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# Antûn SAADEH's Social-Nationalist Doctrine. Presenting and Reconstructing an Original Economic and Social Theory

Wissam Samia\*

## Summary

The rising of “extreme right” approaches in Europe, and the ascension of the “catastrophic nationalism” doctrines deem having a “new” nationalism approach inevitable; not to mention or disregard the “Wahhabism” approach to Islam. The social European collective memory about nation and nationalism tends to consider these subjects as diabolic. This article aims to shed light on an unconventional approach to these notions of “nation” and “nationalism”. The approach covered in this paper was elaborated by Antûn Saadeh. In his view the nation is neither racial nor cultural but a single unity that “is formed over time” and emerged from the interaction of human elements “within and with the environment”. Economic theory and economic strategies derive organically from Saadeh's general social philosophy of nationalism<sup>1</sup>.

**Keywords:** Economic and Social Nationalism, Social Interactions, Production, Syria, economic and social doctrine of Antûn Saadeh

**JEL:** B31, B41, N35, O53, P48

## Introduction

A pioneer of the modern renaissance in the Arab world, Antûn Saadeh was born in 1904 in Lebanon. He spent part of his youth abroad. Back home in 1930, he began to recruit students on the campus of the American University of Beirut, where he was a part-time teacher of German, and founded the Syrian Social-Nationalist Party in 1932, paving the way for a new conception of nationalism in the Arab world. For him, the nation represents the unity of life of a group of people in a well-defined geographical environment. His philosophy would, thus, be based on the permanent interaction between the material and the spiritual, and would be called “Material-Spiritualism” (“al-madrahiyya”). It also paved the way for a new terminology that would serve this new ideology. Saadeh used a personal method of expression and argumentation to persuade his fellow citizens and to spread his principles of “rebirth”: its added value was to translate these ideas in concrete institutions. Saadeh was executed on July 8, 1949 by the Lebanese government. Why is Antûn Saadeh chosen as the research object of this study?

\* CRIISEA, Université de Picardie Jules Verne.

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There have been many studies and a few books written about Saadeh in Syria (Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Palestine, Jordan, Kuwait and Cyprus) by famous writers and professors. Among them we can cite Adel Beshara, Dennis Walker, George Korm, Nassif Nassar, Edmond Melhem, Hisham Shabari, Adonis, and many more.

For my part, I believe that Saadeh should be studied as part of institutional analysis for several reasons. In terms of terminology and method of expression, he has paved a new way, as will be seen later on in the article. Antûn Saadeh has been obscured for various reasons; perhaps it is mainly due to the war he declared on the “exploiters of the people” in different ways. All the institutions in his homeland had an interest in undermining him, thus taking a defensive position against an ideology that would threaten the confessional system, religious and economic feudalism, self-centeredness and all those who regarded nationalism as “illusory”. The Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP), which Saadeh founded and was leader of, would assume a certain responsibility in this regard. Saadeh who wanted to establish a rebirth for his entire nation was instead monopolized by the SSNP and considered by the party members to be the proper person to lead them. Hence his title of “Leader” (not to be confused with Hitler’s National Socialism, we will see below).

The thoughts and theoretical side (if it can be put in that way) of Saadeh’s doctrine has not been fully investigated outside his nation. The studies about his economic and institutional thinking are rare and he was unable to set up “those institutions that would organize the nation’s forces”.

Why has this author not been thoroughly studied? One possible answer is that speaking of a “unifier” in a period of division and confrontation, and pioneering secularism at a time when “confessionalism” was at its height

could provoke contradictory reactions: for some, it would be ridiculous because it sounds like an inaudible cry; for others, it would be essential for the “cures” it carries. At a time when each confession claims its “rights” without sparing any weapons, from politics to killing in its most “civilized” aspects, a saying of Saadeh would attract attention: “hostility is the oxygen of all religious nationalism”. A world where the “supermarkets” of ideas take precedence over ideas of reform and progress is called upon to refer to reflections worthy of study. The number of thinkers who could be used in dark times is not to be overlooked. Among them is Antûn Saadeh.

Our article entitled *Antûn Saadeh and the actuality of his social-nationalist doctrine* was essentially based on thematic analysis. Hopefully this piece of research will answer the following questions: (i) what is social-nationalist doctrine? (ii) What is its originality? (iii) What is the position of social-nationalism vis-a-vis contemporary nationalist doctrines? This article consists of two parts: The first is a biographical sketch of Saadeh, given that Saadeh is not well known in the European community. Such a sketch would be a contribution to the whole article. The second part deals with the study of the concepts of nation and nationalism in Saadeh’s discourse. The nationalist theme constitutes the axis of Saadeh’s thought, and this accounts for the importance of this part.

### **I. Life and works of Antûn Saadeh (1904-1949): a short presentation.**

Antûn Saadeh was born on 1 March 1904 in Dhûr al-chuwayr, a village in Metn of Mount Lebanon. Antûn Saadeh finished his primary education at the school in his native village before accompanying his father to Cairo where he continued his studies at the Collège des Frères. When Khalil Saadeh immigrated to Argentina - after the death of his wife in

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1913 - his son (Antûn) returned to Lebanon to continue his secondary studies at the American school in Dhûr al-Chuwayr (1914-1915) and at the state school of Brûmmana (1915-1916). There his classmates relate how, at the end of the school year, the young Antûn refused to raise the Ottoman flag at his teacher's request which he saw as a symbol of foreign occupation. This refusal was the first sign of the birth of his national feeling. Several factors contributed to the emergence of such a feeling, including the war (1914-1918) and famine.

In early 1920, Antûn Saadeh left his country for the United States of America, and from there he went to Brazil in February 1921 where he collaborated with his father in the publication of the "al-Jarida" newspaper and the "al-Majalla" magazine. His first article was published in "al-Jarida" in Sao-Paolo on 4 June 1921 under the title "Amal-al-watan" (The hopes of the Homeland); he was then 17 years old. His article read:

"Thus it is not the one who sends protests to the League of Nations who gains independence, but the one who carries out actions that force the League to recognize its independence.... It is time for the Syrian people to understand that independence will not be given to them by chance; rather, it depends on the ability of the people to liberate themselves by resisting those who want colonization and servitude. If the people were capable, they would resist colonization firmly and energetically, sacrificing everything they own for independence..... The Syrian people endure humiliation, poverty and insult from the colonialist protectors; they expect the help of the emigrant brothers. Are we greedy towards him, taking into account the selfishness, cowardice and betrayal of the country? Are we witnessing the suffering of the country as a tragedy

played out on the stages? Is this the patriotic duty?" (Saadeh, 1921, p. 21).

At the end of June 1930, Antûn Saadeh arrived in Beirut. He then settled in Damascus in 1931 where he contributed to the editorial staff of the newspaper "al-Ayyam" (Days). In addition, he taught English at Al-jami'a al-ilmiyya (The Scientific College) in Damascus.

Concerned about national political action, he believed that the best place to launch his ideas was the Lebanese student community where his best friends from childhood were still studying. Antûn Saadeh spoke German, so he had classes at the American University of Beirut in 1932. This activity allowed him to establish good relations with students. Later on, he founded the Syrian Social Nationalist Party on 16 November 1932. Antûn Saadeh did not go to university, but he studied several languages. He mastered Arabic, French, English, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, German, and Russian. "This has enabled him, through his readings in these modern languages, to deepen his knowledge of human sciences and thoughts in several fields: history, philosophy, social sciences, anthropology and literature" (SSNP ed, 1978, p.15).

Saadeh's writings were diverse and covered several fields: literature, sociology, religion, politics, nationalism, and others. These writings took the form of newspaper articles, letters, speeches and books. Saadeh's works have been classified and published as follows: The complete works, where Saadeh's writings were published according to their chronology; The New Order Series where Saadeh's writings were published according to themes.

During his lifetime Saadeh published some of his writings in the form of books, among the best known of which are the following:

The first of his books are novels. These are *Eid Saiyydat Saydnaya* (The Feast of Our Lady of Saydnaya) and *Faji'at Hob* (A Love

Tragedy). They were written in 1931 and were first published in Beirut in 1933. The best known book of Saadeh's is *The Genesis of Nations*. In this book, Saadeh treats issues pertaining to the foundations of society and the genesis of nations in terms of societies' cultural and historical differences. He makes an overview of the different theories on the topic. Finally, he focuses his research on the constituent elements of the community and the nation.

*Al-Ta'alim al-Suriyya al-Qawmiyya al-Ijtima'iya* (Syrian Social-Nationalist Doctrine) is a booklet in which Saadeh lays down the principles and goals of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party, affirming the identity of the Syrian nation, defending its homeland, which he considered to be "the natural environment in which the Syrian nation was formed" (Saadeh, 1936, p.27).

*Al-Muhadarat al-'Ashr* (The ten conferences) is a collection of ten lectures that Saadeh delivered to the Party's members who were mainly students at the American University of Beirut in 1948 (between 7 January and 4 April). He discussed the Doctrine of the SSNP and its cause in the form of long explanations of what was written in *Al-Ta'alim al-Suriyya al-Qawmiyya al-Ijtima'iya* (Syrian Social-Nationalist Doctrine).

Saadeh published a series of thirty-six articles in the "Al-Zawba'a" (The Cyclone newspaper) in Sao-Paolo, between 15 October 1940 and 1 May 1942. The title of this series of articles was *Jounoun al-Khouloud* (The Folly of Immortality). The purpose of this series was to carry out a comparative study of religions, stipulating that religion is a social phenomenon. With regard to the differences between Christianity and Islam, Saadeh rejected any arbitrary classification of religions that is not primarily grounded in the socio-political history of mankind. He studied the emergence of religions in their respective

environments and came to this conclusion that every religion is necessarily imbued with the culture and pre-existing lifestyles of the environment. For him, a comparison can and should be made between Syria and Arabia but not between Christ and Muhammad.

The main theme discussed by this thinker in *Al-Sira' al-Fikri fi al-Adab al-Suri* (Intellectual Struggle in Syrian Literature) is the renewal of Literature. For him, there is a logical link between rebirth and the new vision of the universe, life and art. This renewal should not only aim at changing modes of expression, but it should also attempt to formulate a new vision that draws on ancient Syrian myths.

Saadeh left a large number of journalistic articles in different fields, as well as many letters. To this day, about five thousand pages of Saadeh's work have been published.

## II. Antûn Saadeh and the founding of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party.

Saadeh saw that his nation was facing several questions. He considered that the foundation of the SSNP is an answer to:

- "Who are we?
- What brought this misfortune to my people?
- Are we a living nation?
- Are we a society with a purpose in life?
- Are we people who have ideals?
- Are we a nation with one and only one will?
- Are we a human group that realizes the importance of organized actions?" (SSNP ed, 1978, p.43)

In his answer to these questions, Saadeh says:

"The foundation of institutions and the elaboration of their rules are the most important of my actions, after that of the national cause (of Social-Nationalist Doctrine); because it is the institutions that maintain the unity of orientation and

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action; they are the only guarantee of the continuity of politics and the benefit of experiences” (Saadeh, 1938, p.47).

Saadeh set up his party secretly because the laws established by the authorities of the French Mandate prohibited the formation of political and intellectual movements in the country. Saadeh and his party had to keep away from the French authorities, especially since the party had not yet stabilized. In 1935, the number of Party members reached more than a thousand. It was on 1 June 1935 that the Party counted 1,000 members. It was on that occasion that Saadeh delivered an important speech known as *The First Methodical Speech*. It seemed that the Mandate authorities succeeded, after this large gathering, in implanting one of their agents into the Party's. On 16 November 1935, while Saadeh was giving the speech on the third anniversary of the founding of the Party, the Mandate forces raided the house where the ceremony was taking place. It was then that Saadeh was arrested and sent to prison together with a number of Party officials. The French authorities accused him of violating Decree L. R. 115. After the first ruling, Saadeh was sentenced to six months in prison, during which time he wrote *The Genesis of Nations*. He was released from prison in mid-May 1936 and returned to prison towards the end of June of the same year. As he was serving his second sentence, Saadeh wrote a booklet explaining the principles of the Syrian Social-Nationalist Party. Saadeh was released from prison in early November and returned for the third time in early March 1937. During this period, he wrote *The Genesis of the Syrian Nation*, but the manuscript was confiscated by the French Mandate authorities and he never got hold of it. Admittedly, it was then lost. Saadeh left prison at the end of May 1937 (SSNP ed, 1978, p.11). In 1938, Saadeh left his country to Latin America for a tour whose

objectives were as follows: (i) to organize Syrian colonies in emigration countries, to set up Party branches and to disseminate the Party's Doctrine among emigrant circles; (ii) To find permanent sources of funding for the Party through its branches abroad.

While Saadeh was on his tour, the Second World War broke out, preventing him from returning to his homeland before 1947. He founded the newspaper “Suria al-jadida” (New Syria) in Sao-Paolo. In a letter addressed to the President and members of the newspaper's Board of Directors, Saadeh defines the newspaper's policy as follows:

1. “The policy of the SSNP is a Syrian nationalist policy that is not mixed with any foreign policy, as clearly stated and explained in the Party's principles and the Leader's speeches and articles. This is why the policy of “New Syria” does not deviate from official guidelines.
2. The policy of the SSNP is not fascist.
3. The policy of the SSNP is not Nazi.
4. The policy of the SSNP is not “democratic”.
5. The politics of the SSNP is not communist or Bolshevik.
6. The policy of the SSNP is a national Syrian policy that obeys only the eighth principle of the Party's fundamental principles, which states: “The interest of Syria prevails over any other interest” (Saadeh, 1939, p.140).

Saadeh tried to return to Lebanon, but all his attempts were doomed to failure because he had been sentenced by the French to 20 years in prison and exile. After lengthy representations by Party officials to the Lebanese state, Saadeh was able to obtain a visa for Lebanon, but on the condition that that he should respect the Lebanese state. On 13 February 1947 he flew to Cairo. Upon his arrival on 2 March 1947 at Beirut airport, after almost nine years of absence,

he delivered a highly emotional speech at the grand reception of the airport, a speech the Lebanese Government deemed as a challenge to its authority. Saadeh was again the subject of an arrest warrant on 5 March, a warrant he refused and withdrew to the mountains of his native village for almost seven months. Relations between the Party and the Government were altered during the general elections of 24 May 1947. The Government then had two objectives: to limit Saadeh's influence in the elections as much as possible and to put an end to the nationalist current represented by the SSNP.

On the night of 9-10 June 1949 the Lebanese police center turned a blind eye to an attack by the Lebanese Phalangists on the printing house and offices of the "al-Jil al-jadid" (the new generation newspaper). After burning down the print house, there was a clash between the Lebanese phalanxes and the office guards. The same night, the Lebanese Government held a meeting and decided to issue an arrest warrant for Antûn Saadeh and his supporters, accusing them of preparing an armed coup. A major arrest campaign was again launched against Party members and supporters. After a month of arrests and persecutions, the only option left for the Party was to declare on 4 July 1949 in Damascus "the First Social Nationalist Revolution against the Lebanese Government. Saadeh arrived at this decision after a long discussion with Husni al-Za'im, the President of the Republic in Damascus. But during a second round of talks at the Presidential Palace, the Damascus police arrested Antûn Saadeh. The Government of Damascus agreed to hand over Saadeh to the Lebanese security forces only after" the Lebanese Government agreed to grant economic conditions and privileges to the Government of Damascus... as a reward, the Prime Minister "Riyad al-sulh" paid 20,000 Lebanese pounds to Muhsin al-Barazi, the

Prime Minister in Damascus, for Saadeh's blood" (SSNP ed, 1976, p.30). Extradited by the Government of Damascus on 7 July 1949, Antûn Saadeh was executed by the Lebanese State under the cover of a military judgment. A mock trial lasted 18 hours on 8 July 1949.

### **III. Nation and Social-Nationalism according to Antûn Saadeh.**

To avoid any misunderstanding and misinterpretation that may arise from such work, I have chosen a sample that is broad and representative, taking into account the chronology and conditions under which Saadeh's speeches were prepared as well as any other variables. In compliance with the title of the article, I have analyzed speeches with a purely doctrinal vocation and organizational institutional speeches, even though the author's institutionalism is based on doctrine. The two fields are not far from each other, considering that the institution is the means by which ideas are realized and brought to life. Hence the corpus comprises speeches that go beyond 1,000 pages that meet all the needs of my work, both in terms of research topic and methodology.

#### **Definition of the nation.**

Before the exploration of nationalism and Saadeh's definition of it, we need to know the quiddity, a distinctive feature, of the nation since nationalism results from it. There is not only one single definition of nation. Sociological and political schools have formulated different and contradictory definitions depending on the elements that, according to each school, contribute to the formation of a nation. According to Saadeh, the essential element of nation building is "interaction", that is to say the interaction between the people and the land and between the people living on the land. The nation would, therefore, be a community of human beings living in a geographical

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environment (i.e. on a specific land). The interaction of this community with and within this environment gives it a personality different from that of other communities living in different geographical environments. It is pertinent to this study that some of Saadeh's definitions of the nation are quoted.

"The nation is a community of human beings united by a common life in a given territory whose interests, destiny and socio-material factors are unified: interaction with its environment, as it evolves, gives it characteristics and qualities that distinguish it from other communities" (Saadeh, 1936, p.165).

"The nation is a community of human beings who have led, and still lead, a common existence in the same country" (Saadeh, 1926, p.129). The nation is "the unity of existence that would have brought together most of the main elements of which it is composed, to merge them into a single correlative and solid existence, that is, a single society whose life and destiny would be unified" (Saadeh, 1948, p.62). "The nation is neither a language nor a religion of any kind, but rather a social reality, a human and terrestrial society" (Saadeh, 1949, p.127). "Nations are not so based on their imaginations and dreams, but rather on their reality and what they achieve" (Saadeh, 1932, 108). "The nation is an organization where awareness has been realized and in which an intelligent, lucid and clear vision of life, the universe and art has been developed" (Saadeh, 1948, p.29). "The nation is the most perfect community" (Saadeh, 1936, 147). The community is "the unit of life of a group of human beings over a given area, to whom the environment and community life provide particular qualities, in addition to the general qualities it has in common

with the framework that is broader than it" (Saadeh, 1936, p. 141).

Given the multitude of definitions, it can be assumed that Saadeh defined the nation socially as well as philosophically. The nation, which is a social and vital reality, remains in a state of possibility if it does not become aware of itself. Once this awareness is achieved, the nation becomes an existence in action and is no longer in potential state.

### Definition of nationalism.

The social and economic life of a human community gives rise to a feeling and awareness among its members of the unity of their interests and destiny, hence the *esprit de corps* that binds them together: this *esprit de corps* is nationalism (*al-Qawmiyya*).

"Nationalism is the soul of the people and the awareness of its personality" (Saadeh, 1942, p.33).

"Nationalism is the awareness of the nation of its existence" (Saadeh, 1949, p.127).

"Nationalism is none other than people's self-confidence and the nation's dependence on itself" (Saadeh, 1948, p.25).

It is clear that these definitions, especially the last one, show that Saadeh attempted to stimulate his nation to reaffirm its identity and strengthen its unity, which was under threat due to lack of trust. Moreover, this lack of people's self-confidence was one of the main difficulties that Saadeh encountered during the formative phase of the Party. These definitions, therefore, only reflect the prevailing psychological (spiritual) state of affairs at the time. What can also be assumed is the relationship established between "nation" and "nationalism". Nationalism is the factor that gives meaning to the existence of the nation: it constitutes its "soul". Once the nation is aware of itself, its existence and personality, a "nationalism" emerges. Nationalism is also

the “doctrine” and principle of the unity of the nation.

#### IV. Positive and negative relations

##### **Nation, Nationalism and Unity (al-Umma, al-qawmiyya, al-wahda).**

The correct frequency of two words appearing in the same context is due to a certain association between these two themes in Saadeh’s mind. With Saadeh, juxtaposition of the words “nation” (Umma), “nationalism” (qawmiyya), and “unity” (Wahda) is very common. “al-Umma” (the nation) and “al-Qawmiyya” (nationalism) are “married” to “al-wahda” (unity). To justify the above, it would not be possible to offer a comprehensive list of all the sentences where these words appear together. Hence only a few quotes from *Al-muhādarat al-ašr* (The Ten Lectures) will be given:

“... and we make the nation a unity of life, a unity of objectives, a unity of will and a unity of destiny “ (p.32). “The Syrian nation has its social and economic cycle in a unity of life and destiny” (p.44). “The unity of the nation and the homeland leads us to an understanding of the social reality that is the nation” (p.54). “The meaning of “the Syrian nation” includes this unified society in life, whose origins have merged into one single thing that is the existing society in the same environment” (p.57-58). “One nation, one society. The unity of the nation is the basis of the unity of interests: the unity of interests is the unity of existence“ (p.89). “The nation is, by its true meaning, a unity of existence” (p.90). “The economy, as a subject of interest to a nation and a people, can only be seen from the nationalist point of view, from the point of view of the society that unifies the nation, which is the unity of a community, a land and an economy” (p.132).

Saadeh’s “al-Qawmiyya” (nationalism) is a strong magnet where “al-Umma” (the nation) is one pole while “al-wahda” (the unity) is the other. It is clear from this that “nation”, “nationalism”, and “unity” are clearly associated and coalesce in the same contexts, reflecting both the division of Saadeh’s nation due to certain “social diseases”, and his desire to see the nation unified and independent.

##### **Nation, Nationalism and Social Diseases (negative relationship).**

I would define this relationship between “nation” and “unity” as “the positive magnetic relationship”. On the other hand, “the negative magnetic relationship” is between “nation” and “social diseases” that threaten “the unity of the nation” and leave it in the grip of destruction and annihilation. The appearance of two themes in the same discourse does not necessarily mean that Saadeh wished to establish a positive relationship between the two themes. It is the framework and manner in which a theme is evoked that counts. On the other hand, the appearance of the words “nation” and “nationalism” with terms that describe bad conditions explains Saadeh’s willingness to diagnose the obstacles and diseases that prevent the unity (or unification) of the nation.

Saadeh frequently refers to these “diseases” and insists on the danger they pose. However, Saadeh mainly declared war on religious fanaticism and individualism. He regarded these two scourges as be “the most serious diseases” that struck the nation and almost destroyed its unity. As early as 1921, Saadeh wrote:

“One of the greatest obstacles to Syria’s independence was religious fanaticism, that incurable disease that paralyzed the members of the Syrian nation and raised itself as an impassable barrier to its aspirations to rise to the level of living nations... Because the Syrian nation was not undertaking action against

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religious fanaticism, it is paying a high price.... It's like a cancer eating its flesh" (Saadeh, 1921, p.31).

In the middle of his intellectual career, Saadeh stated:

"Finding a policy appropriate for Christians and another appropriate for Muslims means widening the gap between the sons of the same homeland, so that the nation remains deprived of its unity and shared between its doctrines, and so the country remains at the mercy of the foreign occupier who will maintain its influence and domination... It is time for the nation to abandon the policies of the Patriarch, the Mufti, the Christian Council, the Muslim Council and other institutions and councils that have become enemies of the national interest" (Saadeh, 1936).

In 1948, he said:

"When the interests are the interests of confessions... there would be no common national interests. It is impossible to unify the feelings of the people or to engage them in any campaign in the interest of the nation or the homeland led by a single confession however important it may be. It is impossible to make all the interests of the confessions a common public interest: it is contrary to its nature" (Saadeh, 1948, p.90). "There are contradictory customs in our nation, arising from the regulations of our religious and confessional institutions, which exercise the greatest influence in weakening the economic and social unity of the people and delaying our social nationalist renaissance" (Saadeh, 1948, p.127).

The conclusions that can be made with regard to these words are as follows: (i) the confessional system had taken a strong foothold in Saadeh's society; (ii) There are active institutions, namely the religious institutions that defend this position; (iii) It is not surprising that religious institutions

had declared war against the assumptions held by Saadeh and his Party. (iv) As religious institutions attacked the "nationalist institutions" founded by Saadeh, it would be normal for the latter (Saadeh) to declare (or have declared) war on them.

"The individualistic tendency is no less dangerous for the nation than foreign occupation; it is even more dangerous, because the danger of foreign occupation is external, while the danger of the individualistic tendency on the security of society comes from within" (Saadeh, 1942).

If for Saadeh society was a sheer group of individuals, then the danger of the individualistic tendency would not be all that harmful. Yet for him society is an integral unity rather than aligned numbers without reciprocal interaction in "a socio-economic life cycle." Society is a community rather than a gathering. This is why any trend that is not national or universal threatens the whole society, as well as the unity of the community. However, although Saadeh insisted on the seriousness of religious fanaticism and individualistic tendencies, he did not forget other phenomena that clearly harm the unity and strength of society: feudalism, for example, was the subject of the fourth reform principle of his party. This is what Saadeh writes about feudal lands:

"It often happens that hundreds and thousands of peasants lead a miserable existence, in a state of pitiful servitude, on these lands. Their condition is not only inhuman, but also contrary to state security, by maintaining a large part of the active and militant people in a weakened situation, the consequence of which, on the security of the nation and the homeland, is serious: in addition to maintaining a large part of the nation's wealth in the hands (of this category of people) which is poorly managed" (Saadeh, 1948, p.125).

It should be clearly assumed that the war Saadeh declared against these diseases was based on several facts as follows: (i) these diseases threaten the unity of society and the nation. (ii) All divisive tendencies are "enemies of the national interest." (iii) Any tendency that would threaten the unity of the nation is responsible for foreign domination (colonialism). (iv) Anything that affects one category of society would affect all others. (v) "If a division were to occur in society, the nation would be in danger of permanent disintegration and disappearance." ( Saadeh, 1948, p.59)

Saadeh does not only list the diseases that plagued his society, but he gives the remedy that in his opinion would cure them all.

"The path to recovery is the same for all diseases: (i) recognize the existence of the disease. (ii) Accept the sweet or bitter remedy. The only "sanatorium" is the regulation of the Syrian Social-Nationalist Party" (Saadeh, 1942).

The Syrian Social Nationalist Party unifies the nation in a moral framework that would work towards the creation of a new man who is aware of the seriousness and danger of these diseases and has the resolve and the earnest intention to root them out. If the unity of the nation is threatened by sickening factors, the most important factor for its unity and distinction from other nations would be the geographical environment, that is, the Fatherland.

## VI. Nation's dimensions.

### **Geographical dimension of the nation and nationalism: "Al-Umma" -"Al-Qawmiyya" "al-Watan" (The Nation, Nationalism, Homeland).**

No nation exists outside a specific geographical area. In addition to the human element, the geographical environment is one of the essential components of the formation of the nation and the national identity.

"The nation finds its foundation, above all else, in a given territorial unit with which a community of people interact and finds its unity there" (Saadeh, 1948, p.77).

The difference in geographical environments is the main cause of the multitude of nations in the world and that is why all the peoples on earth do not form a single nation. The geographical environment acquires its meaning from the existence of a human community, and is called, in this case, homeland. The homeland is a geographical environment in which a nation is born. Geographical environments unknown to man, and on which there is no human life, cannot be a homeland. In this field, Saadeh goes against certain thinkers who have addressed the question of nations, their formation and constitutive elements, and who have considered that there are elements other than territory that constitute indispensable factors for the existence of a nation, such as religion, language or others. Saadeh refuses to draw borders between the nation and its geographical environment (its homeland). Each of these two elements presumes the existence of the other.

"If it were possible to separate between the nation and the State, under certain circumstances and at certain times, it is not possible to separate between the nation and the land. It has happened, and still happens, in history that nations have lost their sovereignty and obeyed the laws and legislations of a State that did not emanate from them, such as the Syrian nation and the Polish nation before the war, without losing, for all that, its nationalism, or disappearing. However, it has not happened in history, and it is not likely that a nation will lose the land it peoples, providing it with the means to live and persist, without losing its existence... In reality, the nation only exists in its homeland. The environment, or the homeland, is the essential factor that

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confers a given characteristic on the nation that distinguishes it from others. Without the land, its nature, and its geography, a large number of nations would not have existed” )Saadeh, 1936, p.132).

In short, different geographical environments (imply) different nations. Within the clear boundaries of the natural environment, there is a “social, vital, economic, cultural and psychological cycle” that “unifies feeling and orientation” and merges the sons of the nation into a unity that would encompass their interests, characteristic customs and destiny. As a result, a “society” is formed. The nation, thus, is a single society. The national personality of this society would have no meaning “without a specific homeland”. The borders of this homeland are of great importance in safeguarding the unity of the society, and its protection against “the expansion of other societies”. The interaction between the material and the spiritual forms the basis of Saadeh’s Al-Madrahyya (Material-spiritual) philosophy. The term “Al- Madrahyya” is composed of two words, “Rûh and Madda” (spirituality and matter); it constitutes the foundation of Antûn SAADEH’s philosophy, which came as a response to the extremism of the two philosophies, materialistic and spiritualist. SAADEH has found that there is a permanent interaction between the material and the spiritual in this universe, and that man’s existence is based on this interaction.

**The sociological and ethnic dimension of the nation and nationalism.**

In addressing the social nationalist question, Saadeh assumes that “humanity is not, in reality, one” (Saadeh, 1948, p.142). It is made up of many different societies and nationalisms depending on the geographical environment of the world. In each of these environments, as we have seen, there is a

social, economic, cultural, and psychological evolution of an existence common to all human elements that interact horizontally with each other and vertically with the environment. Thus, the nation is “a human-terrestrial society”, and mankind is multiple according to the multiplicity of the “terrestrial” which confers on each nation certain characteristics that differentiates it from other nation. To be more explicit, we use this equation: Suppose a human element *A* and another *B* live in two different geographical environments *C* and *D*. The interaction of element *A* with medium *C* results in different characteristics and qualities than those resulting from the interaction of the same element *A* with medium *D*.

$$\begin{aligned}
 A \times C &= AC \\
 A \times D &= AD \\
 B \times C &= BC \\
 B \times D &= BD
 \end{aligned}$$

These multiple results are at the root of the multiplicity of nationalisms in the world. Natural reality makes the nation a “social reality” and not a chimera or an illusion.

Since the number of “humanities” is equal to the number of “societies”, then man is tantamount to society, hence Saadeh’s “al-Insan al-Mujtama” (man-society theory). The expression “al-Insan al-Mujtama” (the man-society) was used by Saadeh. It carries the conception of the relationship between men, the individual and society in Saadeh. For him, the individual would only be a “capacity” or “strength” in society. What results from the interaction of men between themselves, and between them and the environment, would go beyond individual affairs. An invention, however “individual” it may seem, is not; it is the result of a collective life resulting from a collaboration, direct or indirect, of society. Thus, Saadeh could say “the Syrian Man” to designate Syrian society or the Syrian nation, because “the true man is society and not the individual”.

For him, man is not the man-individual. This assumption is perfectly in line with his vision of society which he considers as a national community and not a gathering of individuals. A group is only numbers aligned and joined together, without any interaction, whereas a community is the unity of life established on a given land. The community is a whole that reacts unanimously to the environment and external factors.

Consequently, society is a life cycle that runs from north to south and from east to west in the middle of the world, and constantly strives for the unity of human-social characteristics. The emergence of an esprit de corps within the community results from the feeling of participating in a common life. This esprit de corps is called nationalism. In this way, every nation will become a single society. The appearance of several conflicting 'societies' in the one nation would threaten it with disintegration and disappearance.

This life cycle generates all the elements of the same geographical environment; each element would lose its first and particular qualities and acquire general qualities common to all the other elements. The peoples who enter a new geographical environment confront, in a first step, the original inhabitants of the country and fight against them. In a second step, this antagonism decreases to give way to a kind of rapprochement, which turns into a third stage - the stage of marriage and interaction between all the groups and the with indigenous population. This interaction gives rise, throughout history, to qualities common to all peoples and elements in the nation.

"The indisputable reality is that each nation is composed of different ethnic groups, that is, it is a mixture of different

human ethnic groups" (Saadeh, 1933, p.131).

It seems that Saadeh had believed in this reality as far back as 1925 when he wrote:

"It is frequent that the nation is originally composed of different elements that would have mixed with each other over time, thus forming the same people" (Saadeh, 1925, p.206).

### Concluding remarks

By way of conclusion it is worth noting that "social-nationalism" is topical nowadays and could possibly provide an answer to contemporary problems related to identity, emigration, refugees, and socio-economic post-pandemic crisis. This theory is far from Nazism and its racial approach that relies on "blood kinship". This theory is far from any of the fascist approaches. An in-depth study from a comparative perspective with other national theories of this era is about to be completed.

Another relevant research topic is Saadeh's economic approach. He developed an original concept of national economy at the heart of which is production, which differs in a number of ways from other conceptions<sup>2</sup>. For Saadeh the distribution of profits and wealth is relative to production. It is neither right nor left but rather a social-nationalist economy. Further comparative research will entail on this latter topic.

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<sup>2</sup> For the survey on economic nationalism see NAKANO (2004), BOULANGER (2006), PENCHEV (2016) and PENCHEV & OZGUR (2019).

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