

FAILING CONSOCIATIONALISM IN LEBANON AND INTEGRATIVE OPTIONS

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Abstract

This article examines political sectarianism as institutionalized in the consociational power sharing arrangements of Lebanon. The proposition advanced in this article challenges the common belief that the sectarian model of corporate consociationalism is adequate for plural societies undergoing democratic transition. It demonstrates that demographic, spatial, and regional power shifts render corporate sectarian power sharing consociationalism conducive to conflict and national fragmentation. As an alternative, it proposes 'integrative consociationalism' as a more responsive governing option that accommodates national and community-based political power sharing arrangements. National electoral strategies as well as administrative reforms are also suggested within the context of integrative consociationalism.

Lebanese Governing System and the Crisis of Consociationalism

Lebanon has come to satisfy the conditions under which most consociational systems have arisen. In 1943, the Lebanese National Covenant (*Al-Methak Al-Watany*) established corporate consociationalism as the de jure power sharing arrangement between the various confessions within the state. These conditions have been defined as the presence of distinct social cleavages, a multiple balance-of-power between the various groupings within the country, public attitudes accepting of government by grand coalition, a light load on the political system, and a small size that precludes an active foreign policy (Jabbra and Jabbra, 2001: 71-77).

The consociational system allocated the presidency to a Christian Maronite, the premiership to a Muslim Sunni, and the Speakership to a Muslim Shi'ite. All public offices were corporate according to confessional and sectarian affiliations. They were assigned confessions on the proportional principle of 5 Muslims to every 6 appointed Christians. Along the same confessional office-allocation principle, all elected seats of the National Assembly were divided. Cabinet ministers and ministry general-directors as well as heads of the Armed Forces, the Central Bank, and the National University, among other sensitive public positions, were distributed along sectarian lines to accommodate the delicate confessional balance.

The end result of this corporate consociational division of power has been a self-perpetuating capture of the state by a political sectarian elite that both lacks national accountability and undermines government commitment to the public good. The sectarian elite's confessional division of power was consolidated by an electoral system that undermined non-sectarian and independent challengers. A plurality list-based majority system within districts of a manageable size provided the incumbent confessional elites with the ability to trade votes across sectarian lines without necessarily soliciting votes from their own social grouping. This factor helped incumbent elite candidates to secure electoral victories and left them free to negotiate with other sectarian elites the division of public offices and resources. Sectarian elites became indispensable oligopolistic patrons to their sectarian cliental constituencies, politically "inheriting" sectarian public offices. [This phenomenon is often referred to in Lebanon as "political feudalism" – *Al-Ikta'a Al-Seyasse*. Examples of elite families that inherited political offices across generations are: Al-Khazen, Junbulat, Al-Assad, Slam, Tueini, Saad.]

The political outcome of this arrangement is such that the confessional elites have become adept at grasping onto the patronage spoils from a division of the public sector pie, trading alliances and allegiances in efforts to maximize their proportion of influence. The main consequence of this outcome is that low priority is given to overcoming the common and pressing reform issues that challenged the entire country, such as the need for economic growth, public accountability, and the rule of law (Salamey and Payne, 2008).

The confessional predetermination of state power among many sects, each having veto power over public decisions, undermined the realization of a functional and strong government system. Instead, a deeply divided and a weak confessional state was established. The immediate result was a spread of social and political insecurity among its citizens, forcing sectarian groups to rely on their own social and security networks, and to look for support beyond Lebanon's borders (Hudson, 1968:34). The state, acting as a trustee, became notorious for its immobility and its inability to implement policies that would promote progress and prevent deterioration (Kerr, 1966: 188).

As a consequence, the sectarian conflict dynamic was heightened, violent conflict followed, and the state repeatedly failed. The Doha Accord of 2008, brokered by the state of Qatar, brought to a halt a short period of sectarian civil strife, but this recent episode was only the latest in a series of foreign sponsored initiatives that have attempted, in vain, to strengthen the consociational system and undermine its conflictual orientations.

The chronic weak nature of state consociationalism in Lebanon and the continuous failure of international efforts to provide a sustainable governing system are attributed to short-term agreements that have neither helped accommodate nor moderated political sectarianism in the country. This paper examines the conflictual dynamics of corporate consociationalism in an effort to recommend a comprehensible proposition for transition and reform of Lebanon's governing dilemma.

Ethno-Sectarian Consociationalism for a Deeply Divided Society

In plural societies, power sharing is often selected as a mechanism to avert or remediate inter-group conflict and violence. Among the challenges facing power sharing formulas is the achievement of a popular majority, while, at the same time, preserving groups' cultural autonomy (Dodge, 2007; Lijphart, 1969; Kapoor, 2002). Traditional debate has entailed competing political propositions. The "melting pot" model rejects ethnicity-based power sharing and advocates assimilation toward nationhood (Dodge, 2007). The multi-cultural and neo-liberal theory models, on the other hand, have emphasized diversity and stressed the importance of politically preserving ethnic, sectarian, religious, regional, and racial peculiarities and identities (Lijphart, 1969; McGarry & O'Leary, 2007).

In the late 1960s, Arend Lijphart proposed ethnic-based "consociational democracy" as a plausible alternative arrangement for plural societies. For plural societies, he suggested ethnic-based consociationalism as a form of governance defined as a "government by elite cartel designed to turn a democracy with a fragmented political culture into a stable democracy" (Lijphart, 1969). He described a plural society as being characterized by deep religious, ideological, linguistic, regional, cultural, racial and/or ethnic segmental cleavages, having public loyalty fragmented according to representative groups rather than being embedded in a single national authority (Lijphart, 1984:22). He characterized consociational democracy as possessing four main political tenets: a grand coalition, a mutual veto, proportional representation and segmental autonomy (Lijphart, 1977:25). Lijphart has maintained a consistent defense of consociationalism as the preferred choice for plural societies, stressing that such an arrangement must guarantee equitable power sharing distribution and group autonomy in at least the educational and cultural spheres (Lijphart, 2006; 2004; 2002:37).

However, in various countries, such as Lebanon and Iraq, consociational democracy has yielded corporate forms of power sharing that have been referred to as 'corporate consociationalism' (Hanf, 1981, Lijphart, 2006). Corporate Consociationalism predetermines power positions among ethnic and sectarian national groups, such as pre-determining the Presidency to a Maronite in Lebanon or to a Kurd in Iraq. Predetermination of power positions is often extended throughout the various representative and administrative institutions of the state. In Lebanon, as has been presented, all elected national offices are allocated on a confessional basis (Salamey & Payne, 2008). In both Lebanon and Iraq as well as in various ethnically and sectarian divided societies, such as North Ireland and Sudan, power sharing distributions and power mandates have been fixed by unwritten national accords, pacts, or customs, making amendments difficult, sometimes impossible, and often risk-laden.

Ultimately, the corporate consociational power sharing model has been confronted, particularly in transitional states, by various extra-national challenges. [For various discussions on the meaning of "transitional state," see Aydinli and Rosenau

(2005).] One of the most problematic has been associated with the phenomenon of 'deterritorialization' and 'denationalization' in the age of globalization, and, by implication, the overwhelming interconnectedness of ethno-political factors reaching out beyond the borders of the nation-state (Anderson, 2006; Castles & Davidson, 2000; Gulalp, 2006; Kerr, 2005; Lake & Rothchild, 1998). In any given national power sharing formulation, this has subjected the various ethno-sectarian groups to the direct influences of transnational groups and foreign governments (Axtmann, 2004; Kerr, 2005; McGarry & O'Leary, 2006). A turbulent and interconnected regional environment, such as in Iraq and Lebanon, has instigated ethnic groups to fight for the re-distribution of corporatized state power. Under such circumstances, and whenever possible, corporate power rearrangements have been re-established to mirror the regional balance of power instead of reflecting domestic group interests and sizes. Thus, such a corporate arrangement has set the stage for a permanent domestic struggle.¹

Efforts have been made by neo-consociationalists to incorporate various institutional and extra-institutional variables into power sharing arrangements. 'Critical-consociationalists' such as John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary recognized the role of external parties in exacerbating ethnic conflict or facilitating agreement (McGarry & O'Leary, 2006; O'Leary, 1989). Similarly, Michael Kerr cites foreign countries' imposition of power sharing as often being instrumental in the framing of 'consociationalism' (Kerr, 2005). McGarry and O'Leary (2007) have recognized the limits of corporate consociationalism in Iraq, and have proposed revising Liphart's original power sharing formula to allow for loose consociationalism within the framework of a 'federacy' in a 'pluralist federation' (McGarry & O'Leary, 2007; O'Leary, 2005).

Nonetheless, as has been noted, the geopolitical factor of ethnic interconnectedness in power struggle was not the only obstacle confronting neo-consociationalism. In multi-ethnic developing countries, globalization and modernization have paved the way for dramatic intra-national demographic and spatial transformations, pitting different groups in direct competition with one another over contested space, resources, capital, and foreign support (Davis, 2006). In turn, foreign intervention in groups' affairs, coinciding with growing demographic and spatial pressures, further polarize ethno-sectarian politics and undermines the consociational state (Salamey & Payne, 2008; Salamey & Pearson, 2005, 2007; Salamey & Tabar 2008). As a consequence, the existing cross-cutting sectarian and secular spaces shrink. Confessional and ethnic political groups emerge as oppressive or even totalitarian rulers within ethnic enclaves, acting as intra-state authoritarian entities (El Khazen, 2003; Salamey & Pearson, 2007; Sharrara, 1998). Sectarian cleansing can be turned into a permanent process orienting and polarizing the political power struggle in the plural transitional state.

Thus, the rise of ethno-sectarian intra- and inter-national geopolitics presents a serious challenge confronting the prospect of the corporate consociational nation-state,

with demographic and spatial dynamics forming additional challenges (Bollens; 2001, 1999). This paper takes Lebanese consociationalism as a case study to reveal the challenges confronting power sharing arrangement. It demonstrates that the fluidity of both space and population in a sectarian plural society renders corporate sectarian-based consociationalism an inherently conflict-ridden form of power sharing arrangement. As an alternative, this paper proposes “integrative consociationalism” as a synthetic institutional arrangement that can better correspond to the dynamism of modern geopolitical plurality. Integrative consociationalism in this paper would endeavor to institutionalize representative and administrative arrangements in a way that combines local with national interests, allows for cross-cutting cleavage formations and joint group activity, and provides for the political duality of the citizen and the community.

Demographic Dynamics Undermining Consociationalism

Under the 1943 provisions of the Lebanese National Covenant, a slight advantage was given to the Christian groups, in particular the Maronites, over the Muslim components of Lebanese society. This advantage was due to a population census conducted in 1932, which recorded a slight majority of Christians, a proportion which has since been on the decline as the Muslim population has grown and the Christian population has declined (Duwayhe, 2006: 14). Yet the system formula remains essentially unchanged, and this demographic dynamic has repeatedly plunged the country into national crises and, often, violent confrontations as a sole mean to adjust sectarian power distribution.

Taking the city of Beirut as a case in point, the pattern of communal rural-to-urban migration resulting in demographic changes has come to challenge traditional notion of confessionalism. Demographic changes coupled with the consociational state’s unresponsiveness and paralysis have resulted in communal grievances and sectarian mobilizations.

In 1960, Greater Beirut’s population stood at 450,000 residents; by 1975, that figure had increased threefold to 1,250,000 (Collelo, 1987). This population boom turned Beirut into the most populous city in Lebanon by a vast margin, and it became the place where embryonic forms of cross-cutting cleavages emerged (i.e., mixed sectarian residential areas, major workers’ and professional associations). [Beirut is almost five times the population of Lebanon’s second largest city, Tripoli (2007 est.).] This rapid expansion of the city’s population initially favored the growth of the middle class and secular neighborhoods where residential and market growth undermined confessional demarcations. [Most conservative estimates have placed the contemporary residential population of Beirut and its suburbs at 36% of the total population of Lebanon as of 2001 (Kasparian, 2003).]

Corporate confessionalism, however, dictated a primordial rather than a “modern” dynamic for such urban areas in the country. The corporate confessional distribution of national and local political offices, including municipal posts, required sectarian segregation. Compounding the polarization, the poor and emerging working class, descending from mainly from rural migrant families, sought residence near their city co-religionists and co-villagers. For the Shia, being unable to meld in with other sects, the pattern was represented in a massive migration allocated in the southern suburbs of Beirut (*Dahye*), later denoted as the suburban “belt of misery.” By 1975, deepening socio-economic spatial stratification between the primarily affluent Maronite eastern suburbs of Beirut and the adjacent poorer Shia southern suburbs led to deep confessional resentment between the groups. As a result, it was no coincidence that the first front of the 1975 Civil War (the Green Line) stretched between these neighborhoods: Shia Shayah versus Christian Ayn Al-Rummanah, which by the 1980s expanded to separate the largely Christian East Beirut from Muslim West Beirut (Collelo, 1987).

Repeated incursions and invasions by Israel into the largely Shia region of southern Lebanon in 1979, 1982, 1993, 1996, and 2006 further drove massive waves of Shia rural-to-urban displacement (Nasr & James, 1985; Salamey & Pearson, 2007). These events resulted in the forced establishment of massive illegal housing neighborhoods (slums) contributing to the further expansion of the southern suburbs of Beirut, at times even reaching the airport (Davie, 1993). By the 1990s, the Shia’s expansion began soon to infiltrate to the city’s traditionally secular, Christian, Sunni, and Druze neighborhoods. [In Beirut, areas such as *Basta*, *Zkak Al-Bulat*, *Mousaytbeh*, *Mazraa*, *Rawshah*, *Hamra*. In suburbs, areas such as *Hadath*, *Harat Herik*, *Khaladah*, *Shouwayfat*, *Na’mah*, and so forth.] Gradual demographic gains by the Shia throughout the city became evident. Yet the city’s political municipal allocation of offices and services, as pre-set by the corporate confessional system, refused to accommodate the sectarian demographic changes and continued to encourage comparative disfranchisement. The representation system did not provide new sectarian residents with corresponding municipal or parliamentary seats in either Beirut or suburban areas of Mount Lebanon. The Shia remained without proportional representation despite their massive residential population.

Confessional population shifts challenged the established yet outdated spatial and political confessional boundaries. Further acute social and radical sectarian mobilizations that disrupted the delicate balance followed soon thereafter (Jabbra & Jabbra, 2001). As had appeared before in 1958 and in 1975-1990, an outburst of civil strife and armed clashes in the country again appeared as a direct consequence of a deep-rooted division between a demographically growing but politically “deprived” sectarian population (lately the Shia) and that of presumably politically-advantaged groups (Sunni, Druze, and Christians).² In 2006, as a consequence, sectarian tensions in West Beirut and suburbs were running high, placing the Shia mainly on one side and the Sunni and Druze on the other. The 1975 Civil War front lines that once divided Christians and Muslim neighborhoods shifted in 2006-2008 to divide sectarian Muslim neighborhoods (Shia vs.

Sunni vs. Druze), with the Lebanese Army and internal security forces standing in between.

The consociational state needed to act to contain sectarian grievances, but it failed to do so. The corporate consociational balance of power structure prevented the political expression of the newly emerging social forces; political avenues were obstructed by the traditional corporate arrangement (Nasr & James, 1985; Shils, 1966) and the static consociational edifice was incapable of adapting to a changing demographic sectarian environment. In 1958 and 1975, Christians' power privileges were at stake against demographically-growing Muslim sects. In 2006, the demographic growth of the Shia, particularly in vital urban centers, such as Beirut and its suburbs, and the inability of the existing corporate consociational power arrangement to accommodate changing demography, were among the major reasons contributing to the series of crises and to the eventual outbreak of violent clashes in 2008.³

A public opinion phone survey conducted by the Lebanese American University (LAU) in 2008 of 300 randomly selected respondents of voting age residing in Beirut and its suburbs captured the demographic basis of the political divide (Salamey & Tabar, 2008). The survey showed that the "residential" composition of opposing political camps was a strong determinant of political affiliation: supporters of the March 8th alliance (led primarily by the Shia) residing in Beirut and its suburbs (Greater Beirut) were predominantly found to be of regional origin from outside of Greater Beirut (77%). In contrast, March 14th supporters (led mainly by Sunni and Druze sects) were composed of individuals with family origin from Greater Beirut (62%) (Salamey & Tabar, 2007).

The Spatial Dilemma of Consociationalism

The permanent sectarian demographic imbalance in Lebanon was echoed by spatial relocations, contributing to changing sectarian political advantages. Access to resources, geographic borders, and strategic locations has been decisive in the determination of sectarian power advantage. Sectarian spaces became contested, driving the sects and their respective sponsoring foreign powers to establish control over vital locations, particularly through population concentration around cities and strategic locations. This has eventually led to sectarian cleansing (i.e., forced population expulsions), conflicting claims over territory, and disputed history. [There is no nationally unified public school history textbook in Lebanon due to sectarian disagreement over historic interpretations.] Sectarian consociationalism within the corporate confessional state has only weakened the ability of state security and military forces to take decisive actions to end sectarian violence or assert territorial state sovereignty.

For instance, the competition over an ever-shrinking urban space in the city of Beirut has had dramatic consequences on urban inter-sectarian struggle. As has been

discussed, throughout the 1950s, 60s, and early 70s, Beirut grew at an unprecedented rate. By the end of the 20th Century, the city and its urban suburbs had attracted almost half of the country's population (Collelo, 1987). Massive rural migration presented a major challenge to traditional sectarian and mixed sectarian urban neighborhoods, catalyzing a rising contention over the sectarian distribution of urban space and state resources (Khalaf, 2002). Most importantly, sects sought to impose their demographic dominance in various neighborhoods as a means to assure sectarian political control and to force corporate advantages in the consociational confessional power distribution (Gebhardt, et al.; 2005). [Displays of posters for sectarian leaders, martyrs, political slogans as well as the presence of religious institutions and sectarian political offices have served as territorial trenches demarking sectarian neighborhoods.]

These led to major sectarian cleansing campaigns throughout Beirut neighborhoods during times of crises and strife. Sectarian massacres during the Civil War of 1975 spread throughout the country in sectarian purification drives. Major routes and highways, ports, airports, strategic mountains, hills, border crossings, markets, and industrial, agricultural, and tourist areas became subject to frequent and violent struggle for control. Altering the demographic sectarian distribution of vital areas becomes the subject of wide spreading conspiracies.

In 2007, the Druze leader Walid Jumblat repeatedly accused Shia Hezbollah of trying to purchase, with Iranian funding, large swaths of real-estate in various areas of Lebanon with the aim of changing its demographic composition and controlling strategic military locations in the country. Likewise, throughout the 1990s, the late Sunni billionaire and former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri was often accused by other competing sects of conspiring to establish Sunni control over the Beirut downtown commercial center through major reconstruction and real-estate venture, known as *Solidere*. In post-1975 period, Shia groups have been accused of building illegal housing projects and slums surrounding the country's only airport as a way of controlling its destiny, using this as a bargaining leverage against other sects. [See civil unrest and armed "insurgency" in May 2008, where Hezbollah blockaded airport's roads in its drive to tease out political concession from the pro-government sectarian groups. The predominantly Sunni Future Movement responded by blockading major Lebanese-Syrian border crossing in Sunni controlled towns.]

Throughout these events, the corporate confessional state appeared unable to respond to the sectarian geopolitical struggle. Collective sectarian consociationalism over state action was a prerequisite. As a consequence, the state failed to intervene, to mediate, or to channel sectarian conflict over contested regions and neighborhoods. Small sectarian armed bands were able to protect "illegal" activities of followers, sectarian religious authorities were ready to mobilize worshipers, and sectarian politicians assured veto over state actions.

Worse, through the institution of blocking coalitions, consociationalism provided any sect with the ability to prevent the state from establishing control over regions

deemed vital to sectarian activities. After all, sectarian geopolitical advantage was most crucially determined by the strategic spatial location of the sect vis-à-vis bordering states. For instance, the Shia, under varying leadership, and, by virtue of their geographic location along the Israeli-Lebanese border, have come to play a vital role in the Arab-Israeli and Iranian-Israeli struggles, which has elevated their proxy regional geopolitical significance. During the 1970s and 1980s, the Shia provided the Palestinian Liberation Organization groups with a safe corridor to wage guerrilla warfare against Israel. The Shia-Palestinian alliance strengthened the Shia-Sunni position in the Lebanese confessional struggle, with the PLO providing money, military training, weapons, and support that allowed them to wage a successful campaign against the Maronite Christians.⁴

The growing regional rivalry between Iran and Israel in the 1990s provided the Lebanese Shia with a significant strategic role in this regional struggle. The Shia's campaign against Israeli occupation of Southern Lebanon was backed by substantial Iranian-Syrian logistical military and financial support, providing Hezbollah with a wide military and social network throughout its areas of control. This strategic dominance of the Southern region motivated Hezbollah to prevent other sects, parties, and the state from sharing control and of developing the constituency. [Hezbollah was forced to accept the positioning of the Lebanese Army along the Lebanese-Israeli border for the first time since the 1975 only after the Israeli military attack against Lebanon in July 2006 and the passage of UNSCR 1701.] Iranian support of Hezbollah has driven other sects to fear the mounting power of the Shia in the country. This fear was further elevated in 2008 after Hezbollah utilized its armament advantage to move militarily against other sectarian areas. [Following Hezbollah's May 2008 armed insurgency against the government and its conquest of predominantly Sunni residential West Beirut, Hezbollah forced electoral reform that undermined the power of other sects; particularly the Sunnis and Druze (See Doha Declaration).]

The corporate consociational structure of the state that allowed sectarian groups to hold semi-veto power over national decisions was a decisive factor in the establishment of safe sectarian enclaves. The consociational state's impingement on these territories were often considered as violations of the national pact and labeled as an attack on sectarian coexistence (*Al-Aysh Al-Moushtarak*) by subjected sectarian groups. The state's efforts to impose itself above narrow sectarian interests in favor of "national interests" drew mainly condemnation and violent confrontations especially among the Muslim factions.⁵ Thus, the state's monopoly over the use of force and its ability to practice an equal application of the law over its territories were further undermined. Amid an immobile territorially-based consociational state, a permanent sectarian race for armaments and external support has been established throughout the Lebanese territories (Traboulsi, 2007). The chronic failure of the consociational state to act as a law and order provider for all its citizens over the entire country's territory has become a factor

further deepening and fueling the sectarian fragmentation and instability of the country and society (Hutson et al., 2009).⁶

In sum, the sectarian struggle over spatial positioning has pitted different sects in competition with one another over vital locations throughout the country. Demographic and spatial sectarian reconfigurations within cities, border areas, and strategic locations were among the critical factors that have fueled sectarian conflicts. Tying communities' spatial locations to the domestic sectarian competition for power, and, consequently, to regional politics amid the existing weak and paralyzed corporate consociational sectarian state renders plurality a conflict ridden reality in a transitional society.

Failing Corporate Consociational State in Time of Regional Turbulence

Sectarian power struggle has driven sects to seek foreign backing and support in order to balance against one another. Foreign players have been active in supporting their respective allies among the different sects to achieve advantageous geo-strategic positions. As a consequence, for the past half century, the Muslim groups have sought the support of the Arab/Muslim World while the Christians relied on their Western allies. Whenever Arab/Muslim-Western relations improved, state consociationalism in Lebanon thrived, and whenever it deteriorated, state consociationalism collapsed. With the growing complexity of contemporary regional power struggles, politics in Lebanon have become further fragmented along sectarian lines, pitting different Muslim and Christian groups against each other with the consociational state seeking a refereeing role at best.

Originally, the rise of Nassir in Egypt and the spread of his pan-Arab, anti-western ideology in the 1950s deeply divided Lebanese confessional politics, contributing to the first Civil War of 1958. Confessional groups mobilized, with Western-backed Christian groups confronting predominantly Islamic factions supported by the Egyptian-Syrian nationalist regimes. Similar polarization was ignited again in 1975 and led to a second Civil War, with Muslim groups taking the side of the Palestinians in their struggle for nationhood while Christians aligning themselves with the West (Traboulsi, 2007).⁷ Today, confessional politics continues to be driven by regional struggle. Mobilizations are being primarily drawn along sectarian lines with pro-Iranian-Syrian Shia groups, led by Hezbollah, pitted against a Sunni-led coalition, backed by France, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the United States. Christians, taking the sideline of the growing regional Shia-Sunni rivalry, have been evenly divided between Shia and Sunni allies (Beydoun, 2009).⁸ Sectarian coalition formations and shifts have been largely tempered by domestic power struggle as well as by external-regional circumstances, making Lebanese politics fundamentally transnational.

A seasoned political observer can easily forecast the prospect for stability in the Lebanese power sharing arrangement and sectarian alliances based upon regional politics. For instance, the Ta'ef Agreement, which enabled the end of the 1975-1989 Lebanese

Civil War, was achieved only after the establishment of an anti-Saddam Hussein international alliance. It included Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria, France, and the United States, and received the blessing of the Islamic Republic of Iran, collectively prompting international support for Syrian “guardianship” over Lebanon. The post-Gulf War I period witnessed relative stability among the confessional groups in Lebanon and a revival of the confessional consociational state.

Following 9/11 and the beginning of the ‘war on terror’ by the Bush administration, and the subsequent U.S. invasion of Iraq, the post-Gulf War I alliance collapsed. Syrian opposition to the U.S. invasion in 2003 undermined Syrian-U.S. relations and drove Syria to align itself even more closely with Shia Iran. Following the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the United States envisioned a democratic domino effect in the region, launching a Middle Eastern democratic agenda known as “the Greater Middle East Initiative” (Baroudi, 2007). This initiated an increase of pressure on Syria for ‘regime change’, and was reflected in the U.S. call for an end to Syria’s political “guardianship” over Lebanon. U.S. pressure on Syria was enshrined in law after President Bush signed *The Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act of 2003*, which imposed various economic and political sanctions against the Syrian regime for its alleged support of Hezbollah (Public Law, 2003). This Act called on Syria to “immediately declare its commitment to completely withdraw its armed forces, including military, paramilitary, and security forces, from Lebanon, and set a firm schedule for such withdrawal” (*The Syria Accountability...*, 2003). Sensing U.S. resolve, anti-Syrian confessional groups in Lebanon, mainly Maronite, Druze, and Sunni, initiated a campaign against the Syrian presence in Lebanon (known as “the Bristol Gathering”). They were opposed by pro-Syrian groups, led primarily by the Shia (assembled around “the Ain Al-Tenah Camp”). The consociational confessional state emerged divided and on the verge of collapse.

By the end of 2004, relations between Syria, on the one side, and Western powers, primarily France and the U.S. as well as pro-Western Sunni Arab states such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt, on the other side, further deteriorated, with the latter accusing Syria of supporting the anti-American insurgency in Iraq as well as arming Shia Hezbollah in Lebanon. Syria responded by implementing an extraconstitutional measure that extended pro-Syrian president Emile Lahoud’s term in office for an additional three years. In turn, the U.S., France, and the U.K. reacted by passing U.N. Security Council Resolution 1559, demanding the immediate withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon and the disarmament of pro-Syrian and pro-Iranian Palestinian and Shia groups such as Hezbollah. What followed was the commencement of a retaliatory campaign of violence against anti-Syrian dissidents, most notably the assassination of the former Prime Minister of Lebanon and Sunni leader, Rafik Hariri.

The Hariri assassination plunged the confessional state into a deeper sectarian crisis. The Shia factions were backed by Iran and Syria, while Maronite, Druze, and Sunni groups were supported by the U.S., France, and Saudi Arabia. Political divisions

were created between the pro-Syrian “March 8th Coalition,” on one side, and the anti-Syrian “March 14th Coalition,” on the other. Massive international pressure succeeded in forcing Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon in May 2005 and in holding national parliamentary elections in Lebanon. Yet, such a pressure, amid deep sectarian division, failed to revive or even stabilize the corporate consociational state (Baroudi & Salamey, 2008; Salamey and Payne, 2008).

Violence campaigns against anti-Syrian leaders resumed. By December 2006, the newly forged coalition between the Shia group Hezbollah and the Maronite Christian leader Michael Aoun orchestrated a popular campaign to topple the March 14th dominated cabinet and parliament.⁹ This began with the resignation of pro-Syrian Shia ministers from the cabinet in November 2006, followed by the initiation of a massive year-long sit-in in downtown Beirut surrounding the Cabinet House, the refusal to recognize the legitimacy or constitutionality of the existing Cabinet on grounds of lacking consociationalism, the blocking of parliament from convening or inaugurating a new president, and finally the leading of an armed insurgency in the capital during May 2008.

International efforts to aid the March 14th cabinet and parliament, primarily from the U.S., France, and Saudi Arabia, proved futile in the face of Syrian-Iranian-backed opposition and sectarian veto. Finally, both France and Saudi Arabia began to yield to the notion that the prospect of the corporate consociational state in Lebanon cannot be achieved without the direct support and approval of Syria, Iran, and their Lebanese sectarian allies. For that purpose, France and Saudi Arabia began requesting Syrian and Iranian assistance to pressure Lebanese allies to work together and elect a new president ahead of forming a new ‘national unity’ cabinet. This led the Arab League in May 2008 to yield the diplomatic initiative to the presumably “neutral” state of Qatar in settling the Lebanese sectarian crisis (see Doha Declaration).

The recent political developments in Lebanon, particularly sectarian compradorialism and international proxy roles played out by competing client groups, demonstrate that the achievement of state sectarian consociationalism is largely contingent upon the consensus of regional and international powers. At the same time, the consociational sectarian prerequisites of the state’s structure and decision making have proven conducive to foreign intervention in power sharing arrangement and regional power struggle over Lebanese territories. The viability and stability of a sectarian based consociational state has proven difficult, if not impossible, to be achieved amid the turbulent regional and international political environment.

Integrative Consociationalism

As has been discussed, the Lebanese example shows that geopolitical interconnectivity and the fluidity of both space and demography paralyze the corporate sectarian-based consociational state that, in turn, leads to groups reverting to local and

exclusionary sectarian control and foreign affiliations. Thus, the preservation of peaceful and coexisting plurality within a corporate consociational power sharing context has been highly contested.

While deep ethno-sectarian identity is a reality determining the political prospects of many plural societies, appropriate consociational power sharing arrangement may undermine splintering momentum, foreign allegiance, and national fragmentation. While deep ethno-sectarian identity is a reality determining the political prospects of many plural societies, an appropriate consociational power sharing arrangement could help to undermine the splintering of momentum, the formation of foreign allegiances, and national fragmentation. Such an arrangement needs, however, to solicit political accommodation so as to encourage the formation of cross-cutting socio-political cleavages rather than the contrary (Lipset, 1959).¹⁰ Integrative consociationalism is proposed here as an institutional formulation that injects political stimulation and incentives for inter-sectarian accommodation and cross-cutting cleavage formation. It is suggested that such a strategy synthesizes national and sectarian-based power sharing arrangements through combining democratic proportional rule with that of sectarian consociationalism. Such a mechanism promises to help moderate deep sectarian divisions in favor of inter and cross-cutting cleavages politics.

The implementation of integrative consociationalism can be achieved through political reforms that institutionalize secular “self-determination” alongside communal sectarian “predetermination” as a principled guide. Arend Lijphart explained “self-determination” as a conciliatory power sharing proposition between ethnic and non-ethnic groups and individuals (Lijphart, 2006:285). Consociationalism based on ‘self-determination’ makes confessional group membership optional rather than pre-determined (Hanf, 1981: 249). The electoral implications of such a proposition include the establishment of ethno-sectarian alongside non-ethno-sectarian elected offices. Applying these recommendations within a diverse ethno-sectarian and divided society requires resolutions that stress political inclusion of individual citizenry without undermining ethno-sectarian communalism (Burkholder, 2006; Khalaf, 2001: 43-44).

Lessons from countries with fluid, interactive, and dynamic cleavages that have relatively succeeded in institutionalizing political formulas to moderate divisions and accommodate fast changing demography should be revealing. Many diverse immigrant-based societies, for instance, have institutionalized integrative governing strategies to cope with fast changing demographic and spatial landscapes (“New World” countries such as Canada and Australia). Many rapidly industrialized and urbanized states have also institutionalized successful integrative mechanisms that helped preserve the dual interests of the citizenry and that of the emerging communities.

At least four important institutional arrangements can be formulated along integrative consociational principles: bicameralism, duality of administrative local and national governance, mixed electoral system, and cross-cutting electoral districting.

The establishment of bicameral representation along with a responsive electoral system is one of the keys to integrative consociationalism. The United States, Germany, Russia, and Australia among others have successfully implemented aspects of integrative consociationalism. In each case, the lower chamber has come to represent the individual citizenry especially in small districts or at large, while the upper chamber has preserved the geographic interests of states, communities, and regions. A combination of centralized and decentralized administrations has also helped achieve duality of interests between the national and local levels of governance. Appropriate electoral mechanisms (e.g., majoritarian, plurality, proportional, or mixed) along corresponding electoral districts have stimulated alliances and cross-cutting cleavage formations.

In principle, Lebanon has made important moves toward integrative consociationalism. The Lebanese Ta'ef Agreement of 1989 stipulated the creation of a bicameral chamber: a Chamber of Deputies elected directly by the Lebanese citizens on a national non-sectarian "self-determination" basis, and a Senate that maintains "pre-determined" sectarian representation. The Ta'ef Agreement also recommended the further decentralization of government administrations. [The 1989 Ta'ef Agreement that sought to end the Lebanese Civil War stipulated the eventual establishment of a bicameral representation, a confessionally-based Upper House or a Senate along with a non-confessionally-based Lower House or a Chamber of Deputies (See The 1989 Ta'ef Agreement).] However, due to strong sectarian elite objections, Lebanon failed to implement such a bicameral and administrative arrangement.

The implementation of bicameral representation in Lebanon would constitute an important electoral element in integrative consociationalism. Bicameral representation allows the individual voter to express dual identities; sectarian representation is vested in the upper house while national citizenship is manifested in the secular vote to the lower house. Sectarian seats in the upper house can be allocated in proportion to the confessional constituencies in the country, as they are allocated today in the Lebanese Chamber of Deputies. Each ethnic or sectarian group would elect their respective representatives.

Administrative aspects of integrative consociationalism have also been introduced by the Ta'ef Agreement to complement bicameral reforms. The Agreement stipulates the implementation of a strong centralism alongside decentralism (See Ta'ef Agreement - "III. Other Reforms: Administrative Decentralism"). Yet neither has been possible to implement amid the lack of a comprehensive and integrative reform. Within the corporate consociational state, centralism has been repeatedly sabotaged by sectarian vetoes while decentralism has been manipulated so as to strengthen sectarian totalitarianism and fragmentation.¹¹ Through bicameralism, however, integration of centralized and decentralized interests (sectarian and regional) makes such administration mutually inclusive as is the case with many federal arrangements.

Another integrative consociational attempt had been made by the National Electoral Commission (also known as the 'Boutrous Commission'), which was set up by

Lebanese Chamber of Deputies in 2005 and recommended the establishment of an electoral system that combines aspects of majoritarianism and proportional representation (National Commission on the Parliamentary Electoral Law, 2006). Such a system, if it were to have been adopted, would have combined local sectarian representation in small plurality at large (bloc voting) based districts (Qaza) with cross-cutting representation of cleavages in larger multi-member proportional list-based districts (Mouhafazah) (see Illustration Manual by the National Commission on the Parliamentary Electoral Law, 2006). The Commission's recommendations, however, were rejected by self-perpetuating confessional elites meeting in Doha, who, alternatively, proposed small-plurality at large districts with seats predetermined along sectarian lines (see Doha Declaration).

Electoral districting and the formation of electoral rules would play a significant role in fostering national cross-cutting cleavages politics in Lebanon. The size of each electoral district, its ethno-sectarian composition, the number of contested national seats, and the number and size of parties are important determinants to consider when designing the electoral system and its corresponding districts (Harris & Reilly, 1998). Ideally, the implementation of proportional representation (PR), particularly for a lower house, would have been an integrative electoral option. The PR system provides incentives for parties to establish cross-cutting sectarian alliances to form a governing coalition. Yet, despite its attractiveness for the lower house (particularly the PR variant known as List Proportional Representation – LPR as implemented in Israel), Iraq's experience stands as stark evidence of various deficiencies inherent in the LPR system for deeply divided societies undergoing transition. The absence of a large dominant or strong national party, the presence of a large number of contested seats for the National Assembly within a single national electoral district, the existence of deep ethnic and sectarian divisions, the low electoral threshold, and the lack of a unifying national leadership has yielded a system of numerous polarized parties of small and medium size. The result has been the deep fragmentation of the voters along ethnic, sectarian, regional, and tribal lines, and, consequently, the undermining state's unity and stability (Salamey & Pearson, 2005).¹²

In contrast, the Lebanese bloc vote electoral system has changed over the years following violent events. The politics of redistricting and gerrymandering has shaped the confessional realignment and power sharing distribution, yielding mixed results.¹³ Large multi-member multi-sectarian-constituency bloc electoral list districts (the 'muhafaza' or province) had been implemented in Lebanon between 1990 and 2005, during the period of Syrian 'guardianship', yielding 'relative' integrative consociational outcomes. Most importantly, in close races, these districts have dictated the formation of cross-cutting sectarian lists throughout the electoral process. Candidates have been forced to moderate their sectarian appeal in favor of coexistence (*Al-Aysh Al-Moushtarak*) to win cross-cutting sectarian votes. This has been particularly the case in districts with no single sectarian majority (Mount Lebanon, North Lebanon, Western Bekaa Valley). In single sectarian dominated districts, however, integration has been undermined (South Lebanon, Nabateya, Beirut, and Chouf) where sectarian minority votes rendered insignificant

(Hutson et al., 2009). Yet, the most important integrative deficiency revealed throughout this electoral experience lies in the pre-determination of quota-based sectarian seats that have fueled conflict during times of demographic dynamics and change, emphasizing exclusionary rather than integrative consociationalism (Salamey & Payne, 2008).

Integrative lessons drawn from the electoral system in Lebanon strongly point to the need to establish mid-to-large multi-member multi-ethnic/sectarian electoral districts. List Proportional Representation is a preferred electoral-system choice because it can better represent the changing ethno-sectarian demography and preserve minority representation. At the same time, a multi-member bloc vote system in sectarian mixed and close-race districts has the advantage of fostering cross-cleavage alliances. A mixed system that combines the advantages is the preferred choice. The German electoral system can be taken as a mixed-model, where the election ballot for the Bundestag provides the voter with the ability to select a competing electoral list, i.e., List Proportional Representation (LPR), as well as candidates running on plurality electoral basis. Thus, districting considerations must be taken into account in order to establish a relative ethno-sectarian electoral balance whenever possible, particularly in mixed cities, suburbs, and provinces, so as to boost integrative electoral process.

Contrary to what the current system dictates, the electoral reform proposed above assures self-determination and makes confessional and secular identification voluntary rather than “pre-determined.” Electoral proportional representation provides an internal corrective mechanism whenever demographic and spatial changes occur. “Balanced” majoritarianism undermines ethno-sectarian polarization by necessitating cross-cutting ethno-sectarian alliance formation at various levels in the country, hence tempering the likelihood of regional intervention. Bicameralism along with a combination of centralized and decentralized administration establishes the groundwork for the duality of communal (sectarian) and individual (national) representation and governance. This re-establishment of power distribution along the lines of integrative consociationalism in Lebanon paves the way for the moderation of the present conflictual inter-sectarian struggle.

As has been examined, Lebanese corporatist consociationalism has converged domestic and regional geopolitical struggles. It has tethered national sectarian dynamics to regional geopolitics. Confessional groups have sought affiliations with foreign countries and drew substantial foreign backing. Yet, despite the various benefits that regional powers have gained by the proxy roles played out by Lebanese sectarian groups, sectarian conflicts have repeatedly threatened to spill over to the entire region. Sunni-Shia struggle in Lebanon has alarmed the entire group of Arab states, particularly those with divided constituencies such as Syria and the Gulf countries. International powers have also been alarmed by the threat of growing sectarian conflicts and instabilities in the region (Iraq, Sudan, Pakistan, Yemen, and so forth). Lebanese sectarian elites themselves have feared open sectarian civil war that would undermine their controls and strategic regional role.

The threat of open conflict and civil war has provided a strong incentive for sectarian elites to negotiate political reform and settlement and to reach agreement (Rustow, 1969). It was no coincidence that during the May of 2008 breakout of sectarian Sunni-Shi'ite strife in Lebanon, regional countries rushed to end the disputes and facilitated incentives for the Lebanese sectarian elites to reach the Doha Agreement. Such convergence of regional and local concerns provides an important opportunity for reform initiatives to gain momentum and for cross-cutting ethno-sectarian integrative arrangements to be advanced.

Conclusion

The dilemma surrounding ethno-sectarian accommodation in Lebanon remains typical of many deeply-divided transitional countries undergoing rapid demographic and spatial changes, amid heavy geopolitical and regional interdependence. Demographic and spatial community dynamics, along with the existing static corporate state system, are setting in motion a conflict dynamic that is repeatedly undermining group co-existence and sustainable relations, and also inviting foreign meddling in the country. The fundamental challenge continues to be in addressing what type of power sharing arrangement could accommodate the aspirations of the various groups, moderate the likelihood and impact of external intervention, avoid internal splintering, and achieve equitable and sustainable individual and community justice.

Despite limits to electoral engineering in the formulation of a sustainable democracy in a divided society (Salloukh, 2006), integrative consociational electoral reform is needed. Fundamental to such reform, however, is the achievement of group accommodation, citizenship rights, and national integration. Such an arrangement, particularly in countries confronting transition, must account demographically, spatially, and politically for the social fluidity of the national environment.

An examination of confessionalism in Lebanon and current ethno-sectarianism in Iraq reveals grave consequences for the rigid, corporate consociational and ethno-sectarian-based power sharing arrangement that refuses to adapt to a rapidly changing national environment and fails to immunize the country from regional interventionism. These arrangements require serious revision if they are to achieve sustainable ethno-sectarian national relations.

In this article, integrative consociationalism through bicameralism, electoral and administrative institutional reforms has been advanced as a synthetic transformational representation model that can preserve sectarian communal interests while, at the same time, integrate the hybridization of permanently-changing communities and individual citizenship. The integrative consociational option will moderate sectarian appeal in favor of sectarian cross-cutting cleavage formations. Through such a transformation, the existing contentions between communities and citizens will be reduced. National

cohesion and political integration will be preserved and the impact of a turbulent and transnational environment contained.

Notes

1. The examination of the Lebanese political experience demonstrates that the various political pacts at different time oversized the power of one sectarian group over others in the corporate arrangements. This can well be associated with regional countries intervening in favor of proxy sect (France in favor of Christians in 1943, Egypt in favor of Sunnis in 1958, Syria and Saudi Arabia in favor of Muslims in 1989, Iran in favor of Shia in 2008).
2. At different periods of the sectarian struggles, superstructure ideological pretexts justified political mobilizations. In 1958 Sunni gathered around Pan-Arab Nasserist sentiments against Christians who supported a non-Arab Lebanese nationalist identity. In 1975, both Sunni and Shia mobilized around the Palestinian cause against primarily the Maronites who opposed growing Palestinian military and political role in the country. Starting in 2005 most Christians formed alliance with Sunnis and Druze in support of a Lebanese sovereign and independent state against the Shia who defended Hezbollah's armed Islamic resistance movement.
3. In May 2008, armed clashes broke out in Beirut between Shia Hezbollah and Amal militias, on one side, and Sunni and Druze militia groups, on the other side. The Lebanese Army and government security forces were paralyzed and prevented from interfering for fear that such an intervention may divide the military and security establishment along sectarian lines. This is the same pretext given in the eve of the outbreak of 1975 Civil War for the army and internal security apparatus non-intervention stance in intersectarian violence.
4. In the early years of the Lebanese Civil War, most young Shia fighters were mobilized by anti-government anti-Maronite secular parties under the umbrella of the Lebanese National Movement. With increasing sectarian mobilization and radicalization, however, most Shia began to join the ranks of the Amal Movement and later Hezbollah. Since 2005, both Shia groups have sought alliance to counterbalance Sunni political power in the country.
5. In February 2008 the Lebanese cabinet deemed illegal the security-based communication network established by Hezbollah in the South and considered it as a violation of state's national sovereignty. This infamous decision, along with the removal of a pro-Hezbollah Lebanese Army commander from a senior role in Airport security, led to nation-wide armed clashes and ceased only after the Cabinet, in humiliation, reversed itself on both decisions.
6. Population studies have indicated an overwhelming public support for state's monopoly over security, yet armed sectarian groups, such as Hezbollah, have prevented the implementation of such public sentiments. For instance, the Hutson's 2008 survey study of Hezbollah-controlled South Lebanon found that 76% of respondents believed only the Lebanese Army and no other actors should bear arms (Hutson et al., 2009).
7. It should be noted that Syria with its Alawi leaders initially feared the Palestinian-Lebanese Sunni alliance in Lebanon and in 1976 intervened militarily in the Lebanese Civil War, with the blessing of Western powers, to back the Christian Maronites against Palestinian-Lebanese Muslim alliance. This position soon shifted after Egypt signed a U.S. sponsored peace agreement with Israel (Camp David Accord in 1978), which was opposed by the Arab and Syrian regimes.
8. Christians, and particularly the Maronite leaders, have been deeply divided between allies to Shiite Hezbollah-led coalition (Aoun-Skaff-Franjeyah) and allies to Sunni Future Movement (Jajaa, Jemayel, Shamoun).
9. Aoun's defection to the Shiite camp can be attributed to the increasing fear of some Christians form potential Sunni political dominance and Christian marginalization. This fear has been infuriated following the Taef Agreement, which re-delegated the power of the Maronite President in favor of the Sunni Prime Minister.
10. Seymour Martin Lipset considered that the chances for a stable democracy "are enhanced to the extent that social strata, groups and individuals have a number of cross-cutting politically relevant affiliations." Additionally, he believed that the presence of such a factor will help reduce the intensity of political conflict (Lipset, 1959:97).
11. Efforts to advance central institutions, such as strengthening the army, have often been viewed suspiciously by sectarian groups. Shia Hezbollah has often vetoed such efforts when support for them came from the United States. In contrast, the Sunni-led Future Movement has Iranian aids. On the other hand, decentralism has meant strengthening sectarian territorial control over national authority, such as in predominantly Shia Southern Lebanon

and Southern Suburbs of Beirut where Hezbollah established a nascent sectarian state. Similar efforts have been made by Sunnis in Western Beirut neighborhoods, such as Tarik Al-Jadidah, and in Northern Lebanon.

12. It should be noted that the ability of a strong national leader at the head of the executive branch may help to undermine coalition instability as has been the case in Israel under the various strong national leaders (Sharon, Begin, Ben Gurion, etc.). However, most executive national leaders that emerged in countries such as Iraq and who were able to unify the country (e.g., Ataturk, Nassir, Mandela, etc...) came to prominence by their assertion of national identity against "foreign" dominance.

13. The major achievement of the Doha Agreement of May 2008 between the various Lebanese sectarian groups was the restoration of the 1960s electoral system, which divided the country into small districts (Qaza), with major implications for sectarian and political realignment and political power sharing distribution.

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