether Lebanon should join the Arab League. Especially the Christian parties opposed this, as they argued that the country should instead orient itself towards Europe and the US. Today, the thousands of people killed in this dispute are mostly forgotten. See Bonsen, *Martyr Cults*, 70–74. According to Volk, the only exception is a memorial in the small town of Beqaata in the Shuf mountains, which was commissioned by Kamal Jumblatt, the leader of the Druze Progressive Socialist Party, and inaugurated in 1960. Fifty-five Druze fighters and four civilian Christians who died in the clashes of 1958 are buried on the plot and labelled as martyrs (Volk, *Martyrs and Memorials*, 79–97).

82 Ibid., 112.

83 Haugbolle claims that posters were already used as a means of political communication during the conflicts of 1958, but I have not seen any of these. Sune Haugbolle, *War and Memory in Lebanon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 165.

84 Chad Elias, *Posthumous Images: Contemporary Art and Memory Politics in Post-Civil War Lebanon* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), 5–6.

85 See Edgar O'Ballance, *Civil War in Lebanon: 1975–92* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan: 1998) and Traboulsi, *History*, 187–239.

still and moving images from, the *Wars*.[86] Instead, what matters in the context of this book is that the period of the *Wars* was a golden age of visual martyrdom.

Already in 1978, journalist Maria Chakhtoura published a book focused on political graffiti, which became popular in the early days of the *Wars*. She also depicted posters of Christian and Muslim martyrs, demonstrating that the medium appeared on the walls as soon as the *Wars* began.[87] The most important publication that addresses posters during the *Wars*, however, is Maasri's book *Off the Wall: Political Posters of the Lebanese Civil War* (2009). She analyses the signs, the discourses, and the materiality of the medium and situates the posters in their socio-political and historical frameworks.[88] Maasri contends that the posters were produced and circulated not by a single hegemonic actor but by several actors, and that these actors were not grassroot activists because many were linked to the fragile Lebanese state. Each of the groups claimed to be engaged in righteous activism while accusing the other groups of distributing persuasive propaganda.[89] Taking this into account, Maasri demonstrates that a framework of thought that is polarised between propaganda and activism is inapplicable to the poster culture during the *Wars*.

I will follow Maasri and think of the posters not as propaganda but as visual politics, a term offered by Maasri without being further defined. To do so, I draw on Roland Bleiker, who argues that images should be understood not 'just as illustrations or as representations but as political forces themselves'; therefore, visuals are consciously produced and circulated by political players in order to shape opinions by eliciting emotions that could not be activated by using text alone.[90] This was also achieved during the *Wars* by the many actors involved, which I will introduce in detail in 3.5. Each of the participating parties had their own media office, which produced political visual material, such as posters of martyrs.[91] Across all factions, these posters typically encompass a juxtaposition of text and image; they usually include a photographic portrait of the deceased, symbols, and biographical information about the life and death of the person depicted.[92]

Maasri argues that Lebanese poster production should be seen within a global context. After the Nakba of 1948 and the expulsion of thousands of Palestinians from their land, many of these refugees came to Lebanon, where, particularly

86 'Lebanese Civil War: 1975–1990', American University of Beirut, accessed 12 March 2023, https://aub.edu.lb.libguides.com/c.php?g=655280&p=4599659.

87 Maria Chakhtoura, *La Guerre des Graffitti: Liban 1975–1978* (Beirut: Dar An-Nahar, 1978).

88 Maasri, *Off the Wall*, 17.

89 Ibid., 6.

90 Roland Bleiker, 'Mapping Visual Global Politics', in *Visual Global Politics*, ed. Robert Bleiker (New York: Routledge, 2018), 1.

91 For details of the technical process of making the posters, see Maasri, *Off the Wall*, 35–37.

92 Ibid., 88.

Fig. 2.2: PFLP (Designer Marc Rudin/Abu Jihad), '9th anniversary of the foundation of the popular front for the liberation of palestine', 1976, Poster, Palestine Poster Project Archives, Courtesy of Laura Zimmermann.

after the Arab defeat in the Six Day War in 1967, they started to organise themselves with the goal of returning to their homes and liberating Palestine. Fighters died in these activities and martyr posters were produced for them.[93] The figure of the Palestinian freedom fighter, the fedayee (which translates as zealot), was visually staged as a heroic, gun-carrying revolutionary guerrilla (*Fig. 2.2*).[94] Back then, printing technologies were more readily available in Beirut than in other Arab cities, which is why the poster industry thrived there.[95] These Palestinian posters 'were a precursor to Lebanese civil war political posters'[96] and the fedayee can be seen as a forerunner of the Lebanese sectarian martyr.

European influences can also be identified in the sectarian posters of the *Wars*. One poster (*Fig. 2.3*) shows Bachir Gemayel, who was the leader of the Christian factions and was assassinated in 1982. He is pointing towards the viewer with his index finger, and the accompanying slogan reads: 'Our Lebanon Needs You'. This is a clear appropriation of a famous WW1 poster, designed by Alfred Leete, that depicts Lord Kitchener, the British Secretary of State for War. Kitchener, whose index finger is pointed towards the spectator, is positioned amidst a slogan reading 'BRITONS [Lord Kitchener] WANTS YOU' (*Fig. 2.4*).

As Ghassan Hage and Sune Haugbolle have shown individually, Bachir (I am using his first name, as this is how he is usually spoken of in Lebanon) is still venerated and remembered on the walls today—often in relation to the notion of

93 Ibid., 39.

94 Straub, *Das Selbstmordattentat*, 56–57; Maasri, *Cosmopolitan Radicalism*, 181–89 and 216–17.

95 Ibid., 180–81. Lebanon also had the first printing press in the region. See Bahia Shehab and Haytham Nawar, *A History of Arabic Graphic Design* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2020), 85.

96 Maasri, *Off the Wall*, 38. For a general overview of martyr cults among the Palestinians in Lebanon, see Khalili, *Heroes and Martyrs*. For an overview of Palestinian resistance posters, see Shehab and Nawar, 152–74.

Fig. 2.3: LF (Designer Pierre Sadek), 'You! Our Lebanon Needs You!', 1983, Poster, 48 x 66 cm, KBA 5, signsofconflict.com.

Fig. 2.4: Alfred Leete, 'Britons Join Your Country's Army!', 1914, Poster, 74 x 50 cm.

Christian martyrdom.[97] The poster of Bachir that appropriates Leete's image is also depicted in a lavishly illustrated booklet by Wassim Jabre, which has a strong political Christian undertone and is therefore to be classified as a sectarian publication. Nonetheless, this source gives valuable insight into how the right-wing political Christian factions constructed their narrative, according to which it is necessary to resist a feared Muslim takeover of Lebanon. Jabre also emphasises that martyrdom was one of the first topics used in Christian posters of the *Wars*, and that images of Jesus are frequently invoked.[98]

Another international source of inspiration came from the martyr imagery of the Islamic Republic of Iran,[99] particularly from the Iran-Iraq War, which lasted from 1980 until 1988. A very well-known photograph that is frequently circulated

97 Ghassan Hage, 'Religious Fundamentalism as a Political Strategy: The Evolution of the Lebanese Forces' Religious Discourse During the Lebanese Civil War', *Critique of Anthropology* 12, no. 1 (1992); Sune Haugbolle, 'The Secular Saint: Iconography and Ideology in the Cult of Bashir Jumayil', in *Politics of Worship in the Contemporary Middle East: Sainthood in Fragile States*, eds. Andreas Bandak and Mikkel Bille (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

98 Wassim Jabre, *Lebanese Resistance Posters, 1975–1985* (Beirut: Trebia Publishing, 2012), 10.

99 Zeina Maasri, 'The Aesthetics of Belonging: Transformations in Hizbullah's Political Posters (1985–2006)', *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication* 5 (2012): 168.

Fig. 2.5: Islamic Republic of Iran, Amir Haj Amini, 1987 (?), Poster.

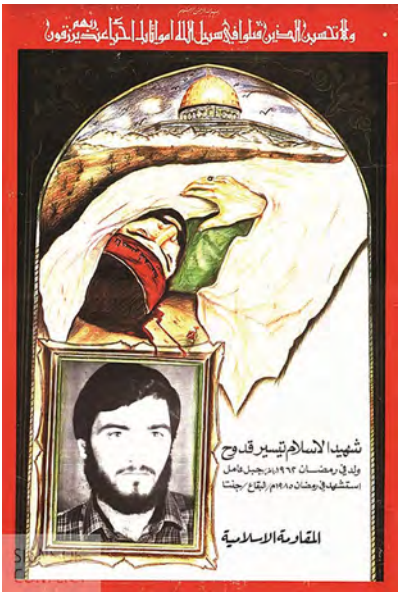

Fig. 2.6: Hezbollah, 'The Martyr of Islam Tayssir Kdou', 1985, Poster, 43 x 64 cm, HZB 5, signsofconflict.com.

on posters in Iran is that of Amir Haj Amini lying dead in the trenches (*Fig. 2.5*), still wearing military gear and a red headband. His face is sprinkled with blood.[100] Christiane Gruber explains the presence of blood as an 'emphatic mode of representation', where the spilled blood was understood to be necessary for the continuation of the Shia line of Islam, which is dominant in Iran, because life was transfused into the community via the blood. In other words, blood is believed to give life, just as plants and flowers grew out of the blood of Hossein and Siyavash.[101] Such images reactivate the Kerbala Paradigm and by referring to Eric Butel, Gruber claims that during the Iran-Iraq War, Iranian soldiers were turned into 'little Hosseins', fighting against Saddam Hossein, who became a contemporary Yazid.[102]

Especially Hezbollah, a Shiite group that has existed since 1982, adapted particular elements, such as red headbands, from the Islamic Republic's iconography

100 Younes Saramifar, 'The Pain of Others: Framing War Photography in Iran', *Ethnos* 84, no. 3 (2019): 481–82.

101 Christiane Gruber, 'The Martyrs' Museum in Tehran: Visualizing Memory in Post-Revolutionary Iran', *Visual Anthropology* 25, nos. 1–2 (2012): 81.

102 Christiane Gruber, 'The Message Is on the Wall: Mural Arts in Post-Revolutionary Iran', *Persica* 22 (2008): 26.

(*Fig. 2.6*).[103] The influence links with the fact that during the *Wars*, Iranian graphic designers came to Lebanon and helped Hezbollah set up a professional media office and design posters.[104]

Finally, there are local forerunners. First, banners with political slogans (yafta) appeared on the walls even before the emergence of posters.[105] Second, putting up images of the dead—including those who died of natural causes—in the neighbourhood where they had lived has been practised in Lebanon even before 1975 and is done until the present day (*Fig. 2.7*). The martyr poster, as 'a continuation of this practice', is intended to inform the neighbourhood about the loss of life.[106]

Fig. 2.7: Announcements of Deaths, Beirut – Ashrafieh, March 2022, Photograph AR.

During the *Wars*, martyr posters served as a 'tool for struggle'.[107] Maasri has shown that heroic shuhada were used in competitions between political actors to outnumber each other in a symbolic commitment to their cause. The posters of martyrs demonstrate the amount of human capital a political player was able to provide, which again shows strength.[108] Khalili argues that martyrs remind the living of an obligation,[109] because each martyr's death called for vengeance and therefore acted as a mode of mobilisation and recruitment for new fighters, who should be encouraged to follow the path of their brothers, neighbours, or friends, whose faces are visible in the posters.[110]

Importantly, images of heroic martyrs as ideal examples of the group for which they died create a sense of community and an 'us' versus 'them' divide in terms of identity.[111] Since the beginning of the *Wars*, posters have also been used to mark

103 Maasri, *Off the Wall*, 96–98.

104 Ibid., 50.

105 Ibid., 36–37.

106 Ibid., 88.

107 Ibid., 51.

108 Ibid., 87–88.

109 Khalili, *Heroes and Martyrs*, 65.

110 Maasri, *Off the Wall*, 88.

111 Ibid., 102.

Fig. 2.8: Amal, 'We Are Guided from the Light of Your Eyes', Beirut – Zoukak el-Blat, February 2023, Photograph AR.

territory. Certain sectarian militias controlled specific areas, and the posters were used to define the sectarian affiliation of the location.[112]

Usually, posters vanished from the walls after a while, with only the posters of assassinated leaders, such as Kamal Jumblatt of the Druze Progressive Socialist Party (PSP), and Bachir, remaining until the present day.[113] Also, the image of Mussa al-Sadr, the founder of the Shiite Amal movement who disappeared in Libya in 1975, can still be encountered. As his body has never been found, he is technically missing, but the many visuals that are still omnipresent in Shia quarters of Beirut adhere to martyr iconography (*Fig. 2.8*).[114]

It is also worth mentioning that in 1982 a new type of martyr, the 'istishahid', emerged. This was a designation for people who conducted martyrdom operations. In most cases, these operations were executed by driving a vehicle with explosives into a military post of the perceived enemy, which meant that the death of the driver was almost always presumed. I deliberately do not call these actions 'suicide operations': first, because they were not conducted due to fatigue from being alive, and second, because members of Muslim parties also conducted such operations. While suicide is forbidden in Islam, martyrdom operations are, as Bonsen claims, a controversial matter of discussion among Muslim scholars and are often legitimised as acts of self-defence.[115] Throughout this book, we will encounter images of those who conducted martyrdom operations.

112 Chakhtoura, *La Guerre*, 13; Maasri, *Off the Wall*, 51.

113 For different categories of martyrs, see Bonsen, *Martyr Cults*, 123.

114 For Mussa al-Sadr, see ibid., 64–67; Bonsen, *Martyr Cults*, 165–72, 192–97.

115 Bonsen, *Martyr Cults*, 51. André-Dessornes's study has demonstrated that these operations were also conducted by women, and Straub has shown us that these operations generally granted an important role to photos and videos. See André-Dessornes, *Les Femmes-Martyres*; Straub, *Das Selbstmordattentat*.

The *Wars* were officially ended in 1989 with the Taif Agreement, but heavy fighting continued until 1990. In the end, there was no change in the political system or any solution to the conflicts. The warlords entered parliament, turned into politicians, and have remained as such until the present day. The fact that thousands of people vanished during the *Wars* was put to rest, and their relatives rarely learned anything about their whereabouts.

In 1991, the General Amnesty Law was passed. It pardoned most crimes between 1975 and 1990, with the exception of deaths that are considered to have sparked the *Wars* and assassinations of important political and religious figures.[116] This means that until the present day, many Lebanese feel that what happened to their relatives, who died or disappeared during the *Wars*, remains unaccounted for. There were no consequences for the killings and abductions, and this has led to a state of impunity. Judith Naeff summarises this as follows:

> the situation after 1990 remained de facto unchanged, apart from the fact that the warring factions agreed that it was in everyone's interest to bring the large-scale violence to a halt. It is why many Lebanese maintain that the war has never really ended. The lack of a political solution to the issues that had been fought over against high costs, combined with the absence of judicial closure to the crimes that had been perpetrated, excluded redemptive debates on justice, reconciliation and commemoration from the political public sphere.[117]

Due to this lack of closure, it is not surprising that posters of martyrs of the sects persisted after the official end of the *Wars*, as Paula Schmitt and Haugbolle have both shown.[118] Schmitt argues that today's posters are 'designed to intimidate and provoke opponents, rather than gather new followers'.[119] Henri Myrttinen, in contrast, writes that the dead are still used as 'a call for others to follow their sacrificial example'.[120] Similarly, Bonsen claims that martyr posters today, like those produced during the *Wars*, are part of a competition for 'political power between parties of different sects' and are utilised to make sense of a death but also for the legitimisation of political goals, identity politics, and the recruitment of new followers.[121]

116 Sami Hermez, *War Is Coming: Between Past and Future Violence in Lebanon* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), 180–81.

117 Judith Naeff, *Precarious Imaginaries of Beirut: A City's Suspended Now* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 24. Naeff's book further includes a section on literary and artistic reflections on martyrdom, where she argues that these artists and writers criticise how martyrs are turned into fetishised and de-individualised object-images by the sects (Naeff, *Precarious Imaginaries*, 219–25).

118 Haugbolle, *War and Memory*, 161–93; Paula Schmitt, *Advertised to Death: Lebanese Poster Boys* (Beirut: Arab Printing Press, 2009).

119 Ibid., 65.

120 Henri Myrttinen, 'Death Becomes Him', 128.

121 Bonsen, *Martyr Cults*, 125.

The violence did not stop after the official end of the *Wars*, however. On the one hand, the Israeli Army, which first invaded Lebanon in 1978, remained present in the South of the country until 2000, which led to frequent violent clashes with resistance groups such as Hezbollah. Also, the Syrian Army, which had been stationed in Lebanon since 1978, stayed until 2005. On the other hand, sectarian violence continued. Of particular importance was 2008, when Hezbollah tried to gain control over West Beirut following an attempt by the government to close the party's media stations. This resulted in an armed conflict between sectarian militias in and outside of Beirut, until negotiations settled the violence.[122] The deal that was made included an agreement to take down all political posters. As Are John Knudsen has shown, this 'poster truce' has not been implemented, and political posters remain on the walls.[123]

However, there have been attempts to erase traces of the *Wars*. This is most notable in the reconstruction of Downtown Beirut, a section of the city—located on the so-called Green Line between predominantly Christian East Beirut and predominantly Muslim West Beirut—that was heavily destroyed during the *Wars*. At the beginning of the 1990s, Rafic Hariri—a businessman who mediated the Taif Agreement and was elected as prime minister with his party, the Sunni Future Movement, in 1992—founded a company called Solidére (an acronym for 'Société Libanaise pour le Développement et la Reconstruction du Centre-ville de Beyrouth'), which subsequently demolished many of the historical buildings in Downtown and replaced them with new edifices. The reconstruction of this part of the city is largely perceived as a failure, because it does not resemble the pre-war city centre and because references to the violence that took place there are lacking. The current architecture almost pretends the *Wars* never took place. Haugbolle observes that 'the war happened downtown if anywhere, but it was there, if anywhere that the war was rendered invisible'.[124] Because of this ignorance, Volk cites the social scientist Joe Nasr, who described Solidére's reconstruction as a 'continuation of war by other means'.[125] Plans to include a memorial to the *Wars*, the so-called Garden of Forgiveness, have never been realised.[126] Today, Downtown is a non-place

122 Ibid., 122.

123 Are John Knudsen, 'Death of a Statesman—Birth of a Martyr: Martyrdom and Memorials in Post-Civil War Lebanon', *Anthropology of the Middle East* 11, no. 2 (2016): 9. There was another unsuccessful attempt in 2015 to remove all political posters and other sectarian symbols from central Beirut; see Sarah Hamdar, 'Hizbullah-land? Branding Religio-Politico Identity in Dahiya', *Journal for Cultural Research* 23, no. 3 (2019): 325.

124 Haugbolle, *War and Memory*, 84–89; the quotation is on page 88. See also John Nagle, 'Defying State Amnesia and Memorywars: Non-Sectarian Memory Activism in Beirut and Belfast City Centres', *Social & Cultural Geography* 21, no. 3 (2020).

125 Volk, *Memorials and Martyrs*, 109.

126 Ibid., 164.

Fig. 2.9: Future Movement, Rafic Hariri and Mazzacurati's Martyrs Statue, Poster, Beirut – Beshara el-Khoury Street, July 2007, Photograph Ward Vloehbergs.

with few opportunities to spend time, while numerous roadblocks prevent public access to certain streets.

Architecture cannot erase memory, force amnesia, or end an ongoing conflict, however. Following the official end of the *Wars*, new martyrs emerged. Between the mid-2000s and mid-2010s, numerous politicians, intellectuals, and journalists who were critical of the Syrian presence in Lebanon were assassinated—often through car bombs—and subsequently remembered in posters.

The most important of these killings was that of Hariri, who died in a massive car bombing on 14 February 2005.[127] The subsequent cult of the president-martyr,[128] which includes his memorial images, has been analysed by both Knudsen and Ward Vloehbergs.[129] Hariri was buried in a mausoleum next to Mazzacurati's Martyrs Statue, which was damaged during the *Wars* and restored by Hariri. Some posters show Hariri next to this same statue, which places him in a lineage with the martyrs of 1916 (*Fig. 2.9*).[130] As a consequence of Hariri's assassination, protests led to the so-called Cedar Revolution, which ended the Syrian tutelage in Lebanon in 2005.

One year later, Hezbollah abducted two Israeli soldiers. This caused another Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the so-called Tammuz War, named after the Arabic word for July, the month in which the war started. Lasting thirty-four days, with

127 For the car bombs, see Bonsen, *Martyr Cults*, 118–20; for Hariri's assassination, see Volk, *Memorials and Martyrs*, 160–61.

128 Ibid., 33. Of course, Hariri was not the president of Lebanon, but the Arabic word for prime minister is 'rais al-wuzara', which translates as president of ministers. See Volk, *Memorials and Martyrs*, 211, footnote 46.

129 Knudsen, 'Death of a Statesman'; Ward Vloehbergs, *Architecture, Power and Religion in Lebanon: Rafiq Hariri and the Politics of Sacred Space in Beirut* (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

130 Volk, *Memorials and Martyrs*, 166–67. The Martyrs Statue is also depicted in posters by the Christian Kataeb and the Sunni Futurist Movement, but not by the Shia parties Hezbollah and Amal; see Lina Khatib, *Image Politics in the Middle East: The Role of the Visual in Political Struggle*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013), 17. Mazzacurati's Statue was used in the imagery of the *Wars* from the beginning; a poster of Mostafa Maarouf Saad shows him in front of the statue and the port of Saida. See Chakhtoura, *La Guerre de Graffiti*, 126.

Fig. 2.10: Hezbollah, 'The Shahid al-Mujahed Rabih Afif Alik (Abu Hadi) and the Shahid al-Mujahed Rami Bassam al-Assad (Jihad)', 2017, Online Poster.

Fig. 2.11: SSNP, 'The Hero Martyr Comrade Adonis Naser. He Was Martyred in a Battle of Heroism… Lattakia Countryside. 19.12.2016', Online Poster.

Hezbollah as the most-involved Lebanese faction, the war resulted not only in considerable destruction, but also in the creation of many martyrs, whose posters covered the streets of Hezbollah areas.[131] Finally, Israel retreated, and Hezbollah narrates this as the group's 'Divine Victory'.

Hezbollah's next opportunity to create new martyrs came with their contribution to the War in Syria, in support of Bashar al-Assad, that started in 2011. Many of Hezbollah's combatants died and are remembered on posters (*Fig. 2.10*), including a photographic headshot, his name, and the date and place of his death, as well as the Dome of the Rock (right) and a headband (left).

The secular Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP) also participated on the side of al-Assad in this war and remembers their dead of this conflict in posters (*Fig. 2.11*). Christopher Solomon provides comprehensive historical insight into the importance of martyrdom within the party, which he—referring to Antuan Saadeh, the group's founder, who was executed in 1949—terms 'The Party of the Martyr'.[132] Due to the relatively small size of the SSNP, Hezbollah's martyr posters resulting from the War in Syria were significantly more prevalent.

131 Volk, *Memorials and Martyrs*, 186.

132 Christopher Solomon, *In Search of Greater Syria: The History and Politics of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2022), 11.

Fig. 2.12: Amal, 'In the Name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. The Martyrs Are with Their Lord. They Have Their Reward and Their Light. The Amal Movement Invites Its Faithful Followers to Participate in the Funeral of the Shahid al-Mujahed Mustafa Mounir Zbib', 2021, Online Poster.

Fig. 2.13: Hezbollah, 'Martyr of Treachery, al-Mujahed Mohammad Jamal Tamer (Samer)', 2021, Online Poster.

Hezbollah dominates the martyrdom discourse in Lebanon because they had the most opportunities to create new martyrs after the *Wars*. This is reflected in scholarship on this subject, as the majority of scientific literature on martyrdom in Lebanon has been written about this party.[133]

Hezbollah, but also Amal, created martyrs in an incident that happened during the time of writing, namely, the one-day Tayyouneh street battle that took place on 14 October 2021, in Beirut. This was caused by a dispute over the appointment of the judge responsible for the investigation of the explosion of 4 August. As a result, the Shia duo (Hezbollah and Amal) clashed with the Lebanese Forces (LF), a Christian party. Seven people were killed and visually proclaimed as martyrs (*Figs. 2.12–2.13*).[134]

133 Bonsen, *Martyr Cults*, 3. For example, Lara Deeb, *An Enchanted Modern: Gender and Public Piety in Shi'i Lebanon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008) examines images of martyrs in Beirut's southern suburb and Hezbollah area, the Dahiyeh; Kinda Chaib, 'Hezbollah Seen Through Its Images: The Representation of the Martyr', in *The Shi'a Worlds and Iran*, ed. Sabrina Mervin (London: Saqi, 2010) has studied the visual portrayal of the group's shuhada; Maasri, 'Aesthetics' has re-traced changes in the party's posters throughout the years; and Bashir Saade, *Hizbullah and the Politics of Remembrance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 43–62 has tackled the group's martyr imagery. Most recently, Sarah Hamdar, 'Hizbullah's 'Ashura Posters (2007–2020): The Visualization of Religion, Politics and Nationalism', *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication* 14 (2021) has studied the party's posters after 2006 and demonstrated how the Kerbala Paradigm is visually held alive through current political events.

134 For this incident, see Tala Ramadan et al., 'At Least Six Dead, 30 Injured After Gunfire Erupts as Hezbollah and Amal Stage Protest Against Bitar', *L'Orient Today*, 14 October 2021, https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1278001/at-least-one-dead-nine-injured-as-gunfire-erupts-amid-protest-by-bitar-critics.html.

Taking down martyr posters was still discussed in 2022, when the caretaker tourism minister asked Hezbollah and Amal to remove billboards that were located on the road from the airport to the city centre and thus visible to everyone who arrives in Lebanon and travels into Beirut. There were fears that these images, many of them showing shuhada, would irritate tourists, which the country desperately needed in its disastrous economic situation. These images were indeed replaced with tourism advertisements.[135]

Since 2019, non-sectarian martyrs have been created, and they were visible in images on Beirut's streets at the time of writing. These images showed men who were killed during the thawra, the protests against the sectarian system that took place in 2019 and 2020 (*Fig. 2.14*). Also, images of those killed in the explosion on 4 August 2020 appeared on the walls (*Fig. 2.15*). Their deaths sparked debate about who should be labelled a martyr and who should not. I will go into more detail about their images in Chapter 5. Today, the commemoration of martyrs takes place not only on the walls, but also online on the Instagram pages of sectarian parties, revolutionary groups, and NGOs.

Fig. 2.14: 'The Heroic Martyrs of the Thawra. Oh Souls Who Have Left This World, You Will Enter Paradise God Willing…', Beirut – Martyrs Square, May 2021, Photograph AR.

Fig. 2.15: Images of the Dead of 4 August on Lampposts, Beirut – Port Area, January 2021, Photograph AR.

135 Sally Abou Al Joud, 'Caretaker Tourism Minister Asks Hezbollah and Amal to Remove Airport Road Billboards', *L'Orient Today*, 3 June 2022, https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1301605/caretaker-tourism-minister-asks-hezbollah-and-amal-to-remove-airport-road-billboards.html.