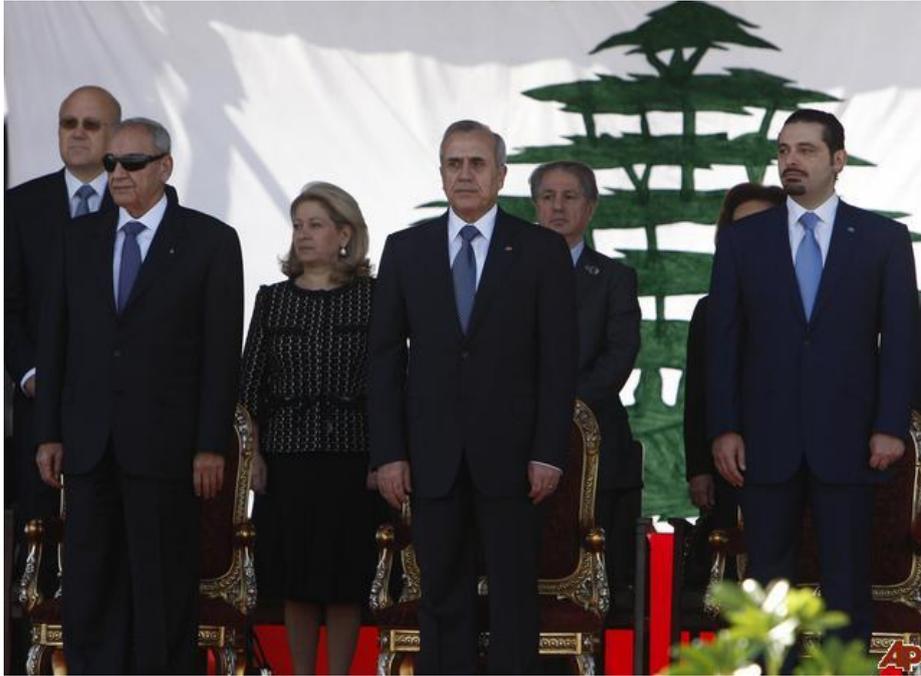


# The Inescapable Dilemma: Consociational Power-sharing in Lebanon between 1989 and 2009

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## The Inescapable Dilemma

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Cover Image: Lebanon's Maronite President Michel Suleiman (middle) meets with Sunni Prime Minister Saad Hariri (right) and Shiite Lebanese Speaker of Parliament Nabih Berri (left) to present the formation of the country's cabinet of National Unity in November 2009. Former Prime Minister Najib Mikati and surviving members of the late President Bashir Gemayel are standing against the background of the Lebanese symbol for national unity, a Cedar tree (Associated Press News).

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## Introduction

To the casual observer, the unity of Lebanon appears inexplicable. Contemporary Lebanon officially recognises eighteen confessions<sup>1</sup> by means of its confessional democracy; a system of governance that proportionally delegates political power among the country's religious communities according to their percentage of the population.<sup>2</sup> But Lebanon's unity has not been without its setbacks. It took no less than four different power-sharing accords since 1864 to cope with stringent internal and external dialectics and arrive at some sort of non-violent coexistence. Signed in 1989, the 'Ta'if Charter of National Reconciliation' succeeded in ending a severe, sixteen-year long civil war in Lebanon by allowing for the resumption of politics between the country's main confessions: Maronite Christians, Sunni Muslims, Druze and Shiite Muslims. And it has been commended since for its commitment to constitutional reform to prevent future outbreaks of confessional fighting, most notably by a deconfessionalisation of Lebanon's political system.

Despite a frequently reiterated commitment to a deconfessionalisation of the political system, however, Lebanon's political elite has consistently failed to implement major institutional reforms accordingly. While, admittedly, some modifications to the country's political system have been implemented, nearly all amendments towards genuine deconfessionalisation have been subject to postponement and opposition as the political elite fails to arrive at constructive agreements. Above all, the conditions in which a deconfessionalisation of the political system should take place continue to remain highly debated. The regime's inability to deconfessionalise its political system has become particularly pressing since the escalation of a nation-wide political crisis in 2005 and the severe clashes between different factions in the government in 2008, resulting in the need for a formal reaffirmation of the country's power-sharing agreement in Doha, Qatar.

Recognising the growing need for additional research, scholars have explored the quality of Lebanon's democracy over the past decade. In general, they observe the distribution of power over confessions to be at the root of the country's shaky establishment and have rightfully indicated the commitment of the country's political elite to deconfessionalisation as crucial to its stabilisation. Surprisingly enough, few academics have attempted to understand Lebanon's recent turbulence by questioning the consociational nature of the state in Lebanon's post-war society and the implications this may have for its efficacy. Stemming from this practical need for and theoretical gap in assessing the country's *problematique*, this study will attempt to answer the following question:

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted here that the official word "ta2ifa", used in Arabic to distinguish between the different groups in Lebanon, has been wrongfully translated as "confession" ("mathhab"), while in fact meaning "community", without alluding to what the content of the communal identity might be. Nevertheless, this study will make use of the term "confession", hereafter defined as a social group whose members share a religious as well as a (framed or imposed) political orientation. As political power-sharing in Lebanon has essentially been between social elites who define themselves as leaders of a confession, a practice that has confirmed rather than contradict the existence of different interests between religious communities, it would be misleading to speak of communities only. In other words, while "community" might come closest to reality by virtue of its inclusion of both members and leaders of a social group, the term "confession" is best used to indicate the subjects of power-sharing theory (confessions) as well as the confessional elite's use of religion and religious institutions in their political struggle for communal power in contemporary Lebanese society.

<sup>2</sup> This is the definition according to the United States Institute for Peace.

*Why has the Lebanese government's aim to deconfessionalise the Lebanese political system, as stipulated by the Ta'if Accord in 1989, failed to materialise during the twenty years that followed?*

In order to answer this question, this study poses an in-depth analysis of the implementation of the Ta'if Accord in Lebanon between 1989 and 2009. It will do so first by exploring the academic debate on power-sharing in general and by examining the power-sharing institutions of consociational theory in particular. Consociational power-sharing is inherently an elite-based theory that allocates political guarantees to all considerable social groups in society; while essentially a western-developed model, its theoretical considerations are highly applicable to the Ta'if Accord. Then, a historical account of confessional representation and power-sharing regimes extending back as far as 1864 is provided to understand in what context the country's sixteen-year long civil war broke out and what motivated the specification of several of Ta'if its provisions. Following from this, the final chapter will discuss the implications of Lebanon's current power-sharing regime and the difficulties inherent in fomenting a process of political deconfessionalisation in Lebanon.

Throughout this study, it is argued that the consociational nature of Lebanon's post-war regime has failed to effectively transform political decision-making power away from the country's confessional groups towards the state as a cohesive entity. By the institutionalisation of consociational power-sharing institutions, confessional groups have been allowed to continue to preserve the interests and needs of their confession at the expense of those of the state. Put concretely, confessional leaders have been unwilling to implement major reforms that would deplete their guaranteed local power-base and have, in fact, used consociational power-sharing institutions to block any formal attempts to do so. In other words, for the sake of restoring political relations, power-sharing accords risk constructing decentralised governments that are not able to arrive at meaningful decision-making for the collective good, a fatal flaw that is insufficiently accounted for in the consociational debate.

## 1. Power-Sharing Theory

At first glance, power-sharing looks like a logical approach to managing inter-communal conflicts in plural societies that have been divided by deep ethnic, social or religious differences. In theory, by relying upon the joint exercise of power, disputes over *who* should have the most powerful position in the social hierarchy of a society are easily resolved. Rather, if emphasis is put on *how* power-sharing might take place instead, conflicts become naturally more constructive. In its broadest sense, power-sharing denotes any type of institution that divides or shares political, economic, territorial and/or military power. Interestingly, while conventionally described as a system of governance in which all major segments of society are provided a permanent share of power, power-sharing has recently become particularly popular as a mechanism to ensure the commitment of adversaries to peace in times of severe distrust and vulnerability. This has earned power-sharing its promotion in a significant number of peace agreements all over the world. However, short from being a panacea for civil war, a lively debate has developed on the design and implementation of power-sharing policies.

In the first paragraph, the theoretical considerations underlying power-sharing are discussed. Conventionally seen as a tool to end civil war, power-sharing has been increasingly promoted as a mechanism to improve the quality of democracy after civil war. Next, the second paragraph will examine the technicalities of consociationalism. Consociational theory is developed by Arend Lijphart (1968) as an elite-based theory that involves four power-sharing institutions: a grand coalition, proportionality rule, consensus and minority veto and segmental autonomy. In later works, Lijphart (1977) developed a set of prerequisites to facilitate and encourage elite cooperation. The paragraph closes with several contributions made by other scholars. The third paragraph highlights the criticisms of consociational power-sharing theory relevant to Lebanon. Most importantly, consociationalism is criticised of cementing group boundaries, allowing for the politisation of ethnicity and rendering the government ineffective as a result of its institutional inclusiveness. Of crucial importance, therefore, are comprehensive institutional reforms of the power-sharing regime.

### 1.1 Three Models for Post-War Power-Sharing

The scholarly debate on power-sharing has essentially taken place in the context of two ontologically different discourses. The discourse of conflict management views the main function of power-sharing as a tool to end violence. Recently, however, power-sharing has been particularly promoted as the preferred remedy<sup>3</sup> for building democracy after civil war (Roeder and Rothchild 2005: 5). Indeed, in the conflict transformation discourse, power-sharing has been assumed as a tool to foster a positive-sum perception of political interactions. In this discourse, power-sharing theory has produced three easily identifiable power-sharing models based on whether the intent of the policy is to *divide* or *share* power among former adversaries: autonomy, conciliation and consociationalism.

First, autonomy is often seen as a realistic way to reconcile the claims of states for territorial integrity and those of rebel forces for secession. It is fundamentally a device to divide state power by allowing

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<sup>3</sup> The main alternatives remedies to end civil war include “partition”, which is generally rejected by international law as well as most third parties (Fearon 2004; Sambanis 2000) and “majoritarian democracy”, which parties to a conflict are not likely to agree to out of fear for being disadvantaged in times of peace.

one or more groups claiming a distinct identity to exercise direct control over important affairs of concern to them while, simultaneously, allowing the larger entity to exercise those powers that are in the common interest of all groups within the state (Ghai, 2000). Second, conciliation seeks to build a system of multi-ethnic political parties or coalitions. Supporters of this model believe that electoral systems and public policies will foster ethnic accommodation by virtue of the promotion of cross-cutting interests and non-ethnic federalism (Horowitz 2003: 118-9). Third, consociationalism is derived from the hypothesis that social cleavages are moderated if they are cross-cutting but generate conflict if they are mutually reinforcing (Daalder 1974: 606). It is therefore most renowned for combining the division of power with the proportional share in power.

Arend Lijphart (2002), who coined the term in the late 1960s, articulated the philosophy of consociationalism as: “the participation of the representatives of *all* significant groups in political decision-making, especially at the executive level” while, “official group autonomy ensures that these groups are fully able to run their own internal affairs, particularly in the areas of education and culture” (39, emphasis mine). In effect, consociationalism promises to produce governmental stability, to protect the survival of the power-sharing agreement and democracy as a whole. By virtue of its inclusive nature, consociationalism has earned its implementation in power-sharing projects all over the world, including that of Lebanon<sup>4</sup>. For this reason, the remainder of this theoretical discussion will focus exclusively on the consociational approach to power-sharing.

### 1.2 The Consociational Model

Whereas, power-sharing models are generally seen as intended to help opposition groups make a transition to democracy, consociationalism indicates a more complex technique of constitutional organisation (Lemarchand 2006). Rather than seeking the restoration of conventional democracy, the consociational model is premised on changing war-prone structures by allowing for a model of democracy that is fine-tuned to a plural society. Indeed, Lijphart commences his consociational theory with a fundamental critique of the Anglo-American preference for majority rule.

Based on a comparative analysis of plural societies including the Netherlands, Switzerland and Belgium, Lijphart (1984) argues that majoritarian systems can be inapt as they assume shifting majorities in parliament and the relative alignment of political parties. While such an assumption may be accurate in respect to a more homogeneous society, he says, it is not so much in societies that do not consist of an ethnic, religious or linguistic majority. In such societies, people tend to vote exclusively along ethnic or religious lines and political parties tend to defend only community-based interests. By facilitating the political and economic marginalisation of minority groups that are not represented in the government, majoritarian rule is therefore inevitably undemocratic and dangerous (13). Instead, the accommodation of social elites is crucial for the political stability of a democratic and plural society. In fact, Lijphart (1999) writes, “the choice is not between consociational and majoritarian democracy but between consociational democracy and no

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<sup>4</sup> It should be noted here that it is unlikely that the brokers of the Ta’if Accord consciously imagined the new Republic to be a consociational democracy. However, the current power-sharing arrangement in Lebanon is often referred to, and explained as, a consociational project, in both the Western and Arab worlds. Indeed, as will be explained later, Lebanon’s current regime adheres to the principles of a consociational democracy.

democracy at all” (31-33). Put concretely, the key to successful power-sharing by social elites lies in the extent to which the technicalities of power-sharing approximate four power-sharing institutions.<sup>5</sup>

First and foremost, a consociational democracy requires the establishment of a *grand coalition* that ensures the representation of minorities at the central state level (Lijphart, 1968). The advantage of such inclusion is the direct linkage of minority representation in parliament and government and, therefore, the inclusion of minorities in key political decisions (Bieber & Keil 2009: 349). Secondly, a consociational democracy requires the institutionalisation of *proportionality* in both the official and civil constituents of the state (Lijphart, 1968). Proportional representation allows for the political inclusion of minority interests in parliament and the political system as a whole and ensures that the state constitutes itself as a multi-ethnic and multicultural entity (Bieber & Keil: 346). Thirdly, a consociational democracy requires the recognition of *segmental autonomy* or some form of decentralised governance that allows for different culturally-based community laws (Lijphart, 1968). It is argued that segmental autonomy effectively eliminates mutually shared fears for the loss of identity-based norms, traditions and religion. Finally, official decision-making in a consociational democracy is to be based on *consensus rule* and *minority veto*. According to Lijphart (1969), while consensus politics should confirm majority rule, minorities should be allowed to veto certain formal propositions in order to protect their vital interests (207–225). There are generally two forms of minority veto rights that can be applied in combination with consensus politics. First, if the state is organised as a federation and minorities are a majority in one or more of the federal units, it is possible to give veto rights to these federal units. A second form of veto right, based on what could be called an “ethnic veto” compared to the aforementioned “territorial veto”, allows the representatives of the constituent peoples in the National Assembly to refer to a “vital national interest” to veto a decision (Bieber & Keil 2009: 352). Based on the institutionalisation of these four power-sharing institutions, consociationalism is expected to promote compromise and conciliation.

Ideally, consociationalism works as a catalyst for peaceful cooperation among contending parties after a deal is signed (Lijphart 1994: 12). Lijphart is not clear on what exactly drives this process but he does mention four prerequisites to foster a positive-sum perception of political interactions, notably: (1) an awareness of the dangers inherent in fragmented systems, (2) a commitment to system maintenance, (3) the ability to transcend sub-cultural cleavages and (4) the ability to forge appropriate solutions that can meet the demands of the subgroups. In addition, Lijphart introduces another ten factors conducive to the cooperation of social elites and the stable support of non-elites: (1) the segmental isolation of ethnic communities, (2) a multiple balance of power, (3) the presence of external threats common to all communities, (4) an overarching loyalty to the state, (5) a tradition of elite accommodation, (6) socio-economic equality, (7) a small population size, (8) a moderate multi-party system with segmental parties, (9) widespread support of the elite cartel system and (10) distinct lines of cleavage (Lijphart 1969: 22-30). While considered favourable to consociational democracy, Lijphart (1977) explicitly states that these factors are neither necessary nor sufficient. Even when all conditions are favourable, the success of consociationalism is by no means guaranteed and even when the conditions are distinctly unfavourable, success remains possible (53-103).

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<sup>5</sup> Power-sharing institutions are defined here as those rules that define how decisions will be made by groups within the polity and that allocate decision-making rights, including access to state resources, among the collectivities competing for power.

Based on a recent case study of Columbia, Mazucca and Robinson (2009) furthermore argue that the emergence of consociational power-sharing institutions results in peaceful interaction between government and opposition (286). Other empirical studies, such as those by Powell (2000), McDonald, Mendes and Budge (2004) and Garry (2009), have concluded that consociational power-sharing institutions promote more moderate policy outputs than institutions that concentrate power in the hands of a single party or the government. Likewise, Kaplan (2008) has claimed that the institutions of consociationalism have effectively made elites perceive internal strife and violence as “costly alternatives” to consociational power-sharing (76). Still others have argued for power-sharing in territorial, military and economic dimensions as well. The greater the overall number of power-sharing dimensions specified in the rules governing the society, the more likely that peaceful relations among former adversaries will materialise (Hartzell & Hoddie 2003: 321) and the less commitment of an international community will be needed (Walter 1999: 154). In other words, if all conflict parties share a genuine belief in power-sharing, the peace agreement will hold.

Some have also argued for additional guarantees to protect the power-sharing regime from collapsing. Most notably, Walter (1999) argues that the use of third parties is the best means to induce actors in a civil conflict to sign and abide by agreements (340). Local actors in civil conflicts need these guarantees to be assured of their own security and to subsequently prevent them from exiting these agreements. In the event that one of the players becomes dissatisfied, such measures should also include a system of checks and balances on the restricted use of military power and leave enough room for social, political and economic development. Decentralisation is a key component of this strategy as it lessens the stakes for violent struggle and because it compartmentalises potential confrontations away from the capital city (Spears 2000: 114-15). Furthermore, by “depoliticising ethnicity”, consociationalism is expected to facilitate and encourage the long-term development of “a common national identity” (Jarstad 2006: 46-8). In this sense, consociationalism holds not only the promise of national reconciliation, but that of national unification as well.

In sum, at the source of Lijphart’s consociational theory is a government by elite cartel that provides social elites with a guaranteed political position to influence decision-making processes. Because consociational power-sharing institutions are premised upon the cooperation between elites, a consociationalist democracy is inherently a regime of guarantees. Moreover, it is argued that the elites’ skill in distributing financial resources and social services equally across disparate groups serves to promote political moderation, national reconciliation and conflict prevention. Seen from this perspective, power-sharing failure will only occur when social elites cease to cooperate and compromise with one another and/or when the power-sharing accord no longer incorporates every significant social group in the society. However, despite the promising outcome of consociational projects all over the world, many such experiments have also wielded negative and inconclusive results throughout the years. Consequentially, the work of Lijphart and others has faced critiques on both logical and empirical grounds, the most important of which are discussed in the next paragraph.

### 1.3 Consociational Theory Criticised

In general, consociational theory is criticised for its supposition that the political inclusion of minorities guarantees a winning and economically beneficial outcome that outweighs the alternative of violence. While the new government may experience a peaceful period of reconstruction, critics argue, it will almost certainly be soon confronted with the same set of problems faced by the pre-civil war government in addition to memories of violence, widespread armaments and greatly weakened social structures (Atlas & Licklider 1999: 37). Given this argument, it is not surprising that after settlement political tensions often arise, not necessarily from reopening fissures between former opponents but from deepening divisions among those who feel that they have 'lost' and those that are perceived by them to have 'won'. Consociationalism, therefore, is not so much criticised for the way it ends civil war as it is for its limited capacity in producing national reconciliation.

As early as 1981, political scholar Kieve criticised Lijphart's assumption that consociationalism was the main reason for the existence of political stability in the Netherlands during the time of its 'pillarisation'<sup>6</sup>, roughly between 1930 and 1970. In short, Kieve argued that consociational institutions are largely ineffective in dealing with political crises based on class differences as elite accommodation procedures stimulate polarisation (Bakvis 1984: 315-16). In other words, emphasising group differences has a counter-productive effect on peace and reconciliation. Many scholars have frequently reiterated this particular critique. Mehler (2008) argues that consociational projects in parts of Africa during the 1990s have effectively cemented group boundaries as they encourage social elites to 'ethnicise' all political issues in order to obtain concessions, often leading to a mutual escalation of demands (37). Moreover, based on an empirical case study of Northern Ireland, Garry (2009) argues that party competition prior to the implementation of consociational arrangements was primarily driven by socio-economic left-right issues while the development of consociational arrangements in 2004 made it that party support was solely and strongly based on the ethno-national cleavage<sup>7</sup> (459). Similarly, Merrill and Adams (2007) say that it is not at all obvious that consociational institutions will actually moderate government policy outputs as they could motivate parties to stake out extreme policy positions, perhaps in an effort to "pull" the eventual compromise policy in the party's preferred direction (420). Hence, both by reinforcing generally shared beliefs that one community's interests are irreconcilable with those of other communities and by allowing for the 'politisational' of ethnic issues, rather than socio-economic issues, consociationalism may induce political leaders to take extreme, uncompromising positions that are electorally more beneficial. This risk that this will result in a political struggle over power would be particularly evident in times of political crisis and social unrest and if there is no ethnic majority but a large number of minority groups who all fear the marginalisation of their particular needs.

A third critique pertaining to consociational power sharing is that it is not always beneficial to have a power-sharing accord that is exhaustive in its inclusiveness. By generating multi-party coalitions, which consist of minorities aware of the fact that they each hold the power to veto government action, it becomes highly difficult for a government to arrive at collective decision-making. In fact,

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<sup>6</sup> A term used to describe societies that are vertically divided in several smaller segments, or 'pillars', according to different religions and/or ideologies.

<sup>7</sup> The 'ethno-national cleavage' implies that the differences between groups are predominantly 'ethnic' in nature, as opposed to socio-economic.

some consociational power-sharing regimes have been said to contain the seeds of their own self-destruction as the search for consensus turns into a political deadlock (Sisk 2003). This important weakness inherent in consociational regimes is also recognised by Lijphart himself. In his own words, Lijphart (1968) admits that “a grand coalition may lead to cumbersome decision-making, not to mention the multiplication of governmental units and associated costs because of the stress on segmental autonomy” but, subsequently adds, “the benefits outweigh the disadvantages since the acceptable coexistence of groups is to be preferred to either non-democratic peace or unstable democracy rent by segmental strife (71).

Some critics of consociationalism have gone so far as to argue that the inclusive nature of consociational institutions has in some cases led to the reproduction of insurgent fighting. By rewarding rebels and war-time militias with a share of state power in negotiating a peace-agreement, it is said, consociationalism risks creating an “incentive structure” upon which ambitious would-be leaders can embark by choosing the path of violence (Tull & Mehler 2005: 20). Equally true, the inclusion of certain groups or individuals can lead to the dissatisfaction, anger and even withdrawal of other social elites from a peace agreement. These particular critiques are often accompanied by the argument that Lijphart’s classic case studies, including the Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland, Cyprus and pre-1975 Lebanon<sup>8</sup>, do not reflect the reality in other parts of the world. Indeed, it could be argued that Lijphart’s primary reflections were biased as consociationalism in these case-studies had been introduced as a constitutional model of ethnic or religious accommodation rather than imposed from outside by third party mediators after civil war.

An important element in the critiques mentioned above is that the weakness of consociationalism lies not in the preservation of power-sharing institutions but, quite to the contrast, the nature and (long-term) effects of these institutions. The context of a society proves crucial in this regard. As political scholar Lemarchand (2006) rightly observes, even the most carefully calibrated constitutional engineering can do little to promote peace and stability where the necessary societal conditions are missing (2). Any power-sharing accord should thus take into account the reality of a society’s context prior to developing and implementing the technicalities of its institutions.

In this regard, a final critique on consociationalism, as identified by Walter (2002), is that once inaugurated, consociational power-sharing regimes will almost certainly be blocked when the necessity of implementing major reforms is more evident (167). Indeed, the personnel and transitional institutions that are established to guarantee security to adversaries shortly after civil war often have adverse effects in the long term and may need to be reformed in order to safeguard security, peace and political stability. But as power-sharing institutions carry with them widespread interests to maintain status and privileges (Mehler 2008:14), the implementation of major reforms has proven to be highly difficult in some contexts. Consociational institutions should thus allow for peaceful change when circumstances warrant. If a negotiated power-sharing accord is able to survive the initial phase of post-war insecurity, consociationalism should further induce adversaries to “attenuate” their inclination to resort to arms for protection as well as enable them to learn to transact with one another at the political centre through the gradual institutionalisation of norms for the management of conflict (Hartzell & Hoddie 2003: 320).

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<sup>8</sup> Before 1975, Lebanon’s consociational democracy was widely seen as a huge success.

In conclusion, while not denying that consociational power-sharing regimes may have beneficial effects in the initial phase of post-war stabilisation and reconstruction, the merits of consociationalism are by no means secured after consolidation. The technicalities of power-sharing institutions risk polarising the society by emphasising different interests rather than shared needs, rendering the government ineffective or reproducing inter-communal violence or ethnic conflict as a result of its inclusiveness. Therefore, more importantly than the technicalities of power-sharing in spelling the difference between the success and failure of a consociational accord is the socio-political context. Taking all these critiques into consideration, it could thus be concluded that only tailor-made and transitional or flexible power-sharing regimes can have the beneficial effects Lijphart intended they would have. As will become evident in the following chapter, the need to analyse a country's socio-political context and overcome the potential weaknesses of a consociational democracy by introducing a set of comprehensive reforms in order to maintain peace over the long-term is authenticated in the case of Lebanon's current Republic.

## 2. Context and History of Confessional Representation

It has been a frequently voiced argument that unless the Lebanese government undertakes serious steps to reform the current political system to a system that is based on individual rights and full protection for minorities, a secular, equitable and stable society cannot be established (Abu-Hamad 1995). But in order to fully appreciate the current use of power-sharing institutions in Lebanon today, it is important to examine the legacy of power-sharing. While power-sharing arrangements in Lebanon do not have a long history, dating only to the late nineteenth century, they have important precedents in the country's history of confessional representation.

The first paragraph will elaborate on the current geopolitical dimension of Lebanon. In short, it will discuss the different groups and their position and presence in the country. The second paragraph will then discuss the country's history of confessional representation and inauguration of three subsequent power-sharing regimes since the sixteenth century, the last of which was inaugurated in 1989. It will illustrate that, despite the promise of consociationalism, power-sharing regimes in Lebanon have been constrained by the need for balanced confessional representation, unmitigated factional divisions and the ever-present interference by neighbouring states. As this chapter focuses primarily on formal power-sharing regimes, the civil-war period (1975-1989) in which the country's different confessions reigned exclusively will be omitted here. The final paragraph moves directly from the pre-war period of the early 1970's to the period after the civil war had formally ended in 1989. In particular, it focuses on the provisions under Ta'if and the post-war circumstances in which peace returned to Lebanon. However, a growing political crisis escalated in a series of events and has seriously challenged power-sharing again in Lebanon. The chapter is concluded by emphasising the need for an assessment of the implications of the country's current consociational arrangement.

### 2.1 Confessions, Demography and Distribution

Lebanon is situated in the Eastern Mediterranean and West part of Asia, geographically close to Europe whilst bordering Syria in the north and east and contemporary Israel in the south. While the total population of Lebanese in the world is estimated to be more than 15 million, only about four million reside in Lebanon as a result of recurring fighting between the country's confessions. In fact, contemporary Lebanon recognises no less than eighteen confessional groups of which each is considered to be either Christian or Muslim<sup>9</sup>. Apart from a religious identity, the main divisions between the Lebanese confessions appear to be cultural and economical. Traditionally, Lebanese Christians have been perceived to have a Western orientation, whereas their Muslim counterparts are perceived to adhere to an Arab orientation. Moreover, poverty has mostly manifested among the latter, in particular the urban Sunnis and Shiite refugees. Importantly, Lebanon's confessional groups

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<sup>9</sup> The Druze's inclusion as a Muslim group is highly contentious. While originally an offshoot of Ismailism, a precursor of "mainstream" twelver Shiism, the Druze have been theologically separate from, and even conflicting with, other Islamic religious authorities. Therefore, as a rather esoteric confession in Lebanon, the Druze are not commonly referred to as Muslims but simply as "mohammadiyyin", followers of Mohammad.

are not geographically encapsulated; while certain confessions predominate numerically in various regions, much of the Lebanese population has been mingled in both urban and rural areas.<sup>10</sup>

Despite the fact that Lebanon's confessions have been governed by several power-sharing regimes based on confessional proportionality, Lebanon is the only member state in the United Nations that has not conducted a population census since 1931, in which year the Christian confessions were estimated to assume a slight majority.<sup>11</sup> However, there is wide agreement among scholars that Lebanon's demographic balance is no longer reflected in the current political reality. The most recent account of Lebanon's demography comes from Kliot (1986) who estimated that the proportion of the Muslim communities has increased markedly since the 1940s, reaching 61 per cent of the population in 1982 (62). Taking into account Lebanon's delicate demographic balance, it could be safely assumed that the findings of such a general census would be shocking enough to upset Lebanon's current power-sharing regime. Indeed, to this day, power-sharing regimes in Lebanon have been suffering markedly from social and political turbulence domestically.

Having said that, it should be noted that this internal turbulence has been at least partly the result of (competing) foreign colonial agendas and the economic, social and demographic effects of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Indeed, it is these changing but ever present external factors that have left their footprint in Lebanon's tumultuous existence. In order to understand the origins of the country's current consociational regime, it is important to study its relatively short but highly eventful history that has the country throughout the years. Towards this end, the following paragraph will discuss the history of Lebanon. In particular, the paragraph will focus on the need for confessional representation and the existence of power-sharing regimes since 1843.

## 2.2 Confessional Representation and Power-Sharing Regimes (1843-1989)

Lebanon as a polity begins with the Emirate of Mount Lebanon<sup>12</sup>, constituted as an autonomous region inside the Ottoman Empire in 1523 and governed by the *iqta`* system<sup>13</sup> that favoured Druze political supremacy. Within the emirate developed a number of distinguishing characteristics that would greatly impact on the structure and developments of Lebanon in modern times. Most notably, the early conversion to silk production for the market and international trade that attracted the urbanisation of a sizeable Maronite Christian peasantry from the Northern parts of Mount Lebanon to the Druze-controlled regions and the simultaneous territorial rivalries with the Shiite Muslims

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<sup>10</sup> See Appendix AIII for the estimated distribution of Lebanon's confessional communities in the 1980s.

<sup>11</sup> The 1932 census showed a slight Christian majority of 402,000 to 383,000 for the Muslims. The population distribution by confessions was as follows: 226,000 Maronites (28 per cent), 76,000 Greek Orthodox (10 per cent), 46,000 Greek Catholics (6 per cent), 53,500 other Christians (7 per cent), 176,000 Sunnis (22 per cent), 154,000 Shiites (20 per cent) and 53,000 Druze (7 per cent). The 1932 census is highly controversial as it is the last census to be organised in Lebanon and it was conducted by a foreign Western power that used professional statisticians despite its known favouritism toward Christians (Faour 2007: 911).

<sup>12</sup> For the purposes of understanding Lebanon's demographic transition throughout history, it is important to emphasize that Mount Lebanon did not constitute the same territory as contemporary Lebanon; it was not until France its declaration of Greater Lebanon that the contemporary borders were drafted.

<sup>13</sup> This was a system that allotted tax-farming rights in mountainous or desert areas to ethnic or tribal chiefs under the control of the Ottoman landowners. Appendix AI includes a Map of the Ottoman Empire.

bordering the Druze territory (Traboulsi 2007: 3). However, despite the ethnic-religious struggle between the traditional Druze leaders and the Christian majority over the identity of the region, it was not until the fall of the *iqta`* system, marking the end of the Emirate of Mount Lebanon in 1842, that a confessional system of political representation was institutionalised resulting from the negotiated consensus of Ottoman, British and French colonial powers.

Nevertheless, with the declaration of the *qa'im maqamiya*, a system that divided Mount Lebanon into two political and administrative units which were to be ruled by either a Druze or a Christian governor from 1841 to 1861, this situation proved to be paradoxical. The Christians, a majority in Mount Lebanon, were a minority in the context of the Ottoman Empire, while the Druze, having become a minority in what was called not so long ago the 'Druze Mountain', considered themselves part of an oppressed Arab majority. Consequentially, tensions between the Druze and the Christians exacerbated and resulted in renewed hostilities only two years into the consensus. A series of overlapping and complicated conflicts, heavily influenced by the competing colonial designs and interests of Great Britain and France, dominated the years that followed. Eventually, a compromise between the French-sponsored project for an independent Christian emirate and the British desire for complete submission of Mount Lebanon to the Ottoman Empire was reached with the implementation of the *mutasarrifiya*<sup>14</sup> in 1861. This system imposed a religious power-sharing formula, the *Règlement Organique*, on Lebanon that introduced the notion of a "pure communal actor" where it had never existed before (Kingston & Zahar 2000: 83). As Makdisi (2000) writes: "[w]hereas religion had once been an integral part of an elaborate non-sectarian order, it now constituted the basis and *raison d'être* for communal segregation (65). Indeed, the new system granted limited autonomy to Mount Lebanon and effectively divided its Administrative Council in seven Christian councillors (including three Maronites, two Greek Orthodox and two Greek Catholics) and five Muslims councillors (including two Druze, two Shiite and one Sunni) in 1864<sup>15</sup>.

By the time the *Règlement Organique* was set up, Mount Lebanon's demographic composition had shifted in favour of a Christian, more specifically Maronite, majority.<sup>16</sup> But it was mainly in the socio-economic fields that the gap was widening between the Druze and the Christians. In addition to the Christian majority of seven to five votes in the Administrative Council, Maronites were increasingly being anchored in the privileged confessionors of the economy: trade, services and sericulture. At the same time, the Druze were being marginalised and remained linked to agricultural and artisanal production. Nevertheless, resulting from the phenomenal economic growth generated by the silk

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<sup>14</sup> A system, led by Christian Ottoman administrators from 1861 to 1915, that united the two political and administrative units of the *qa'im maqamiya*, in addition to parts of the Hirmil district (eastern Biqa`) and the Mediterranean coast, excluding the coastal cities Beirut, Sidon, Tyre and Tripoli, into one territory. This territory consisted of seven *cazas*, or districts, governed according to the majority community in each. A Map depicting the design of this organisation is included in Appendix All.

<sup>15</sup> While commonly referred to as the first power-sharing agreement, the *Règlement Organique* granted the Administrative Council mainly *consultative* powers, real administrative power remained in the hands of the Christian Ottoman governor.

<sup>16</sup> Depicted below are the population statistics for the *mutasarrifiya* in 1865 and 1895 (Spagnolo 1977: 24).

<u>Confession</u>	<u>1865</u>	<u>1895</u>	<u>Confession</u>	<u>1865</u>	<u>1895</u>
Maronites	171,800	229,680	Shiites	9,820	16,846
Greek Orthodox	29,326	54,208	Sunnis	7,611	13,576
Druze	28,560	49,812	Total	266,487	398,594
Catholics	19,370	34,472			

economy, the remittances of high proportions of Lebanese migrants residing overseas and the relatively weak intervention by the European powers in the affairs of Mount Lebanon, the accord succeeded in bringing more than half a century of communal peace to Lebanon (Traboulsi 2007: 41).

On the eve of World War I, Mount Lebanon witnessed a fall in the revenues of the silk confessor and a decline in the taxable population that increased the budget deficit and induced the Administrative Council to express their desire for more autonomy from Ottoman rule. However, upon entering the war on the side of Germany, the Ottoman Empire annulled the special status granted to Mount Lebanon and reincorporated it into the Ottoman Empire by appointing an Ottoman Turk as governor, redistributing the control of trade, income revenues, wheat and livestock back to Ottoman authorities. At the end of the war, Lebanon's fate was again left in the balance as it awaited the power struggles between the Arab and Christian leaders in the region and the colonial powers. In the interest of dividing and controlling Syria, France acquired a mandate over the two countries in 1919 and officially declared the creation of a Greater Lebanon one year later, extending Mount Lebanon to include the coastal cities of Beirut, Sidon, Tyre and Tripoli as well as four additional ex-Ottoman districts. Almost all of Greater Lebanon's Muslim population rejected the mandate, opting instead for an independent Arab state and, short of that, annexation to Syria (Traboulsi 2007: 80). Even Lebanon's Christian population, initially welcoming the creation of a Christian state, soon realised that French domination was more than they had bargained for.

Following a period of rising communal tensions between a highly privileged Christian elite and a deprived Muslim majority, a series of reforms were proposed by a French provisional governor to appease the Muslim population<sup>17</sup>. However, with the adoption of a new constitution that transformed Greater Lebanon into the Republic of Lebanon in 1926, the proposed reforms were rejected and, instead, this second power-sharing resolution enshrined confessionalism throughout all levels of governance. Significantly, article 95 provided for the fair distribution of government and administrative posts, but not of parliamentary seats, among the various confessions (Traboulsi 2007: 90). Despite various events and crises increasing confessional and political tensions in the years that followed, a multi-confessional alliance aspiring independence ascended to the foreground in 1936.

During several rounds of negotiations in Paris, the Christian 'protectionists', afraid of annexation by Syria upon independence, requested French guarantees *vis-à-vis* Syria and the Lebanese Muslims, while the Muslim 'unionists', fearing the country's independence would legitimise Christian dominance, requested French guarantees *vis-à-vis* the Christians. The treaty of 'Friendship and Alliance between France and Lebanon', signed on 13 November 1936, constituted recognition of Lebanon as an independent state but with strong ties to France.<sup>18</sup> Based on a 1932 census, the political supremacy of the Maronites as the largest numerical minority in Lebanon was ensured. But as a result of France's weakened position resulting from the German invasion of 1940, a joined Christian and Muslim uprising in Lebanon succeeded in the definite termination of the French mandate and the declaration of Lebanon as an independent state in 1943.

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<sup>17</sup> These proposed reforms included: the reshuffling of the Administrative Commission to include more Muslims, the unification of the fiscal system to reduce inequalities in imposition, the opening of administrative posts to Muslims, the initialisation of a secular public education system and the secularisation of the electoral system. However, most of these reforms were rejected under pressure from the Maronite church.

<sup>18</sup> In short, these 'ties' referred to the presence of a French military in exchange for control over Lebanese capital.

Lebanon's independent republic took off with two founding documents: a formal constitution known as the National Pact, the third power-sharing accord in Lebanon, and an informal understanding between the country's major confessional leaders concerning the confessional reservation of certain jobs and political positions to support the new constitution. In essence, the National Pact was a negotiated power-sharing agreement between the newly elected Maronite president and Sunni Prime Minister. Importantly, the constitution itself, which is still intact today, contains a fundamental dichotomy. It establishes the judicial, civic and political equality of all Lebanese as *muwatinin*, citizens, inasmuch as it institutionalises their judicial and political inequality as *ahlin*, subjects, belonging to a hierarchy of religious communities with unequal access to political power and public office<sup>19</sup>. The National Pact barely concealed Maronite political primacy, represented by the exceptional powers that the constitution bestowed on the president of the republic, now firmly established by tradition as a Maronite. As uncontested head of the executive, the president had the power to name ministers and choose a prime minister among them and held a right to dismiss the members of his cabinet, individually or collectively. Moreover, the president had the power to initialise legislation and veto legislation passed in parliament. Although himself elected by parliament, the president could also dissolve the legislature and call for new elections. According to article 60, the president was unaccountable for "his actions during office".

Admittedly, the National Pact did act to supplement and correct some of the essential questions unaddressed by the 1926 constitution concerning the country's identity, its international relations and the incorporation of Muslim communities in the power structure. It did so by introducing three important principles. First, the pact confirmed the power-sharing formula among the confessions already established in article 95 of the 1926 constitution, the 6:5 ratio in political and administrative representation, and added to this the confessional reservation of the three major posts of government: a Maronite president, a Shiite speaker of parliament and a Sunni prime minister. Second, the pact defined Lebanon as a "country with an Arab profile that assimilates all that is beneficial and useful in Western civilisation". In other words, the "Arab profile" was an attempt to replace the Muslim demand for unity with Syria whereas the reference to 'cultural links' with the West were intended to replace the Christian demand for Western protection in general. Finally, confessional quotas in the administration enhanced Muslim access to public service at the expense of traditional Christian primacy. Hence, the National Pact is best seen as a confirmation of political guarantees for the Christians in exchange for the recognition of political promises to the Muslims. During the first years of independence, however, Muslim dissatisfaction over the dominant position of the Christians and the unequal distribution of institutional power and resources flared up anew.

These matters were made even worse as a result of the Palestinian *Nakba*<sup>20</sup>, the creation of the state Israel and Israeli expansionist designs. Economically speaking, Lebanon benefitted substantially from

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<sup>19</sup> Although the (1943) constitution does not openly provide for a state religion, article 9 introduces religion into political and civil life as "absolute". It maintains the following: "The state, in performing its obligations of reverence to God almighty, respects all religions and all confessions and guarantees *takfal* [the freedom of practice of religious rites] under its protection, provided that this does not disturb the public order, and it [the state] also insures *tadmenn* [the respect of the system of personal status and religious interests] for all the subjects in their diverse confessions.

<sup>20</sup> *Nakba* refers to the Palestinian exodus from traditional Palestine in 1948. As a result of the Arab-Israeli war, around 750,000 Arabs were forced to seek refuge in neighbouring countries, including some 120,000 that had fled from the Galilee (North Palestine) to Lebanon.

the Arab economic boycott of Israel; Beirut developed rapidly as a centre for international communications between Europe, Asia and some parts of Africa. However, in terms of social and political stability, Lebanon was facing a heightened set of tensions. The country's prosperity aggravated class-based and regional disparities as most of the profits were absorbed by the commercial and financial confessionors of the economy and concentrated in the province of Mount Lebanon. Moreover, in light of the rising tensions resulting from complex politics, social unrest and competitions between different confessional ideologies, the new Lebanese president pushed his exercise of power to the limits of authoritarianism by relying heavily on the textual interpretation of the constitution at the expense of the spirit of the National Pact (Traboulsi 2007: 129). Not only did the president's anti-Arab and pro-West policies alienate Lebanese Muslims, it also divided the Christian ranks. But while this and the continued presence of Palestinians in the country continued to disturb the precarious demographic balance in Lebanon, major armed insurrections stayed out.

In June 1967, after a short period of relative stability that had earned the country the status of most stable democracy in the Arab world, Lebanon was plunged into the Arab-Israeli conflict it had sought to evade for so long. The physical incarnation of that involvement was the entry of Palestinian commandos to its territory and their accelerated implantation in the south, where they launched their raids against the Jewish state and triggered a policy of Israeli military retaliations. Moreover, all segments of the Lebanese population were increasingly in motion to contest the established order, resist the economic crisis and confront the policies of the commercial oligarchy that had gravely amplified the costs of living, expressing in one way or another a deep desire for political, economic and social change (Traboulsi 2007: 131). Ultimately, in 1975, an incident that involved the killing of a group of Palestinians on their way to a refugee camp triggered a severe civil war that effectively split the country in a set of military cantons along confessional lines. During this period, confessional groups strengthened sole authority over their constituents by providing physical protection and, in varying degrees, institutions accessible only by the members of their respective confession.

### 2.3 The Implementation of the Ta'if and Doha Accords (1989-2009)

Unlike several previous proposals aimed at ending the war, the Ta'if Accord had been drafted and approved by the bulk of the (surviving) Lebanese legislators of the 1972 parliament on 22 October 1989. Sixty-two ministers, half of them Muslim, the other half Christian, had been involved in the process, providing Ta'if with a unique political legitimacy. Ta'if meant the formal end of a sixteen-year long civil war in Lebanon and set the country on a path to peace and reconstruction. In essence, the accord restores the confessional political order of the National Pact, albeit with salutary alterations in the power-sharing formula. The most important provisions pertain to the reallocation of parliamentary seats<sup>21</sup> and a commitment to comprehensive deconfessionalisation.

With the inauguration of the Ta'if Accord, all of Lebanon's religious communities were now guaranteed representation in the Lebanese Assembly and the previous 6/5 ratio between Christians and Muslims in the distribution of parliamentary seats and cabinet portfolios was replaced with a 5/5 ratio. Moreover, the total amount of parliamentary seats was increased to 128. While re-

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<sup>21</sup> See Annex AIV for an image of the total seat allocation for the Parliamentary Elections after Ta'if (1989).

institutionalising the confessional distribution of power over the offices of president, prime minister and the speaker of parliament, allocated to a Maronite Christian, a Sunni Muslim and a Shiite Muslim respectively, the prerogatives of the president of the republic were severely curtailed in favour of the prime minister, the cabinet, the parliament and its speaker<sup>22, 23</sup>.

More importantly, the Ta'if Accord envisioned the end of political confessionalism as “a fundamental national objective” in two periods. The Second Republic, to which it had given birth, was conceived as an interim republic that would lead to the inauguration of a Third Republic by the election of a non-confessional parliament. Towards this end, article 95 of the constitution was modified to commit the first elected parliament to create a special council.<sup>24</sup> For now, confessions would be represented in a Senate similar to that of the 1926 constitution which would have the decisive vote on issues of national concern. Moreover, there would be an abolishment of the confessional 50/50 quota in public jobs, the judiciary, the military, security, public and joint institutions and independent agencies, with the exception of so-called “Degree One posts”, the general directors of ministries. Such jobs are to be subject to parity and rotation, meaning they are to be shared equally by Christians and Muslims but none can be reserved to a fixed confession. An additional priority would be the abolishment of entries specifying confession and denomination on the identity card.

Other provisions included a new compromise on the country's identity and its relation to Syria. First, it defined Lebanon as “Arab in its belonging” and the “final homeland for the Lebanese”. On the one hand, Lebanon's Arab identity had been upgraded from an “Arab character” in the National Pact to an “Arab belonging” in the Ta'if Accord, meeting the demands of the Muslim majority. On the other hand, it also specified that the country would never enter in any union with Syria, a major demand by Christians since the formulation of the National Pact in 1943. Therefore, the accord established a “special relation” with Syria to ensure the security of both countries, one that would be institutionalised with the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation in May 1991. By design, the Ta'if Accord stipulated that Syrian forces would assist the forces of the legitimate Lebanese government in spreading the authority of the state of Lebanon within a set period of no more than two years starting from the ratification date of the national accord charter. One of the security forces' major tasks would be to disarm all national and non-national militias in Lebanon with the sole exception of Hezbollah, which was allowed to remain armed in recognition of its national character as a resistance

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<sup>22</sup> Although he remains head of state, symbol of the country's unity and guardian of the constitution, the president practically lost most of his executive powers in 1989. Compared to the previous situation in which he would preside over cabinet meetings and the cabinet could not issue decrees in his absence, the president could now attend cabinet meetings but enjoyed no right to vote. Moreover, the prime minister, previously appointed by the president of the republic, would henceforth be designated by ‘obligatory consultations’ that the president carries out with the members of parliament and, according to a modification of article 53, he is bound by the decision of the majority. Furthermore, a modification of article 54 stipulates that the decrees the president previously signed with the minister concerned required henceforth the additional signature of the prime minister and finally, based on a modification of article 55, the right to dissolve parliament was passed from the president to the cabinet (Ta'if Accord, 1989).

<sup>23</sup> Annex B depicts the current political system in Lebanon as inaugurated in 1989.

<sup>24</sup> An included procedure stipulates that the Chamber of Deputies, elected on the basis of equal sharing by Christians and Muslims, shall adopt the proper measures to form a national council that will be headed by the president of the republic and that will include, in addition to the prime minister and the Chamber of Deputies speaker, political, intellectual, and social notables. The council's task include examining and proposing the means capable of abolishing confessionalism, presenting them to the Chamber of Deputies and the cabinet and observing the implementation of the phased plan (Ta'if Accord, 1989). No time limit is specified.

movement against the occupation of Israel in the south. It should be noted here that, following the Memorandum of Understanding between Lebanon's surviving pre-war politicians, the disarmament of militia leaders in Lebanon happened in exchange for amnesty from all wartime atrocities. Rather than embarking on a process of national reconciliation, therefore, the country's political elite relied on foreign occupation to settle matters of conflict.<sup>25</sup> This not only prevented the establishment of an inherently accountable government but also provided many of the pre-war politicians with the opportunity to reinforce the influence of their confessions by re-claiming their pre-war positions and reiterating confessional differences in the political arena.

Despite these provisions, the nature of the Lebanese political system largely stayed intact and so did its pre-war political instability. No more than two years into the Ta'if Accord, Syria refused to withdraw or redeploy its 40,000 troops on the grounds that not all the political reforms had been achieved, notably the deconfessionalisation of the political system. Moreover, it justified its military presence and intelligence in Lebanon by framing it as a counter-force against Israeli aggression. But Syria did not only interfere militarily in the country, it also interfered in Lebanon's political affairs, playing out different political parties against each other and pressuring the Lebanese government into maintaining a pro-Syrian policy, creating widespread domestic resentment to Syria's physical occupation.<sup>26</sup> With the assassination of ex-Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri in 2005, this growing political crisis erupted and led to a near-total political paralysis of the regime.

In March 8, 2005, an alliance of Shiite parties Hezbollah and Amal, as well as the multi-confessional Syrian Social Nationalist Party and several smaller parties including Christians, Druze and non-confessional members took to the streets of Beirut to openly oppose American and Israeli interventions and praise Syria's presence and assistance during the years of reconstruction, an act that outraged a considerable part of the Lebanese population. On March 14, 2005, more than a million protesters responded to the pro-Syria demonstration by openly accusing Syria of the assassination and demanding the resignation of the pro-Syria government and the immediate end to Syria's military presence and political interference in Lebanon. This demonstration, which would later be dubbed the 'Cedar Revolution', resulted in the government's resignation and Syria's long-due retreat of Lebanon. Then, mainly Christian and Sunni Muslim politicians united in what came to be known as March 14, a coalition of pro-West and anti-Syria political parties in Lebanon. Equally, this forced Hezbollah, Amal and several smaller pro-Syria parties to join forces in a counter-coalition labelled March 8<sup>27</sup>. On May 29, 2005, a quadripartite electoral alliance was formed between the better part of March 14 and March 8, excluding the main Christian political party, the Free Patriotic Movement, which was then still considered part of March 14.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Author's interview with Samir Makdisi, Professor in Financial Economics at the American University of Beirut, on 20 April 2010 and Muhammad Sammek, Secretary General of the National Committee for the Dialogue between Muslims and Christians, on 15 May 2010.

<sup>26</sup> Author's interview with Zeina Helou, Program Director of the *Lebanese Center for Policy Studies*, on 30 March 2010.

<sup>27</sup> While there has been a definite political divide between a March 14 and a March 8, this has not prevented parties from shifting alliances and strategies. Most notably, some parties that supported the anti-Syria protests in 2005 have at times joined the March 8-alliance and sought improved relations with Syria in 2009.

<sup>28</sup> Author's Interview with Jade Said, Program Manager at the *Arab NGO Network for Development*, on 20 June 2010.

During their pro-Syria demonstration, March 8 claimed that *Mossad*<sup>29</sup> was responsible for executing the assassination of the Prime Minister in an attempt to severely destabilise the country, an argument that would also serve to re-establish Hezbollah's position as a movement of national resistance in Lebanon after the loss of its initial *raison d'être* in 2000. This became particularly evident when a violent conflict erupted between Hezbollah and Israel in 2006, resulting in a 33-day siege by Israeli forces on Lebanon that would have devastating effects on Lebanon's economy and social stability. However, as the resistance movement received much grass-root support for its efforts to fend off the Israeli aggressor during the 2006 war, Sunni-Shiite tensions heightened nevertheless. The Israeli invasion and Hezbollah's powerful counter-offensive rekindled the parliamentary majority's fears that Hezbollah's military arsenal would one day be used to strengthen Shiite influence across Lebanon. Consequentially, despite initial support, the Lebanese government began to severely press for Hezbollah's disarmament shortly after the war had ended, claiming that Hezbollah's role in reinforcing hostilities in the region had to be put to a definite end.

In 2008, the Lebanese government took an actual and highly effective aim at Hezbollah's military apparatus by reassigning the head of security at Beirut's airport, directly affecting the movement's control over a strategic trafficking location. In response to the second governmental decision to investigate Hezbollah's independent telephone network, Hezbollah decided to intimidate the Lebanese government by teaming up with Shiite militias and the Syrian Social Nationalist Party in forcing the government's surrender through a military showdown in Beirut. A day later, Hezbollah took over several, Sunni-dominated, neighbourhoods in West Beirut. The March 14 coalition, now increasingly alarmed at Hezbollah's superior military strength and ability to trigger a devastating confrontation, heavily protested. Politically, Hezbollah was denounced by the government as a non-national, Shiite-movement that had been advancing an Iranian or Syrian agenda instead of a Lebanese one. Based on the Arab Council's initiative regarding containment of the Lebanese crisis, an agreement was concluded among the Lebanese parties in Beirut on May 21 in Doha, Qatar.

The Doha Agreement served to reconstitute authority to the Lebanese state by inaugurating a government of National Unity, allowing the Hezbollah-led opposition to amount to a veto in the future cabinet. In preparation for the upcoming 2009 parliamentary elections, moreover, the government of National Unity required the election of a new president and the adoption of a new electoral law that would redistribute the country's parliamentary seats by dividing the country into smaller electoral districts<sup>30</sup>. However, after the elections, which were effectively won by March 14, it took no less than five months to form an actual cabinet. Since then, while re-established as a corporate whole, the Lebanese government has done very little to implement constitutional reforms.

In conclusion, Lebanon has had a lengthy history of confessional representation and power-sharing arrangements. Despite a gradual move towards confessional equity, these power-sharing regimes were inherently premised upon unbalanced relations between the country's main confessional groups. As the Druze and later the Maronite Christians were the preferred power-holders under the Ottoman Empire and French occupation, a growing Muslim population became consistently marginalised. In 1989, nearing the end of a devastating civil war that had lasted for sixteen years, an agreement was reached between former Christian and Muslim parliamentarians to share formal

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<sup>29</sup> This is the Israeli *Institute for Intelligence and Special Operations*.

<sup>30</sup> See Annex C for the sectarian seat allocation since the Doha Agreement in 2008.

power on the basis of a 50-50 proportionality ratio and the confessional reservation of certain high-profile jobs. However, in the years that followed, a country-wide political crisis began to develop anew and erupted quite suddenly in 2005 when Lebanon's Minister President Rafiq Hariri was assassinated and again in 2008 when government and opposition militias violently clashed. Since the conclusion of the Doha Accord shortly after that, reorganising the political system and restoring the government's sovereignty, a sense of calm returned to Lebanon. This was not without a price as Hezbollah was now granted a right to veto major government decisions.

The next chapter will scrutinise the consociational framework that was established with the Ta'if Accord in 1989 and enforced by the Doha Agreement in 2008. In particular, it will look at the implications of the Ta'if Accord for the society and the power-sharing regime.

### 3. Implications of Lebanon's Post-War Consociational Project

Prior to Ta'if its inauguration in Lebanon, Lebanon's political elite expressed a joint interest in creating a better government by assuming centralised decision-making power, cooperating collectively on issues of national concern and working towards improving the development of the state as a whole by implementing some major reforms, including the deconfessionalisation of the political system. Admittedly, Ta'if had much to recommend it; it succeeded in restoring Lebanon's constitution and parliament and initiated a period of regularly held elections<sup>31</sup>. The formal agreement that facilitated the return of the Lebanese state, however, also meant the introduction of a highly complicated political system. Due to its complexity and the reaffirmation of political confessionalism in Lebanon, it enforced an already strong society rather than Lebanon's weak state.

In the first paragraph, it is discussed how, due to the institutional inadequacies of a political system based on the distribution of power along confessional lines, the Lebanese government has become proportionally unrepresentative<sup>32</sup>. The technicalities of the electoral system and the persisting structure of patronage<sup>33</sup> have effectively restrained the legitimacy of the state. Following from this, it is argued in the second paragraph that Lebanon's confessions have used their primacy in order to preserve and pursue the interests of the confession rather than those of the state as a cohesive entity. In the final paragraph, it is discussed how, consequentially, the continued primacy of confessional groups in Lebanon's post war consociational democracy have derived the government from its decision-making power and prevent it from implementing meaningful reforms.

#### 3.1 A Weak Political System

The Ta'if Accord set out to restore national unity by introducing a set of consociational power-sharing institutions based on the delegation of the state's decision-making power over its confessional components. But while the ability of power-sharing institutions to guarantee political power among groups is initially a critical factor for stabilising the peace, long-term stability depends on improved groups transaction and conflict management on the basis of elite interactions at the political centre (Hartzell & Hoddie 2003: 320). Paradoxically, rather than facilitating elite interactions, Lebanon's consociational democracy has developed into a highly competitive political system. This can be argued to be partly the result of at least four institutional inadequacies.

First and foremost, Lebanon's consociational democracy has failed to create sufficient incentives for genuine inter-confessional cooperation in its political system. In an attempt to encourage cooperation between different confessional constituencies, the Ta'if Accord called for an electoral law in which the parliament's 128 seats were to be distributed along a total of five *mohafaza* or

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<sup>31</sup> Parliamentary elections have been held on five subsequent occasions in 1992, 1996, 2000, 2005 and 2009, including the parliamentary election of a new president in 1998 and with increasing degrees of legitimacy. These have been supplemented by three municipal elections in 1998, 2004 and 2010.

<sup>32</sup> The term "(proportionally) unrepresentative" refers here to the absence of confessional proportionality. Since 1989, not one of the country's politicians has been supported by a majority within their electorate or confession, nor by the national electorate as a whole (this point is elaborated upon in paragraph 3.1).

<sup>33</sup> "Patronage" is best defined here as the support, privilege, or financial aid that an organisation or individual bestows to another because of religious, social or familiar bonds.

electoral regions, rather than the much smaller *caza's* of which there were 26. Each of these electoral districts holds a number of confessionally reserved seats according to the assumed demography of each particular district. In theory, this unique political system is argued to give politicians a strong incentive to cooperate across group lines, for they cannot be elected on the votes of their own group alone (Horowitz 2003: 118). Admittedly, candidates stemming from different confessions are forced to form a single block representing all the designated electoral seats for that district. In order for confessional leaders to go to parliament, therefore, the Lebanese electoral system requires each electoral district to establish an electoral list on which the candidates proportionally represent the confessions present in that district. However, as few voters cross group lines when casting their vote in practice (Bieber & Keil 2009; Reilly 2001), cross-confessional alliances formed during election-time are often a façade; they are formed above all on a mutually-shared interest in going to parliament and therefore dissolve shortly after the election outcome.

This holds true even when politicians reiterate hostile sentiments toward other groups prior to the elections. In fact, in times of social and political crisis, politicians benefit politically from exploiting hostile sentiments towards others (Horowitz 2008: 1229). It is sometimes said that, as long as there will be mutually-shared fears that confessional loss will result in the political exclusion of confessional interests, the country's political elite will be unable to cooperate.<sup>34</sup> This seems to be confirmed by several recent opinion polls by *Information International*, showing that Lebanese voters have generally little confidence in Lebanon's electoral system and the electorate (Information International 2008; *ibid.* 2009; *ibid.* 2010).

Secondly, Lebanon's political system is essentially a system of 'first past the post', meaning the successful candidate is the one that gathers most votes compared to his confessional constituents (Salam 2004: 2). As Lebanon's electoral system allocates a fixed amount of seats to each confession, the votes acquired by all other candidates within that confession are lost by definition. Take, for example, a certain electoral district of 150,000 electorates<sup>35</sup> in which Maronites, Druze and Shiite are each allocated one seat in parliament. Now imagine that, the distribution of the votes is as follows: 40,000 for Shiite candidate one, 30,000 for Shiite candidate two, 20,000 for Shiite candidate three, 25,000 for Druze candidate one, 5,000 for Druze candidate two, 10,000 for Maronite candidate one, 5,000 for Maronite candidate two and 2,000 for Maronite candidate three (13,000 people abstain from voting). Despite the fact that a majority of this district exerts a clear preference for Shiite representation, notably 90,000 voters out of 150,000 electorates, the second- and third-placed Shiite candidates in this electoral district will not be able to go to parliament. Against the background of a changing (or wrongfully estimated) demographic reality, the rigidity of the fixed allocation of confessional seats diminishes the proportional representativeness of Lebanon's political system.

In fact, proportional representativeness is severely affected in legislative and even municipal elections as voters are automatically registered, not where they reside or where they were born but, where their family is registered. Strangely, married women vote where their husbands are registered. As a result, while people may live in and around a certain electoral district, a considerable

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<sup>34</sup> Author's interviews with Theodore Abi-Mansour, Journalist for the news website *Beirut Online*, on 8 April 2010.

<sup>35</sup> Electorates in this case are people who are entitled to vote. In Lebanon, one must be 21 years of age or older and holding Lebanese citizenship (excluding refugees).

part will be forced to elect complete strangers that would not affect their lives politically. Admittedly, it is possible to "move one's registration" in theory, but practice appears to indicate that this is a highly complicated and costly proposition, becoming particularly problematic as many political factions ardently oppose bigger circumscriptions. Indeed, even those who consider the alternative in their rhetoric are actively engaged in gerrymandering<sup>36</sup>, a recurrent issue in every election<sup>37</sup>.

Thirdly, as Lebanon's political system allows for a multitude of electoral lists, whether or not a candidate will be able to obtain a parliamentary seat depends, not on how much he is supported within his own confession, but even more so on the popularity of the electoral list in which he takes part<sup>38</sup>. Ideally, all number one candidates go to parliament together so that each electoral district would at least be represented by the most supported candidates of each confession. In the scenario described earlier, this would mean the representation of almost half of the electorate of that district, 75,000 voters out of 150,000 electorates. However, as Lebanon's electoral system allows for the establishment of multiple electoral lists, it enables candidates that enjoy little electoral support within their confession to win solely based on the electoral support of those candidates he joins. This means that in yet the same scenario, the third-placed Maronite, represented only by 2,000 voters, is nevertheless able to win from his confessional colleagues should he forge an alliance with the first candidates of the Shiite and Druze confessions. With the rising number of candidates (and lists) within electoral districts, the percentage of votes required to elect a deputy is limited, sometimes producing electoral blocks represented by as low as 30 per cent of the electorate (Salam 2004: 11).

Finally, Lebanon's political system has reinforced the notion that voters are represented by their confessional membership and has enforced people to vote along confessional lines, not based on their rights and interests as a Lebanese citizen.<sup>39</sup> Put concretely, voting-behaviour in Lebanon is more likely to be determined by ascribed confessional membership and the social structure of small-scale privileges and distinctions produced by patronage (Kingston & Zahar 2000: 83). More often than not, local confessional leaders or patrons are either running for a seat in parliament themselves or are closely associated to a candidate that is. Their electoral support is determined, not so much by their political program but by a guaranteed confessional vote and the patron's success in providing basic services such as employment, housing and social (and physical) security in exchange for votes (Kingston 2001: 56). In addition, as the electoral rules strengthen confessional identification, they make it hard for non-confessional or 'civic' parties to perform well in the political system (Bieber & Keil 2009: 348). Candidates that claim non-confessional programs usually suffer from this system as they are principally denied a parliamentary seat and often lose ground to the primacy of the

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<sup>36</sup> Gerrymandering is a form of boundary delimitation (redistricting) in which an electoral district or constituency boundaries are deliberately modified, thereby producing a contorted or unusual shape. It may be used to achieve desired electoral results for a particular party or to help or hinder a particular group of constituents, in this case one or several of the country's confessions.

<sup>37</sup> Author's interview with Jade Said, Program Director at the *Arab NGO Network for Development*, on 12 August 2010.

<sup>38</sup> It should be noted here that Lebanon's electorates are not obliged to vote on their own confessions. But while cross-confessional voting is technically possible, it is very rare due to the primacy of confessions as discussed in paragraph 3.2.

<sup>39</sup> Author's Interview with Ziad Abdel-Samad, Executive Director of the *Arab NGO Network for Development* and Secretary General of the *Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections*, on 26 April 2010, Hilal Khashan, Senior Professor in Political Sciences at the American University of Beirut, 26 April 2010 and George Sabra, Decan of the Near Eastern School of Theology, on 5 April 2010.

confessions. Even if a candidate were to sway the population with a non-confessional political program, the electoral support he would acquire would simply be translated to the confession he is associated with. In other words, the electoral system has been central in reaffirming the legitimacy of national political parties that exclusively represent only one community.

In sum, Lebanon's political system, based as it is on the distribution of power along confessional lines, contains four institutional inadequacies. Rather than producing cross-confessional, political cooperation, Lebanon's political system has allowed for the country's confessional leaders to compete within and between each confession for a fraction of the total number of votes. Moreover, while cross-sectarian alliances are forged, they are often dissolved shortly after the election outcome. In particular, the fixed allocation of seats and a changing demographic reality have negatively impacted upon the representativeness each district's candidates. Also, the presence of multiple electoral lists and a high number of electoral candidates has produced electoral lists that are often supported by less than half of each district's electorate. But perhaps most importantly, Lebanon's political system has reinforced the notion that the Lebanese people are represented by a certain confession rather than their citizenship to the state. As voting behaviour is mostly determined by birth and patronage, there is little relationship between voting on the ground and the national electoral outcome of these votes. As will be explained in the following paragraph, the country's consociational democracy has not only produced an unrepresentative and insufficiently legitimate political system but also reinforced the primacy of confessions.

### 3.2 The Primacy of Confessions

Ironically, despite the political marginalisation of clerical leaders like the Maronite Patriarch, the Sunni Grand Mufti and the President of the Higher Shiite Council since the end of the civil war, the mythology of confessionalism has persisted and probably grown stronger (Hudson 1999; Kingston 2000; Makdisi 2000). However, the resilience of Lebanon's confessional groups has little to do with religion. In countries marked by the absence of a strong state, people are left to choose among the state entities and social organisations based on which would offer the most attractive package of benefits with the fewest sanctions (Early 2006: 118). During sixteen years of civil war, the people from Lebanon have had to depend on their confessions for social and physical protection and relied on these confessions as the sole avenue through which to articulate their interests, a practice that has changed little in the post-war era (Kingston 2000: 88). Whereas the country's individual confessions have succeeded in developing community-wide institutions, covering education and social welfare services, Lebanon's political elite has done precious little in the area of unemployment compensation and social security over the past twenty years.<sup>40</sup>

In addition, a general lack of confidence in the reconstituted institutions of the government (Hudson 1999: 33) and the subsequent outbreak of a political crisis in 2005 have resulted in a heightened concern about confessional status and security among the country's major confessions. As Kaplan (2008) accurately observes, the weakness of the state makes each identity group fall back upon its

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<sup>40</sup> Author's interview with Samir Makdisi, Professor in Financial Economics at the American University of Beirut, on 20 April 2010.

traditional loyalties because such loyalties are the only form of protection and support available. In result, short-term opportunism prevails at the expense of long-term investments that could advance development (70-3). Furthermore, part of the strength of confessional groups derives from unaddressed memories of the war. Barak argues that state-society relations have suffered from the government's policy not to remember the war (Barak 2007). Hence, the widely shared belief that one's interests are best preserved by the confessional group has contributed greatly to the importance of confessional belonging and a depletion of the state's legitimacy.

But the problem of Lebanon's consociational democracy today is not necessarily the presence of multiple confessions. Indeed, Migdal (2001) defines the state as a "field of power marked by the use and threat of violence and shaped by (1) the image of a coherent, controlling organisation in a territory, which is a representation of people bounded by that territory, and (2) the actual practices of its multiple parts" (15-6). This definition of the state takes into consideration the fact that the state is not really a unitary actor but is composed of numerous parts that function to varying degrees of effectiveness. Rather, the problem of Lebanon's consociational democracy is that it has been designed to delegate much of the state's power to impose its set of rules on the populace to already strong confessions in society engaged in a similar pursuit.

Put concretely, the institutionalisation of segmental autonomy has allowed for the preservation of the power of confession groups and their relationship to the state. In theory, segmental autonomy holds that all decisions not pertaining to matters of common interest should fall within the jurisdiction of a society's individual communities. In Lebanon, this has been translated to a high level of confessional autonomy. Each of the country's eighteen recognised confessions enjoys the right to handle its *waqf*, a religious endowment pertaining to personal status and family law<sup>41</sup>, according to their own courts and traditions.<sup>42</sup> There is an absurdity to be found in the Lebanese constitution and the Ta'if Agreement here. While the Lebanese constitution and country's judicial system are officially secular, most of the regulations that directly affect people's personal lives, formally involving marriage settlements and housing and informally also including services and opportunities provided by the state but channelled by confessional leaders<sup>43</sup>, are attainable only through religious institutions.<sup>44</sup> In effect, confessions have become the necessary intermediaries between state and citizens, with civil liberties being guaranteed to communities rather than individuals (Dagher 2000: 172). Therefore, as each Lebanese citizen is institutionally forced to belong to a confession<sup>45</sup>, the country's confessional system has become intrinsically connected to the state, its institutions and the very existence of the Lebanese citizen itself.

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<sup>41</sup> Personal status and Family law constitutes an area of the law that deals with family-related issues and domestic relations, including: marriage, unions, partnerships, divorce, annulment, inheritance and property settlements, alimony, parental responsibility orders, spousal abuse, legitimacy, adoption, surrogacy, child abuse and child abduction.

<sup>42</sup> Author's interview with Paul Matar, Archbishop of the Maronite Church of Mount Lebanon, on 22 March 2010.

<sup>43</sup> In this case, the confessional leaders intercede to allow their constituents to benefit from them. For instance, a person applying for a public sector job will need their political patron's interference to get it. And the same applies to a business person applying for subsidies or even a licence.

<sup>44</sup> Author's interview with Jade Said, Program Director at the *Arab NGO Network for Development*, on 12 August 2010.

<sup>45</sup> Author's interview with Paul Matar, Archbishop of the Maronite Church of Mount Lebanon, on 22 March 2010.

On the one hand, this re-institutionalisation of confessionalism has been detrimental to the prospects of democratic governance from the very beginning. As political activity in Lebanon's political system has been principally premised upon preserving the interests of the confessions, power-sharing in Lebanon is necessarily constructed as an alternative to competitive elections (Spears 2000: 108). Moreover, aside from the 'natural' difficulties in reaching agreement on the very rules and boundaries of the Lebanese polity, it has been common practice for individual *zu'ama*, or confessional leaders, to exacerbate conflicts for political ends (Kingston 2001: 57). This is particularly evident in times of regional tension and communitarian fervour when Lebanon's various confessional leaders have acted to restrict the degree to which Lebanese state penetrates and directly regulates Lebanese society in the name of the confessions' survival.<sup>46</sup> Importantly, this also illustrates that grand coalitions alone cannot accommodate minority claims for recognition and protection (Bieber & Keil 2009: 351) as confessions in Lebanon have well been able to maintain their legitimacy.

By framing their political conduct as necessary to guarantee the access and rights of confessions to state power and resources, Lebanon's political elite has often laid claim on electoral and financial backing from their confessional support base (Kingston 2001: 58). In this respect, the religious clergy is said to work in close coordination with confessional political leaders as they can gather the revenues needed by reference to their religious status. A good example of this is the clergy's abuse of their autonomy in divorce settlements. According to some, religious leaders have exploited people by pilfering thousands of dollars before granting an annulment or divorce<sup>47</sup>, in addition to using state resources to repress challenges to their dominance at the local level (Kingston 2001; Peters 2006). Whether this is factually true or not does not necessarily matter for the validity of the argument that guaranteed electoral support facilitates the engagement in disputes in the name of a particular confession, which cries for protection against all other confessions, and allows each confession to continue to intervene in the personal lives of their constituents.

On the other hand, the institutionalisation of segmental autonomy has had particularly adverse effects on the country's strong and 'pillarised' society. Admittedly, the institutionalisation of segmental autonomy has been quite successful as a mediating principle, allowing the various factional interests in Lebanon to coexist within some kind of unified, albeit loose and unstable national framework. However, the decentralisation efforts in Lebanon's post-war context have also led to further confessional isolation. In addition to the aforementioned confessional control over religious law and state resources, confessional leaders determine other issues for their constituents, such as what newspaper to read, which radio channels to listen to, what university to attend, what swimming pools to go to and which TV-channels to watch<sup>48</sup>. This isolation process based on confessional membership has attenuated the influence of civil society and independent media, contributing once more to the influence of confession and patriarchy.

Religious leaders are influential in the sense that they can exert influence by controlling the personal lives of citizens and by expressing a preference for political leaders and programs. In their own

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<sup>46</sup> Author's interview with Hanin Ghaddar, Managing Editor for NowLebanon.com, on 12 April 2010.

<sup>47</sup> Author's interview with Jamil Mouawad, Researcher and co-founder of the *Common Space Initiative*, on 6 May 2010.

<sup>48</sup> The country's permitted TV-channels are distributed as follows: one for the Prime Minister (Future TV), one for the Speaker of Parliament (NBN), one close to the president (LBCI) and one close to interior minister and deputy Prime Minister (Murr TV).

words, religious spokesmen explain they feel responsible for the members of their respective confession and therefore obligated to voice an opinion.<sup>49</sup> Still, religious leaders remain subject to the country's political leaders<sup>50</sup>; they are either the same actors as the confessional political leaders and use religious rhetoric to conceal political interests, such as is prevalent in orthodox Muslim communities<sup>51</sup>, or they are elected by political leaders as is the case in most Christian and some moderate Muslim communities<sup>52</sup>. In the end, therefore, religious leaders maintain a close relationship with political leaders, perpetuating a system of social hierarchy and domination.

In sum, due to the traditional primacy of confessions and their allocated power in the political system citizenship in Lebanon is no longer able to exist outside the confession.<sup>53</sup> Lebanon has never possessed a strong state, characterised both by the absence of systemic legitimacy and the presence of eighteen strong and institutionally well-developed confessions. However, this fact has been worsened by the institutionalisation of segmental autonomy. By design, the Ta'if Accord has delegated a large part of the state's judicial and institutional responsibilities to decentralised actors at communal and local levels. This decentralisation of power has enforced confessional dominance in the political system and facilitated obstruction of the political system. As a result of this unstable framework, Lebanon's political elite has widely engaged in confessional politics to preserve their communal power-base by blocking institutional reforms, an observation that deserves further scrutiny in the next paragraph.

### 3.3 Confessional Politics

Confessional politics in Lebanon derives its justification essentially from the emphasis on consensus decision-making and the institutionalisation of a minority veto. In theory, consensus decision-making allows people to work through their differences and reach a mutually satisfactory position. It is often juxtaposed against (majority) voting, which does not particularly consider, nor protect, the feelings, needs or objections of a particular confessional group. However, as is accurately observed by Horowitz (2008), severely divided societies such as that in Lebanon need a strong ensemble of conflict-reducing mechanisms and a wholly negotiated process is unlikely to produce these mechanisms (1235). The institutionalisation of a minority veto, in addition, is likely to produce decision-making outcomes that all actors may be able to agree on, but that will rarely include any decisions that can carry the system forward to more effective policies (Peters 2006: 1084). In Lebanon, the confessional elites block every major reform that would transfer decision-making power away from their confessional support base to the state as a cohesive entity.

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<sup>49</sup> Author's interview with Paul Matar, Matar, Archbishop of the Maronite Church of Mount Lebanon, on 22 March 2010.

<sup>50</sup> Author's interview with Imad Salamey, Professor of Political Sciences and International Relations at the Lebanese-American University, on 22 April 2010.

<sup>51</sup> Prior to the parliamentary elections in 2009, for example, religious Shiite leaders issued *fatwa's*, which are traditionally religious opinions about law but are now used in Lebanon to express opinion about politics, to deem the act of abstention from voting for Hezbollah a sin.

<sup>52</sup> Author's interview with George Sabra, Decan of the Near Eastern School of Theology, on 5 April 2010.

<sup>53</sup> Author's interview with Imad Salamey, Professor of Political Sciences and International Relations at the Lebanese-American University, on 22 April 2010.

Initially, the implementation of Ta'if served a valuable purpose as it restored political relations and stipulated a clear set of provisions crucial for the long-term development of the country. As was discussed earlier, the republic established under the Ta'if Accord was essentially meant to be an interim government but attempts to reform the constitution in following years largely failed to materialise.<sup>54</sup> Later, upon the political crisis in 2005, the Lebanese government reaffirmed its commitment to reforms in the electoral system. Indeed, it established a National Commission to assume a national dialogue on electoral reform and proposed a new electoral law which was being reviewed by the Council of Ministers before its submission to Parliament's vote in 2006. However, again, out of fear for political loss, confessional leaders proved rather hesitant to commit to these reforms. While each of the following amendments has been discussed by the government since, the proposals have continued to be blocked on confessional grounds.

A first amendment is the inauguration of an independent electoral commission. Such a commission would have to be a permanent, publicly funded body that is accountable to the Parliament but independent of it at the same time. It should have the authority and responsibility to administrate and supervise local, municipal and parliamentary elections and the ability to refer to the general public's opinion in accordance to the provision of the law.<sup>55</sup> In Lebanon, such a commission would be able to provide oversight and regulate media coverage and political party spending in election times. However, its inauguration has been proposed, presumably because of its potential to seriously curb the power of the country's current confessional elites.

A second amendment is the introduction of pre-printed ballot papers to protect the secrecy of the votes and the anonymity of the voter. In Lebanon, governmental elections make use of blank or one-sided ballots that do not give an accurate indication of the names of the candidates and political parties.<sup>56</sup> In doing so, the current situation in Lebanon maintains the power of the confessional candidates and religious institutions to influence pressure and even threat confessional members and manipulate electoral success. The fear of losing decision-making power in face of new reforms prevents confessional political leaders to commit to change (i.e. if one or several confessional leaders would allow their confessional members to vote anonymously but others, pretending to do the same, would not in practice, the ones that would openly allow for anonymity and thus cross-confessional voting would risk losing political support).

A third amendment, lowering the voting age from 21 to 18, has proven to be a highly controversial amendment. To start, it would bring an educated and increasingly secular youth into the mainstream of the political process.<sup>57</sup> More importantly, however, it would have a different outcome for different confessions in terms of electoral success and thus challenge the current power-sharing balance. It is widely understood that due to the twin wartime processes of massive Christian emigration and increased Muslim, particularly Shiite, birth rates (Atlas & Licklider 199: 48), as well as the arrival of mostly Muslim immigrants from Syria and former Palestine (Dekmejian 1978: 256), Christians currently constitute less than a third of the population in Lebanon. Adopting a lower voting age is

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<sup>54</sup> Author's interview with Samir Makdisi, Professor in Financial Economics at the American University of Beirut, on 20 April 2010.

<sup>55</sup> Author's Interview with Ziad Abdel-Samad, Executive Director of the *Arab NGO Network for Development* and Secretary General of the *Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections*, on 26 April 2010.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

therefore seen as a further loss of guaranteed political support for the Christian political parties, concerned with the rights and liberties of the Christians.

A fourth amendment, the non-residential vote, while guaranteed by the constitution, is equally controversial.<sup>58</sup> On the one hand, there are no mechanisms for the full implementation of the non-residential vote. At the moment of writing, American expats can vote on presidential and legislative elections while French expats can vote in presidential elections, on national referenda and on special senators representing expats. But as the president is not elected by direct suffrage in Lebanon, it is difficult to develop mechanisms that would apply the non-residential vote to parliamentarians representing specific regional circumscriptions.<sup>59</sup> More importantly even, since the majority of the Lebanese living outside of the country, allowing Diaspora to vote in parliamentary elections would strengthen a Christian political block. In recent years, the lack of a non-residential vote has already led many expatriate Lebanese to spill over the country during election-time. But the incentive for returning Diaspora is not necessarily unmitigated patriotism. Stories about Lebanon's wealthy, mainly Christian, political class' involvement in vote-buying<sup>60</sup>, by paying for flight tickets so that Diaspora can vote, are abundant.<sup>61</sup> All the objections to proposed amendments highlight the fact that the provisions for democratic governance do not by themselves settle the issue of uncertainty (Jarstad 2006: 7). In other words, consensus rule and the minority veto have proven unable to settle the issue of uncertainty and, as a result, have been used to block amendments to the constitution.

Not surprisingly then, a major reform such as political deconfessionalisation, which would directly challenge the support base of Lebanon's confessional elites, is a venture that seems nearly impossible to carry out. An issue increasingly debated because of this is the lack of a civil marriage. As was discussed earlier, people can only marry through a religious institution. While the Christians tend to say that they are not necessarily against the frequently voiced demands for civil marriage, they refuse to comply with its adoption. According to them, Islam principally denies civil marriage and implementing civil marriage for the Christians would therefore constitute a political loss of Christian confessional groups.<sup>62</sup> Equally so, Christians say that they feel there can be no deconfessionalisation of the political system without secularisation, which would otherwise also mean immediate political death by a Muslim numerical majority.<sup>63</sup> Muslims, on the other hand, say that they feel there can be no secularisation without deconfessionalisation as they view secularism

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<sup>58</sup> Author's Interview with Ziad Abdel-Samad, Executive Director of the *Arab NGO Network for Development* and Secretary General of the *Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections*, on 26 April 2010.

<sup>59</sup> Author's interview with Jade Said, Program Director at the Arab NGO Network for Development, on 12 August 2010.

<sup>60</sup> Vote-buying refers literally to a practice in which people vote in exchange for money. However, political support is often 'bought' by non-material means, such as through the provision of social security services and granting of personal favours relating to employment, family matters or housing.

<sup>61</sup> Muhammed Samek.

<sup>62</sup> Author's interview with George Sabra, Decan of the Near Eastern School of Theology, on 5 April 2010 and Paul Matar, Archbishop of the Maronite Church of Mount Lebanon, on 22 March 2010.

<sup>63</sup> Author's interviews with Fadia Kiwan, Professor of Political Science at St. Joseph University and co-author of the book *Options for Lebanon* (2004), on 23 April 2010, Paul Matar, Archbishop of the Maronite Church of Mount Lebanon, on 22 March 2010, Alber Kostadian, politician of a Christian party, on 10 June 2010 and Samir Makdisi, Professor in Financial Economics at the American University of Beirut, on 20 April 2010.

as an attack on Islam and the loss of one's individual faith in the will of God<sup>64</sup>.<sup>65</sup> In reality, however, every confessional authority, save for a tiny minority of clerics which are not restricted to one confession and are rather seen as renegades by the establishment, was vocally very much against secularisation when the project for elective civil marriage was proposed<sup>66</sup>. And while every confessional leader claims to be committed to deconfessionalisation, they have opposed all the required measures consistently.<sup>67</sup> Hence, it is more likely to assume that both Christians and Muslims fear the future consequences deconfessionalisation would have for their confessional power bases.

This is not to say that there are absolutely no attempts to undermine the influence of the confession. For instance, in 2009, Lebanon's interior Minister issued a circular that every Lebanese citizen has the right to remove reference to religion in Civil Registry records.<sup>68</sup> However, removing reference to one's religion has not prevented religion to continue to determine voting behaviour so long as civil status remains primarily granted through confessions and religious institutions. Furthermore, the decision was eroded by a ruling from the *Shura* (consultative) Council that stated that removing the reference does not actually remove the person from their sectarian affiliation.<sup>69</sup> Seen from this perspective, banning religion to the private sphere is just not supported by the country's institutions.

While, as Hudson (1999) noted, "muddling through" may have short-term tactical benefits, it has disastrous long-run consequences (38). This is evident as Lebanon's institutional inability to form a viable and unified state has exposed it to the continuous threat and presence of foreign occupation and outside interventions. On the one hand, the regional equilibrium in the Middle Eastern region is generally linked to political competition in Lebanon.<sup>70</sup> Should, for instance, bilateral relations between Saudi Arabia and Syria deteriorate or should something happen between Iraq's Sunni and Shiite groups, a highly tensed and vulnerable political environment would instantly erupt in Lebanon as different confessional leaders are implicitly forced to choose more extremist positions in relation to each other. But even more so, confessional leaders themselves have frequently used transnational confessional backing<sup>71</sup> to request material and capital with which they have attempted to gain an advantage over one another. Therefore, the mutually felt fears to transfer power away from the confession remain in place as a result of the presence of transnational confessional alliances (Seaver 2000). Hence, the irony of Lebanese politics is that while confessionalism is not a durable resource, it is too entrenched and too useful for the confessional elites to discard.

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<sup>64</sup> Author's interview with Hilal Khashan, Senior Professor in Political Sciences at the American University of Beirut, 26 April 2010 and George Sabra, Decan of the Near Eastern School of Theology, on 5 April 2010.

<sup>65</sup> Author's interview with Imad Salamey, Professor of Political Sciences and International Relations at the Lebanese-American University, on 22 April 2010

<sup>66</sup> Notably, former melkite archbishop for Beirut, Gregoire Haddad, and Shiite Cleric Hani Fahs.

<sup>67</sup> Author's interview with Jade Said, Program Director of the *Arab NGO Network for Development*, on 12 August 2010.

<sup>68</sup> Human Rights Watch, 16 February 2009 (accessed 3 July 2010).

<sup>69</sup> Author's interview with Jade Said, Program Director at the *Arab NGO Network for Development*, on 13 August 2010.

<sup>70</sup> Author's interviews with Theodore Abi-Mansour, Journalist for the news website *Beirut Online*, on 8 April 2010, Imad Salamey, Professor of Political Sciences and International Relations at the Lebanese-American University, on 22 April 2010 and Fadia Kiwan, Professor of Political Science at St. Joseph University and co-author of the book *Options for Lebanon* (2004), on 23 April 2010.

<sup>71</sup> While not fixed, the Christians are traditionally supported by their Western backing, notably the United States and France, the Sunni and some Muslim fundamentalists by their counterparts in Saudi Arabia and the Shiite, particularly through Hezbollah, by Iran.

In conclusion, out of fear for political loss, confessional leaders have been hesitant to commit to reforms. Put concretely, confessional political leaders have refrained from implementing any major reforms that would transfer power away from their confessional support base to the state as a cohesive entity. By use of their right to veto major decision-making, confessional elites continue to avoid compliance with proposed reforms, a factor increasingly pressing now that the Doha Agreement has allocated the right to veto to the Shiite controlled political party of Hezbollah in 2008. Essentially, confessions are willing to reform when the reform contributes to their particular power base and weakens that of other confessions, but have refrained from reforms that would constitute the opposite. As such, the right to minority veto has led to a recurring political deadlock and complete political paralysis on almost all meaningful decision-making. To overcome this difficulty, rather than working collectively towards enhancing the state's power, confessional leaders have at times broadened the scope of conflict to attract foreign supporters in an attempt to defeat their opponents. In this sense, Lebanon's weak state has not only allowed for but attracted regional players to defy its sovereignty and interfere with its politics.

## Conclusion

*Why has the Lebanese government's aim to deconfessionalise the Lebanese political system, as stipulated by the Ta'if Accord in 1989, failed to materialise during the twenty years that followed?*

The relevance of this question should be evident. Since the end of its sixteen year-long civil war, Lebanon has experienced renewed clashes between its confessions in 2005 and 2008. The distribution of power along confessional lines is widely believed by Lebanon's political elite to be at the source of the country's consistently turbulent society and, therefore, the government has been formally committed to a process of political deconfessionalisation since 1989. Moreover, this commitment to deconfessionalising the political system has been identified by scholars as crucial for the country's long-term development and return of sustainable peace and political stability, albeit without providing a satisfactory explanation of the difficulties of such a venture in Lebanon's post-war context. However, despite this shared emphasis on deconfessionalisation, two decades have passed without any significant progress being made in this respect. Paramount to understanding why political deconfessionalisation has not taken place during this period is the nature of Lebanon's consociational democracy and the implications it has in the country's adverse post-war environment.

Whereas power-sharing in general has been increasingly interpreted as a mechanism to foster a positive-sum perception of political interactions and improve the overall practice of democratic constitutions, consociationalism has been particularly promoted for its constitutional organisation. Arend Lijphart, who coined the term in the late 1960s, critiques majority rule in plural societies as being inherently undemocratic. Rather, he argues, all considerable social groups should be guaranteed proportional representation in the government while simultaneously being allowed some degree of communal autonomy to accommodate fears of (cultural) extermination. Put concretely, the theory is based on four power-sharing institutions: (1) *a grand coalition* that ensures the representation of minority parties at the central state level, (2) *proportionality* in both official and civil constituents that contributes to state legitimacy, *segmental autonomy* that allows for a decentralisation of state power and (4) *consensus rule* and the *minority veto* that secure the protection of vital, community-based interests. Based on the institutionalisation of these four power-sharing institutions, consociationalism essentially guarantees the promotion of political compromise and conciliation among former adversaries. But the implementation of consociational models all over the world has not been without its controversies, revealing three important weaknesses in the theory.

To start, consociationalism has been criticised because it reinforces the generally shared notion in post-war, plural societies that one community's interests are irreconcilable with those of other communities. Often resulting from consociational regimes, according to critiques, is the cementing of group boundaries, maintenance or even increase in group polarisation and the continued struggle for power by political means. The latter will be particularly evident if there is no majority group but a large number of minority groups that all fear the marginalisation of their particular needs. Moreover, this preoccupation with communal power struggles has severe implications for the central government as well. Indeed, critics have claimed that it is not always beneficial to have a power-sharing accord that is exhaustive in its inclusiveness as it erodes governability. In fact, Lijphart himself admits that a grand coalition may lead to cumbersome decision-making but counter argues

that the benefits outweigh the disadvantages since the acceptable coexistence of groups is to be preferred to either non-democratic peace or unstable democracy beset with segmental strife. Still, a final critique is that once inaugurated, consociational power-sharing regimes will almost certainly be blocked when the necessity of implementing major reforms is more evident. In general, therefore, it is argued that, while not denying that consociational power-sharing regimes may have beneficial effects during the post-war stabilisation and reconstruction phase, critics have observed that the merits of consociationalism are by no means secured after consolidation. This argument is authenticated by the case of Lebanon's post-war consociational arrangement.

Importantly, Lebanon's current Republic has had a lengthy history of shaky power-sharing arrangements. Despite a gradual move towards confessional equity, three of its power-sharing regimes, the *Règlement Organique* in 1861, the first Republic of Lebanon in 1926 and the National Pact in 1943 respectively, toppled as a result of unbalanced power-sharing relations between the country's main confessional groups: the Maronites, the Druze, the Sunni and the Shiites. Lebanon's fourth and final power-sharing accord made an end to the sixteen-year long civil war and was essentially a compromise between the conventionally privileged Christians and the Muslim majority to share power equally based on a 50/50 political and civic representation principle. In addition, Ta'if explicitly envisioned Lebanon's reconstituted republic to be an interim republic that would eventually lead to a Third Republic in which political confessionalism would be abolished. However, by that time, the country's confessional leaders had clearly become accustomed to their primacy over the state, a condition that continues to impeding with the state's formal commitment to political deconfessionalisation and that is insufficiently addressed by the institutions of the Ta'if Accord.

In sum, three factors explain why political deconfessionalisation in Lebanon has not taken place between 1989 and 2009. First, the Ta'if Accord has established a weak political system. By distributing the power of the state along confessional lines, the political system has failed to create sufficient incentives for genuine inter-confessional cooperation. The institutional requisition of cross-confessional voting has resulted in temporary confessional alliances rather than a restriction of Lebanon's political structure of clientelism and patronage that largely determines voting-behaviour. In fact, the rigidity of the fixed allocation of confessional seats and the institutionalised space for a multitude of electoral lists have diminished the proportional representativeness of Lebanon's political system, encouraged populism and reinforced the notion that voters are represented in the state by their confessional membership rather than by their national citizenship.

Secondly, the Ta'if Accord has institutionalised segmental autonomy which, in turn, has strengthened the primacy of the country's confessions. While decades of inter-communal strife and the continued absence (and thereby legitimacy) of an effective state had already resulted in strong confessions, the decentralisation of important authorities effectively contributed to the primacy of these confessions. The delegation of the authorities over family law and property rights, both of which directly affect the citizen's existence, from the central state to the country's already strong confessions, have caused confessional leaders to enjoy high levels of loyalty, electoral and financial support from their members. In effect, citizenship itself has become a facet attainable only through confessional membership. From this perspective, decentralisation has led to further confessional isolation and 'pillarisation' rather than the reconciliation efforts much-needed for collective governance.

Finally, resulting from this unstable political framework, confessional leaders have refrained from implementing major reforms that would transfer power away from their confessional support base to the state as a cohesive entity. By use of their right to veto major decision-making, confessional elites continue to avoid compliance with proposed reforms. As such, the right to veto has led to a recurring political deadlock and complete political paralysis on almost all meaningful decision-making, particularly a deconfessionalisation of the country's political framework.

In conclusion, the weaknesses revealed in the debate about consociationalist power-sharing have been authenticated by the case of Lebanon's post-war power-sharing regime. However, rather than suggesting that consociationalism in Lebanon has failed as such, this study has highlighted a far more nuanced implication for consociational power-sharing theory, namely, the importance of the need to gradually transform existing power-sharing regimes in order to support and improve the regime's efforts to maintain peace and stability. The advocates of consociationalism currently put too much emphasis on the short-term merits of power-sharing institutions, while overlooking its long-term implications. As was explained earlier, while consociationalism invests a great deal in the conditions necessary to satisfy the immediate needs of the adversaries, it subsequently assumes that further developments will occur naturally. But as the conditions on the ground change gradually over time, the demands of the power-sharing regime change with it. One can clearly observe this process in Lebanon today, whereas there was a clear need for confessional guarantees in the political system immediately after the end of the civil war, contemporary Lebanon requires more and more exactly the opposite, a deconfessionalisation of the political system. In other words, a power-sharing accord must not be fixed at certain conditions but leave sufficient space to allow for a gradual modification of the accord itself according to the changing conditions and needs locally.

### Epilogue

The inflexible nature of Lebanon's consociational government and the inefficient regime it has produced implies a great deal of political unpredictability. This is even more so because of the continued insecurities stemming from the undetermined fate of 400,000 (registered) Palestinians and growing regional tensions, inducing the individual political leaders to 'take sides' and seek refuge within their own confessions. Simultaneously, one can witness the increased civic demands for greater efficiency and more transparent and competitive systems from the government. From this perspective, it is evident that Lebanon will eventually need a strong and stable executive leadership legitimised on a national and civic basis rather than on confessional and patronage-based constituencies to cope with current and future challenges.

Having said that, however, one should also not forget that the country's confessional guarantees have been solely accountable for bringing peace to Lebanon, albeit one that is characterised by severe inter-communal competition and political strife. Therefore, aside from the question whether or not political deconfessionalisation is possible in Lebanon today, it is imperative to continue to examine if and when this course of action is desirable as well. Indeed, despite domestic tensions in recent years, Lebanon's political elite has also found some common ground in the normalisation of relations with Syria, the acceptance of the presence and artillery of Hezbollah and the scrutiny of inter-party commonalities and alliances. In other words, adversaries might actually find the current political paralysis quite appealing as it ensures that an opponent will be unable to enact policies detrimental to their interests on the one hand, while allowing them to look for common ground of issues of national concern on the other. Whether or not to deprive the country of that which is fundamental to its current peace-base in order to break out of its current political paralysis is truly an inescapable dilemma Lebanon's political elite is facing today.

Ideally speaking, the growth and participation of a complex civil society would gradually allow for a more flexible approach towards consociational power-sharing rather than the sudden termination of political confessionalisation. If Lebanon's society increasingly comes to rely on cross-community communication and cross-confessional political cooperation, another collapse of the ruling regime may not be so inevitable. This includes taking steps towards cross-confessional voting and the inauguration of federal, rather than confessional, arrangements, that would surely contribute to increased political stability and sustainable alliances on the elite level. Only after a process of genuine political reconciliation and unification within the establishment will the Lebanese government be able to effectively handle inter-confessional conflict and fend off regional interferences.

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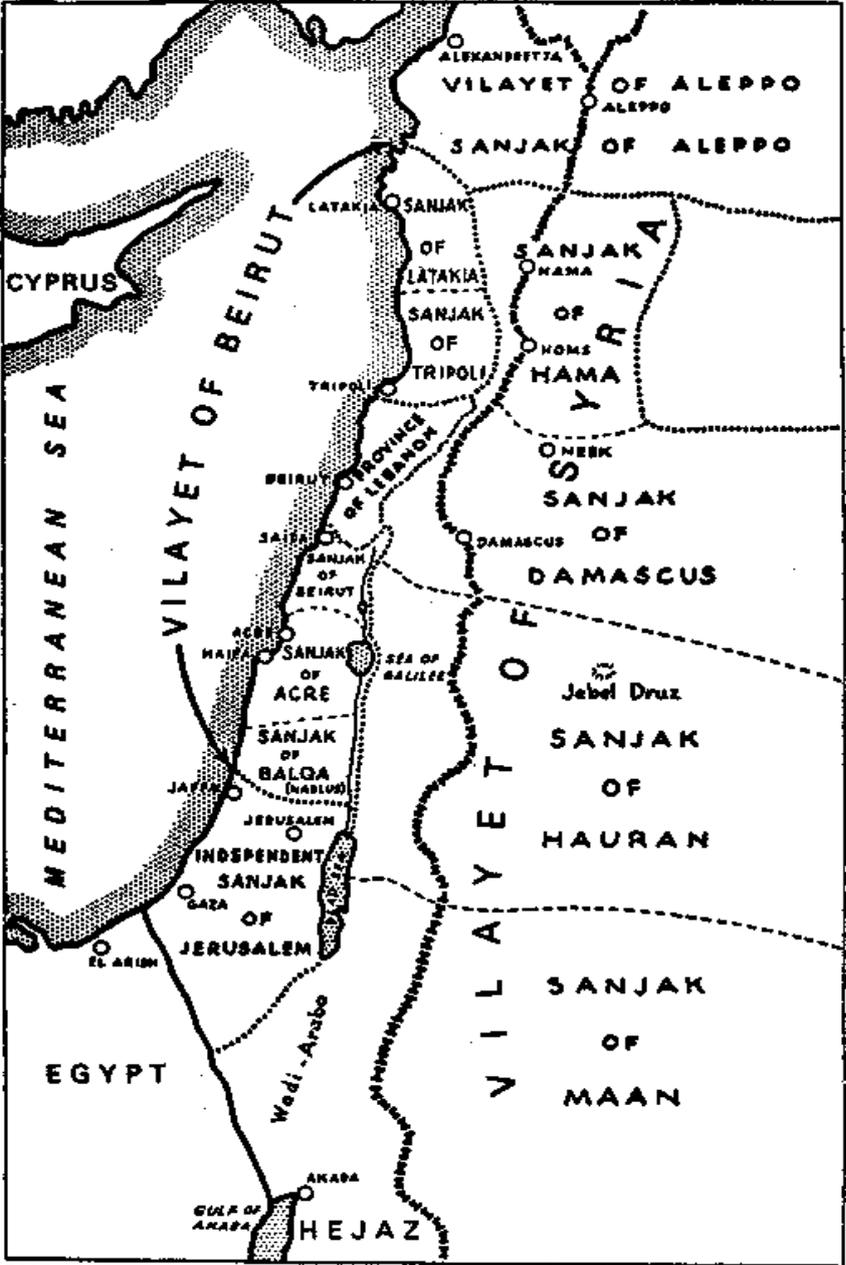
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APPENDIX A: Maps

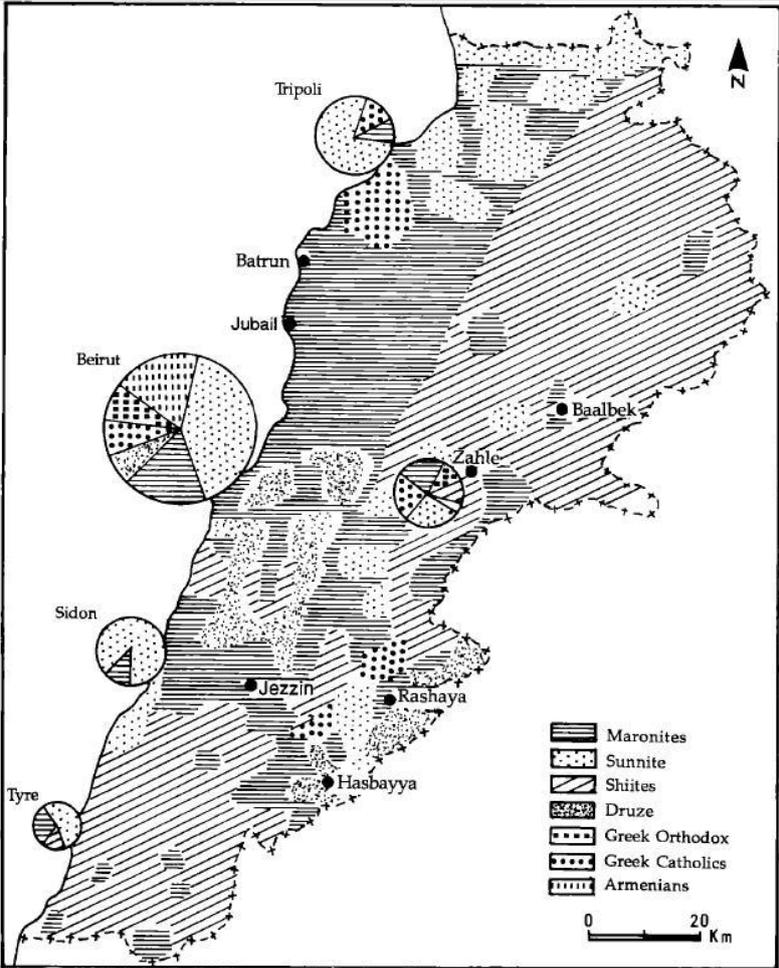
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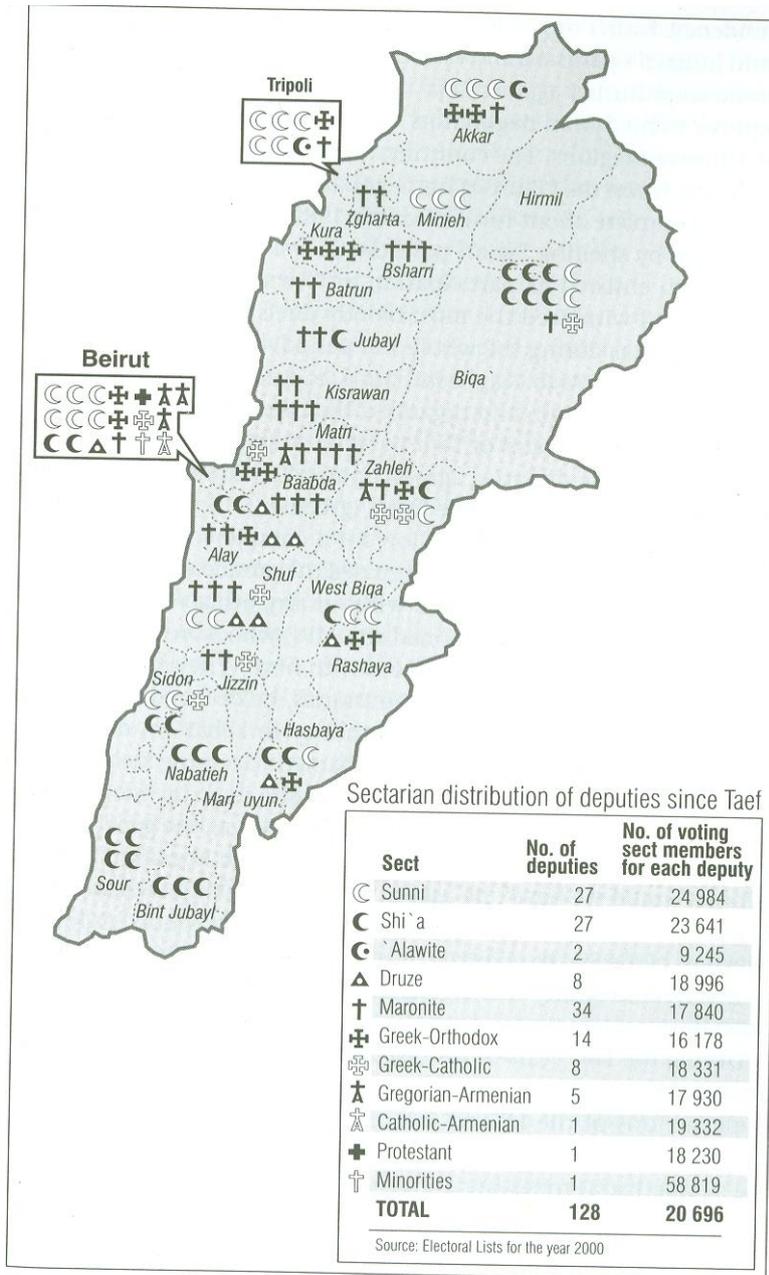
All. The *mutasarrifiya* system (Traboulsi, 2007).



AIII. The Estimated Distribution of Lebanon's Confessional Communities (Kliot, 1986).



AIV. Seat Allocation for the Parliamentary Elections after Ta'if (Traboulsi 2007).



**APPENDIX B: Political System since Ta’if, 1989 (Law Library of Congress).**

<p><b>LEGISLATIVE POWER</b></p>	<p><b>EXECUTIVE POWER</b></p>	<p><b>JUDICIAL POWER</b></p>
<p>Parliament comprised of 128 members and headed by a <u>Shiite Speaker</u></p> <p>The members of parliament are elected through a democratic system directly by the people for a renewable four-year term. It is divided by 64 Muslim parliamentarians (27 Shiites, 27 Sunnis, 8 Druze and 2 Alawites) and 64 Christian parliamentarians (34 Maronites, 14 Greek Orthodox, 8 Greek Catholics, 5 Armenian Orthodox, 2 Christian minorities and 1 Armenian Catholic). The parliament carries all the power and authority normally attributed to a parliamentary democratic system.</p> <p><b>The Constitutional Council</b></p> <p>The constitutional council is a public institution newly created after the 1990 Amendment of the Constitution that is comprised of ten members. It is responsible for the control of the constitutionality of laws and has the power to settle litigation over presidential and parliamentary elections.</p>	<p>The Republic headed by a <u>Maronite President</u></p> <p>Elected by the members of Parliament for a six-year mandate, the President is a symbol of unity for the nation. His duties are to maintain the respect of the constitution and to safeguard the independence and integrity of the country. The President is also the Supreme Chef of the Armed Forces, who come under the authority of the council of Ministers.</p> <p><b>Council of Ministers headed by a <u>Sunni Prime Minister</u></b></p> <p>The Council of ministers is empowered to deal with general political matters, to elaborate new laws, projects and to issue decrees and their application, to nominate civil servants, and to dissolve parliament for specific reasons at the President's request. Decisions taken by the government are by consensus or a majority vote of those attending. Nevertheless, a 66% majority of the total number of ministers is required for fundamental issues such as amending the Constitution, voting on the budget and development plans.</p>	<p>Judicial Court System known as <i>kadaa' dli</i></p> <p>Original jurisdiction is normally found in the Courts of First Instance, then there are the Courts of Appeal and finally there is the Cassation Court.</p> <p><b>Administrative Court System known as <i>Majlis al-Shura</i></b></p> <p>The administrative courts' jurisdiction is limited to matters involving or arising from administrative decisions issued by the state or any of its agencies and institutions.</p> <p><b>The Military Court System</b></p> <p>The military courts have a specialised criminal jurisdiction restricted to arms and ammunitions (other than for hunting), crimes against national security, crimes committed in a military facility and crimes involving members of the military forces.</p> <p><b>The Religious Court Systems</b></p> <p>The religious court system is composed of the court systems of the 18 recognised denominations pertaining to the three main religions of Christianity, Islam and Judaism. The jurisdiction of these courts is limited to personal status and family law matters as authorised by law.</p>

**APPENDIX C: Seat Allocation since the Doha Agreement, 2008 (after the Lebanese ‘Ministry of Interior and Municipalities’).**

	Shiite	Sunni	Maronite	Druze	Greek Orthodox	Armenian Orthodox	Greek Catholic	Alawite	Armenian Catholic	Christian Minorities*
<b>North Lebanon</b>										
1.Akkar (7)		3	1		2			1		
2.Minnieh-Dennieh (3)		3								
3.Tripoli (8)		5	1		1			1		
4.Zghorta (3)			3							
5.Koura (3)					3					
6.Bcharré (2)			2							
7.Batroun (2)			2							
<b>Mount Lebanon</b>										
8.Keserwan (5)			5							
9.Jbeil (3)	1		2							
10.Metn (8)			4		2	1	1			
11.Baabda (6)	2		3	1						
12.Aley (5)			2	2	1					
13.Chouf (8)		2	3	2			1			
<b>Bekaa</b>										
14.Baalbek-Hermel (10)	6	2	1				1			
15.Zahle (7)	1	1	1		1	1	2			
16.West Bekaa-Rashaya (6)	1	2	1	1	1					
<b>Beirut</b>										
17.Beirut 1 (5)			1		1	1	1		1	
18.Beirut 2 (4)	1	1				2				
19.Beirut 3 (10)	1	5		1	1					2
<b>South Lebanon</b>										
20.Saida (2)		2								
21.Zahrany (3)	2						1			

22.Nabatiye (3)	3									
23.Jezzine (3)			2				1			
24.Sour (4)	4									
25.Bint Jbeil (3)	3									
26.Marjaayoun-Hasbaya (5)	2	1		1	1					
<b>Total number of seats (128)</b>	27 (Shiite)	27 (Sunni)	34 (Maronite)	8 (Druze)	14 (Greek Orthodox)	5 (Armenian Orthodox)	8 (Greek Catholic)	2 (Alawite)	1 (Armenian Catholic)	2 (Christian Minorities)

\* The seat reserved for minorities allows one of nine other groups' parliamentary representation

APPENDIX D: Photo Gallery



### From left to right

**Photo 1:** Church and (Hariri) Mosque built right next to each other in the reconstructed area of Down Town Beirut after the civil war in the early nineties.

**Photo 2:** Sign on the outside wall of a popular bar in a predominantly Muslim area in Beirut, opposite of where former Minister President was assassinated by a car bomb.

**Photo 3:** Laïque Pride march for a deconfessionalisation of the political system and the inauguration of civil marriage on 30 April, 2010, in Lebanon. *The Daily Star* Newspaper reported that an estimated 3,000 demonstrators attended the march.

**Photo 4:** Laïque Pride march arrives at the Lebanese Parliament after a two-hour march through Beirut city; at the horizon peeks Beirut's famous blue Hariri Mosque.

**Photo 5:** Anti-Israel demonstration in Down Town Beirut, a day after the Gaza flotilla raid on 31 May, 2010. The demonstration included both Palestinian refugees and Lebanese citizens.

**Photo 6:** Conference on Switzerland's experience with power-sharing and their implications for Lebanon organised by the Carnegie Endowment Middle East Center in Beirut on 14 May, 2010. The speaker in this photo is the Swiss ambassador to Lebanon. Other attendees included diplomats, politicians and academics. While some comparisons were made, the general conclusion was that the two countries could not be compared due to contextual and demographic differences.

Photos were taken by the author, between February and May, 2010.