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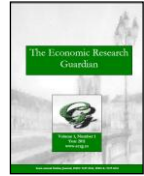
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## **Towards a National Economy Based on Production in the Natural Syria Region. Antoun Saadeh's Theoretical Contributions**

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### **Abstract**

*The chaos in the natural Syria region seems increasing. The factors of economic and social deterioration are various. "What brought on my people this woe?" the answer to this existential question posed by Antoun Saadeh in 1916? wasn't just for scientific knowledge, the answer was in order to discover the effective way to remove the causes of woe. After a regular preliminary study, he decided that the loss of national sovereignty was the primary cause of what had befallen his nation and what befell it. This was the beginning of the era of the study of the national issue, the question of groups in general, and social rights and how they emerged. Therefore, an original economical approach was indispensable to be developed, a social-nationalist economy. This national economy is based on production, a spiritual-material production, where the distribution of its profits is relative to the contribution of its producers. On this paper we present the theoretical economical conception of the Lebanese politician and social scholar Antoun Saadeh (1904 – 1949), and we discuss its originality and fundamental elements.*

**Keywords:** National Economy, Production, Syria, Social Nationalism, Antoun Saadeh

**JEL Classification :** A12, B31, B41, B52, N35, 053, P48

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### **1. Introduction**

Natural Syria has occupied a central position for thousands of years. In this distinguished part of the world, the site and its role were of special importance, and the results of the characteristics of the place extended to include the inhabitants of Syria throughout history. This was a source of good, development, and a distinguished civilization, just as it was a source of major challenges imposed by greedy interests from outside the region, which brought about wars, colonialism, and continuous conflict. From natural Syria to the whole world, the Hammurabi Code established the basis of the legal laws. It was the essence of inspiration of religions. André Parrot, former president of the Museum of Louvre said: "Every civilized man has two homelands his own and Syria" (Rimbaud, 2020). In 1916, the Sykes-Picot agreement established artificial political borders in

natural Syria, and since that the degradation of the level of life in this region seemed to be its destiny. The Sykes-Picot Agreement was one of the defining moments in the history of the modern Middle East. (Berdine, 2018). Without forgetting the catastrophic results of the “Balfour Declaration” (Lustick, 2017).

At the turn of the 20th century, in the pre-and post-World War I years, in particular, we see intense French interest in Syria's economic conditions. This interest is not new. It was the first French military intervention in 1860 (Emerit, 1952) and the launch of mulberry cultivation and the trade of cocoons and silk lines in Mount Lebanon thanks to the French capital in the second half of the nineteenth century (Chevallier, 1960). However, the French interest in the new phase, the phase when the colonial race movement reached its climax, will intensify and express itself in vigorous efforts, ideas, and projects that it will recruit for, not only the diplomatic and consular apparatus but other agencies: experts, scholars, university professors, chambers of commerce and business. The First World War and the accompanying talks to divide the spheres of influence in the Arab and Asian states of the Ottoman Empire will give the appropriate opportunity to express these ideas and projects, to take initiatives and arrange preparations, leading to the second French military intervention in 1919. The number of thinkers who could be used in dark times is not to be overlooked. Among them is Antoun Saadeh.

Antoun Saadeh was born in 1904 in Lebanon, Syria. “*Saadeh regarded the Fertile Crescent as a single continuous plateau unimpeded by any significant internal barriers.*” (Beshara, 2011) He founded the Syrian Social-Nationalist Party in 1932 paving the way for a new conception of nationalism in the Arab world. His philosophy would, thus, be based on the permanent interaction between the material and the spiritual, and would be called “Material-Spiritualism” (“Al-Madrahiyya”). Saadeh was executed on July 8, 1949, by the Lebanese government.

This paper presents the theoretical economical approach of Saadeh, its originality, and its fundamentals. In the first part, we present the leading concepts in Saadeh's theory, namely the relationship between the nation, production, and its efficiency. Then, the factors determining efficiency are considered, namely the human factor and its manifestations (part two), land (natural resources), and forms of capital (part three). The concept of production as social-nationalist, the role of property and interests are set out in the last, fourth part.

## 2. Nation, production, and efficiency

According to Saadeh, the essential elements for the formation of a nation are the interaction between the people and the land. (Samia, 2020) The nation would thus be a community of human beings living in a geographical environment (i.e. on a specific piece of land); the interaction of this community with and within this environment gives it a personality different from those of other communities living in different geographical environments.

First of all, it is important to clarify that, for Saadeh, the social-nationalist economy is the character of the nation-state and not the character of the nation. This is the economic system of the social-nationalist state, which is clear from the principles of reform in Saadeh's theory of the state.

The first economic document presented by Saadeh was the text of the fourth reform principle<sup>1</sup>. The second document was the “*Eighth Conference*” where we find a detailed explanation of this principle, and then the declaration of 1 May 1948. In addition to this, we find the treatment and

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<sup>1</sup> The SSNP principles are 8 basic principles and 5 reform principles, wrote by Saadeh on the 1936.

positions on certain economic issues. The third was his rejection of the “*monetary convention*”<sup>2</sup> in a lengthy interview published in a local newspaper<sup>3</sup>, where he emphasized the strategic economic danger of the convention. In this article, Saadeh sets out his vision of monetary sovereignty.

In all these documents, we can find evidence that the word “*producing nation*” was central to the economic quote “*production is proper to producers*” (Saadeh, Speech of the 1st of May, 1948) Saadeh's nation, in economic terms, is a nation of producers, industrial producers, agricultural producers, and even producers of ideas and thoughts. Saadeh's privilege was his development of an economic theory of society while others were interested in theory until they lost sight of the complex social reality. Thus, Saadeh stressed that economics is a social-nationalist economy. The absence of the social reality that exists in one place as opposed to the thinking of some economic thinkers who are absent from the complex social reality in the context of time. By this, we mean that they looked at the current working “class” or the current peasant generation, whereas Saadeh understood that the nation is a complex society of current generations (minor generations (children) and the elderly) capable of production and that it is necessary to safeguard the interests of all generations of the nation.

It should be noted that, for Saadeh, production is, by definition, not something static but, on the contrary, it must gradually increase to meet the needs of the nation and the nation-state. He thus stated that the equal distribution of poverty is not fair and that the social-nationalist movement is a movement for the fair distribution of wealth, not the distribution of poverty. (Saadeh, The Ten Lectures, AL Mouhadarat AL Ashr, 1948).

The establishment of a social-nationalist economic order requires two basic conditions: (i) the “*new man*” who knows his identity and the interest of his community, (ii) an invulnerable, sovereign state that places in its constitution social-nationalist economic laws, whose main objective is to define the nation as productive and production as belonging to the producers. In fact, the economic problem found in Saadeh is essentially a problem of productivity. So we find it at the heart of the economic principle, which is the fourth principle of reform, which says: “*Organize the national economy on the basis of production*”, and elsewhere, production is the “*important basis of the national economy*” (Saadeh, The Ten Lectures, AL Mouhadarat AL Ashr, 1948), because without production, “*we can never think of the welfare of the people.*” (Saadeh, The Ten Lectures, AL Mouhadarat AL Ashr, 1948). While the economy is one of the foundations of the modern state, in terms of national independence, the establishment of popular sovereignty, and the promotion of social life, Saadeh considered production “*a major objective of thinking in the nation-state*” (Saadeh, The Ten Lectures, AL Mouhadarat AL Ashr, 1948).

Is justice would be the fair distribution of poverty? Would people have an interest in a poor distribution?

The people's situation would be miserable and backward if production was low and the population was high. So the problem of economics in Saadeh is essential, as we have said, the problem of production and its constant increase, and “*only on the basis of production can we envisage creating a justice of social rights among those involved in production.*” (Saadeh, The Ten Lectures, AL Mouhadarat AL Ashr, 1948). The distribution must be that of wealth, and the problem of this distribution is the solution to the problem of production. If the quotation of production is the most important thing to think about in Saadeh's economics, this does not mean that he leaves

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<sup>2</sup> Convention signed by the Lebanese government and the French government with a refusal from the Syrian government in 1948.

<sup>3</sup> Journal al-jil-aljadid, (The New Generation) April 1948.

this quotation inaudible and vague. Production is a relative production, it is the production of a particular population in a particular period, interacting with the potential of a particular environment. In other words, if production is the most important concept of a social-nationalist economy, the idea of “efficiency” for Saadeh is the most important concept of production, that is, a highly efficient production economy.

The idea of efficiency is a general scientific idea, and we rely on all the advanced sciences, especially economics, physics, chemistry, mathematics, and technology. The essence of this idea is a relationship between production and factors of production, and its very simplified symbolic form will be (Vincent, 1969):

$$r = P/F, \tag{1}$$

where  $r$  refers to productivity,  $P$  refers to production and  $F$  is the factors of production. Production is affected by three fundamental variables: Labour<sup>4</sup> ( $L$ ), land and natural environment ( $T$ ), and Capital ( $K$ ). Hence

$$q = f(L, T, K), \tag{2}$$

where  $q$  refers to production. Let's now look at these variables and their impact on production.

### 3. Human factor and production

We start with the variable  $L$ , the human factor, from which physical-material effort is usually understood. The question is now: how to get the best out of this variable to maximize productivity?

Saadeh proposes three important ideas in this section (i) demographic, population; (ii) moral-cultural; it concerns the awareness of social-nationalism, the nature of culture and the perception it generates, and (iii) science and technology.

#### 3.1. The State

According to Saadeh, the notion of the state is only relevant if there is a gradual development of the culture of the society, to make groups aware of essential interests. A general will emerge, rallying around the need to adhere to arrangements for managing and promoting these interests. In his process of examining the genesis of nations, Saadeh noted that human society has always produced a political manifestation from other manifestations. This was in the perspective of synergy between sociology and economy, a political manifestation that followed a new and innovative line of regulation, forms, and appropriate methods. In many cases, this political manifestation, the state, became a force of oppression and a tool to achieve private interests.

For Saadeh, the social-nationalist state is a tool in the service of the community, “*AL Muttahad*”, which serves its interests and those of its ideals, and expresses its will, so it is not merely a “*physical power*” that is violent within or beyond the nation's borders. Although he does not accept that the state encroaches on the nation's borders and colonizes other nations, he does not call for

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<sup>4</sup> It is important to note that Labor here means labor done by “man and woman”, Saadeh considers that “the work will not be national until women participate and are active members.” “We want women to be active members of our society.” In this regard, Professor at the University of Melbourne, Edmond Melhem, wrote an article entitled “*Saadeh's Quest for Gender Equality*” published in the book by Professor at the University of Melbourne, Adel Beshara, “*The Intellectual Legacy of Antoun Saadeh*” ed “*Kutub Publishing*” 2017, p 333.

isolation, “*because isolation is contrary to urbanization and cultural improvement*” (Saadeh, *The Genesis of Nations*, "Nushu' al-Umam", 1936), “*and once the nation obtains its vitality, its resources and means increase*” (Saadeh, *The Genesis of Nations*, "Nushu' al-Umam", 1936). If anything, society resorted to methods of recovery and did not stop at these methods to get closer to the best possible state, so that the social environment became immune. The function of the state, in this case, is to ensure cultural continuity between nations and peoples, to distribute to humanity its intellectual and cultural production, and to take advantage of the cultures, production, and processes of nations, new ways of living to increase the standard of living and production. In other words, when Saadeh calls for a social-nationalist state that gives the same rights to all its members without specific social privileges and the nation-state is seen as a single community and a common will to live and develop, he is at the same time radically removing any possibility of oppression, domination or exploitation of an individual, or a minority, group or faith, and this has virtually eliminated all individualistic, racial, confessional perspectives simultaneously, and has even ousted the class struggle by replacing them with a concept that unifies the nation. Thus, the social-nationalist state, “*the modern state has two homogeneous principles, nationalism and democracy*” (Saadeh, *The Complete Works*) Al-Athar al-Kamila, 1936), becomes the state of a united people, the state of the producers in all fields, and not a state of oppression and repression. Thus, he settles the question of class struggle, but in whose favour? And his answer: in favour of the national producers who make up what the people are.

### 3.2. Freedom and the place of the individual

The course of life is for Saadeh connected to freedom, this freedom is not limited to the freedom of individuals, it is the freedom of society, the freedom of the state and the independence from any colonization or affectation that reigns in it, and the existence of such freedom for society gives its value to life. “*Freedom is life, and those who do not care for freedom, fearing for their lives, have lost life and freedom.*” (Saadeh, *The Independence of Marakech*, 1925) It is with *Freedom* that life goes on, and whoever rises to attain his freedom, gains freedom and life. “*We shall accept only the free life and we shall accept only the morality of free people.*” (Saadeh, *The Complete Works*, Al-Athar al-Kamila, 1948) Saadeh believes that the value of thought is strengthened by freedom because truth and knowledge are revealed through free inquiry and not through oppression. “*Freedom of opinion and freedom of speech are undoubtedly fundamental freedoms and all governments that have resorted to suffocating them in defiance of the democratic principle, and any charter that aims to prevent the people from being free of opinion and speech, is a charter that does not reveal the will of the people.*” (Saadeh, *The Complete Works*, Al-Athar al-Kamila, 1947)

That is why freedom has joined the heart of democracy and has grown as an element of human life, a creative, innovative thought, working to change the prospects of the future. It is the freedom that ensures life, and it is the sacrifice that ensures the added value of free life. For him, freedom is an important cause that great souls carry, souls that have enough faith, and patience. Freedom is an integral part of human existence and without it, humanity would not have arrived at this scientific evolution. Thus, freedom preserves democracy, which is the complementarity of life, development, and progress of society; without freedom, democracy would not exist.

Accordingly, Saadeh's concept of democracy and freedom gives us the following insights: (i) freedom gives democracy its appearance, its essence, and its ideology. These two principles are inseparable; (ii) Freedom is an existential, moral, and social condition of democracy; (iii) Freedom unlocks thinking, knowledge, research, creativity, and development.



### 3.3. Demography

How does Saadeh take advantage of demography in the field of production and in the context of increasing production? The answer lies in the following principle: *“Every member of the state must be productive in some way”* (Saadeh, The Ten Lectures, AL Mouhadarat AL Ashr, 1948).

According to this principle, work becomes a duty and a right, and all members of the nation are transformed into productive workers, whether farmers, industrialists, craftsmen, or intellectuals. Unemployment becomes a crime punishable by the social-nationalist state. And it is interesting to note that this demographic-economic principle includes all citizens. This principle turns the entire population into an army of labor dedicated to the production and its constant increase. When we talk about production, we are talking about the general good, prosperity, and strength for the whole nation. With this principle, Saadeh transformed the neglected demographic value into an economic value that serves the progress of the people and the development of the nation.

### 3.4. Moral and culture

What is the importance of the cultural-moral factor in the productive economy? How does Saadeh benefit from the cultural-moral factor in the field of production and its development?

Saadeh sees the economy as a social-national matter, not an individual, family, or class matter. Therefore, the application of the national-social economic system is based on the existence of a society that realizes that the “nation is one society” and that this realization is very important for the workers of production as it nurtures in them the same spirit and perception, which mitigates the contradictions between its members and thus avoids the waste of capacities.

How does Saadeh take advantage of the moral issue to increase production? Before answering this question, we will briefly examine his moral doctrine: he believes that the issue of ethics or moral spirit is *“one of the most important issues of national advancement after the advent of the idea of the nation and after the appointment of its main objectives”* (Saadeh, The Ten Lectures, AL Mouhadarat AL Ashr, 1948)

Without a clear morality, all works and objects are thrown into confusion and failure. Every plan, no matter how perfect, *“cannot be realized without morality capable of implementing that plan with sound morals, including determination, strong will and faith, and the consideration that principles are more important than life itself.”* (Saadeh, The Ten Lectures, AL Mouhadarat AL Ashr, 1948) *“life”* here means the lives of individuals, which must be led for the public good.

Therefore, *“every system needs morality, and ethics are at the heart of every system that can be maintained”* (Saadeh, The Ten Lectures, AL Mouhadarat AL Ashr, 1948).

He considers that the new moral mentality included in the principles of social-nationalism is the most valuable thing that the Syrian Social-Nationalist Party offers to the nation, for its goals, actions, and orientation. What does this tell us about morality?

The following idea: Morality is the science that eliminates the contradiction between theory and practice. Morality is the art that transforms obligation (values) into existence (reality), it is the art that transforms principles into real life. An observation of history shows how important ethics is in success, but this is a long search that takes us away from the subject of the thesis.

We now return to the idea of the importance of social-nationalist morality in achieving and increasing national production. Thus, for example, we highlight two fundamental socio-economic moral statements that Saadeh made.

### 3.5. Cooperation and “Goodwill”

*“If goodwill does not always work miracles, it seems to create the most favorable circumstances for them to happen.”* (Cauwelaert, 2019) The idea of cooperation comes from the fact that production is national production, or as Saadeh himself describes it, joint production. The principle of joint production includes the principle of cooperation, not friction and speculation, because there is no work or production in society without replacing the mentality of disagreement between interests and investments, and establishing a new ethical mentality of cooperation and participation in the interest of life, towards *“...work that is better integrated into the life and more formatted, in its very organization, by taking into account the other roles of the workers, work that is endowed with more meaning and that enables individuals to express their talents.”* (Méda, 2018)

Can there be goodwill without conscience? Until the human *“mental laboratory”* changes, there is no hope of significant change in the outcome of the *“physical laboratory”* movement.

The same applies to the concept of *“goodwill”*. Saadeh sees individuals as *“caretakers”*<sup>5</sup> over capital and devotes it to production. In other words, individuals *“manage”* the affairs of capital, but in the interest of national production and its increase. Capital, which is an absolute individual property of the capitalist system and whose freedom of action is absolute, was subjected in Saadeh's economic system to the principle of national production and the interest of the nation. He considered that capital can, it seems, pass from one state to another and can never be annulled and that the autocracy of capital must be prohibited if an individual uses it against the common interest. But the question is how can an individual be benevolent about capital if he is not a *“new man”* who understands the deep meaning of social-nationalism and that his real choice is in the welfare of the nation and in national production in general?

Having explained the importance of demographic and cultural ideas in production in terms of improvement and increase, we return to the symbolic equation of productivity, and see that it takes a new form:

$$q = f(K, T, L1, L2, L3), \quad (3)$$

where *“L1, L2, L3”* human factor after its impact has been multiplied by the demographic variable (*L1*), cultural-moral (*L2*), and technical (*L3*).

### 4. Land (natural environment) and the place of capital

So far, we have talked about the human factor in production and the increase in production. We now turn to the importance of the second factor in production, which is the *“Land or natural environment”*. *“In Saadeh's opinion, any existence, or being, outside nature means nothing. Its supposition is valueless and meaningless.”* (Melhem, 2010)

After Saadeh proved his theory that socio-economic ascent is not possible without *“great production”*, he says that the condition of production is resources because *“we cannot produce without resources for production”* (Saadeh, Speech of the 1st of May, 1948).

He also links the ownership of the country's resources to social-nationalist consciousness, because resources are not self-protecting, the conscious nation alone preserves the ownership of its resources. *“...And all these primary resources are essential to our industry, to our cultures, to the production*

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<sup>5</sup> A composite term for conscious, aware individuals.



*of our national wealth, and we cannot secure our welfare and the general welfare by getting rid of them.*" (Saadeh, Speech of the 1st of May, 1948)

Saadeh stressed the importance of these resources in achieving true social justice, which brings wealth and good, because *"the equal distribution of poverty does not save us... No matter how fair that distribution is."* (Saadeh, Speech of the 1st of May, 1948) And declares that *"the elimination of backwardness and the advancement of popular progress is achieved by placing all the resources of the nation under the sovereignty of the nation."* (Saadeh, Speech of the 1st of May, 1948)

Our author, again, links the issue of national resources to social-nationalist awareness (knowledge of the existence of the nation, its reality, and interest in its progress). He also links the question of resources to the right to work. He explains his conception of the right to work from this perspective as a right to resources. What is left of the right to work and production if there are no resources to devote to the human effort? Addressing Syrian workers and farmers, he says: *"The first of your natural and social rights is the right to work and production"*, but *"the right to work means our right to our resources, to our land, to our plants and minerals."* (Saadeh, Speech of the 1st of May, 1948)

It is also interesting to note that the ecological issue would occupy an important place in Saadeh's economic approach. In an article that was published on 19 November 1937 in the daily newspaper al-Nahda (The Renaissance), he referred to the importance of the environment and climate change on the capacity and intellectual energy of men.

Let us next address the capital variable  $K$  in terms of its nature and production status.

Society can only progress with capital, capital that has been invested for the progress of society. Saadeh's statement sees *"capital"* from the point of view of *"production"* based on his socio-economic basic approach. On this basis, capital is a part of the production since it is originally a *"product of production"* and since joint production is a public right, not a private right, capital is (in principle) also public property. This is the nature of capital: It is a part of joint national production, and it is the property of the nation.

Saadeh's perception of capital is based on his main statement in the productive economy, and in the sense, we describe, capital has a significant role in the process of maximizing production. But we cannot know Saadeh's view of capital unless we first explain his theory of the nature of production. His conception of the nature of production is very different from those of other schools. Production is a social-nationalist productive issue, it is about the important result that every citizen is a worker and workers do not form a particular class (proletariat), as Marx thought. The theory of class struggle had as a social result only incitement to *"class"* war, in other words, it is an incitement to the increase of splits in society. It is not a solution to economic and social problems. The differences between Saadeh and Karl Marx are enormous, their approaches to economic and sociological issues are contradictory. Their different concepts of state and society deserve to be studied and analyzed, but as our subject is far from that, we will limit ourselves to the economic question, which for Saadeh cannot be separated from society<sup>6</sup>. One of the critical questions Saadeh posed to Marxism was what would be the scale of need, labor, and production and how to control it? This requires identifying and defining need, identifying labor, selecting it, specifying production, and defining it. The labor-value relationship is internal to each nation, and its dissemination requires the abolition of the idea of states and societies. Just as the question of improving the standard of living forms an integral part of Saadeh's thought.

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<sup>6</sup> Saadeh's materialistic-spiritual (*al-madrabiyya*) is opposed to the materialism of Marxism, as it is to the spiritualism of fascism.

Social-nationalism eliminates the class struggle in favour of the national producers. The workers are the whole nation, in its view, they are the producers of “*science, thought, agriculture and industry*”, they are “*the nation, creators, producers, and builders.*”

The real workers are not only the producers but also those who work to increase production and ensure the good of all, not only to survive but also to achieve the highest level of progress in civilization.

In this regard, he addresses the Syrian workers: “*Your greatness is what you do day and night, you industrialize machines that increase industrial production, you plough the land, you increase agricultural production, you innovate, you plan urbanization, you create a good life.*” The planners of urbanization and the good life are, of course, the intellectual workers and the men of scientific, philosophical, and artistic research. They are the innovators of advanced material-spiritual ideas and the engineers of the material-spiritual life of society. Thus, Saadeh removed from the nation's production and productivity set, a group that has few members but has much influence and poses many dangers to the nation, that is the category of thieves of the people's rights, the exploiters of the national production and the people's property, and those who expose the sovereignty to the servitude of foreign will. These categories, according to Saadeh, are the following: (i) the capitalists who steal machines and tools that factory workers make and turn them from a weapon for the workers into a weapon against them and their lives, (ii) the feudalists who plunder the wealth and expenses of the agricultural workers, monopolize them and deprive their true owners of the right to life (iii) he category of politicians who are indifferent to the problems of the fatherland and the nation, but whose personal benefits have turned them into “merchants of national production”. Let us return to the subject of capital.

As capital is a “*product of production*” then its increase is linked to the increase of production. Capital could for example be financial, tools of industrialization, or it could be an intellectual, scientific, artistic, or philosophical contribution. For Saadeh, the role of scholars, scientists, artists, politicians, managers, is indispensable to the increase of production quantitatively and qualitatively.

What will happen to the production equation we started with? The initial formula was as follows:

$$q = f(L, T, K) \quad (4)$$

After the discussion on the human factor, the formula took the following form:  $q = f(K, T, L1, L2, L3)$ . And after the discussion on the two factors, land and capital, the formula develops as follows:  $q = f(K1, K2, K3, K4, T, L1, L2, L3)$ , where  $K1$  is agricultural capital,  $K2$  is industrial capital,  $K3$  is intellectual capital and  $K4$  is e-technical capital.

## 5. Production as social-nationalist production

So far, we have studied the theory of social-nationalist economy, we have defined it by the concept of the productive nation, and then we have tried to determine the elements of production and its equations, and we have talked about the human variable, land, and capital. Production for Saadeh is a social-nationalist production, “*Production must be seen as something national, in the interest of the people, the society, the nation, not of individuals as individuals.*” (Saadeh, The Ten Lectures, AL Mouhadarat AL Ashr, 1948). It should be made clear here that Saadeh sees the public interest that production brings, not the direct material returns of individuals through production. We will come back to this in detail to show Saadeh's practical approach to the organization of the national economy on the basis of production.

This description of production can be explained as follows. First of all, in national production, the interest is that of the people. This means that the economy, which is a productive economy, is not just an abstract science that only looks for economic laws, but the economy has a certain human value. In addition to dealing with facts and laws, it is an economy with a purpose, and its purpose is in the interest of the people in progress and well-being. *“Production is the foundation of the national economy, and without production, we can never think of the welfare of the people.”* (Saadeh, The Ten Lectures, AL Mouhadarat AL Ashr, 1948).

Secondly, when Saadeh says that production is in the interest of society and not of individuals as individuals, he creates an important and delicate distinction between individuals as individuals and individuals as producers. Production, based on this distinction, would be owned by individuals in terms of producers (i.e., the producing nation). Based on this distinction, we will discuss the concept of property in the social-nationalist economic system.

It seems to me that the key to this problem is the key to the whole economic question, it is the principle of production. Saadeh regarded joint production as a public right, not a private right. Based on this economic-legal rule, the nation would be the true owner of production, and the nation consists of the producers of agriculture, industry, ideas... On the other hand, his rejection of making joint production a private right would be a rejection of the capitalist system.

## 6. Property and ownership

Does this mean that individual property is not included in the social-nationalist system, and what would be Saadeh's attitude towards the private property?

Let us return to the factors of production, identify Saadeh's attitude towards each factor concerning the concept of ownership, and then consider the question of ownership of production arising from the combination and interaction of these factors. *“Substantive economics consists of two inseparable levels. The first is the interaction between humans and nature. The second refers to the coherence and stability of the economy: human subsistence cannot be left to the mercy of accidental causes. Rigidities are necessary, which is what the institutionalization of “interaction processes” means.”* (Maucourant, 2011).

We begin with the human factor, where Saadeh considers that the individual in himself is simply a social possibility. A saying of “Al-Kawakibi” explains this concept well: *“The free individual, who is completely autonomous, is completely possessed by his people.”* (AL-Kawakibi, 1902) Saadeh confirmed this view of the human being by considering that all that is in us comes from the nation, and all that is in us is for the nation. For him, this thought makes individuals believe that the true good is in the good of the whole nation, their freedom in the freedom of the whole society, and their progress in the progress of the whole people. This establishes the general spirit of the public good.

Concerning the land factor, it is summarized as follows: Individuals are *“caretakers of the land on behalf of the nation and its people.”* And *“their duty is in no way to act against the progress of the society.”* (Saadeh, The principles of the SSNP, 1937).

This means that the true owner of the land and its resources is the nation, where the nation is not a certain group of individuals, religious groups, a set of politicians, or even a generation of generations, but all generations in the unity of continuity and progress. The individual is a caretaker on property within the limits and conditions of social-nationalist work and the objective is the increase of production. This principle eliminates feudalism. It is not acceptable in the social-nationalist system that feudalism exists or that feudalism continues. This feudalism can take either a traditional form of land ownership and peasant exploitation or a “modern” form of

taxation obliging investors to give a share of their investments to the new feudalists. About capital, it is, in principle, a national public property, because it is originally the product of common national production. As far as individuals are concerned, their link with capital is the link of the benevolent to this capital, they are responsible for the management of capital aimed at increasing production. *“Without justice, the whole system is doomed to failure and collapse.”* (Melhem, 2016) It is crucial to say that *“it is not simply a matter of achieving social justice but of instituting forms of social transparency giving meaning to an ethic of personal responsibility.”* (Maucourant, 2011) Similarly, Saadeh states that he does not aim *“to annihilate private property as practical goods, nor to take capital out of the hands of individuals and remove the right to dispose of it”* (Saadeh, The Ten Lectures, AL Mouhadarat AL Ashr, 1948) hence his position on the ownership of capital is as follows: Do individuals own capital? The answer would be: no and yes.

No, - in principle, everything from the land, capital, tools of production, machinery, and resources is public property of the nation. Yes, - in practice, this is one of the stages of progress, according to the needs and necessity of society. In this case, their ownership is limited by the interest of production itself, subject to the development of the physical and psychological forces of production and subject to their ability to use capital in the production process, which encourages individuals to develop their skills and increase their educational level. This ownership includes behavior that allows them to use all the talents to *“design and execute skills to produce what they feel they are capable of producing.”* (Saadeh, The Ten Lectures, AL Mouhadarat AL Ashr, 1948) This practice is by no means synonymous with ownership in an individual capitalist system. It is subject to the general rule that capital is public property, to the conditions of control of production and division of labor, to legislation aimed at liberating man-society, eliminating human exploitation in the development of production, and increasing public wealth. This practical property in terms of benevolence is a kind of social function that can be expanded and shortened by the scale of public production or by the development of the forces of production.

Private property, which Saadeh did not want to destroy as practical property, would be a social-nationalist and moral responsibility, centered on social cooperation, and national benevolence. Its aim is the public good, not the private good, and its law is an increase in national production, the plan for which is managed by the social-nationalist state. A contemporary intellectual of Saadeh, Ludwig von Mises quoted: *“Productive individuals are regarded as the practical owners of the property of the nation.”* The nation can only be managed by coordinated institutions run by conscious individuals. The guarantee of this caretaking, which is legal and moral, is also based on the planning, control, and management of national production.

For Saadeh, participation in production would be a fundamental condition for participation in public law. He believed that non-producers cannot be treated as producers and take the same share in production. All the people should be productive. The people must work for a strong industrial, agricultural, and economic renaissance that brings good to the nation and the fatherland. *“With this work, we can look forward to distributing the fair share to all so that they can live a decent life for the civilized man.”* (Saadeh, The Ten Lectures, AL Mouhadarat AL Ashr, 1948).

## **7. Technical categorization of production**

Saadeh stated that he did not see that the trade unions and their way of organizing would be the best way to achieve the ideal production situation. He considered that the unions had almost systematically become, from a political point of view, a “war camp” that continually seeks conflict and is constantly in demand, without any reasonable or rational evaluation of the results. If a

union wins something, it demands more after a while, and immediately starts a second strike if the state has not met its demands, which can sometimes be detrimental to the national interest. *“The narrowness of the union would then replace the vision of a narrow capitalist individual who had nothing for the public good.”* (Saadeh, *The Complete Works, Al-Athar al-Kamila*, 1948).

The syndicate cannot consider what the state budget needs to deal with complex modern situations. Syndicates become for him an *“irrational way of working”*, intuitive, based on arbitrary estimates, and politically inspired by individuals rather than by the perception of the people. The alternative is the *“technical categorization of production”*, establishing the right basis for distribution while preserving the state's consideration of fundamental issues. It is possible that the reason why Saadeh did not develop this *“technical”* issue is based on the importance of technical adaptability to the societal reality in a well-defined time.

## 8. System of interests

This new system of interest is based on the consciousness and conviction of the people regarding their interest in this system. It is based on continuous development so that the problem of bureaucracy does not remain a turning point between the nation and its exercise of ownership. The essence of the nation is creation, creativity, and excellence.

Saadeh's economic question is part of the social-nationalist question, and it is not possible to solve economic problems successfully if it is seen as a material question that has nothing to do with the higher interest of the nation. The importance of production derives from his conception of social interaction and its importance in increasing the factors of production and creating value, *“It's the production that adds the value.”* (Schiff, 2019).

The development of the means of production is a fundamental aspect that requires full social and political stability. The establishment of large capital projects will encourage investment in the country. In Saadeh's articles on immigrants in his homeland, he makes it clear that their investment portfolio requires a new economic system and new pillars to encourage them to invest. In his articles, we note the importance of the notion of investment: *“Our problem lies in the fear of courageous investments that avoid commercial cooperation. It is, therefore, better to prefer collective work to individual work”* (Saadeh, *Saadeh et l'affaire économique, Saadeh wal cha'n al 'ikisadi*, 2004).

He also felt that savings should have a purpose, *“Savings create the capital that allows for the expansion of production.”* (Schiff, 2019) It is the investment and the creation of organized economic institutions which at the same time contribute to raising the level of national production, and which also benefit the producers within these institutions.

Social development is always relative to economic development; social structures are the product of the interaction of man and the natural environment. In other words, they result from the qualitative and quantitative development of production and its modes. *“Economic growth is largely related to the modes of production adopted, which means that talking about patterns of production is not a marginal issue, it is at the heart of the economy.”* (Fayyad, 2012).

## 9. Wealth distribution

How can we understand the concept of production-based wealth distribution according to Saadeh?

In the fourth principle of reform, he states that the regulation of the national economy based on production is the only way to create a vigorous balance between the distribution of labour and



the distribution of wealth. It is important to mention that at the economic level he didn't use the term "equality" but "equity" and "justice". *"It should be noted that a just distribution of wealth does not imply an equal distribution of wealth."* (Melhem, 2016). All citizens must be productive in some way. In this case, production and producers must be categorized in such a way that cooperation and participation in work can be integrated as widely as possible, the fair share of production must be controlled, the right to work, and the right to share must be guaranteed. Saadeh did not explain the concept of 'fair share of production' in detail, but the linguistic analysis might help us to understand it.

The linguistic analysis of his expressions *"on the basis of production"* and *"fair share of production"* is the same, what Saadeh means in other words: *"In relation to production"* or *"fair return in proportion to production"*, so we can understand what he meant by *"production for producers"*, i.e. that the return to productive individuals is a percentage of the overall return to production or profits.

On this subject we can read what Adéodat Boissard had said: *"...the regime of proportional or associationist sharing, in which the different collaborators agree to achieve the complete sharing or, in any case, the most proportional to the share taken by each in the production, of all the results of this production, whatever they are, losses or profits."* (Méda, 2018). Receiving the full value of the contribution to production could be the remedy. This abolishes the control of capitalism, which Saadeh sees as *"economic colonialism"* and the fragmentation of society caused by communism. *"...he categorically rejects the economic and political doctrine of the Communist Party, which he believes pits class against class and risks dividing a stable society and provoking civil war. He also rejects the international approach of communism which calls for the overcoming of nations in the name of homogeneity of conditions of the proletariat throughout the world."* (Sneifer, 2019).

Fairness and equity in the distribution of profits from production and the exploitation of capital in the national interest are important measures as they will contribute to a drastic reduction in the unemployment rate and the improvement of living standards. Without forgetting that political independence and sovereignty are the keys to economic independence and sovereignty, it is the way to a sovereign economic policy that puts the interest of the nation and society above all considerations and takes appropriate economic measures in the national interest.

## 10. Concluding remarks

Natural Syria is one of the most important geopolitical and economic areas in the Middle East for the parties to the international equation (Khoury, 2021). Its geographical location and the sea access it possesses made it the coastal gateway to the continent of Asia, and the center of the launch of the world's continents due to its location on the lines of global trade, as well as being an energy corridor area. A large number of powerful countries are working to achieve their goals through economic and cultural means (Cooper, 2000). Perhaps in the successive forms of sieges on the Natural Syria's states as an expression of this, here emerges the need and the existential interest to agree to launch an integrated regional project, which saves the region from weakness and falling into recurring crises.

Saadeh's legacy and ideas have retained their appeal and resonate with a relatively small, but significant, number of Lebanese and Syrians (Yonker, 2021). Saadeh's doctrine may hold the remedy for this region. He considers that the most important thing is that work and production are rights, while *"salary, labour law, and security laws are only virtual issues, as they do not solve the problem of unemployment or general poverty."* If we give the worker what he asks for in terms of legislation, will this solve the problem of unemployment, will it solve the problem of general poverty? And will



the standard of living increase satisfactorily for humans? The principle of the “*right to work and produce*” is the fundamental point of the progression of society and the security of wealth.

The researchers note that Saadeh has not operationally clarified his economic concept (Samia, 2021), which is reflected in several points: he considers that the economy evolves with social consciousness, which derives from his reflection “*society is knowledge and knowledge is power*”, this consciousness evolves with society over time. We also note that Saadeh established the basis of his economic thinking, a very clear basis, on a national economy, understood here in the sense of “*the interest of the nation*”. This national economy is based on production, a *spiritual-material* production, where the distribution of its profits is relative to the contribution of its producers.

This article paves the way for further research, a united monetary system reveals vital to be studied. What remains for future research is the important comparative perspective with other national economic doctrines, something that will allow the originality of Antoun Saadeh to be taken even further.

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