

**CHAPTER 9 POWER SHARING IN LEBANON: FOREIGN PROTECTORS,
DOMESTIC PEACE, AND DEMOCRATIC FAILURE¹**

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“This little country that is so important...” Clemens Metternich

Lebanon’s experiment with power sharing dates back to 1861. In the 140 years since then foreign powers and Lebanese leaders have devised four different power-sharing “regimes” for the country. Although Lebanon has experienced violent crises, including two civil wars, none of the attempts at crisis resolution has altered the fundamentals of the Lebanese power-sharing institutions. At most, these institutions have been recalibrated to address changes in the domestic and international context. As one of the most enduring power-sharing experiments, one that has lasted for over a century under shifting domestic and international conditions, the Lebanese case study is well suited to shed light on the relations between power sharing on the one hand and the durability of domestic peace and the transition to democracy on the other.

My argument is twofold: First, power sharing has brought long periods of peace, but this has depended on external protectors: When there have been foreign protectors, peace has lasted, but the withdrawal of an existing protector or the intervention of new would-be protectors has often brought significant turmoil to the country. Second, even though all three regimes established since the end of the Ottoman Empire have been based on the notion that Lebanon must make a transition from power sharing based on religious affiliation to “one citizen, one vote” democracy, power-sharing institutions have thwarted the country’s transition to democracy.

This chapter opens with a brief discussion of Lebanon’s demography and the structure of

¹ “Power Sharing in Lebanon : Foreign Protectors, Domestic Peace, and Democratic Failure,” dans Donald Rothchild et Philip Roeder (directeurs). *Sustainable Peace : Power and Democracy after Civil Wars* (Ithaca : Cornell University Press, 2005). Pp. 219-240.

identities in the country. I then turn to the four power-sharing regimes and describe their institutions and the conditions under which they were established. In the final section, I compare and contrast the four regimes with respect to the two outcomes of concern to this volume, the durability of peace and the transition to democracy.

“A House of Many Mansions”²

To the casual observer, the unity of Lebanon appears inexplicable. Contemporary Lebanon officially boasts seventeen religious sects, commonly referred to as confessions. The country’s political system and civil administration is a delicate exercise in proportional balancing of elected representatives of these confessions. To complicate the task of proportional balancing, Lebanon’s only official census was conducted in 1932. It showed that Maronite Christians enjoyed a slight numerical majority over the next largest confession, the Sunni Muslims. Yet they made up only 32 per cent of Lebanon’s overall population. Other relatively large confessions in Lebanon included the Christian Greek Orthodox (followers of the Russian Orthodox church), Greek Catholics (followers of the Vatican), the Shi`a Muslims, and the Druze (an offshoot of Islam). Lebanon was—and remains in spite of demographic changes that have decreased the overall proportion of Christians in the population—a country of minorities.

Not only is Lebanese society divided along confessional lines, these divisions were for most of the 20th century concomitant with class divisions. At the start of the century, the rich urban merchant classes tended to be Sunnis and Greek Orthodox; the rural farmers tended to be Maronites and Shi`a, but Maronites were on the whole more prosperous than their Shi`a counterparts. The Druze, initially the ruling political class and the feudal landlords of the Ottoman Empire that controlled Mount Lebanon, lost their privileged status under the French mandate. Maronites prospered under French rule. Although each confession had its share of well-to-do strongmen and rich landlords, it is reasonable to describe Lebanese society as exhibiting

reinforcing rather than crosscutting cleavages. Confessions have tended to concentrate in distinct geographical regions, although there are a few mixed regions and many areas with substantial minority clusters. The territorial concentration of confessions has grown as a result of sectarian acts of violence committed by all sides during the civil war.

Lebanon's Power-sharing Regimes

In this section, I review the historical conditions that led to the emergence of the four power-sharing regimes and discuss the details of power-sharing arrangements in each (see Table 9.1). The discussion summarizes a very rich and complex history, and highlights factors leading to stability and instability in each period. I also focus on reasons that led to the decay of each regime under study and assess their ability to maintain domestic peace and initiate a transition from power sharing to full democracy.

1. The 1860 Civil War and the R glement Organique

The first recorded autonomous political entity in what became modern day Lebanon dates back to the early 17th century and the establishment of the Mount Lebanon *Imarah* (principality) within the Ottoman Empire.³ The *Imarah* rested on a feudal society that linked the primarily-Druze feudal landlord class (although there were also Druze peasants) to the primarily-Maronite peasantry (even though a few Maronite families had become members of the elite). Religion was not a factor in the principality's politics until the late 18th century (Harik 1968, 40). Feudal ties formed the basis of social order. Rank was the marker of elite status and, within the elite, family alliances transcended differences of faith (Makdisi 2000, 35). The principality's autonomy was premised on subservience to its Ottoman masters; the *Emir* (prince) was required to maintain social order and deliver required taxes and other obligations to the Sultan in Constantinople.

Religious communal identities emerged with a tax revolt in 1820. Maronite peasants rebelled against landlords using identity to call into question the relationships that underlay the

social order. The revolt resulted in a new power configuration. The Maronite Church, which sided with the peasants, became a prominent challenger to the lords. Large and wealthy, the Church advocated the establishment of a Christian emirate (Harik 1991, 125; Aulas 1987, 11). Things came to a head in 1858 when Maronite peasants in the northern district of Kisrawan rose up against their lords (Abraham 1981; Kerr 1959). The conflict spilled over into southern Mount Lebanon where Druze lords played the communal card to rally the Druze peasantry. By July 1860 the Druzes were victorious. The death toll on the Christian side stood at eleven thousand.

It was against this background of communal violence that the first power-sharing arrangement was devised. The *Règlement Organique* (Organic Law) was announced by the Ottoman Empire, backed by a consortium of European powers, on 9 June 1861.⁵

Following the violence of 1858-1860, various foreign brokers stepped in as a consortium to contain the conflict because of its negative impact on their strategic interests (Hourani 1966, 22). While the Ottomans sought to restore the disrupted social order, European ambassadors used their “concern” for Christian communities as a pretext for intervening in the Ottoman Empire’s affairs. The French were mainly concerned for Maronite safety, and the British—who backed the Druze to check French influence among Maronites—were worried about growing French influence. The result was 32 weeks of negotiations between France, Great Britain, Austria, Russia, Prussia and the Ottoman Empire. Through French initiative, an international commission representing the five European guarantors of the agreement was established to “fix responsibility, determine guilt, estimate indemnity, and suggest reforms for the reorganization of Mount Lebanon” (Khalaf 2002, 6).

The *Règlement Organique* transformed Mount Lebanon into a fully autonomous Ottoman province with political institutions based on power sharing among its various sects under an Ottoman-European consortium protectorate. The Ottoman governor, a non-Lebanese Catholic, was appointed by Constantinople with the approval of the five foreign guarantors. Each of the six

major communities was allotted two seats on the twelve-member administrative council that helped the governor rule.⁶ According to article 11 of the Règlement, all members of the administrative council and of judiciary councils as well as local officials of smaller counties were to be “nominated and chosen, after agreement with the notables, by the leaders of the respective communities and appointed by the government” (Khalaf 2002, 278). The province was subdivided into six districts. Each had a dominant religious community and was ruled by a local mayor chosen by members of that community.

The Maronites looked unfavorably upon these arrangements. With a numerical majority, they wanted representation to reflect their preponderance (Khalaf 2002, 279) and rejected equal representation with sects, such as the Shi`a, who made up less than six percent of the population. By 1864, tension between the Maronites and the Ottoman governor required substantial modifications to the arrangement. Once again, the foreign brokers stepped in and over time they redesigned the administrative council to consist of four Maronites, three Druzes, two Greek Orthodoxes, one Greek Catholic, one Sunni Muslim, and one Shi`a Muslim. Proportional communal representation thus became the norm (Meo 1976, 34).

The 1864 settlement introduced by the Ottoman-European protectors brought almost a half century of communal peace to Mount Lebanon. Although political instability and tension occurred between local notables seeking increased autonomy and the Sublime Porte attempting to maintain control over these Ottoman territories, there was no major violence among Mount Lebanon’s religious communities. The settlement lasted until 1920 when the victorious allies dismantled the Ottoman Empire, which had sided with Austria and Germany in World War I.

2. Power sharing under the French Mandate

Upon the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire, the victorious Supreme Allied Council met in San Remo on April 28, 1920, and entrusted France with a mandate over present-day Syria and Lebanon. On September 1, 1920, the French High Commissioner, General Henri Gouraud,

proclaimed the creation of Greater Lebanon (*Grand Liban*), which would include the territory of Mount Lebanon, the towns of Beirut, Tripoli, Sur (Tyre), and Saida (Sidon), the regions of Ba`albak and the Biqa`, and the districts of Rashayya and Hasbayya (see Figure 9.1). Expansion of Lebanon also increased the country's religious heterogeneity. From 80 per cent of the population of the Mount Lebanon province, the Maronites fell to a bare 51 per-cent majority in the new polity (Zamir 1985, 98). For their part, the Druze lost their position as the dominant Muslim sect to the Sunnis. Yet Maronites and Greek Catholics enthusiastically backed the creation of Greater Lebanon; other communities were ambivalent.

From 1920 to 1926 the political situation in Greater Lebanon remained unsettled. From 1920 to 1922, four successive French governors administered Lebanon. A 17-member consultative council, representing the different Lebanese confessions and selected by General Gouraud, assisted the governors. Council members continued the tradition of the Administrative Council of Mount Lebanon, which had tended to defend local interests against the Ottoman governor. In March 1922, the French High Commissioner sought to establish a more permanent representative body and decreed the institution of a Lebanese Representative Council. The Council, inspired by the experience of the *Mutasarrifiyya*, would comprise 30 deputies elected by general (male) suffrage for a period of four years. It was based on "confessional representation in proportion to the size of each community as recorded by the census of 1921" (Zamir 1985, 142). Predicated upon a belief that only sectarian representation could stem the tide of sectarian strife and bring about inter-group cooperation, its design reinforced sectarianism and increased the power of sectarian leaders (Hourani 1946, 181). The Council was limited to an advisory role. The High Commissioner and governor had a final say in all matters and they could overturn any decision of the Council; in addition, they had the authority to adjourn or dissolve the Council.

Between 1920 and 1926, France's inability to develop pro-active policies toward the Syrian Arab nationalist movement entangled Lebanon in the growing French-Syrian confrontation and hindered the development of a Lebanese national identity. Maronites sought to

secure Lebanon's gains in terms of political autonomy; several other sects (mainly the Sunnis) refused to acknowledge the country's independence and considered it a part of Greater Syria.

Against this background of mounting communal tensions, France ended the six-year transition by establishing Lebanon's second power-sharing regime. A new Constitution transformed Greater Lebanon into the Republic of Lebanon in 1926 and enshrined confessional politics throughout all levels of governance. The Constitution vested legislative powers in two houses—a senate and a chamber of deputies. Both houses enjoyed widespread powers including the election of the president, voting confidence in the government, and approval of the yearly budget on paper. The two houses elected the president who also enjoyed wide-ranging powers for a three-year term, with the possibility of renewal. Article 95 guaranteed sectarian representation (Zamir 2000, 30). Although this was supposed to be a temporary arrangement on the way to an integrated Lebanese nation-state, these institutions actually made realization of this objective more difficult. Power sharing increased the influence of a small group of prominent Christian families in Beirut and the Mountain, of Shi`a and Sunni landowning feudal families on the peripheries, and later—when Sunnis decided to accept the independence of Lebanon from Syria—of Sunni notables in the coastal towns. According to Meir Zamir (2000, 31),

Despite religious, sectarian, regional and national differences, members of this dominant class cooperated with each other because they shared a similar interest—exploitation of the institutions of the new state to strengthen their positions and increase their wealth. Indeed, they used sectarianism more as a tool to exact privileges for themselves, their relatives and their clients than to protect the interests of the communities to which they belonged. ... Only politicians predisposed to these methods were able to succeed in the Lebanese political arena. Those who genuinely strove to transform Lebanon into a democratic, pluralistic and equitable society either had no influence or were forced out of the system altogether.

These squabbles among political hopefuls jockeying for power and relative advantage

would leave two legacies for politics in post-independence Lebanon. First, they altered the balance of power among the president, government, and parliament. With French backing this shifted toward the president. Parliament became “a mere forum for debate, rather than a sovereign authoritative body.” The government became unstable and the prime minister, dependent on the president (Zamir 2000, 245). The Maronite presidents came to exercise significant clout, which would later jeopardize the delicate inter-communal balance on which Lebanon’s stability depended. The second legacy was the introduction of political feudalism in the political system. This tendency of political elites to seek access to state institutions and wealth under the guise of serving community interests, can be credited in part for the growing intensity of sectarian politics that would ultimately bring about the collapse of the “Lebanese miracle”.

After establishing *Grand Liban* in 1920, the French deployed their political and military power to defend the young state’s autonomy and territorial integrity against both internal and external threats. Several Lebanese communities, notably the Sunnis, were hostile to Lebanon’s independence. Similarly, Syria rejected the separate existence of the young state. The French role was part of a historical continuity. It was, as Zamir (1985, 97), notes, “an international guarantee for the independence, territorial integrity and Christian character of Greater Lebanon, recalling the guarantees of the six European powers, headed by France, for the existence of the autonomous Sanjak of Mount Lebanon more than half a century before” (Zamir 1985, 97).

France helped to consolidate the new Lebanese state. French representatives prevented Maronites from completely dominating state institutions, tempering the opposition of the Sunnis and other communities to Lebanese independence (Zamir 2000, 241). However, these short-term solutions had longer-term destabilizing consequences. First, although they maintained a balance among the various communities, the power-sharing policies of French officials left Lebanon vulnerable to political sectarianism, feudalism, and clientelism. Old and new elites managed to strengthen their control over the state by portraying themselves as guardians of their communities’ rights (Zamir 2000, 245). Second, France’s policies in Lebanon and toward the

Greater-Syrian Nationalists in Syria invited Syrian intervention in Lebanese politics. The Syrians exploited sectarian, factional, and personal divisions against France.

3. The National Pact of 1943

In 1941 the French presence in the Middle East was seriously weakened by the German invasion of France. The end of the Mandate was on the horizon—and would actually terminate in 1946. On the eve of independence three major nationalist positions could be discerned in Lebanon. Christian nationalists sought to retain French tutelage. Arab nationalists sought Lebanon's incorporation into Syria. Lebanese nationalists accepted Lebanon's independence within the 1920 frontiers, provided the country followed a policy of real independence and cooperated closely with the Arab world (Hourani 1946, 298).

The National Pact (*al-Mithaq al-Watani*) of 1943, which was an informal agreement between representatives of the largest Christian and Muslim communities, reflected a compromise based on the Lebanese nationalist position. It provided a framework to reconcile the interests of the Maronites and Sunnis and confronted the French with a united Lebanese position for an end to the mandate. Led by a prosperous merchant class, the Maronites wanted to control the machinery of government in their own interests and settled for a formal break with France; the Sunnis, led by Arab nationalists, sought independence from the French mandate and were willing to settle without a formal tie to Syria (Hourani 1966, 27). The unwritten pact would supplement the formal Constitution of the country. It enshrined three principles:

1. Segmental proportionality (representation of the communities in government in proportion to their demographic weight);
2. Segmental autonomy (a guarantee of the communities' rights to conduct religious, educational, and cultural affairs with no state intervention); and
3. Foreign policy "neutrality" (an agreement by the Sunnis not to seek union with Syria in return for a pledge by the Maronites not to steer the country towards the West).

From 1943 to the eruption of the civil war in 1975, Lebanon's political institutions sought to preserve the autonomy of the country's seventeen religious groups while guaranteeing their proportional representation in the central government. True to what by then had become a long-standing tradition, the distribution of political offices was a delicate balancing act. The Maronites held the Presidency of the Republic, an office endowed with extensive powers and privileges.⁸ To counterbalance Maronite presidential prerogatives, the Sunnis were given the office of the premiership. Cabinet posts provided representation for the largest religious communities relative to their importance. The Ministry of Finance was shared almost equally between the Sunnis and the Maronites (Salem 1967, 501). Christians held the offices of Deputy-premier (Greek Orthodox) and Minister of Foreign Affairs (Maronites/Greek Catholics). Muslims held the ministries of the Interior (practically always held by the Sunni Premier), Defense (Druze), Agriculture (Shi`a or Druze), and Post and Telegraph (Crow 1962, 496).

The 1943 National Pact fixed the ratio of Christian to Muslim representatives in Parliament at six to five, the number of seats per community being set by law. Later the post of Speaker was assigned to the Shi`a and the office of Deputy-Speaker, to the Greek-Orthodox. But the Constitution also intended Parliament to serve as an instrument of national integration and members were elected on the basis of a "common roll" that represented electoral constituencies rather than specific communities (Crow 1962, 494).⁹ Yet, after 1943 the Lebanese electoral system failed to fulfill its unifying role. Traditional leaders used intimidation and patronage to secure the election of their lists. Candidates on the list did not have to worry about building support across communities (Salibi 1988, 189). The legislature turned into a private club as leaders promoted their protégés. The elites almost secured a monopoly of representation. Hence patronage politics did not bode well for legislative responsiveness to popular demands.

In the mid-1950s, the Muslim community increasingly called into question the arrangement that had produced a decade of peace among communal groups (Hourani 1988, 3-10;

Hudson 1988, 226-234).¹⁰ A host of factors was transforming the socio-demographic structure of Lebanon. Economic growth focused on the service sector at the expense of agriculture. This triggered an exodus of impoverished Shi`a farmers from South Lebanon to the slums of Beirut's southern suburbs while the country was experiencing its economic golden age and the rich, mostly Sunnis and Christians, were getting richer. This deepened the rift between the center (Beirut) and the periphery, the elites and the masses, and created a never-before experienced socio-economic gap that closely mapped onto religious affiliation. The Maronites were on top of the heap and the Shi`a at the bottom.

Yet, the decisive problem was the absence of a foreign protector to maintain the rules of power sharing, to prevent confessional groups from seeking outside allies, and to exclude competitive foreign interventions into Lebanese affairs. Despite their agreement to share power, the two "founding" communities continued to disagree on the country's identity. Despite their apparent compromise to maintain neutrality in foreign affairs, Lebanese communities drew outsiders into domestic politics to redress internal inequalities or to counter perceived threats from one another (Khalaf 1997; Azar 1988). The result was recurring crises and episodes of civil war in Lebanon's third power-sharing regime.

While domestic socio-economic developments increased Muslim popular disenchantment, competitive foreign intervention rocked the foundations of the National Pact. U.S. foreign policy sought to drum up support for regional stability by including conservative Arab regimes in the Baghdad Pact. Egypt's President Gamal Abd al Nasir challenged this U.S. policy, advancing instead a message of pan-Arab unity. President Camille Sham`un's decision to join the Baghdad Pact in 1958 was strongly opposed by the Lebanese National Movement (LNM), which was influenced by the discourse of Arab unity (Tuéni 1982; Hudson 1988; Khalaf 1997).¹¹ Disagreement over Lebanon's foreign policy developed into a crisis over the extensive prerogatives granted by the Constitution to the Maronite President. The opposition demanded

political reforms to prevent the Maronite vision of Lebanon from dominating. Syrian intervention only worsened matters.¹² Upon creation of the United Arab Republic on 1 February 1958, an event that was met with feverish enthusiasm among Lebanese Muslims, UAR radio broadcasts urged the LNM to use violence and overthrow the Lebanese government (Anonymous 1958, 370). The political and military support that Syria and Egypt provided to the mobilized Muslim populace forced elites to shed their moderation and adopt a radical tone for fear of losing support at the ballot box. Opposition leaders thus allowed themselves “to become prisoners’ of their own followers’ extremism ... and [they proved] more interested in their own personal political status than in the country’s welfare” (Khalaf 2002, 124). This led to a brief civil war, a small American intervention, and a slow return to the status quo ante by the end of the year.

This was the first of three major crises that brought the National Pact to an end. Second, following the establishment of the PLO in 1964, the Palestinian armed presence in Lebanon became a major bone of contention between the various communities. Maronite leaders argued that commando operations launched from Lebanese territory exposed Lebanon to the danger of Israeli retaliation and threatened national security and stability. The Maronites also saw the Palestinians “as a Trojan Horse which the radical parties in the country ... were already making expert use of to subvert the Lebanese system” (Salibi 1976).¹³ This provided the backdrop to the 1969 crisis between the Lebanese Army and the Palestinian guerrillas (Hudson 1978, 262-267; Sirryieh 1976, 78-79; Salibi 1976, 26-43; Brynen 1990, 46-48).¹⁴

Following clashes in April 1969 and again in August, President `Abd al-Nasir of Egypt mediated between the parties. The Cairo Agreement, signed by Lebanese and Palestinian representatives on 3 November 1969, granted the PLO wide autonomy within the Palestinian camps and limited freedom of movement outside the camps. It deepened divisions between the Lebanese. Muslims for whom Christian political ascendancy was a “sort of domination” considered the Palestinian commandos a source of security and an embodiment of their cause.

While Muslim leaders showed impatience with the PLO, they were caged in by the masses (Salibi 1976, 54). Maronites regarded the agreement as an unwarranted betrayal of Lebanese sovereignty and exerted pressure on their own leaders not to give in to the demands of the Muslims.

Once again, Syria's intervention made matters worse. Between 1969 and 1973, Al-Sa'iqa, a Syrian-financed and supported Palestinian militia, acted to extend Syrian influence in Lebanon (Brynen 1990, 57). It and other Syrian-backed Palestinian groups were instrumental in instigating Lebanese-Palestinian clashes in April and October 1969 (McLaurin 1977, 257). In a small crisis in 1973, Syria sided with the Palestinians and closed the Lebanese-Syrian border to pressure the Lebanese government into containing the conflict. The Maronites considered this an infringement on Lebanon's sovereignty.

Against these mounting competitive pressures within and outside Lebanon, the National Pact's third armed crisis began: April 13, 1975, marks the beginning of the Lebanese Civil War. Dissatisfaction with the power-sharing formula that privileged the Christians was a major cause. The two warring factions are often labeled Christian and Muslim, but it is more accurate to describe them as pro- and anti-status quo.¹⁵ The powerful traditional elites (mostly Maronites) fought to maintain their privileges while socio-economically disadvantaged groups (mostly Shi'a) fought for more power and access to state resources. However, domestic political issues might have been resolved differently were it not for the inside-outside dialectics that linked developments within the Lebanese political system to wider international issues.

4. The Ta'if Agreement of 1989

In 1989, members of the Lebanese Parliament met in Ta'if, Saudi Arabia, to negotiate an end to the war that had begun fourteen years earlier. They produced the Ta'if Agreement. Although the basic power-sharing nature of Lebanon's institutions remained unaltered, reforms changed the powers of the presidency and council of ministers and the composition of parliament. By 1991 the war had ended and most parties had accepted or acquiesced in the terms of the Ta'if

Agreement.

The impetus to reach agreement was the imminent collapse of the Lebanese state. Until 1988, some state institutions, notably the Central Bank, the Foreign Ministry, and the Presidency of the Republic, had remained active. In August 1988, however, the presidency became formally vacant. Under the Constitution no president could serve beyond his term. When the constitutional deadline for the election of a new president passed without elections, the outgoing president had to step down. Two parallel governments emerged when outgoing President Amin Jumayyil appointed Army Commander General Michel `Awn to head a cabinet of transition, while Muslim leaders recognized the outgoing Prime Minister, Salim al-Huss, as government leader. Arab mediation efforts in early 1989 failed to resolve the deadlock. Against this backdrop, a confrontation between the troops of General `Awn and Syrian armed forces heightened concern in the Arab world for the survival of Lebanon. In May 1989, Arab mediators formulated a truce plan according to which a cease-fire would come into effect on 29 August followed by a meeting of the Lebanese parliamentarians in Ta'if.

The parties to the conflict were not the main negotiators who designed the power-sharing arrangement of the post-conflict Lebanese state. Lebanese members of parliament, who had been elected in 1972 and who for the most part had been spectators rather than actors in the civil war, negotiated the agreement (Maila 1994, 37). The Ta'if Agreement maintained the broad outlines of the older power-sharing system, but redistributed domestic political power among the major confessions—Maronite, Sunni, and Shi'a. It curtailed the powers of the Maronite President (Harik 1991, 45-56),¹⁶ entrusted most executive powers to the confessionally-mixed Council of Ministers¹⁷ (thus yielding significant power to the Sunni Prime Minister), and increased the power of the legislature and especially that of the Shi'a House Speaker. Ta'if replaced the old 6:5 distribution of seats in Parliament by an equal distribution between Christians and Muslims; it also increased the number of seats in parliament from 99 to 108 and eventually to 128.

Ta'if also provided for Syrian Army assistance in helping the legitimate Lebanese forces extend state authority. This provision recognized the role of a hegemon to maintain the peace and legitimated military intervention to assist in the implementation of power sharing. The agreement also clarified the nature of relations between Lebanon and Syria: Ta'if stated that the two countries have “distinctive relations which derive their force from the roots of propinquity, history, and common filial interests,” but it stipulated that any agreements between Syria and Lebanon shall “realize the interests of the two filial countries within the framework of the sovereignty and independence of each” (Salem 1991a, 171). In addition, Ta'if sought to introduce a number of reforms—including administrative decentralization, a new electoral law, the establishment of an economic and social development council, reform with a view toward reinforcing national integration and identification of education and teaching, regulation of the media—and to re-assert the objective of liberating Lebanon from Israeli occupation.

As was the case with the 1926 Constitution and the 1943 National Pact before it, Ta'if emphasized confessional compromise and inter-communal cooperation as temporary measures to facilitate transition to an integrated, non-confessional democracy; however, no steps were taken in the direction of a non-confessional regime. Rather, confessionalism became deeply institutionalized once again. Ta'if sought to replace the rule of individuals by the rule of institutions; thus, executive powers were taken away from the presidency and placed in the hands of government. In practice, however, the country was ruled after 1989 by a “troika”¹⁸ whose members perceived themselves as representatives of their respective communities. This “three-man show” consisted of the three Presidents: the President of the Republic, the “President” of the Council of Ministers, and the “President” of Parliament.¹⁹ Far from working to eradicate confessionalism, Lebanese leaders used customary practices to challenge the provisions of the new constitution. They engaged in attempts at enhancing their power vis-à-vis each other (Krayem 1997, 426-427). For instance, President Ilyas Hrawi insisted on attending all the

meetings of the Council of Ministers to assert his control over the executive branch (Mansour 1993, 204-207).

The stability of the power-sharing arrangement owed much to Syria's newly recognized role as protector. Jockeying for predominance among the confessional leaders might have been destabilizing were it not for Syria's role as an arbiter among the president, the prime minister, and the speaker of parliament. Yet, this drew the Syrian authorities deeper into domestic politics in Lebanon. Much as the French presence had affected the realities of power sharing during the Mandate, so the Syrian presence affected the reality of power sharing after 1989. First, much as the French presence had strengthened the hands of the Maronites in earlier decades, the Syrian presence strengthened the hands of Syria's political allies among the community leaders. These favored leaders had less reason to compromise with the leaders of other communities or with challengers within their own communities. Second, much as the French presence had strengthened the hands of the president, the Syrian presence strengthened the government. Third, much as France had been in a position to change the rules of the game as long as it remained a hegemon, Syria's protectorate allows it to re-interpret major clauses of the Ta'if agreement, such as the provision that required a full Syrian military withdrawal prior to the first postwar elections (Zahar 2002). In 1992, despite a provision that major rule changes required a two-thirds majority in the government, the executive passed a new electoral law that totally disregarded the opposition of Christian ministers. In summer 2004, Syria pressured the Lebanese Parliament into amending the Constitution to extend the term of President Emile Lahoud, a Maronite close to Damascus, by three additional years.

Despite Syrian favoritism toward Lebanon's Muslims, Christian forces did not react violently to what amounted to a forced renegotiation of the power-sharing arrangement. This stability owed much to Syria's determination to quash opposition. In 1989, no sooner was the Ta'if agreement disclosed than General `Awn and his supporters rejected, contending that Ta'if did not commit the Syrian armed forces to a rapid and complete withdrawal from Lebanon. They

also rejected the proposed political reforms as unable to solve fundamental political problems (Salem 1991b). Bolstered by popular support, `Awn urged other Christian political forces to take sides. Disagreement among the Christian leaderships followed and led to a military confrontation that left them weakened and vulnerable. The Syrian Army took advantage of this vulnerability and on October 13, 1990, with a quick strike, defeated Awn's troops and paved the way for implementation of the Ta'if Agreement. By so doing, the Syrian forces demonstrated their willingness to use force in their dealing with spoilers. This deterrent message was not lost on the Lebanese Forces in 1992.

Conclusions to be Drawn from Lebanese Power Sharing

Power sharing has brought extended periods of peace to Lebanon, including the fifty years under the *Règlement Organique* (1864-1914), the decade and a half under the 1926 Constitution (1926-1943), and the first dozen years under the National Pact (1946-58). Yet, as popular participation in politics has grown and deference to traditional elites has waned, the length of each successive period of peace has declined. More importantly, peace has depended on a stable foreign protectorate and has thwarted the transition to a non-confessional democracy.

Power-sharing and domestic peace

External factors are paramount in explaining the varying degrees to which power-sharing regimes have succeeded at maintaining domestic peace in Lebanon. The pattern over time is quite clear: When a foreign protectorate—particularly a multilateral protectorate—has been in place, Lebanon's power sharing has brought peace. When there was no protector, violent crises in the power sharing system were more likely. The likelihood of violence began to rise as one protector weakened or began to withdraw. It continued into the early stages of establishing a new protectorate. Other factors, such as changing elite-follower relations, played a secondary role. The *Règlement Organique* was a success because it stemmed communal violence in Lebanon. In spite

of the widespread massacres that accompanied the events of 1857-1860, quiet was restored relatively quickly in Mount Lebanon. The 1926 Constitution was also relatively successful, with no inter-communal violence reported throughout the period of the Mandate: During the political crises of the 1920s and 1930s, the French authorities often used the threat of force to deter Lebanese politicians and their followers from pressing what were considered “unacceptable” demands, yet none of the political demonstrations involved more than low-level rioting. In contrast, the 1943 National Pact, despite its first dozen years of peace, must be considered a failure in light of the numerous violent and non-violent politico-military crises that beset Lebanon as early as 1958 and culminated with the 1975 civil war. Finally, the Ta’if Agreement seems to have reduced the level of inter-communal violence. The heavy-handed Syrian military presence in the country and the repression of opposition forces have lowered the level of inter-communal violence (Zahar 2002).

In the Lebanese case, a foreign protectorate has been necessary—and perhaps sufficient—to secure domestic peace and stability, even without the support of all Lebanese communities. It is interesting to note that the most stable period in Lebanese history remains the period following the *Règlement Organique*. Peace was restored relatively soon after the violence; it endured even beyond the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire. Key to understanding this stability is the congruence in the interest of all foreign powers to maintain stability and order in the region and prevent large-scale violence. In the same vein, the post-1990 domestic peace in Lebanon is in no small part a function of Syria’s interest in the stability of Lebanon. In contradistinction, Lebanon’s most unstable period, 1943-1975, saw no international guarantees of the power-sharing regime.

A multilateral condominium appears to have led to a more durable power-sharing arrangement than did the single-state protectorates. First, a multilateral agreement to abstain from competitive intervention made agreement on a new power-sharing arrangement possible. The *Règlement Organique*, the mandate system, and the Ta’if Agreement were all parts of multilateral

guarantees. Presumably, it is more difficult to achieve consensus among a larger number than among a small number of players. Thus, the multilateral constellation surrounding power-sharing arrangements such as the *Règlement Organique* seems more difficult to reproduce. Yet, this was precisely the kind of constellation that secured domestic peace for the longest period.

The history of foreign efforts to end Lebanon's most recent civil war is telling in this respect. Of the many conferences, summits and agreements organized to end the Lebanese civil war of 1975-1990, all those set up solely by one foreign player failed—as evidenced by the many Syrian-sponsored peace agreements and the ill-fated Israeli-Lebanese agreement of 1983. The Ta'if Accord, in contradistinction, had drummed up support from all quarters (the Arab World, the United States, France, and the Vatican).

Second, the numbers of guarantors was also important for the stability of domestic peace in one other way. The larger the number of guarantors, the less likely it was that one player's withdrawal from the agreement would endanger the stability of a power-sharing regime. Thus, the Ottoman Empire's disengagement did not affect the situation in Mount Lebanon. However, one can only wonder about the impact that an abrupt end to the French mandate would have had on Lebanese politics in the 1920s and 1930s. Finally, Syria's withdrawal would probably put the stability of the post-Ta'if second Republic in jeopardy. Given the essential Syrian role in the implementation of the Ta'if accord—including the repression of political opponents and the silencing of counter-elites—a Syrian military pullout would be likely to re-open the Pandora's box of civil violence.

Alternatively, the intervention of new external actors to challenge a declining protectorate or to create a new protectorate has undermined the stability of power-sharing arrangements. Foreign intervention in the periods before 1860 and in the periods 1920-26 and 1943-75 contributed to the political crises that rocked the country. French meddling in the affairs of the Ottoman Empire fueled growing Maronite demands for expanded political rights that led to communal violence. Syrian meddling during the Mandate period fed Sunni resentment and

support for the idea of Greater Syria, and it fueled the Maronites' relentless pursuit of guarantees, which involved controlling key executive and military positions in the new state. In the newly independent Lebanon Syria's political and military support of the Lebanese National Movement was a critical factor in the violence of 1958.

From late 1975 to 1990, Syria began to play the role of protector that would ultimately support a new power-sharing arrangement, but the transition to this new protectorate and power-sharing regime was accompanied by extreme violence. Looking to avoid a partition of Lebanon that could further weaken the Arab world in its conflict with Israel, the Syrian government sought to stabilize the situation militarily by contributing heavily to the Arab League's peacekeeping mission in Lebanon, the Arab Deterrent Force. It also tried to forge an alliance between the Lebanese Front and the LNM (Brynen 1990, 91-92).²⁰ This attempt failed but it highlighted a shift in the Syrian involvement in Lebanon as it got closer to actually establishing a protectorate: Syria's new role as a mediator among the various factions. In 1976, the Syrian authorities helped produce the Constitutional Document, a proposal that conceded some internal reforms to the Lebanese power-sharing formula in return for guarantees that the PLO would respect the terms of the 1969 Cairo Agreement.²¹ Damascus was involved in 1980 in the elaboration of the Fourteen Points for Reconciliation that sought the reestablishment of Lebanese sovereignty, an equilibrated system of power-sharing, close cooperation with Syria, and Lebanese support for the Palestinian cause.

In 1984 Syria mediated among the Lebanese factions in the civil war at national reconciliation conferences in Geneva and Lausanne, Switzerland. The talks resulted in proposals for a slightly modified power-sharing formula, including the redistribution of parliamentary seats and a curtailment of presidential powers. In a major departure from the neutrality provisions of the National Pact, the talks asserted Lebanon's full affiliation with the Arab World (Khalidi 1989, 379). Later that year Syria sponsored the Tripartite Accord, a peace deal negotiated and signed in

Damascus, which introduced significant changes to the terms of Syrian-Lebanese relations. The 1984 accord severely limited presidential prerogatives and planned a sweeping deconfessionalization of Lebanese politics. Although these mediation efforts ultimately failed, they usually coincided with lulls in the fighting. In sum, while Syrian intervention on behalf of one side in the conflict was usually associated with an increase in the level of violence, Syria's growing role as protector and attempts at mediation were on the contrary associated with a decrease in the intensity of conflict.

The illusory hope of transition to democracy

Since the end of the Ottoman Empire, all power-sharing regimes have included provisions that stipulated that these institutional arrangements were to be only a transitional mechanism that would lead Lebanon toward a non-sectarian democracy. Yet none of these provisions was able to transcend sectarianism. On the contrary, at the end of each regime the sectarianism in politics was stronger and more firmly rooted. This may in part have been a result of incentives created by power sharing, but the role of foreign protectors and the alternation of peace and conflict associated with the rise and decline of each protectorate increased these incentives. Indeed, protectorates had five unintended effects on the bargaining among communal leaders that increased the incentives for sectarianism and thwarted the development of a non-confessional democracy.

First, in designing power-sharing arrangements, protectors introduced procedural measures to convert politically charged issues into technically tractable matters; yet, this deliberate avoidance of the hard issues of Lebanon's statehood did not make these go away. (This tactic was also used in a number of other peace negotiations, including the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks and the Northern Irish process, where the different groups postponed decisions on the statehood issue.) Instead, the parties agreed on procedures about which their interests coincided and avoided issues that might have led to breakdown of negotiations. This aptly describes the

dynamic of inter-elite cooperation under French rule where elites with diametrically opposed objectives (Lebanese autonomy and the creation of a Greater Syria) managed under French pressure to cooperate by focusing on the details of power sharing without addressing the ultimate identity of the country that they were building. Yet, the festering statehood issue continued to give rise to severe crises that threatened to tear apart or extinguish the Lebanese state.

Second, the presence of a protector encouraged mutual intransigence on many issues by decreasing the painful consequences associated with hardened positions. A good illustration of this dynamic is provided by the particularly unstable Lebanese politics under the French mandate. Aware of the fact that the French presence in Lebanon presented a guarantee against a descent into anarchy, the various Lebanese elites did not feel compelled to display a spirit of compromise in their dealings with one another on difficult overarching issues. Rather than creating incentives for cooperation, the protector-backed power-sharing arrangements increased the tendency of sectarian elites to engage in the type of extortionate threats that tore Cyprus apart.

Third, the presence of the protector created winners and losers, and once the protector began to weaken its hold, the losers were likely to seek a fundamental revision in the distribution of powers and invite in outside challengers to back their demands. Thus, under the French mandate, the Presidency of the Republic acquired so many prerogatives that “after 1943 Maronite presidents would wield considerable clout, with a detrimental effect on the delicate balance between the communities. The presidency thus became a means for the Maronites to maintain their dominance” (Zamir 2000, 245). Under Syria’s tutelage, disagreement over the design of electoral institutions served to rekindle sectarian politics. In the same vein as the 1926 Constitution, the Ta’if agreement sought to encourage moderate multiconfessional voting, by holding elections on the basis of the *muhafaza* [governorate]. Instead, as a result of extensive electoral gerrymandering, the *muhafaza* was replaced with the more homogenous *qada`* [district].²² Although Ta’if provided for a new electoral law that required the support of two-

thirds of Lebanon's cabinet members—effectively allowing a dissenting minority to exercise a veto—the law was adopted in total disregard of the Christian leaders' opposition to its content (Phil: is this logical? Why wouldn't a minority want a provision requiring a two-third's majority? Joëlle: there seems to be a misunderstanding here, Ta'if provides for minority veto in the drafting of the electoral law and in all important decisions to be taken in cabinet. When Christian members of government refused the electoral law and walked away the law was voted by the rest of government members thus transgressing the provision that passing such a law required 2/3rd approval in cabinet –with Christian members out, it was not 2/3rd of cabinet but of those present and voting who passed the law). The electoral debacle resulted in a Christian boycott of the first post-conflict parliamentary elections. The Syrian-backed Lebanese government disregarded the boycott and went ahead with the elections, leaving Christian political forces with little to no access to the formal structures of power. The Christian population worried that the behavior of Muslim political elites indicated their intention to achieve in peace the victory that they had been unable to achieve in war. The Syrian bias toward some Muslim communities reinforced sectarian cleavages in the country (Bahout 1993; Krayem 1997).

Fourth, the presence of a protector permitted Lebanese elites to focus on cementing their respective political monopolies. The leaders focused on the manipulation of specific institutional arrangements to benefit their own position within their communities at the expense of other politicians. Within their respective communities this reinforced political feudalism and blocked challenges to the elites' power. With the backing of the protectorate, these elites could quell all challenges to their own power in the guise of a defense of the power-sharing peace accord.

Fifth, the perceived bias on the part of the protector and the heightened insecurity among losers left the latter less willing to forego power sharing for a non-confessional democracy. Rather than the growing trust that Timothy Sisk and Christoph Stefes find in South Africa (Chapter Twelve), power sharing backed by a protector heightened suspicions and fed demands for still stronger power-sharing guarantees. For example, after 2000 Christian elites felt

threatened by the terms of the Ta'if power-sharing arrangement. An expression (*al-ihbat al-Masihi* [Christian hopelessness and discontent]) was even coined to describe the situation of Maronites specifically and Christians more generally. Under such conditions, Christians rejected any moves toward deconfessionalization and a transition to full democracy, in favor of locking in guarantees through power sharing. This is not unlike the situation in 1958 when the foreign policy of President Sham'un was seen as a breach of the National Pact by Muslim communities and elites. The result was retrenchment behind the defenses of sectarian politics and political feudalism. Power sharing also paralyzed any move toward democracy.

Thus, there has been a perverse resilience to Lebanese power sharing. Although the Lebanese Civil War prompted a reformulation of the power-sharing formula, it did not question its fundamental logic. In spite of the many political and military crises that rocked Lebanon in the past century, power sharing endured. Lebanese elites renegotiated the terms of the power-sharing arrangement after each major conflagration. The renegotiated agreements differed only slightly from previous ones. None was able to make the step to democracy.

Endnotes to Chapter Eight

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² The expression comes from the title of Kamal Salibi's (1998) book.

³ Lebanon's foremost historian Kamal Salibi dates the consolidation of the Imarah to 1627.

⁴ A number of factors including internal power struggles within the Druze community, the arrival of Greek Catholic communities from Syria that joined the Maronites and swelled their ranks, and Maronite economic ascendancy account for Druze decline.

⁵ The *Règlement Organique* was preceded by another attempt at organizing the policy along sectarian lines, but that attempt, known as the *double qa'immaqamiyya*, sought to separate communities and give them exclusive spheres of influence rather than introduce power-sharing per se.

⁶ The six major communities were the Maronite, Greek Orthodox and Catholic Christians and the Druze, Shi`a, and Sunni Muslims.

⁷ In the 1860s, Maronites made up almost 60 per cent of the population.

⁸ These powers include ultimate control over the Lebanese Army, veto over legislation passed by Parliament, and an informal say in the choice of the Premier.

⁹ Within a single constituency, where ordinarily there are several seats of varying religions, the electorate forms a common roll with each voter voting for all seats including those denominations other than his own. Thus electoral contests turned into intra-sectarian struggles and candidates, to be acceptable, could not solely count on the approval of their co-religionists.

¹⁰ Both Michael Hudson and Albert Hourani, see the failure of "power-sharingism" as a result of growing regional/political and internal/socio-economic pressure that the system failed to absorb.

¹¹ The Lebanese National Movement was an umbrella organization of all the opposition parties during the 1958 crisis headed by Progressive Socialist Party and Druze feudal leader Kamal Junblatt.

¹² As early as 1949, the Syrian Nationalist Party, a Lebanese party favoring the creation of a Greater Syria, attempted a coup against the first post-independence Lebanese government.

¹³ Camille Sham`un's National Liberal Party, Pierre Jumayyil's *Kata'ib* and Raymond Iddah's National Bloc formed the Triple Alliance [*al-Hilf al-Thulathi*] in view of the upcoming 1968 parliamentary elections. Their stance on the Palestinian question was openly backed by Maronite Patriarch Ma`ushi.

¹⁴ On 23 April 1969, clashes erupted between the Lebanese Army and the Palestinian guerrillas.

¹⁵ The mainly Christian forces in favor of the status quo came to be known as the Lebanese Front. The Front included political forces associated with Maronite traditional political families in addition to the militias of Maronite religious orders. The anti-status quo forces revolved around the mainly Muslim Lebanese National Movement and some Palestinian guerrillas.

¹⁶ Christians argue that the extensive powers of the President are a security guarantee. The prerogatives are considered by many Maronites as an essential political tool to implement their “vision” of Lebanon.

¹⁷ Safeguards were built in to prevent any community from establishing de facto control of the executive. A two-third majority in government was required to decide major issues including the state of emergency, war and peace, general mobilization, international treaties, the budget, comprehensive development and long-range plans, the dissolution of Parliament, the election law, the naturalization law, and personal status law.

¹⁸ The word “troika” has actually made its way into the Lebanese political lexicon.

¹⁹ The titles of Prime Minister and House Speaker respectively translate from Arabic into English as President of the Council of Ministers and President of Parliament.

²⁰ According to the semi-official *Al-Ba`ath* newspaper: “Lebanon's security, interests and Arabism are an essential part of Arab national security and interests, especially after the retrogressive Egyptian-Israeli agreement which is firmly linked with what is going on in Lebanon.”

²¹ Although it did not alter the confessional character of the top decision-making elites, it promised sweeping reforms in Parliament, the civil service, and education.

²² The *muhafaza* was only adopted in regions where there was no doubt on the political loyalties of the would-be parliamentarians. Where the elections were expected to be contested by anti-Syrian forces, or where Syria sought to reward one client over another, it was abandoned in favor

of the *qada'*. Thus in 1992 and 1996, a special status was accorded to the Druze in the predominantly Maronite governorate of Mount Lebanon to secure the election of Syrian ally, PSP leader Walid Junblatt. Mount Lebanon, a stronghold of Christian opposition, was divided into a number of constituencies to decrease the electoral chances of opposition candidates.