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The Hardships of Consociation, The Perils of Partition: Lebanon 1943–1990

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INTRODUCTION

From 1975 to 1990 Lebanon, a pluralist (or: divided) state regarded by many scholars as a successful consociational democracy since the mid-1940s, was tormented by a bloody and devastating civil war that left some 150,000 people dead and spurred close to a third of its population to emigrate. This conflict, caused primarily by local factors but with regional and international dimensions as well, represented the breakdown of the internal consensus that had prevailed in this state, and brought about the near-disintegration of its political and military institutions.[1]

The ongoing conflict in Lebanon prompted many observers to view it as a "non-state state": a political entity in which the central government enjoys only nominal authority over its territory.[2] Nevertheless, as fifteen years of seemingly endless conflict continued, all attempts to find viable alternatives to the state—for example, partition, annexation, "cantonization," a radical regime, majoritarian democracy, and so on—ended in failure. As the 1980s drew to a close, however, a new political consensus in Lebanon began to emerge, and the reconstruction of the state institutions began. As before, external factors, notably Syria, also played a significant—albeit far from exclusive—part in these developments.

Unlike other cases of internal conflict where coexistence was put to the test and the outcome was de facto or de jure partition, such as Korea, Vietnam (temporarily), Yugoslavia, Cyprus and, presumably, Israel-Palestine, the war in Lebanon resulted in renewed integration: the option of partition proved unattainable, and local and foreign players agreed that the only way to end the conflict was to return to coexistence based on a new formula of power-sharing among all of its ethnic communities.

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1 The literature on the Lebanese conflict is enormous. Notable works are Salibi (1976, 1988); Haley and Snider (1979); W. Khalidi (1979); Marius Deeb (1980); Azar (1984); Rabinovich (1985); S. Khalaf (1987); Barakat (1988); Shehadi and Mills (1988); Hanf (1993); Picard (1996).
2 Hudson (1988); Faris (1994); Harris (1997).

This paper addresses the two main questions presented by the Lebanese case. First, what were the main reasons for the breakdown of the political settlement in Lebanon toward the mid-1970s; and second, how can the remarkable viability of this state throughout and after the 1975–1990 civil war be explained?

THE HARDSHIPS OF CONSOCIATION

With an area of 10,452 square kilometers and a population numbering about 3.1 million (not including some 350,000 Palestinian refugees and hundreds of thousands of foreign laborers, most of whom, at present, are Syrian), Lebanon enjoys a long tradition of power-sharing settlements among its seventeen officially recognized ethnic communities or religious sects (*tawai'f* —pl. of *tai'fa*), heads of large families and other traditional political bosses (*zu'ama'*—pl. of *za'im*), and geographic regions. However, the political history of this state, rooted in the Ottoman period and the period of the French Mandate, is also ridden with outbursts of internal strife, reaching their peak in 1860, 1958, and 1975–1990.

The consociational settlement that enabled the leaders of Lebanon's various ethnic communities, clans, and regions to come together and administer the state's affairs from its independence in the mid-1940s until the outbreak of the civil war three decades later—and, with some modifications, to this very day—consists of several power-sharing mechanisms defined by formal and informal agreements that were reached since the creation of "Greater Lebanon" in 1920. These include the constitution of 1926;[3] the Franco-Lebanese treaty of 1936 (and particularly annexes "6 and 6 *bis*," which are a code-name for the entire political settlement);[4] laws passed before each parliamentary election;[5] and the National Pact of 1943.

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3   Khalil (1962), vol. 1: 112–121; Baaklini (1976); Chalouhi (1978); Zamir (1985).
4   Salibi (1965); Browne (1976/77).
5   Khalil (1962), vol. 1: 124-134; Marayati (1968); Hanf (1993).

The last agreement, which was amended in 1989 but nevertheless remains the most important in this group, was reached through regional and international mediation. It comprises two main parts. The first, which was immediately made public, was a compromise regarding the national identity and foreign policy of the independent Lebanese state. It was agreed that it would have an "Arab face" (*wajh 'arabi*), i.e., some type of Arab identity, and that its foreign policy would be "neither east nor west," i.e., neither an alliance with a Western power, like the one promoted by France, nor a union with the Arab hinterland. These stipulations reflected the recognition of the leading political circles in the Christian and Muslim communities, and particularly among the Maronites and Sunnis, the prominent ethnic groups in the state, that the once-illegitimate "Greater Lebanon" established by the French in 1920 was by now irrevocable—i.e., that partition of the state along ethnic lines or, conversely, its full annexation to the Arab hinterland in the name of irredentism, was ruled out and that political integration between its various communities remained the only feasible option. In 1945, Lebanon was one of the founding members of the Arab League, thus demonstrating its political and cultural alignment with the Arab states. However, Lebanon's leaders went to great pains to ensure that this all-Arab organization would accord legitimacy to its individual members—i.e., that it would set up a "Westphalian order" among the independent Arab states and institutionalize *raison d'état*—and not be allowed to become an instrument for attaining Arab unity in the form of a federation or confederation.[6]

The second part of the National Pact provided all ethnic groups in Lebanon with proportional representation in the various institutions of the state, and despite the fact that this part of the agreement was not publicly announced, time has shown that it was no less binding than its first part. An

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6   "Speech by Prime Minister Riad al-Sulh, Delivered in the Lebanese Chamber of Deputies, October 7, 1943," in Khalil (1962), vol. 1: 105–109; Khuri (1960). On Lebanese attitudes toward the Arab League, see Porath (1986); Zisser (2000).

informal understanding among Lebanon's leaders determined that the three highest offices of the state—president of the Republic, premier, and speaker of the parliament—would be held by a Maronite, a Sunni, and a Shi'i, respectively; and that a 6:5 ratio between members of the Christian and Muslim communities, respectively, as well as proportional representation of all ethnic groups, was to be observed in all branches of the government, including the political institutions of the state, the public administration, and the security forces (in 1989 this ratio was changed to Christian-Muslim parity).[7]

The National Pact of 1943 enabled Lebanon to avoid communal tensions from within and gain regional and global support for its struggle for independence, which was brought to a successful conclusion after the last French soldier left its territory three years later. Only in October 1989, when the overwhelming majority of the Lebanese parliament adopted the Tai'f agreement—a document of political reforms designed to facilitate an end to the civil war—was this understanding amended: Lebanon's ties to the Arab hinterland were strengthened, and power-sharing among all its ethnic communities was formally acknowledged as the cornerstone of its political system.

But the consociational settlement that enabled Lebanon to enjoy over two and a half decades of relative political stability and economic prosperity began to fall apart in the late 1960s, leading to the eventual deterioration of its institutions and the outbreak of internal conflict in the mid-1970s. This process should not be traced solely to external factors—whose interference in Lebanon's affairs served to exacerbate internal strains on its political, social, and economic system rather than create them in the first place—but to two major drawbacks of the consociational settlement itself: the considerable "immobilism"[8] that characterized both parts of the National Pact, which was evident already in the mid-1940s but became acute two

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7   Rondot (1966); Qubain (1961); Salibi (1965); Susser (1986); Gaunsen (1987).
8   Lustick (1979, 1997); Chalouhi (1978).

decades later, and the lack of "stateness,"[9] which impeded the process of state-building in Lebanon and left the state institutions weak and incapable of exercising their authority. The next section elaborates on these two detriments.

Despite the significance of the National Pact, it was after all a political bargain struck between President Bechara el-Khoury and Prime Minister Riad el-Sulh, two prominent Lebanese politicians who were at the time the most influential in the Maronite and Sunni communities, respectively. As such, it could only reflect specific political and social circumstances. One could have expected that other, similar compromises would follow— namely, the establishment of concrete mechanisms enabling the country's leadership to adapt the consociational settlement to changing political, social, and economic circumstances—but this did not happen: although minor modifications did take place, particularly after the first civil war in 1958, the crux remained unchanged until the Ta'if Agreement was approved forty-six years later.

The limitations of the first part of the Pact were not apparent in the early years of independence. The ambiguity of this compromise suited the aspirations of Lebanon's ethnic communities; and the regional system and the international community alike accorded it support and legitimacy. But this positive atmosphere was short-lived: the moderate brand of pan-Arabism that characterized the conservatives in the Arab states in the 1940s and early 1950s was replaced by the revolutionary zeal of military officers who gradually came to power in many Middle Eastern countries, and the Cold War forced every state, regardless of its size, to take sides.[10] The result was that those in Lebanon who sympathized with pan-Arabism and its new champion, Egypt's leader Gamal 'Abd el-Nasser, began to emphasize Lebanon's Arab identity, while those who feared Arab domination, particularly after the establishment of the United Arab Republic (1958–

9   Ben-Dor (1983).
10   Kerr (1978).

1961), clung to the vague stipulations of the National Pact in terms of Lebanon's identity, and at the same time defied it by appealing for Western support. The internal divisions over the issues of identity and foreign policy came to a head in the first civil war in 1958, an internal quarrel between rival Lebanese *zu'ama'* that quickly escalated into a domestic, regional, and international crisis.[11] They became acute when the state was gradually drawn into the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, particularly after the 1967 war, and as its ethnic, national, and socioeconomic cleavages began to overlap.[12]

But power-sharing in Lebanon, as determined by the second part of the National Pact, was also far from perfect. First, the consociational settlement proved difficult, if not impossible, to modify by peaceful means. In 1946, only three years after the National Pact, an Orthodox member of the Lebanese parliament, Habib Abu-Shahla, was elected speaker of the House, but ardent supporters of his rival, Sabri Hamadeh, the powerful Shi'i *za'im* of the Beqaa' valley, vehemently rejected this breach of the Pact and took to the streets, calling for total abolition of the political system. From then on, only Shi'i MPs were elected to this post. Likewise, the premiership and presidency became the exclusive domains of the Sunni and Maronite communities, respectively. This allocation of posts, a product of a political compromise that took into account the proportions among Lebanon's ethnic communities existing in 1943 (based on the outcome of the 1932 population census), has thus become a sine qua non of its political system. All that could be done to adjust these ratios and allocations of positions was to shift prerogatives from one official to another (as was finally done in the Ta'if Agreement) or set up completely new institutions that could be allocated to deprived and/or discontented communities.

Holding a new population census in place of the one taken in Lebanon in

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11 On the 1958 conflict, see Stuart (1958); Junblat (1959); Karami and Karami (1959); Qubain (1961); Agwani (1965); Meo (1965); Hudson (1968); Kerr (1972); Alin (1994); Little (1996).

12 Lahoud (1976); R. Khalidi (1986).

1932, which has served as the basis for ethnic representation ever since, was likewise an unachievable task.[13] Higher birth rates among its Muslim communities (particularly Shi'is), together with a greater tendency to emigrate among the Christians (mostly Maronites), raised serious doubts about the existing proportions of ethnic representation. But Muslim demands for a new census, which were voiced already in the mid-1940s, only elicited Christian counterdemands that members of the Lebanese diaspora living abroad—most of whom were said to be Christians—be counted as well, and the result was a mutual veto.[14] The sensitivity of this issue led even Prime Minister Riad al-Sulh, who had strongly supported a new census when he formed two of his governments in 1943 and 1947, to conclude that this was indeed a hopeless cause: an Egyptian journal quoted him as saying in the mid-1940s that taking a new census in Lebanon might prove that the majority of the population was Muslim, and that he and other members of his community sincerely hoped that this was not the case, since on the day that Christians were no longer the majority in the country, as stipulated by the National Pact, a crisis would erupt that could deteriorate into full-fledged civil war.[15] And indeed, a comprehensive census has been avoided in Lebanon ever since, although in 1996 a partial census that eschewed any questions regarding sectarian affiliation was taken throughout all provinces.

Although the formula for representation of all ethnic communities in state institutions and for allocating funds remained fixed and almost unalterable, political, social, and economic developments in Lebanon could not be arrested at will and soon began to elicit demands for change. These came not only from groups who claimed to be socially and economically deprived—such as members of the Shi'i and Druze communities, whose spokesmen gradually became angered by what they saw as

13 On the politics of the 1932 census, see Maktabi (1999).
14 Donald Horowitz (1985).
15 *Aakhir Sa'aa* (Egypt), October 1, 1947.

exclusive Maronite-Sunni domination of Lebanon's politics, economics, and society—but also from members of other ethnic communities who were either barred from political decisionmaking processes and/or harbored visions of a Lebanon that differed from that of its ruling elite, composed mainly of bankers, businessmen, entrepreneurs, and traditional semifeudal landlords. In retrospect, it was the failure to meet these rising demands that jeopardized the power-sharing formula in Lebanon, put its legitimacy in question, and led to internal instability and eventually to conflict.

Until the late 1960s, opposition to the political settlement in Lebanon revolved around local bosses who were able to mobilize their clients in times of need, turn their fiefs into de facto autonomous regions, and thus pose a challenge to the central government in Beirut. The only two exceptions were the PPS (*Parti Populaire Syrien*, or Syrian National Party), a relatively marginal radical movement that envisaged the establishment of "Greater Syria" in the Fertile Crescent and initiated two abortive coup d'état attempts in 1949 and 1961, and the Lebanese Communist Party (LCP), which criticized the political and socioeconomic order in Lebanon but did not attempt to overthrow its government by force.

In contrast, the late 1960s began to witness changes both in the motives and the methods of opposition groups in Lebanon: a plethora of political movements sprang up throughout the country, and managed not only to mobilize hundreds—and later thousands—of supporters, but to gain the upper hand in their respective ethnic communities. One such organization was the overwhelmingly Druze Progressive Socialist Party (PSP), founded and led by Kamal Junblat, the regional boss of the Shuf area in Mount Lebanon. This party was established as early as 1949 but became dominant in its community in the late 1960s and early 1970s, after it managed to overcome traditional rivals such as the Arslan family and adopted a radical platform that matched those of other opposition parties. In 1969 Junblat, who as a Druze could not occupy a government position higher than that of minister but harbored greater political aspirations, founded the National Movement, a coalition of socialist and pan-Arab groups that opposed the

political and socioeconomic order in the country and supported the Palestinian guerrilla organizations that had turned Lebanon into their base of operations.[16] Another example was the Amal movement (*Harakat Amal*), founded in 1975 by Musa al-Sadr, a Shi'i cleric of Lebanese origin who came from Iran in the late 1950s. This organization, the successor of an earlier movement called Movement of the Deprived (*Harakat al-Mahrumin*), established and headed by al-Sadr, soon became the focal point for feelings of deprivation and social inequality among members of the Shi'i community in the peripheral areas of the south and the Beqaa', as well as in Shi'i-dominated south Beirut, challenging the traditional Shi'i *zu'ama'*, who had until then fully controlled this community, as well as radical political parties that held considerable appeal for young Shi'i activists: the LCP, the Ba'th, and the Communist Action Organization (CAO), a local offshoot of the Arab National Movement (*al-Qawmiyyun al-Arab*). Hizbullah ("Party of God"), the more radical Shi'i organization in Lebanon, is also an example of an opposition movement that began as a group committed to undermining the prevailing political and socioeconomic order in the country and replacing it with an Islamic state, although it appeared later on the political scene, in the aftermath of the Israeli invasion in 1982.

All these groups, as well as other, similar movements that emerged in Lebanon during this period, had both the will and the means—given their collective power and their alliances with radical outside forces—to challenge the existing political and socioeconomic order, namely, to defy the consociational settlement and its two main features: "political sectarianism" (*al-tai'fiyya al-siyasiyya*), the need to accord each and every ethnic community in the state its proportional share in all of its institutions, and "political feudalism" (*al-iqta'iyya al-siyasiyya*), the near-exclusive rule of Lebanon's traditional semifeudal elite. However, it should be pointed out that at the end of the day most of these movements, parties, and organizations—including radical ones such as the PPS, the PSP, Amal,

16　Junblat (1987).

and Hizbullah—have become an integral part of the Lebanese political system, and employ methods and tactics reminiscent of their bitter rivals, the *zu'ama'*.

After the termination of the first Lebanese civil war, and as part of the lessons drawn from this conflict, President Fuad Chehab (1958–1964) and his administration set out to modernize the Lebanese state and provide it with strong institutions. Chehab, formerly commander in chief of the Lebanese army, detested the *zu'ama'* and relied on professional bureaucrats and army officers—particularly from the *Deuxième Bureau*, its intelligence branch—instead. Until 1970, he and his handpicked successor, Charles Helou, managed to strengthen the central government in Beirut and to upgrade public services in impoverished areas such as the south and the Beqaa', thus improving the socioeconomic status of their inhabitants. But these steps, applauded by many in Lebanon and beyond, also resulted in an augmented process of urbanization: village dwellers, most of them Shi'is from the south, took advantage of the new road system that now connected their remote villages with the capital, and moved there hoping to earn a living. Once in Beirut, they set up a "Misery Belt" of slums to the south of the city, known as the "Southern Suburb" (*al-Dahiya al-Janubiyya*), and usually worked as unskilled laborers in its expanding services sector. This constant influx of young men torn from their traditional environment supplied local radical groups, and at times even Palestinian guerrilla organizations, with a reservoir of fresh recruits who could be mobilized, trained, and inculcated with identities, beliefs, and ideologies. These developments, considerably enhanced by the violent struggle between the Israeli army and the Palestinians in the Lebanese-Israeli border area from the late 1960s and its consequent spillover northwards, serve as yet another reminder that rapid modernization per se is hardly a panacea for all social maladies of developing states, but is instead a Janus-faced phenomenon that at times may lead to ethnic radicalization.[17]

17 Connor (1971); Nordlinger (1972); Newman (1991).

But calls for a comprehensive reform in Lebanon, which took the form of biting criticism of its existing political and socioeconomic order and assertive demands for change, were voiced not only by representatives of dissatisfied communities seeking a greater share of positions and funds than what they had under the consociational settlement. They came also from members of several ideological currents that were opposed to the "Lebanese model" in principle. While some spokesmen for these circles branded the political and socioeconomic order in Lebanon an anomaly, predicting its imminent—if not inevitable—demise, other critics took a more active part by openly advocating or working for its abolition or destruction.

To members of the modernization school, whose main stronghold in Lebanon was the American University of Beirut, the notion of sectarianism—like primordial bonds in other "new states" that gained their independence following the Second World War—was nothing but an obstacle to state- and nation-building. Proportional representation for all ethnic groups in Lebanon was a relic of a dark and shameful past that continued to cast its shadow over the young republic, and the dominant position of the *zu'ama'* in the affairs of the state was not only outdated and archaic, but obstructed all efforts to introduce essential reforms. Unless the Lebanese state rapidly modernized, they warned, it was bound to lag behind and fail to meet the rising challenges of the modern era. Elie Adib Salem, a leading professor at the American University and a representative of this school, wrote the following passage in 1969, two years after the Arab defeat by Israel:

> When a friend approached me and asked me to participate in a Lebanese newspaper during my sabbatical out of the country, I replied that I had a nine-year-old newspaper that informs me about everything that goes on in my homeland. We live and die and talk day and night, quarreling with each other in all seriousness over matters that have nothing to do with our future: This is a Maronite and this a Sunni, this is a Shi'i and this an Orthodox, this is a Druze and this a Catholic, the presidency to the Maronites and the premiership to the Sunnis, a number from this sect and a number from that. Filling this

>[parliamentary] seat and leaving ... that [seat] vacant, a government of
>giants or a transitory government, today is a holiday and tomorrow is
>a holiday and the day after that is a vacation, visits and ceremonies,
>telegrams and greetings, monstrous wealth, smuggling and invest-
>ments, government offices that do not function, a university that is
>no university... and a party that isn't a party ... and all this in a
>country at the end of the sixties of the 20th century [and] next to
>Israel ... which challenges the Lebanese entity and the Arab entity as
>a whole in science, seriousness, technology and its determination, and
>forces us all to bear the burden of responsibility laid upon us by the
>era, or else cease to exist.[18]

Devoted secularists also disapproved of what they saw as the
institutionalization of the dominant position of religious sects in their
homeland. For Halim Barakat, a leading Lebanese sociologist who taught in
the American University of Beirut and later emigrated to the United States,
only one remedy could cure his country's ongoing predicament: full
separation between church and state that would include total abolition of
the sectarian regime, which in his view "contradicts democracy by nature."
In a profound article published two years after the "pseudorevolutionists"
had dashed the hopes of the Arabs in the 1967 Israeli-Arab war, he argued
that only the *Fidayin*—the Palestinian guerrilla organizations—were
capable of attracting the Arab imagination.[19]

This last observation reflected a widespread belief that eventually
became the cornerstone of a political and military alliance between the
radical Lebanese opposition and the Palestinian national movement. Many
Lebanese who were critical of the political, social, and economic reality in
their country were mesmerized by the achievements of the Palestinian
"armed struggle" (*al-Kifah al-Musallah*) against Israel, as well as by the
nationalist and socialist propaganda of George Habash's Popular Front for
the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and Naif Hawatmeh's Democratic Front

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18   Salem (1969, 1973); Kerr (1966); Hudson (1968).
19   Barakat (1969).

for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP). At the same time, the Palestinian leadership itself became convinced that in order to avoid another "Black September"—the suppression of their organizations in Jordan by King Hussein's army in 1970–1971, resulting in their expulsion from what had until then been their principal stronghold in the Arab world—their movement had to win the hearts and minds of large segments of Lebanese society. This new strategy, which took the form of generous Palestinian support and ideological inspiration for local leftist and pan-Arab groups, accorded with Mao Zedong's teaching that the relationship between a successful guerrilla movement and its surrounding population must resemble that between fish and water. However—and as Rashid Khalidi had pointed out in his book on the Palestinian experience in Lebanon—on the eve of Israel's invasion in June 1982 the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was "flopping helplessly" on Lebanon's "dry land."[20]

Socialists, as well as ardent nationalists who belonged to both pan-Arab and pan-Syrian movements, were also hostile to sectarianism in Lebanon. For them, the National Pact represented yet another formal recognition of false, foreign-inspired, and "deviationalist" identities that obstructed a more "genuine" identification with either a social class or a supra-state nation.[21] In this respect it should be noted that many Lebanese supporters of communism and socialism and/or supra-state nationalism were Sunni Muslims and Greek Orthodox who saw these ideologies as a means to overcome the political and cultural predicaments of their own communities. Many Sunnis believed that Arab unity alone could put an end to their awkward position as a minority in a state within a region dominated by their coreligionists, while Greek Orthodox, who belonged to an ethnic group scattered throughout the Fertile Crescent, hoped that supra-state ideologies would help them reunite with their kin across the border and/or find a common ground with the "Muslim sea" that engulfed them. But Marxism

20 R. Khalidi (1986), 1; Sirriyeh (1976); Saghir (1978); R. Sayigh (1994).
21 A. Sayigh (1955); Bayhum (1957).

and supra-state nationalism alike found devoted disciples in other Lebanese communities as well, particularly among young Shi'is, who found their way either to socialist and communist parties such as the veteran LCP and the relatively new CAO, or joined staunch pan-Arab and pan-Syrian movements such as the PPS and the Ba'th, which in Lebanon included two rival wings, one pro-Syrian and the other leaning toward Baghdad.

For their part, members of the consociationalist school regarded Lebanon as another case of a pluralist (or divided) state governed by a formula of power-sharing among its various ethnic communities. For Arend Lijphart, the leading spokesman for this school since the late 1960s, the significance of the case of Lebanon during 1943-1975, as well as that of Malaysia during 1955-1969, was that they both served to "strengthen the case for consociational democracy as a normative model not only because they provide concrete evidence of its applicability and feasibility in two plural societies in the Third World but also because the conditions for consociationalism in these countries were not uniformly favorable."[22] Lijphart and his colleagues dismissed the criticism of the Lebanese political system by modernizationists and proponents of the "one nation, one state" maxim alike, arguing that both of these paths fell short of loosening age-old ethnic bonds in the country. In their view, nation-building in developing multiethnic states, in the form of governmental attempts to coerce disparate ethnic and national communities into assimilation, would either lead to "nation destroying" or provoke these groups to the use of force, leading to endless internal conflicts.[23] The only plausible way to ensure that democracy in Lebanon—as in other deeply divided states—would endure, consociationalists argued, was to formally acknowledge its *inherent* pluralism, as was done in the Lebanese constitution, in its election laws and, above all, in the National Pact of 1943. This is because the "Westminster model" of

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22 Lijphart (1977), 153. See also Geertz (1973); Lehmbruch (1974); Smock and Smock (1975); Young (1976).

23 Lijphart (1977); Connor (1971, 1993).

majoritarian democracy is not applicable in non-Western pluralist states, and the two remaining choices are consociational democracy or no democracy at all.[24]

But this reasoning, which was correct in the Lebanese case, led some consociationalists to "idealize" the Lebanese political system since 1943 and to overlook its shortcomings. After the outbreak of the civil war in the mid-1970s, members of this school began to emphasize the role of *external* forces in the breakdown of its political system, pointing a finger at the Palestinians, Syria, Israel, and other foreign actors while playing down the role of the Lebanese themselves in their misfortunes.[25] Thus, they joined many Lebanese politicians and intellectuals who had long been arguing that their state was "victimized" by outside interference, and that a "war between others"—as opposed to a genuine civil war—was being waged on its soil.[26] And indeed, while outside actors, particularly its neighbors, did take part in the unmaking of its political system toward the mid-1970s, just as external players had helped to sustain it since it was established in 1943, blaming Lebanon's miseries on foreigners alone is an exaggeration: first, the conflict in Lebanon continued with full vigor—and even escalated—as foreigners came and went; second, fighting among Lebanese, either on the interethnic or intraethnic level, eclipsed that between them and other forces, as well as between external forces themselves on Lebanese territory; third, local actors were often behind the foreign involvement in their country and/or applauded it when it materialized; and finally, events of such magnitude as the 1975-1990 civil war cannot possibly be explained in terms of external

24 McGarry and O'Leary (1993).
25 Lijphart (1984), 40; Kelass (1991), 136-141; McGarry and O'Leary (1993), 36. For more critical appraisals of the consociational settlement in Lebanon, see Hudson (1976); Chalouhi (1978); Dekmejian (1978); Lustick (1979); Hudson (1988); Smooha and Hanf (1992).
26 Cf. Chamoun (1977); Vocke (1978); Buheiry (1987); Cooke (1988); Corm (1988); Khazen (2000).

intervention alone.[27] A brief account of the prevailing perceptions in Lebanon since the 1960s on the issue of foreign involvement will further clarify this point.

Since the late 1960s, and particularly after the two major confrontations between the Lebanese army and the Palestinian guerrillas in 1969 and 1973, the radical Lebanese opposition came to believe that the PLO would pull the chestnuts out of the fire for them, and that it would become a "Muslim army" that would balance the superiority of Lebanon's official security forces, which were dominated by members of the Christian communities and thus deemed a bastion of the existing political and socioeconomic order. At the same time, staunch Lebanese conservatives, mostly Maronite and Sunni *zu'ama'*, became convinced that Syria's President Hafez al-Asad—who, unlike his predecessors, preferred the traditional political system in Lebanon over an unpredictable radical regime that might fall under the hostile influence of Iraq, the PLO, or Libya, and was on good terms with President Suleiman Franjieh (1970–1976)—would intervene on their behalf and spare them the need to reach a painful compromise with their Lebanese rivals. In the late 1970s, and after their "honeymoon" with Syria had ended, Maronite leaders urged the Likud government in Israel to intervene in Lebanon and expel the PLO (and possibly Syria too), and then managed to receive considerable support and backing from the U.S. government. Maronite, Israeli, and U.S. leaders all believed that the traditional Maronite-Sunni alliance, which had dominated Lebanese politics since 1943, could be restored, and that the demands for change voiced by the opposition— particularly Junblat's PSP and Berri's Amal—could be brushed aside. But these were all miscalculations that backfired and led to further conflict and destruction.[28]

27 Salim al-Hoss, "Presentation of the Chairman of the Conference," in "Lebanon after the Ta'if Agreement," *Al-Mustaqbal al-'Arabi* 165 (November 1992): 69 (in Arabic). Cf. Picard (1996); Perthes (1997).
28 Ajami (1985); Hanf (1993); Parker (1993); Salem (1993).

In retrospect, the perceptions and deeds of the various groups in Lebanon that sought the support of external forces, both regional and international, and the positive response of outside players that seized the opportunity to intervene in this state's affairs and supplied their local clients with arms, ammunition, and political backing, obstructed the efforts to reach an internal compromise—"elite accommodation" in Lijphart's terminology—thus jeopardizing what was described as the very essence of consociational democracy.[29] This was the outcome because local groups, which had come to believe that they had ample external backing thanks to the patron-and-client networks they formed with external forces, no longer felt obliged to relinquish their maximalist positions, as they had done since 1943, and pragmatism and realism gave way to hard-line extremism, which had earlier been suppressed. It is thus not surprising that proponents of the existing political order in Lebanon on the one hand, and the advocates of reform on the other, could not bridge the widening gaps between them, eventually leading to the collapse of the entire political system, to anarchy, chaos, and civil war. As elite accommodation in Lebanon began to fall apart, radical currents, which had until then been on the fringes of its political system, sprang to life and, together with more recent factions, gradually came to dominate the political discourse in the country, pushing their communities to extremism.

Among the Christian communities, and particularly the Maronites, several groups retained their longstanding apprehensions about the National Pact and the Muslim-Christian union in Lebanon. Some of them, who feared Muslim domination, continued to harbor a vision of a "Christian homeland" in Lebanon, even at the price of partition by ridding the state of its Muslim-dominated regions that were annexed in 1920 and returning to a "Smaller Lebanon." Although these were relatively small movements—for example, the *Tanzim*, the Maronite League, the Guardians of the Cedar, and the Maronite monastic orders—they were nonetheless

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29 Lijphart (1977); Daalder (1974); Lehmbruch (1974).

vocal and influential. Their impact was due to the fact that even more conservative Maronite groups, such as the Phalanges (*al-Kataib*)—the most powerful organization in the country—and the National Liberals (*al-Wataniyyin al-Ahrar*), supported the consociational settlement in Lebanon only halfheartedly and with reservations. In the case of the Phalanges, its leaders, the Gemayel family, did not hesitate to threaten force whenever they felt that things were not going as they wished, as occurred in the aftermath of the 1958 crisis and during the clashes of 1973, and some of its members came to believe that, given the Palestinian support to the Muslims, Christian predominance in Lebanon could only be sustained by resorting to violence.[30] In the Muslim communities too, and particularly among the Sunnis, many held to their dream of leveling the artificial boundaries separating the sons of the Arab nation from one another and establishing some form of Arab unity. In addition to the PSP, CAO, and the two rival branches of the pan-Arab Ba'th party, this was the political platform of new groupings that included, among others, the Independent Nasserist Movement (and its militia, *al-Murabitun*) in west Beirut, the Popular Nasserist Organization in Sidon, and the October 24 Movement in Tripoli.[31]

These radical groups, which began to form paramilitary organizations— the militias—amplified the search for political, financial, and later military assistance outside Lebanon's borders. Whereas radical Maronite organizations received aid from Israel and begged for Western support, particularly from France and the United States, their rivals appealed to Lebanon's Arab neighbors. Here it should be added that so long as Gamal 'Abd al-Nasser was the champion of pan-Arabism, Cairo was the Mecca for most Arab nationalist groups in Lebanon, as well as for many of its leading statesmen, who sought and acquired Egyptian support. But when Nasser died and was replaced by Anwar al-Sadat, who embarked on a foreign policy emphasizing Egyptian interests and gradually laid aside the old slogans of pan-Arabism,

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30 Stoakes (1975); Hudson (1976); Khalaf (1976); Entelis (1979); Randal (1983).
31 Salibi (1976); Hanf (1993).

Cairo's interest and influence in the Levant began to wane, and Lebanese leaders and parties, always attentive to regional developments, began to look for support elsewhere. One alternative was Syria, itself a focal point for foreign intervention in the past but now much more stable internally and harboring ambitions externally; others were Iraq—Syria's bitter rival, whose leaders were ready to support any leader and party that would defy Damascus—and Libya, which offered generous support to a plethora of Palestinian groups as well as to local leftist and pan-Arab organizations. But whereas Egypt, looked upon as Lebanon's "big sister" by Prime Minister Sulh in his 1943 governmental address,[32] was a safe distance from Lebanon, as were Iraq and Libya, Syria was on its borders, and its regime discerned crucial political, strategic, and economic interests there. And indeed, the early 1970s witnessed a rise in Syria's influence on decisionmaking in Beirut, culminating in its direct military intervention in June 1976.[33]

As the conflict in Lebanon drew near, radical political movements that represented only a fraction of its population but were nevertheless the most outspoken, armed, and equipped, managed to dominate the political discourse and pushed aside moderates in all communities, foremost of whom were the *zu'ama'*. In fact, some of these groups were led by strongmen (*qabadayat*) who were employed by leading *zu'ama'* but now rebelled against their former masters.[34] Unlike the traditional parties in Lebanon, which were loosely knit frameworks that usually included a leading *za'im*, several members of his clan, and some of his clients and supporters and did not have any fixed ideological program, the militias represented a new political phenomenon: they appealed to religious, ethnic, and national sentiments and used clear-cut messages and propaganda, and thus managed to mobilize hundreds and thousands of supporters and secure massive external support

32 "Speech by Prime Minister Riad al-Sulh, Delivered in the Lebanese Chamber of Deputies, October 7, 1943," in Khalil (1962), vol. 1: 105–109.
33 Dawisha (1980); Rabinovich (1985); Avi-Ran (1987); Ma'oz (1988).
34 Johnson (1977); Dekmejian (1978).

from regional and international powers. As the fighting began, they quickly took control over large areas of the country, usually involving large-scale "ethnic cleansing," and replaced the ineffective institutions and services of the Lebanese state.[35]

The conflict in Lebanon, which eventually found its way into almost every family, community, and region in the country, was much more than a mere controversy over the identity of the Lebanese state and its foreign policy, or over the exact quotas accorded to each community in its political, civil, and military institutions, later to be resolved by its veteran politicians. It was a full-fledged civil war that brought about the near-collapse of state institutions, the very framework that was supposed to buttress and sustain its consociational settlement. And indeed, one of the lessons of the conflict in Lebanon is that power-sharing settlements in deeply divided societies cannot endure without some measure of intervention by the central government, i.e., the institutions of the state, which are required to make sure that the mechanisms of compromise work properly and that the political settlement enjoys an untroubled atmosphere. "Consociationalism," as Theodor Hanf once put it, "is a fair weather model."[36] This is true both internally and externally: power-sharing formulas in multiethnic societies cannot endure simply because they are the only alternative to majoritarian democracy or to chaos; they must be preserved and fortified regularly, and must also be protected from extremists who attempt to undermine their foundations. At the same time, governments of multiethnic states must try to promote the development of "over-arching loyalties"[37] among members of their subcultures, and can use the two main agents employed by the modern state to inculcate collective identities and group feeling: the school system and the armed forces. In the case of Lebanon, these two institutions were neglected from its independence until the outbreak of the civil war: the

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35 Randal (1983); Snider (1984); Harik (1993); Corm (1994).
36 Quoted in Hudson (1988).
37 Lijphart (1977).

Lebanese army was a small and underequipped force of volunteers (limited conscription was only introduced in 1993!),[38] and every ethnic community—as well as foreign religious orders—was permitted to operate private schools in addition to government schools. The outcome of this situation has been described as follows: "In one school, children learn that Lebanese are Phoenicians, in another that they are Arabs. In one school, the ties with the West are stressed, in another ties with the Arab east are emphasized."[39]

The Lebanese case demonstrates that if a pluralist state is too weak to make a difference, and if subcultures do not refrain from seeking backing and support elsewhere and are free to subvert against its formal and informal institutions, then the consociational settlement rests on shaky foundations. On the other hand, if the various pillars of the pluralist society acknowledge that coexistence is a sine qua non, that it is inevitable and must be given precedence over all particular values and goals, then consociational democracy stands a better chance.

Why did Lebanon lack "stateness" since the mid-1940s? Why were the institutions of this state so weak and frail, leading to their paralysis almost immediately after the outbreak of conflict and, later, to their near-disintegration along ethnic and regional lines? A close examination of the views, perceptions, and deeds of its founding fathers sheds light on this crucial issue.

The "1943 generation," whose members launched the political compromise that enabled the Lebanese state to gain its independence from foreign rule and find its place in its regional environment, were also the representatives of its political, economic, and social elite. For them, consociational democracy was not just a means to accord every ethnic community its due share in the government so as to avoid internal strife, but also an *instrument* to preserve the existing political and socioeconomic order and their own predominant position in their state, that is, to lay the

38 Lahoud (1976); Freiha (1980); McLaurin (1984); Aoun (1988).
39 Jabra and Jabra (1984).

foundations that would enable them to manage its affairs for decades to come. In this respect, the "1943 generation" had trodden in the footsteps of the notables who ruled Mount Lebanon in the Ottoman period and the traditional leadership that governed "Greater Lebanon" under the aegis of the French Mandate. Like their predecessors, they too made sure that the consociational settlement was tailor-made to suit their own needs, and were determined to eliminate any attempt to change it. And indeed, during 1943–1975, it was the traditional *zu'ama'* who were elected to parliament in all provinces and who served in the highest offices of the state. Through the power-sharing settlement they were able to receive public funds and jobs in the administration, and the patronage networks they established with their respective constituencies enabled them to maintain their hegemony in their region, sect, and family.[40]

The predominant position of the *zu'ama'* in Lebanon before 1975 enabled them to rule the country almost exclusively. Newcomers—self-made men, party members, radicals and reformists—were kept out and neutralized, and every effort was made to win parliamentary elections time and time again, either by fair play or foul: forgery, intimidation of voters and candidates, and at times even assault and murder. It would not be an exaggeration to say that respect for laws, norms, and rules of the game was lacking among the pre-1975 elite in Lebanon, whose members did not hesitate to use all means at its disposal to attain their ends. As a result, the authority of the state during 1943–1975 was doubtful, and its institutions enjoyed a legitimacy that was at most conditional: they could hardly serve as neutral arbitrators aloof from regional, intracommunal, and intercommunal rivalry, and were consequently barred from intervening in political and social unrest, which haunted Lebanon long before the civil war. When violence broke out, they preferred to mediate between the rival parties and did not try to quell it—even when serious crimes, including murder, were committed—and after the dust settled, compromise was given preference

40 Johnson (1977, 1986); Hudson (1968); S. Khalaf (1987).

over justice. In other words, consociationalism—the need to take into account the needs and interests of all regions, ethnic groups, and clans in the state—was applied not only to political and socioeconomic issues in Lebanon, but to *all* matters: political, economic, judicial, and even to issues of national security.[41]

It is important to understand that the "Night Watchman State," as Eric Nordlinger termed authority in Lebanon in the early 1970s,[42] was no mere coincidence but the product of a conscious and deliberate choice by its ruling elite. The writings of Michel Chiha, the wealthy banker and man of letters considered the "mastermind" of the Lebanese political system, reveal deep feelings of antagonism and distaste for the state, which he regarded as tyrannical; and many in the political and economic elite, regardless of their regional and communal affiliations, shared his view.[43] Fear of excessive state interference in their affairs, which was exacerbated by the Arab-Israeli conflict from 1948 and the mounting military and economic burdens it imposed, as well as by the numerous coup d'état attempts by military officers in the neighboring countries, convinced these leaders that their state should forever remain weak and, as such, be both incapable of interfering in their own affairs and exempted from intervening in regional and international disputes. But the outcome of this attitude was that the institutions of the Lebanese state were incapable of asserting themselves at times of internal strife as well, and this became acute primarily because the consociational settlement did not resolve all internal tensions: given that the quotas for all ethnic groups in the country were predetermined, intercommunal conflicts were replaced by intracommunal quarrels over hegemony in the local, communal, and national arenas, which were no less

41 For important remarks on the problem of central authority in Lebanon in the pre-1975 period, see Hourani (1988); Hudson (1988). For criticism of this aspect of the consociational model, see Ryan (1995); Lustick (1997). See also Dahl (1982); Dan Horowitz (1982).

42 Nordlinger (1972).

43 Chiha (1966); Gemayel (1985).

violent. This was mainly because another dimension—an electoral one—was now added to the existing power struggle among large families for influence, power, and supremacy.

In this respect it is noteworthy that power struggles between rival *zu'ama'* and their clients in Lebanon were often at the bottom of conflicts that seemed to be waged over strictly ideological issues. During the first civil war, in 1958, for instance, President Eisenhower's special envoy Robert Murphy traveled to the Shuf mountains, the semi-autonomous stronghold of Druze leader Kamal Junblat, to meet the chief of the PSP and one of the leaders of the rebellion, who came to greet him together with his deputy, a Greek Orthodox. During the 1957 elections, Junblat told his American visitor, President Camille Chamoun had gone out of his way to exclude important leaders from parliament, including himself, even though his family had been represented there for four generations.[44] For Junblat, one of the ardent leaders of the Lebanese opposition, it was the blow to the status of his well-established family of *zu'ama'*—and not ideological reasons such as Chamoun's alignment with the West, the "Eisenhower Doctrine" he adopted in 1957, or Nasser's pan-Arab schemes—that was at the heart of the crisis.[45]

So long as everyone in Lebanon was satisfied politically, socially, and economically, democracy prevailed and consociational mechanisms worked smoothly. But when some players in the political system began to feel that power was slipping from their grasp or being snatched away by their rivals, as was the case with several *zu'ama'* in 1958, or that despite the democratic practices followed in their state, "the faces" of its politicians "do not change" and leadership was being passed from father to son "like money, land and features,"[46] as was the case with many of the radicals toward 1975,

44 McClintock-Department of State, July 25, 1958, Box 35, Centre for Lebanese Studies, Oxford; Goria (1985).
45 See, e.g., the Memoirs of Antoun Sa'ad, head of the Lebanese *Deuxième Bureau* (1952-1964), *al-Sayyad*, July 10, 1975.
46 Barakat (1969).

almost nothing—neither formal and informal institutions, shared values, nor respect for laws, norms, and rules of the game—deterred them from resorting to whatever means they could use to regain what they believed was rightfully theirs from time immemorial (like Junblat and his allies in 1958) or to defy the existing political order (as was the case from 1975).

THE PERILS OF PARTITION

The recent conflict in Lebanon serves as yet another reminder that wars in general, and internal conflicts in multiethnic states in particular, are baffling times for historians and political scientists alike. The horrors and atrocities they entail tend to be overwhelming, and not only blur our perceptions of current events but also hinder our efforts to arrive at a balanced interpretation of distant eras.

There may be some comfort in the fact that wars not only puzzle observers from afar, such as civilian and military leaders, journalists and scholars, but also bewilder those directly involved in them. This is because as age-old customs, traditions, and institutions seem to collapse under the weight of violence and destruction, *Realpolitik* makes way for adventurism, and prudence is overcome by old visions of grandeur that rise from oblivion. The discourse of violence, formerly held in check, cuts loose and begins to corrode the mechanisms of compromise and intercommunal coexistence, which suddenly seem irrelevant, almost naive. If partition and integration are the two extreme points of a spectrum of possible political solutions for internal conflicts in multiethnic states, then during periods of conflict, arguably, the odds are more likely to be tipped toward partition, since the prospects for integration seem slim. One could even claim that an alternative discourse dominated by the notion of partition tends to emerge during these conflicts, displacing the previously dominant discourse of integration.[47]

47 Consider, for instance, the acceleration of moves toward unilateral partition on Israel's part during its 2000 crisis with the Palestinian National Authority.

The case of Lebanon from 1975 to 1990 accords well with these observations. Most Lebanese political factions and their leaders, as well as the numerous external actors that intervened in its affairs, committed errors and miscalculations that not only contributed to the outbreak of the civil war but also considerably prolonged it. Perplexed by the unprecedented levels of violence and destruction, many of its participants and observers— local and foreign—despaired of the prospects of national integration and coexistence and began to consider the option of partition as both a likely and favorable outcome of the conflict. In other words, many came to believe that what they saw was not only the breakdown of the Lebanese political system, but the total demise of the Lebanese state itself.

It should be noted that skepticism—and at times cynicism—about the viability of the Lebanese state had been voiced long before the civil war broke out. Local and foreign observers freely spoke of its artificial boundaries, precarious foundations, and uncertain prospects, as if other Middle Eastern states that had also been carved out of the former Ottoman Empire enjoyed natural boundaries, more profound origins in history, and greater internal cohesion. Even after the Lebanese state managed to survive the first civil war in 1958, important works by two distinguished scholars, Leila Meo and Michael Hudson, described it as an "improbable nation" and a "precarious republic," respectively.[48]

The conflict in 1975–1990, which, thanks to the electronic media, could be followed in homes throughout the world, seemed to remove all remaining doubts about the prospects of the Lebanese state, and many observers rushed to write it off. To David Gordon it was a "nation in jeopardy," and Nurit Kliot spoke of its "territorial disintegration."[49] Even Theodor Hanf, who concluded that coexistence under the prevailing anarchy in Lebanon manifested the "rise of a nation," felt obliged to add that the "decline of a

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48 Meo (1965); Hudson (1968). Optimism regarding Lebanon was voiced in this period as
    well. Cf. Binder (1966); Salem (1973).
49 Gordon (1983); Kliot (1986).

state" had taken place in this case as well.[50] Pessimist-determinist scholars, such as the late Elie Kedourie and Meir Zamir, took this line of argument further: the former, a known skeptic on the prospects of democracy in the Arab world, found in the Lebanese case empirical "evidence" for his arguments; the latter concluded that the creation of a multiethnic state in 1920 had sealed Lebanon's fate and that only partition along ethnic lines awaited it.[51]

Yet despite these decisive appraisals, which could be attributed to the magnitude of the conflict in Lebanon, the paralysis and near-disintegration of the institutions of state and, finally, the massive foreign intervention by its neighbors and international forces and powers, the Lebanese state managed to overcome the perils of this long and destructive civil war— albeit tarnished and injured—and to embark on an agonizing process of reconstruction, thus rebutting all the premature rumors of its death. How did it manage to endure throughout the conflict? The two notions of partition and integration, as well as the interplay between them, are helpful in explaining this remarkable phenomenon.

First, it should be stressed that despite the fact that many political factions in Lebanon had reservations about the state, its partition was the preferred outcome for only a small minority of the country's population. Its traditional leadership—the "1943 generation" and its successors—ardently believed that there was no real alternative to the Muslim-Christian union established by the National Pact on the eve of Lebanon's independence, and to some form of power-sharing among all of its ethnic communities. Staunch realists as they were, they recognized that the future of their country lay not with the West—or with Israel, for that matter—but with the Arab East that engulfs it. Even the leaders of the Maronite-dominated Phalanges, who toyed with the idea of forming a strategic alliance with Israel and later appealed to the United States for help, maintained open channels to the

50 Hanf (1993).
51 Kedourie (1980, 1992); Zamir (1985).

Muslim leadership in the country too, as well as to Damascus and other Arab capitals, and meticulously avoided any explicit move that could be interpreted as a renunciation of their country's longtime ties with the Arab hinterland.[52]

But not only members of the upper stratum in Lebanon, who had a stake in the prevalent political and socioeconomic order, were careful not to tear the delicate fabric of intercommunal coexistence, as manifested by formal and informal institutions of the state. The three most powerful militias in the country, the Maronite-dominated Lebanese Forces (LF) in the northern parts of Mount Lebanon, the Druze PPS in the Shuf area, and the Shi'i Amal in Beirut, the Beqaa', and the south, together with other smaller factions, all preferred informal "cantonization"—their de facto control over their respective areas alongside these crippled institutions—to full-fledged, formal partition. Shrewd, cunning, and well acquainted with political and strategic realities in Lebanon and beyond, these leaders began to recognize that small, ethnically based independent political entities could never be sustained internally, and that even if they materialized, they could never aspire to regional and international legitimacy. And indeed, it seems that one of the main reasons that Lebanon did not fragmentize during the civil war, as was the case with former Yugoslavia, Korea, and other states that experienced internal conflict, was that the very notion of "partition" (*taqsim*) had become anathema to the overwhelming majority of the Lebanese.

The possibility that Lebanon would be partitioned during the civil war was also regarded unfavorably by important regional actors, including neighboring Syria, conservative Saudi Arabia, and the Arab League. These, as well as others in the Arab world, unequivocally supported Lebanon's renewed integration both politically—in the summits convened throughout the conflict—and militarily. In June 1976, when Syrian forces crossed the border into Lebanon and took over large areas of its territory, the leaders in

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52 Schiff and Ya'ari (1984); Baqraduni (1991).

Damascus explained that the move had been made in the name of Lebanon's unity, which was threatened by "isolationist" (*In'izali*) schemes to split it up into "ministates" (*duwaylat*) along ethnic lines. This outcome, they argued, could have been an enormous setback for the pan-Arab cause: it would set a precedent for others in the Middle East, and weaken the longstanding claim of Arab nationalists that Israel, the only ethnically based political entity in the region, was illegitimate.[53] One could argue that these claims, which were repeated from then on, were only an ideological cover to facilitate the interference of one Arab state (Syria) in the affairs of another (Lebanon), although, as noted, it was Lebanese leaders (the Maronite-dominated Lebanese Front and its allies) who begged Damascus to intervene on their behalf, and although Syria's role in Lebanon was legitimized by two Arab summits held in 1976. But what is more important here is that the dominant political discourse in the Arab world completely ruled out the option of partition of the Lebanese state—even as it seemed imminent and irrevocable—and was prepared to back any state that would try to forestall it.[54]

The possible partition of Lebanon was also viewed unfavorably by the international community. Contrary to allegations by many politicians and scholars in Lebanon and the Arab states that foreign powers contemplated Lebanon's partition as part of a conspiracy (*mua'amara*) against the Lebanese and the Arabs, prominent players in the international system such as the United States, Europe, and the United Nations (as well as the Soviet Union) preferred a unified Lebanese state to a partitioned entity, and made considerable efforts to preserve its territorial integrity. The United States first arranged for Syrian forces to enter Lebanese territory and restore order (through the "Red Lines" understanding with Yitzhak Rabin's first government, in which Jordan also played a part), and after the Israeli

53 Tlas (1983); Rabinovich (1985); Esman (1988); Ibrahim (1998).
54 Compare this attitude with the African case, as presented by Jackson and Rosberg (1982); Jackson (1990). See also Zartman (1995).

invasion of Lebanon in 1982, it organized the Multinational Force (MFN), composed of American, French, and Italian troops, which aimed at strengthening the local government. Even after pulling out its forces in 1984, following attacks against the MFN in Beirut by Shi'i militants, Washington continued to mediate between various political factions so as to reach a political compromise that would facilitate an end to the war in Lebanon, and strongly objected to its partition. The UN was also helpful in this respect: in late March 1978, after Israel's Litani Operation, the Security Council adopted Resolution 425, which called for immediate withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanon's territory, and sent UNIFIL to the south to help it restore its effective control of this area. Later the Security Council adopted further resolutions that emphasized Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integration.[55]

The rejection of the option of Lebanon's partition on the internal, regional, and international levels had in fact created tacit rules of the game for all actors involved in this conflict, both internal and external. Although de facto "cantonization," which characterized most of the civil war, was seen as a consequence of the insecurity felt by many local and/or ethnic communities after the paralysis of the central government, any attempt to *formalize* the partition of the Lebanese state was deemed illegitimate. And indeed, although at times some local players held the card of partition up their sleeves—usually as political leverage—it was laid on the table only once, without yielding any positive results for the player who used it: in 1979 Major Sa'ad Haddad, a Christian Lebanese officer who commanded a pro-Israeli militia in the Israeli-Lebanese border area, prevented units of the Lebanese army from deploying in this area and announced the establishment there, with Israeli backing, of "the State of Free Lebanon" (*Dawlat*

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55 Shultz (1993); Pelcovits (1984). On the American position against partition of Lebanon, see Richard W. Murphy, "Lebanon at the Crossroads," address before the American University of Beirut Alumni Conference in Orlando, October 29, 1988, *Department of State Bulletin* 88 (December 1988): 45-47.

Lubnan al-Hurr). But this step only served to brand him and his men as collaborators with the enemy of the Arabs for years to come, and failed to advance his cause.[56]

In autumn 1988, the second instance in the Lebanese conflict when its disintegration seemed inevitable, the prospects of partition were rejected by most of its leaders, who were again joined by an overwhelming majority of the Arab states and the international community. Unlike the crisis in 1975-1976, when the militias took over vast areas of the state and endangered its integrity, this time the political, administrative, and military institutions of the state themselves—which continued to operate throughout the conflict, albeit with many difficulties—were in jeopardy. Failed attempts by parliament to elect a new president during the previous summer had resulted in a "constitutional vacuum" in the highest office of the state and engendered the de facto rule of two rival governments, a Muslim-dominated one led by Premier Salim el-Hoss and a Christian military one led by General Michel Aoun, commander in chief of the army, each claiming exclusive legitimacy and denouncing the other as "partitionist." This awkward, and unprecedented, situation had grave effects on other institutions as well: the separation of the Christian-dominated units of the army from the Muslim-dominated ones, which had begun earlier in the conflict, was now nearly complete, and the bureaucracy was loyal to the government in control of the area in which its officials and staff worked. Of all the institutions of the state, only two remained intact: the central bank, which continued to finance both governments, and the parliament, which did not meet but nevertheless retained its multiethnic and interregional character.

This crisis, and the prospects of partition it entailed, gravely concerned many Lebanese. And indeed, while many could accept "cantonization" for long periods of time, as they had since 1975–1976, the near-formalization of their homeland's demise was extremely distressing. This was evident not only in the use of euphemisms by the two governments—whose ministers

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56 On Haddad and Israel's involvement in Lebanon from 1976, see Hamizrachi (1988).

consistently refrained from "appointment" (*ta'ayin*) of their supporters to jobs "evacuated" by their rivals' sympathizers, and preferred to "commission" (*taklif*) them to these posts instead—but also in the many lamentations for Lebanon and its unique formula of Christian-Muslim coexistence that began to appear in its politicians' statements, the writings of its leading scholars, and in newspapers and journals appearing locally and abroad.[57]

In the regional domain, Hoss's government enjoyed support from Syria, while Aoun's government received generous backing from its rival Iraq, whose leaders had just ended their long and devastating war with Iran and were eager to settle scores with Iran's only Arab ally. Israel's ban on the use of Syrian fighter planes in Lebanon, a part of the Red Lines understanding of 1976, as well as the apprehensions of PLO leaders who were under the constant threat of Syrian dominance and desperately needed allies in Lebanon, also worked in favor of General Aoun and his army in this period. For the time being, other Arab states, as well as the international community, maintained their contacts with both governments.[58] Until Aoun's final defeat two years later by a combined Syrian-Lebanese offensive carried out under the shadow of the Gulf crisis, the main question was which of the two governments would gain the upper hand in terms of domestic, regional, and international legitimacy and support. The other possibility— that both governments would endure at the end of the day, i.e., the formal

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57 Salibi (1988); McCarthy (1991); Messara (1991); *al-Diyyar* (Lebanon), October 7, November 16, November 22, 1988, January 13, 1989; *al-Shira'* (Lebanon), January 14, 1988; *al-Anwar* (Lebanon), November 24, 1988; *al-Khayat* (London), April 6, 1988, February 28, 1989; *al-Sayyad* (Lebanon), September 16, September 30, October 7, 1988; *al-Dunya* (Lebanon), January 19, 1988; *Sawt al-Sha'b* (Lebanon), April 13, 1988; *al-Bayyan* (Kuwait), March 16, 1989; *al-Sharq al-Awsat* (London), January 27, April 4, 1989; *al-Itihad* (Kuwait), October 5, 1988, April 11, April 22, 1989; *al-Qabas* (Kuwait), April 4, 1989; *al-Watan al-'Arabi* (Paris), October 28, 1988.
58 On this period, see Hoss (1991); McLaurin (1991); Na'um (1992); Harris (1997).

partition of Lebanon—was decisively ruled out by most parties, local and foreign, including the two rival premiers themselves. While Hoss emphasized the "phenomenon of coexistence" in Lebanon, adding that "if Lebanon's unification is difficult, its partition is impossible,"[59] Aoun's main slogan, voiced by his devoted supporters ever since, was "Lebanon is too small to be partitioned and too large to be swallowed" (*Lubnan asghar min an yuqassam wa-akbar min an yubl'a*). As some observers pointed out, the two leaders thus had a similar vision of Lebanon and only differed as to how to pull it out of the quagmire. Hoss favored comprehensive political reforms and understood that Syria's dominant role in Lebanon was a fact that had to be reckoned with; Aoun believed he could outmaneuver Damascus and force the Asad administration to assent to his candidacy for president on his own terms. When his hopes were dashed, he began to emphasize Lebanon's pressing need to be "liberated" from foreign "occupation," i.e., from the continuous presence of the Syrian army in its territory, but failed to provide a political program that would win him support among the Muslim communities as well. As a result, Syria managed to mobilize its local supporters, including Junblat's PSP, Berri's Amal, Franjieh's *al-Marada,* and others, against him and, eventually, to crush his stronghold around the presidential palace in Ba'abda.[60]

The escalation in Lebanon from March 1989, which took the form of unrestrained artillery exchanges between Aoun's army units on the one hand and the Syrian army and its local allies on the other, alarmed members of the Arab League, particularly Saudi Arabia, and inter-Arab peacemaking efforts were resumed with invigorated momentum. In addition to the prospects of Lebanon's de jure partition, which upset many Arab leaders and observers, apprehensions were expressed at the mounting foreign involvement in the conflict, which threatened to lead to a direct confrontation between Syria and Iraq and further disrupt regional

59 *al-Shira'*, May 8, 1989.
60 Na'um (1992); Hanf (1993); Harris (1997).

order.[61] In May 1989 an emergency summit of Arab leaders was convened
in Casablanca, and a Tripartite Arab High Commission was appointed to
implement a cease-fire in Lebanon and mediate between its warring parties
so as to facilitate an agreement on the question of political reform. After
several more months of violence and political deadlock, local and foreign
actors were beginning to acknowledge that their maximalist positions could
not be attained, and the initiative of the Tripartite Arab High Commission
was accepted by all Lebanese sides. This consent paved the way for
convening the remaining members of the Lebanese parliament in Ta'if (in
Saudi Arabia) to agree on a new political formula that would bring an end
to the civil war.

The Ta'if Agreement, endorsed by an overwhelming majority of the
Lebanese parliament, represented a turning point in the civil war and in
Lebanon's political history. First of all, it was a formal agreement endorsed
by a formal Lebanese institution—the only remaining institution accorded
legitimacy by the majority of its population; it was neither a tacit and
unofficial understanding like the National Pact of 1943, nor a unilateral
declaration like the Constitutional Document of 1976, nor an agreement by
militia leaders like the Tripartite Agreement of 1985. Its declarative part
stated that Lebanon was a "final homeland for all its sons," thus giving this
once-illegitimate state decisive, wall-to-wall recognition; it also asserted that
Lebanon was "Arab in its affiliation and identity," in contrast to the vague
expression "an Arab face" used in 1943. Any "authority which contradicts
the pact of communal coexistence" was deemed illegitimate, emphasizing
that the agreement of the various communities to live together and share
power among them was the source of legitimacy for authority in Lebanon,
and implying that any authority challenging the Ta'if Agreement, including
Aoun's military government, would be removed by force.

On the political level, executive power was transferred from the president
(Maronite) to the government and the premier (Sunni) and, to a lesser

61 Mylroie (1989); Norton (1991).

extent, to the speaker of parliament (Shi'i). Instead of the informal 6:5 ratio in favor of the Christians in effect since 1943, a ratio of 50:50 was adopted for distribution of parliamentary seats and high-level posts in all state institutions, and other positions were to be filled according to merit, thus eliminating the principle of representation according to ethnic community. A national body was to be set up for abolition of "political sectarianism," but no time schedule was specified. In fact, the Ta'if Agreement was once again a compromise between those demanding the total and immediate abolition of the consociational settlement in Lebanon and those favoring its preservation. However, the fact that a clause stating that "political sectarianism" should be abolished was added to the constitution—as were all the reforms agreed upon in this compact—seemed to open the door to future criticism of the existing order, and elicited only apprehensions from some Maronite scholars and politicians.[62]

Other important reforms introduced by the Ta'if Agreement were in the field of national security, where an effort was made to put an end to the prevailing ambiguity about the use of military force that had such a grave outcome in the past. The armed forces were to be subordinated to the government, which was also responsible for declaring an emergency, war or peace, and for ordering mobilization, as well as for supervision of all governmental agencies, including security and military bodies. The Lebanese "National Reconciliation Government" was to devise a security plan that would expand its control over all its territory, and the militias, both Lebanese and non-Lebanese (i.e., including the Palestinian organizations and the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, who arrived in 1982), were to be dismantled. The concluding section of the agreement emphasized the "distinctive relations" (*al-'alaqat al-mumayyaza*) between Lebanon and Syria, and called for additional agreements between the two states in all fields. Lebanon was prohibited from becoming a source of threat to Syria's security and a passageway or *place d'armes* for any force, state, or

62 Abu Khalil (1993); Phares (1995).

organization that might endanger it. It is noteworthy that this concluding section was the result of prior agreement between the Tripartite Arab High Commission and Syria, and the Lebanese deputies were unable to alter it. This fact, as well as the ambiguous clauses on Syrian withdrawal, convinced many observers that Syrian troops would remain on Lebanese soil indefinitely, and that the price for national reconciliation in Lebanon was accepting some restrictions on its sovereignty, that is, a type of "Finlandization."[63]

The remaining months of the Lebanese crisis witnessed an attempt to implement the Ta'if Agreement, with Syrian support and backing from the Arab League and the U.S. government. General Aoun, for his part, denounced Ta'if as a betrayal of Lebanon's sovereignty, but the agreement was endorsed by more and more Maronite leaders, including Phalange leader George Saadeh, who had played a crucial role in its formulation, and by Geagea's LF. A new president, René Muawwad, was elected by parliament in November 1989, but he was soon assassinated, and Elias el-Hrawi, a deputy of parliament closer to Syria in his views and past record, was elected in his place. Hoss formed a new government the next day, and Saadeh participated as minister representing his party. The new government dismissed General Aoun as commander in chief of the Lebanese army and appointed General Emile Lahoud, another Maronite officer, to the post. But in the face of an attempt to depose Aoun by force, Geagea declared his support for Aoun, and the Hrawi government restricted itself to nonmilitary pressures: the central bank halted all money transfers to the areas controlled by Aoun's government, and the Defense Ministry stopped paying salaries to his men.

Aoun failed to take advantage of the widening gaps in the pro-Ta'if camp, and from late January 1990 he attempted to crush the LF in bloody battles that left hundreds dead and caused unprecedented destruction in the

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63 Mary-Jane Deeb and Deeb (1991); Maila (1992); Hanf (1993); Harris (1997).

Christian areas.[64] Geagea soon recognized Hoss's government and the Ta'if Agreement, and on August 21 parliament convened again and amended the Lebanese constitution to include all the reforms decided upon in Ta'if. Forty new deputies were to be appointed (and not elected, due to the "extraordinary situation" prevailing in the country) so that parliament would now number 108 members, equally divided between Christians and Muslims (the appointment took place in June 1991). Aoun's enclave, which had shrunk considerably during the battles with the LF, was put under siege from late September, and on October 13, 1990, Syrian forces and Muslim-dominated units of the Lebanese army stormed it and defeated his forces, meeting only minor resistance. In this last move, Syria benefited from the American efforts to include it in the international coalition formed against Iraq after its invasion of Kuwait, and received a green light from Washington to seize Aoun's enclave. Israel, which banned the use of Syrian jets over Lebanese territory as part of the Red Lines understanding, agreed to their use against the palace in Ba'abda. With the defeat of General Aoun and his forces, the last bastion of opposition to Ta'if was removed, and the way to the implementation of its articles was paved.

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 and its aftermath, and the defeat of Aoun's enclave by the Syrian army and its Lebanese allies in October the same year, are two illustrations of the regional and international attitude with respect to redrawing present borders in the Middle East. Saddam's bold attempt to annex another Arab state by force was regarded by most leaders in this region, as well as by the overwhelming majority of the international community, as a breach of the regional order of states (it is hence not surprising that the only support Saddam received in the Arab world was from the Palestinians in Jordan, who practically forced King Hussein to side with Iraq, and from a *non-state* actor, the PLO); Syria's efforts to restore order in Lebanon while preserving its unity, received regional and international support and were accorded legitimacy. This

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64 Laurent (1991).

attitude on the part of regional and international actors emanated from a common belief that the present borders in the Middle East are not to be tampered with, since even one instance of redrawing these borders—all of which have their roots in agreements and/or unilateral actions of the colonial powers—could undermine them all. In other words, in terms of the borders between its states, the Middle East is a glass house, and those who live in glass houses are very careful not to throw stones.

CONCLUSION

The Lebanese civil war (1975–1990) presents an intriguing case of an internal conflict in a multiethnic state that was resolved not by its partition according to communal lines, as predicted by many observers locally and from afar, but by a renewed formula for integration. This formula, represented in the Ta'if Agreement of 1989, was the product of strenuous and often frustrating efforts made by its own statesmen, who reflected the apprehensions of their fellow countrymen at the prospects of their country's partition, as well as of the continuous support of regional and international powers and organizations that could not acquiesce to its demise.

The return to power-sharing in Lebanon, as manifested by the Ta'if Agreement and its successful implementation since the end of the civil war, constitutes evidence that a consociational settlement between the various ethnic communities in this state, for all its hardships and drawbacks, is irreplaceable. And indeed, the formula that enabled Lebanon to gain its independence and be governed ever since could be modified, adapted, and improved, as was finally done in Ta'if, but could not be discarded altogether. Therefore, those who challenged the political and socioeconomic order in Lebanon, and particularly since the late 1960s, for all their revolutionary zeal and well-ordered doctrines, eventually fell short of realizing their far-reaching ends and were unable to change fundamental realities of the country: first, that it is a mosaic of ethnic groups, large families, and regions, all of which demand their share of government

positions and resources, and second, that its regional and international environment firmly rejects its unmaking, either by partition or annexation, and will do its utmost to preserve its national integrity, even at the price of some sort of "Finlandization," as has been the case from October 1990.

The long and bloody conflict in Lebanon has inevitably affected the political and socioeconomic reality of a country so small in size and in population. A generation of traditional politicians who were its incontestable masters since 1943 have stepped down, and in some instances—such as in the Shi'i community—*zu'ama'* who were almost synonymous with its institutions were pushed aside by newcomers who could mobilize the masses using radical, and at times ethnically flavored, propaganda. But despite this "change of faces," it seems that all of Lebanon's leaders—traditional and new—have learned to accept the imperative of power-sharing and no longer toy with its demise. If anything, the Ta'if Agreement of 1989 signals a return to—and a formal institutionalization of—this fundamental concept. The strengthening of the institutions of the Lebanese state in the postwar period, particularly its security forces, with Syrian backing and international support, is yet another sign that some of the lessons of the prewar period in Lebanon have been learned, and that consociational mechanisms are finally accorded a supportive institutional framework that can buttress and sustain them in the future.

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