

LEBANON'S SECOND REPUBLIC: SECULAR TALK, SECTARIAN APPLICATION

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DURING A TRIP TO LEBANON in December 1996, I observed a very interesting and intriguing phenomenon in one neighborhood of Beirut's southern suburbs. I was visiting with a friend who lives in the predominantly Shiite neighborhood of al-Shiyya. His residence is located in a newly built area very close to the predominantly Christian area of al-Tayyuna. At dusk, he pointed to me a reemerging tradition in the community; we saw candles lit and arranged in different formations on some balconies and windowsills in adjacent buildings. My Shiite friend had to inquire from his wife about the occasion. We learned that it is in celebration of the advent of mid-Sha'ban. (Sha'ban is the month that immediately precedes the fasting month of Ramadan according to the Muslim calendar.)

When we revisited the scene a few minutes later I noticed a very intriguing fact. Some of the apartments displaying the burning candles also had illuminated Christmas trees in their living rooms. It was not unusual for me to see decorated Christmas trees in Muslim households in Lebanon. This was a common occurrence in the last few years before the 1975-90 civil war. But what attracted my attention was the concurrent existence and public display in this area of what is considered to be two "rival" religious symbols in the postwar period.

Beirut's southern suburbs had been a frequent target of "sectarian" shelling throughout the war, mainly from the adjacent Christian-concentrated areas that were controlled by the right wing militias. Although Beirut's southern suburbs had been a stronghold for leftist and secular parties in the past, Shiite-based sectarian militias and religious groups became very active in these suburbs in the 1980s. As a result, these areas became identified as a bastion for Shiite sectarian-based calls for reform and Shiite "fundamentalism." In such a milieu, the mutual display of "contesting" religious symbols could be a direct challenge to the logic of sectarianism (*al-ta'iffiyya*). The phenomenon of sectarianism was rejuvenated in different parts of Lebanon in the 1980s.¹

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WHAT IS SECTARIANISM?

Sectarianism and the sectarian system (*al-nizam al-ta'iffya*) were considered by some scholars and Lebanese political contenders as major contributors to the Lebanese conflict before 1990. They were reinforced through the 1989 Document of National Understanding (also known as the Ta'if Accord) that ushered in the formal end of the war. The main aim of this essay is to examine the reasons for the continuous use of sectarianism in government in the postwar period. I argue that the interest of the Lebanese elite in maintaining control is a principal factor in the continuing implementation of the sectarian system since its embryonic formation in 1843.

Sectarianism is a complex phenomenon. The coeval display of the "opposing" religious symbols in al-Shiyya under the circumstances described above triggers many pertinent questions. These questions have to do with the degree of association between sectarianism and other factors, like the increasing practice of religious rituals² and the expansion of modernization and globalization³ that influenced Lebanon from 1990. Drawing on the al-Shiyya case, a set of questions could be raised here to address the relationship between sectarianism and religiosity.

Is lighting candles in this case a sign of religiosity or sectarianism or both? Are religiosity and sectarianism—universally or in the case of Lebanon—different or the same in nature and goals? And if different, to what extent do they overlap? Are sectarianism and sectarian feelings a logical extension or a necessary outcome of religious identity? Are the Lebanese who displayed multi-religious symbols sectarian but tolerant of other religions, or are they are religious but not necessarily sectarian? Is either of these two options possible, and in which way can we explain the phenomenon of displaying these symbols? Can we generalize across geographical areas about the reasons for displaying multi-religious symbols, or will they vary greatly from one area to another in association with other economic, social, and political factors? Finally, is the simultaneous display of these symbols a strong or weak indicator of the commonly held argument that sectarianism is well entrenched in Lebanon after the civil war?

Sectarianism is not necessarily synonymous with religiosity. These concepts should be differentiated from each other with an eye on the situational nature of sectarianism. One difference is that, while sectarianism may imply some intolerance of them (sectarian) "others" and encourage feelings of competition with them, religiosity does not necessarily imply intolerance. Moreover, religiosity may be personal, dormant, and passive in many instances. History has shown many cases of the existence of a significant degree of tolerance among religious groups.

Another difference is that a sectarian person is not necessarily a religious person in practice, behavior, and attitudes. To the contrary, it is common to find people in Lebanon who have strong sectarian feelings and may exhibit sectarian behavior, but who are secular in terms of their daily conduct

and general attitudes—including many who are non-practicing Muslims and Christians. It is also common to find a person who may act in a sectarian or religious way but have secular positions on some issues.⁴

Moreover, religious conflicts have in many cases involved an attempt to convert the “others,” to subdue them on a religious basis, or even to separate permanently from them. This has rarely been the case in Lebanon since the initiation of the sectarian system. The civil war period in particular witnessed calls for separation by Christian-concentrated right wing militias or for the creation of a religious state introduced by Islamist groups. But these ideas were and are unpopular and are usually considered inapplicable and extremist.

Sectarian arguments do not necessarily reflect religious dogmas, although they may use them heavily at times. Sectarianism is mainly a political tool whose advocates often exaggerate the significance of “ethnic” markers in sectarian communities in order to stress their differences and promote an identity of each community versus others. The proponents of sectarianism may shift tactics and arguments, sometimes drastically, to achieve power ends. For example, during the 1975-82 period some predominantly Christian sectarian right wing forces called frequently for “autonomy of Christian regions” or partitioning of Lebanon, at times citing the inherent religious differences from Muslims as a cause for separation.⁵ But when the Israeli invasion in the summer of 1982 tilted power to the advantage of these groups their presidential candidate, Bashir Jemayel, campaigned on the basis of reuniting the “10,452 square kilometers,” that is, all Lebanese territories.

Sectarianism in Lebanon’s case cannot be simply explained by the fact that sectarian communities exist. In other words, sectarianism is not a “natural” byproduct of the presence of sects, as some scholars had assumed or argued.⁶ If so, then sectarian systems would have been more common in other states, including Middle Eastern states, where more than one sect exist and societal tensions are rampant.

The vast literature on ethnicity is very useful to our understanding of sectarianism. Studies of ethnicity in its broader context, including groups differentiated along racial origins, cultural backgrounds, and religious affiliations, address the causes for the rise of ethnicity and ethnic mobilization. Of the two major approaches that address ethnicity and ethnic mobilization, the instrumentalist approach is more viable than the primordialist approach in explaining Lebanon’s sectarianism. The primordialist approach tends to consider sectarian mobilization as inherent and given based on the existence of sects, whereas the instrumentalist approach allows for explaining fluctuations in mobilization in association with other socioeconomic and political factors.⁷ Most studies on sectarianism in Lebanon use the primordialist approach, and the few who use the instrumentalist approach have mainly explored specific affects or dimensions of sectarianism.

Sectarianism is purposeful rather than coincidental. It is not an independent but a dependent variable, largely dependent on the interest of the elite in reaching and maintaining power. If we examine historically the

development of the sectarian system since its inception in 1843, it becomes clear that it was carefully promoted at its different stages by an emerging or an established elite interested in power.

Lebanon's elite in general are interested in sectarianism because it is a useful tool for control. As such, it serves two major purposes. First, it creates a solid constituency for the elite. This constituency is composed mainly of lower and middle class co-religionists who are led to believe that their access to resources is dependent on their association with the elite in a client-patron relationship. Second, it allows the elite to diffuse demands for reforms raised by the lower and middle classes. The elite would achieve their goals if they succeeded in dividing these classes along sectarian lines, thus encouraging them to compete with one another for access to resources.

Sectarianism is institutionalized in a sectarian system that highlights sectarian communities as primary societal units and political entities. As a result, the state largely confines political representation to the boundaries of "sectarian representation." The dominance of the elite over their co-religionists is legitimized by the "fact" that they "represent" their interests. Moreover, the state tries to redirect the anger caused by the growing inequalities between the upper and the popular classes, and within different segments of the population, into intra-class anger within the popular classes molded as sectarian tensions.

Although the elite compete over resources, and would enhance their positions if they secured continuous (sectarian) popular support, they would usually like to keep the mobilization of the popular classes within safe limits. Thus the privileged elite usually emphasize stability and maintenance of the sectarian balance. In other words, they are interested in controlling the emerging tensions of the popular classes and guaranteeing themselves continuous access to resources. So popular attempts to challenge, modify, or abolish the sectarian system are usually blocked by the exploiting elite for the alleged sake of safeguarding the national interest (*al-maslaha al-wataniyya*) or national unity (*al-wihda al-wataniyya*).

Sectarianism could be initially identified here as an elite-promoted mode of differentiation among religiously affiliated members of the society in terms of access to power and control over resources. Although this differentiation is primarily a perceived one on the popular level, it may materialize in association with the competing elite interests in building a solid constituency among their co-religionists. The main goals of sectarianism are diffusing the popular classes' demands for reforms aimed at alleviating their deteriorating conditions and redirecting their activism into intra-class competition that weakens their abilities for change and advances elite control over them.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF SECTARIANISM AND THE SECTARIAN SYSTEM

The sectarian system is relatively new to Lebanon's rule: its principles were first introduced to the political regime of Mount Lebanon in only 1843 and it was not applied to the rest of Lebanon's territories until the inception of Greater Lebanon in 1920.

Mount Lebanon was divided under the Ottomans in 1843 into two administrative districts: the southern Druze-concentrated region and the northern Maronite-concentrated region. These districts were headed respectively by Druze and Maronite administrators. Members of the district councils were also drawn equally from the various sectarian communities in each region.⁸

An array of factors contributed to this injection of sectarian principles into government rule. The influence of lay and religious Christian elites grew significantly under Ottoman rule. The Ottoman millet system allowed for developing communal institutions of non-Muslim sects, which, coupled with the Ottoman Capitulations to the expanding European powers, advanced the status of emerging Christian elites in Lebanon. Many of these were involved in economic activities associated with expanding Western interests in the region. Concurrently, the Western-connected Maronite Church was gaining wealth and influence.

The introduction of European-based capitalism during the "long nineteenth century" was a principal factor in shaking the foundations of Mount Lebanon's feudal principedom and weakening the predominantly Druze feudal lords. Subsequently, class-based peasant revolts became more frequent, placing strong pressures on the elite to enact reforms. The division of the mountain and the introduction of "sectarian representation" in 1843 did not terminate the peasant insurrections. In 1858 a major uprising by peasants against their co-religionist feudal lords in the predominantly Maronite area of Kisirwan succeeded in throwing out the lords and establishing a commoners' republic.⁹ But the conflict expanded wildly into other territories and turned sectarian.

The European powers and the Ottomans, who had jointly supported the 1843 regime, intervened again in 1861, but this time to unify the mountain under a new system. This system reinforced the principles of "sectarian representation," which favored the Maronites in appointment of district heads, allocation of seats in the central administrative council, and recruitment of the gendarmerie.¹⁰ This system helped advance the emerging Maronite bourgeoisie.

Under the French Mandate, Greater Lebanon was established in 1920 by joining Mount Lebanon with adjacent parts of the dissolved Ottoman provinces. The French, along with some Maronite compradors (agents of foreign economic interests) saw the larger entity as more economically viable and suitable for infiltrating the Arab interior. But the initiation of Greater Lebanon was entwined with a steady gap in access to resources among the Lebanese as well as serious disagreements over national identity. The socioeconomic and

national identity divides had overlapped with regional and religious differentiations.

Greater Lebanon engulfed two areas unequal in their level of capitalist development and their access to services and resources: the more advanced area of Beirut and Mount Lebanon, constituting the center, and the less advanced areas of northern, eastern, and southern Lebanon, constituting the peripheries.

The creation of Greater Lebanon was also against the wishes of a significant number of its population. A large number of the center's residents were Christians, and many of them, particularly Maronites, were advocates of the new state. A good number of the peripheries' residents were Muslims, and many of them, in addition to a good number of Christians, leaned toward reunion with a Syrian/Arab nation.¹¹ The different concentrations of sectarian communities in the center versus the peripheries also meant that Christians, predominantly of the center, had better access to resources while Muslims, predominantly of the peripheries, had less. This access also varied with class differences, with the upper classes of various religious affiliations in both regions having much better access to resources.

The continuous rejection of the French Mandate and its local allies throughout the 1920s and 1930s, supported by the development of secular parties that represented the popular classes, led the ruling elite to reinforce sectarianism through expanding "sectarian representation." Seats in the first parliament, initiated in 1926, were allocated on a sectarian basis. The sectarian allocation of top state offices also started to take shape during this period, although the Christian elite predominantly filled them.

The sectarian system was fully developed at independence in 1943. Bishara al-Khuri and Riad al-Solh, representatives of the Maronite-based comprador class and the Sunni-based merchant class respectively, joined in an unwritten agreement called the National Pact to establish this system. Tradition was set to preserve the position of the presidency for the Maronite elite, the premiership for the Sunni elite, and the parliament speakership for the Shiite elite. Rules were also set to distribute parliamentary seats, cabinet posts, and administrative and army positions at all levels on sectarian basis. These arrangements worked mainly to the advantage of the Christian, and more in particular, the Maronite elite.

The predominance of a service-based economy during the 1950s, the subordination of agriculture and industry to its rules, and the heavy discriminatory impact of the sectarian system culminated in a series of crises starting in the mid-1960s. These led in turn to forceful calls for political, socioeconomic, and educational reforms. The reform coalition included labor unions, secular parties and organizations, and student groups. Political organizations like the Communist Party, the Syrian Social Nationalist Party, and the Ba'th Party were involved, while the student unions at the Lebanese University and the American University of Beirut led the student movement. Demands for reform included abolishing the sectarian system and replacing clientelism by merit for access to resources.

In response, the ruling elite moved to weaken the reform movement and diffuse its demands. The dominant Maronite elite initiated a well-organized sectarian campaign that was also designed to solidify their sectarian mass base and develop its military readiness.¹² The Kataib Party led the campaign along with the National Liberal Party, and coordinated their efforts with President Suleiman Franjiyya and the Lebanese army. The resulting tensions culminated in the outbreak of the civil war in 1975.

The largely Christian right wing sectarian militias became dominant in Christian-concentrated areas from 1975 on and cleansed these areas in a short time from their "enemies." The list of groups targeted included Christians who disagreed with the militias' sectarian plans as well as the bulk of non-Christian and non-Lebanese inhabitants of these areas.

In the first few years of the war the secular parties of the leftist coalition made serious efforts to maintain a secular atmosphere in the areas they controlled. Nonetheless, several factors, including the impact of the 1982 Israeli invasion, allowed the predominance of the largely Muslim sectarian militias in the multi-sectarian areas from 1983 on. Although mobility between various areas was relatively tolerated in the late 1970s, a stalemate was reestablished after 1982. Each side confined itself mainly to its own areas and fixed lines were drawn among neighborhoods and regions.

THE TA'IF ACCORD: SECULAR TALK, SECTARIAN TALK

In a Saudi-brokered deal, the Document of National Understanding (Ta'if Accord) of 1989 ushered in the formal end of the civil war, a step enforced in 1990 with a great deal of Syrian help.

The Ta'if Accord was the crest of a series of "reformist" proposals and agreements that never materialized fully in wartime.¹³ The secular and leftist forces' calls for reform had gained momentum rapidly from 1975 on. In response, the right wing forces argued that the conflict was primarily an internal-external one between Lebanese and Palestinians, and that reforms were unnecessary. Some members of the Muslim traditional elite argued in turn that the formula for reducing tensions lay in achieving parity of power with the privileged Maronite elite.

Despite the fact that most of those traditional Muslim elite lacked teeth during the war, the essence of their argument constantly prevailed throughout the "reformist" documents culminating in the Ta'if Accord. Many factors developing after 1976 contributed to this outcome. These factors included the gradual retreat of the leftist and secular forces, the rising power of the Muslim-concentrated sectarian militias (especially in the 1980s), the inability of the right wing forces to expand beyond the Christian-concentrated areas they controlled in the war's first two years, and the forceful intervention of the Syrians. As a result, reform was narrowed down to a redistribution of resources on a sectarian basis to the advantage of the Muslim elite. Such an outcome was made more possible by the

reluctant acquiescence of Christian-concentrated right wing forces, who preferred it to any secular alternative.

The new (1990) preamble to the constitution, drawing on the Ta'if Accord, addressed three major underlying causes of the Lebanese civil war.

The first cause pertains to the conflict of national identity entwined with Lebanon's inception in 1920. While the 1943 National Pact rather recognized Lebanon's dual ties to the West and the Arab world, the new preamble to the constitution unequivocally stressed Lebanon's Arab identity and affiliation (Clause B).¹⁴ But this was represented with a particular "Lebanese" twist. The preamble rejected any attempt to partition Lebanon and any form of discrimination among the Lebanese (Clause I). It also declared illegitimate any authority that negated the (sectarian) coexistence of the population (Clause J). These statements were a veiled response to arguments propagated by some right wing Christian-concentrated forces from the war period. But the preamble equally stated that Lebanon is a "final homeland" for all its citizens (Clause A).

Such an emphasis was aimed at weakening the historical calls by leftist and secular forces to include Lebanon in a larger Syrian and/or Arab union. Thus in the preamble the postwar regime equated secessionists and larger unionists, and considered both extreme sectarian arguments and broader nationalist (often secular) ones non-viable. Because of the significant support extended to the Accord by the Muslim elite, the stress on the "final homeland" concept definitely got their approval. This in turn suggests that the new Muslim bourgeoisie (like Rafiq al-Hariri and Nabih Berri) were openly signaling their acceptance and advancement of a "Lebanese nation." The Muslim bourgeoisie had historically refrained from supporting this notion.

The second cause relates to the growing socioeconomic divide perpetuated by unequal access to resources and the negative affects of the steady center/peripheries gap. The new preamble states that Lebanon's system should be based "on social justice and equality between all citizens in rights and duties without any differentiation or preference" (Clause C). It also affirms that "a balanced development among regions culturally, socially, and economically is a cornerstone of the state's unity and stability" (Clause G).

The third cause is sectarianism and its discriminatory system. Indicating the destructive effects of the sectarian system, the postwar state made it clear that "abolishing political sectarianism is a fundamental national goal that should be achieved according to a piecemeal plan" (Clause H).

The founders of the Ta'if Accord "Second Republic" mimicked their predecessors who conceived the National Pact's "First Republic." They suggested that sectarianism should be phased out to advance Lebanon, yet they took steps to reinforce it. But while the National Pact's elite did not advance beyond the hope that sectarianism would wither away,¹⁵ they organized the sectarian system in an extra constitutional manner.¹⁶ The Ta'if elite, in contrast, injected into the constitution for the first time both the intention to abolish sectarianism and steps that solidified its existence.

The 1990 constitutional amendments introduced some principles and mechanisms that organized and rearranged the sectarian system. Article 24 presents the guidelines for the sectarian distribution of seats in parliament. This article affirms that, until parliament enacts non-sectarian electoral laws, parliamentary seats should be distributed equally between Christians and Muslims. It also states that seats should be allocated on the basis of “proportional representation” among the sectarian groups within each of the Christian and Muslim communities. While the first tier of distribution of seats between the two religious communities is clearly defined, the second tier is rather obscure and open to different interpretations.¹⁷ The principles of sectarian “proportional representation” were not implemented accurately in the past and they did not accommodate the demographic changes showing Muslims as the numerical majority starting in the 1960s. Moreover, there are no constitutional guarantees that these principles will reflect any present and future changes among the larger religious communities or the sectarian groups.

Article 19 establishes a constitutional council whose role is to “oversee the constitutionality of laws and to adjudicate the conflicts stemming from the presidential and parliamentary elections.” Religious heads of sectarian communities are, except for the three top state leaders and ten unspecified members of parliament, the only parties allowed to petition the council. The religious leaders’ appeal to the council is restricted to legal matters related to “personal status, and freedoms of belief, religious practice, and religious education.” Nonetheless, they were provided an exclusive opportunity to influence decisions on such vital matters. Such an opportunity was not extended to civic associations or individuals, who may have a comparable interest in petitioning the council on such matters.

Top religious leaders can use their petitioning prerogatives under Article 19 to preserve their exclusive control over all personal status matters in the absence of a civil personal status law. Moreover, their privileged ability to protect religious education, in a state where a significant number of educational institutions are religiously affiliated, puts them in a unique position to block secularization of education and disrupt attempts to create a secular and unifying national identity. One disturbing notion about Article 19, as Muhammad Majzoub argues, is its unfairness: it provides those who wrote the laws with the right to check and correct them, while it denies this right to their potential victims.¹⁸ This in turn contradicts the principle of social justice injected in the new preamble.

The Ta’if Accord delivered a major boost to the sectarian system’s durability by rearranging sectarian control among the top state leaders through the constitutional amendments. The exclusively Sunni-held position of prime minister was strengthened at the expense of the president’s traditional functions. According to Article 64, the prime minister is clearly now the one who heads the government and acts as its representative. The Shiite-exclusive position of the parliament’s speaker was also empowered by the 1990 amendments. The speaker’s term is extended to four years, instead of one in the past, as stated in

Article 44. In addition, limiting the executive authority's ability to dissolve it to three rare cases as stated in Articles 65 and 77 strengthened parliament.¹⁹ The Maronite-exclusive position of president was rendered more symbolic. The president is now the head of the state (Article 49), but executive power now lies mainly with the Council of Ministers (Article 17), and the president shares the decision-making process with the prime minister and the council.

These rearrangements of power among the top state leaders created a unique situation never witnessed before in Lebanon. Now three presidents rule Lebanon: the President of the Republic, the President of the Council of Ministers, and the President of the Chamber of Deputies. Although this literal translation of their posts had existed before 1990, the term "three presidents" (*al-rou'asa al-thalatha*) or troika was coined after 1990 to indicate that they now share power almost equally, though in different capacities. Tensions and clashes among the troika members increased, and on a larger scale than those among top state leaders in the pre-1990 period.

The intensity of the competition among the elite is multiplied by the fact that they are operating in a sectarian environment. It is continually argued that the rearrangement of control among those leaders is reflective of power relations among their respective religious-affiliated communities at the war's end. Joseph Mailla points out that the post-1990 tug-of-war over claims of executive control is one between a Maronite President of the Republic and a Sunni President of the Council of Ministers.²⁰ Paul Salem also notes that, while the president's term is limited to six years and he or she can be removed from office only by impeachment, the speaker and prime minister are limited to four years and both are subject to a vote of no-confidence in parliament. Salem suggests that the "proviso on the term of the Speaker" as stated in Article 44 "reflects Sunni-Shiite sensitivities and the need to maintain the delicate balance between the two groups."²¹ This argument supports the frequently suggested notion that the continuous strife between Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri and Speaker Nabih Berri was an indicator of the competition over the "representation" and leadership of Muslims between their two larger respective sectarian communities.

While the above constitutional amendments reinforce sectarianism in the Second Republic, other amendments address the abolition of political sectarianism and suggest steps to achieve it. Article 95 entrusts the first parliament "elected on an equal basis between Christians and Muslims" to take the "appropriate measures for eliminating the sectarian system according to a piecemeal plan." One of these measures is assembling a high-powered committee to achieve that goal. This committee is to be charged with studying and proposing the means to abolish sectarianism, presenting them to the parliament and cabinet, and supervising the execution of the transitional plan. The committee, to be headed by the president, would also include the prime minister, speaker of parliament, and leading public figures.

During the transitional period, the article states, sectarian groups should be represented in an equitable fashion in the cabinet. Moreover,

The principle of sectarian representation should be eliminated and expertise and competence should be applied in the appointments for public service jobs, the judiciary, the military and security institutions, and public and joint institutions, all in accordance with the requirements of national reconciliation. Grade one posts and their equivalents should be exempted from this rule, and should be equally distributed between Christians and Muslims without reserving any of them to any sectarian community while employing the principles of expertise and competence. (Article 95)

There are two fundamental problems with Article 95. First, its distribution of grade one posts and their equivalents on a sectarian basis violates the principle of merit stated in Article 12. Article 12, kept in its original text from the 1926 constitution, clearly states that “every Lebanese has the right to hold a civil service job, with no preference being made except on the basis of merit and competence.” This contradiction between Articles 95 and 12 is not new. Both the original 1926 text of Article 95 and its amendment in 1943 recognize the sectarian distribution of civil service jobs. But the Ta’if sponsors should have eliminated the sectarian distribution of jobs from the 1990 amendment to Article 95, especially because the amendment’s main aim is to abolish political sectarianism through a transitional plan.

The second problem lies in the suspicious nature of the committee entrusted with abolishing the sectarian system. Neither the Ta’if Accord nor Article 95 sets a time limit for the function of this committee or the duration of the transitional period. They also do not state that the committee’s recommendations are to be binding on the parliament or cabinet. Simply put, this committee was rather a paper tiger: it never materialized with the first parliament elected in 1992 “on an equal basis between Christians and Muslims” as required in the constitution. Actually, it was only initiated on paper eight years later, as we will show below.

In major violation of the spirit of abolishing political sectarianism stated in the preamble and Article 95, Article 22 was amended to allow for initiating a sectarian-based senate immediately following the first parliament elected on a non-sectarian basis—a senate which shall encompass “representation of all spiritual families and whose authority shall be confined to dealing with crucial national issues.” The article does not specify who would represent the “spiritual families,” leaving room for participation of religious leaders, which—if it materializes—will solidify their constitutional prerogatives stated in Article 19.

The Ta’if Accord elements reflected in the 1990 constitutional amendments are not fully committed to the cause of abolishing the sectarian system. As such, they look contradictory and vague, suggesting that sectarianism is an unnecessary evil that should be eradicated, but taking various steps to

reinforce it. There is also a serious effort in the constitution to maintain "sectarian representation." This is clear in the distribution of cabinet and grade one civil service posts during the transitional period, in allowing religious leaders exclusively the communal right to petition for crucial civic matters, and in the plans to initiate a sectarian-based senate. An additional measure showing the lack of commitment to abolish sectarianism in the constitution lies in the make-up of the committee entrusted with doing so: Article 95 authorizes those who are the principal beneficiaries of the sectarian system to lead the efforts to eliminate it.²²

THE "SECOND REPUBLIC": SECTARIAN APPLICATION

The Ta'if Accord sustained the notion that political representation is for now mainly bound within sectarian "representation." The reinforced sectarian system continued to facilitate the process of tying the popular classes to their respective co-religionist elite in a client/patron relationship. The sectarian ideology in turn asserted the concept that access to resources and power may be achieved mainly through sectarian channels.

Under these conditions Lebanon returned to the prewar period. The First Republic disallowed and oppressed the bulk of the secular forces for a long time and, when they were legalized in 1970, worked hard to block their activism and expansion. The increasing activism of the secular forces then posed a serious challenge to the maintenance of the clientelist system.²³ Although secular forces have better legal grounds for activism in the Second Republic, the sectarian groups and elite are the dominant ones now. The reproduction of ruling elite control in the Second Republic is strongly associated with the reproduction of sectarianism, both made possible through sectarian "representation."

This whole scheme was facilitated in the Second Republic by a loose alliance between two major forces: leaders of the war militias and a new socio-political coalition led by Hariri, who represented a coalition between local and regional capital.²⁴ Members of this alliance were heavily represented in the cabinet and the troika leadership.

The hegemonic control of the predominantly sectarian militias during the war's later period led to their manipulation and maintenance of a war economy plus segmentation of the population along sectarian lines.²⁵ As a result, they had the upper hand in accumulating and distributing resources that they had levied directly or were state-owned. When the state reemerged after 1989 and sectarian demarcation lines were loosened, a concentration and centralization of power rapidly developed. Under these circumstances, many militia leaders broadened their appeal and patronage to the national level and started to compete over state resources.²⁶

The troika members, who agreed on a partnership in state control but frequently clashed over access and distribution of its resources, supervised this centralization of power. This relationship, like the one among Hariri, Berri, and President Elias Hrawi that dominated the political process in the 1992-98 period,

is historically unique to Lebanon. At no time in the past did the fate of state policies hang for an extended period of time primarily on relations among the top three state leaders. The relationship among those three leaders cannot be sufficiently explained by their personality traits. But it is politically significant to the extent that it overshadowed the interaction among the institutions they presided over. This lies in direct contradiction with the Ta'if Accord, whose main purpose "was to replace the rule of the individual (the president) by the rule of institutions."²⁷ One of the frequent complaints about the hegemony of the Maronite elite over state affairs in the prewar period was directed at the symbol of this authority: the all-powerful president.

The political weight of the troika relationship plus the relative power parity among its members had a great impact on the popular level in association with the logic of "sectarian representation." Under this dominant logic, each member of the troika is the top state "representative" of his respective sectarian community. With this pretext, the growing competition among the troika members may resonate negatively on the popular level, while their rapprochement usually spells stability. In addition, the success or failure of their maneuvers to legislate and/or implement policies is usually measured in scores of "losses" or "gains" of the Maronite, Sunni, and Shiite sectarian communities and subsequently of the two larger religious communities. Some Maronite elite consider the First Republic a presidential system and consider the more equitable post-Ta'if relationship among presidency, cabinet, and parliament a loss to their community. In this context, President Hrawi in 1998 blasted what he called "the system of the three presidents" and called for the stabilization of a presidential system,²⁸ although Clause C of the preamble identifies Lebanon as a parliamentary democratic republic.

Each of the troika members was interested in advancing his power in the state, and represented and served certain economic powers. But the strong influence of sectarian logic in public discourse serves to camouflage the class dimensions of several contested issues. For example, Berri and Hariri disagreed for most of 1998 on modifying the pay scale for government employees. This is not a Shiite-Sunni issue per se and was usually presented as the result of their personal rivalry; but it was also suggested that Berri's advocacy of the pay increases added to his weight as a speaker and a Shiite spokesman. Hariri had also recruited to high state offices professional advisors and managers of different sectarian affiliations who worked for his vast business enterprises. But Hariri was seen as the dominant Sunni politician, and this non-sectarian selection of economic advisors was not given enough attention.

Government corruption continued to hinder the state's effectiveness under the Second Republic,²⁹ but on a larger and more intensive scale than under the First Republic.³⁰ It became more rampant at different levels of the power structure, from the monopoly of elite family members over private services, to favoritism in the distribution of government contracts, to nepotism in the bureaucracy, to the payment of bribes in most government departments. Bribes partially addressed the economic needs of traditionally underpaid government

employees, especially at the lower ranks of the bureaucracy.³¹ But the rejuvenation of sectarianism and clientelism from 1990 on particularly contributed to the spread of corruption. This rejuvenation was greatly helped by the expansion of the militia-built networks that were engaged in the distribution of resources during wartime and the interest of the reemerging state's elite in creating political fiefdoms for themselves. It is interesting that many of the new elite, most of whom come from lower and middle class backgrounds, were as effective as the upper class-based traditional elite in manipulating sectarianism and clientelism to serve their interests.

Every reshuffling of top administrators from 1990 on has been marred by conflict among the troika members over their "sectarian shares." Sectarian affiliation and patronage are becoming increasingly the major criteria for selection to these positions. An excellent example is the extended crisis associated with appointing deans at the Lebanese University. This university, the only public university in Lebanon, has the largest student population, drawn mainly from the popular classes. It had been historically neglected by the state, which favored private universities. As a result, it has continuously struggled to survive and expand. The move to appoint new deans for its ten colleges was blocked for months in 1996 because the troika members could not agree on a sectarian/clientelist distribution of deans that was satisfactory to all three of them.

The initial distribution of deans was as follows: three Maronite deans, one clearly close to President Hrawi and a second the brother-in-law of the Orthodox Minister Murr; three Sunni deans, all close to Prime Minister Hariri; two Shiite deans, one close to Speaker Berri and the other apparently endorsed by both Berri and Hariri; one Orthodox dean, brother of Hrawi's personal physician; and one Druze dean, close to Druze minister Walid Junblat. Speaker Berri protested the inadequacy of his share compared to those of the other troika members, and the appointments were shelved. Finally the troika reached a compromise: a new college was initiated (the College of Tourism and Hotel Management) and a Shiite dean was appointed to it in order to satisfy Berri.³² As soon as the appointments were announced, a public uproar ensued over the sectarian and clientelist criteria for the selection. So the troika froze the appointments for a few months until the uproar died down.³³

A central secular issue, the introduction of civil marriage, was the subject of serious contention on both the leadership and popular levels in spring 1998. The personal status of Lebanon's residents, including marriage, is solely regulated by religious courts and may vary widely among the eighteen state-recognized sects.³⁴ Thus a couple seeking marriage who are born to different sects will usually face the requirement that one of them should convert in order to get married in the other's religious court. If they choose to avoid conversion, one available alternative is to have a civil marriage outside Lebanon. This does not suggest that they have avoided religious courts for good. Lebanese authorities will recognize their marriage, but other personal status matters like

inheritance are regulated only under these courts. The couple will still face other personal status-based problems because of their different religious affiliations.

The introduction of civil marriage had been blocked repeatedly in the past because it was considered an important step on the road to secularism.³⁵ Member of Parliament Ghassan Matar, who belongs to the secularist Syrian Social Nationalist Party, submitted a proposal to Parliament in July 1997 to enact secular laws, including civil marriage, but his proposal was not examined. In March 1998 President Hrawi succeeded in passing in the cabinet a draft law for optional civil marriage. This was made possible by the support provided by the secularists and Speaker Berri's allies in the cabinet. This in turn increased tensions between President Hrawi and Speaker Berri on the one hand and Prime Minister Hariri on the other.

Sources suggested that Hrawi was primarily showing his leadership abilities in passing the civil marriage draft law. The countdown for the presidential elections had started amid reports that Hariri and probably Berri were more interested in electing a new president than supporting another extension for Hrawi in office. It was also suggested that Berri's support of the draft law was just another round in his continuous struggle with Hariri. In addition, Berri had been trying to position himself for some time as the champion of abolishing political sectarianism.³⁶ Such support for the draft law would be consistent with this image and would also make him, rather than Hrawi, the star of secularism. Hariri was infuriated by this alliance and by the fact that Hrawi had challenged his authority as the President of the Council of Ministers by passing the draft law under his nose.

Sunni clerics led a forceful campaign against the draft optional civil marriage law, mobilizing sectarian support and coordinating with some Sunni Islamist groups. This of course strengthened Hariri's position in the troika's rivalry. The Sunni clerics were soon joined by Shiite and Druze religious leaders and on the Christian side by the Maronite hierarchy.³⁷ In response, a group of secular associations and parties organized to promote civil marriage and immediately became active on college campuses. This secular coalition broadened its appeal to address the need for civil personal status laws and received enthusiastic support on the popular level. Its activities included rallies and petition signing in various areas.³⁸

On the troika level, a joint meeting with Syrian President Asad diffused the crisis without inflicting heavy losses on any of its members. Sunni clerics contained their support. Prime Minister Hariri remained adamant in his refusal to sign the civil marriage bill. President Hrawi sent a letter to parliament asking for the initiation of a national committee, as stipulated in Article 95, to study and formulate the plan to abolish political sectarianism. Although Speaker Berri was the one who solicited Hrawi's letter, he received it and read it in parliament without taking any action. Berri undermined the proposed committee's success beforehand by suggesting that it would take it "20 to 30 years before reaching anywhere."³⁹

Economically, the postwar state continues to face some of the same major problems that plagued Lebanon before 1990. Prewar patrons often came from the landed class and had provided the connections to facilitate services for their clients. Now the war lords-turned-business owners, along with the new capitalists, are providing both jobs and connections to their clients. This situation has made the clientelist system more socioeconomically entrenched and effective, facilitated by tight labor market conditions, which has tied the clients more tightly in their livelihood to the destiny and whims of their patrons.

Moreover, the state's spending priorities through 1998 strongly favored paying debt interest plus defense and general government expense spending over social services like education, health, housing, family support, and unemployment benefits.⁴⁰ The state also paid more attention to rebuilding the infrastructure and supported the service sector while relatively ignoring the productive economic sectors.⁴¹ Although the pre-1975 center/peripheries divide was relatively destabilized by the war's effects, this did not lead to any fundamental change in the distribution of wealth or access to services between its regions. The center is still the dominant area: it engulfs a concentration of wealth and better access to services, which are available mainly for the few while the majority of its residents are becoming more impoverished.

A very influential "center within the center" is developing in the newly reconstructed downtown Beirut. This area is designated as an exclusive commercial/financial center and has many skyscrapers but little public space. Among the major criticisms of the center city scheme is financial exploitation of small owners and social segregation resulting from the reconstruction design, both assigned to a Hariri-owned company that fully controls the project.⁴²

Other infrastructure projects have developed in a similar direction. The expanding network of highways is redrawing the urban geography of Beirut, segregating its neighborhoods from one another and impoverishing some of them. The new highway that connects Beirut with southern Lebanon has been diverted from the poor neighborhood of Ouza'i, leading to its further marginalization.⁴³ The state's policy on poverty is very similar. Poverty is ignored as a major societal problem. The state assumes instead that its focus on currency stabilization and infrastructure projects will ultimately lead to a decrease in poverty.⁴⁴ The execution of such policies by the Hariri governments broadened the socioeconomic gap and increased poverty vis-à-vis the prewar period.⁴⁵

The state's leading troika is mainly interested now in building a service-based nation-state using a hybrid of conflicting national models and symbols.⁴⁶ Prime Minister Hariri could have been a leading candidate to continue such a role, taking into consideration his strong regional and global connections as well as his unprecedented internal economic and political control. But this project does not lead necessarily to a stable and successfully developing state.

The Ta'if Accord was a turning point in ending the civil war. But the Accord has not succeeded as of 1998 in creating an effective formula for a stable Second Republic. The new regime has not yet resolved the lingering causes of

the civil war as promised in the 1990 preamble to the constitution. The Second Republic, as Salim al-Hoss suggests, is a “sectarian, and therefore a discriminatory, regime”;⁴⁷ it neither narrows (or even seriously addresses) the socioeconomic gaps among the Lebanese nor puts sufficient effort to create even development among its regions. A unified national identity cannot be facilitated under these conditions. If Emile Lahoud’s regime fails to install reforms that implement the Ta’if promises, all the gains achieved from 1990 to stabilize Lebanon may be in serious jeopardy.

NOTES

1. Sectarianism and sectarian-based power were undermined from the late 1960s on by the forceful rise of secular forces intent on introducing secular reforms. But these forces were weakened from the early 1980s and in particular after 1982. Less mixed areas like the southern suburbs in particular witnessed an ascendance of sectarianism during the later part of the war.

2. Surveys of student attitudes, for example, show that Lebanese university students are becoming more religious and more engaged in religious rituals in the postwar period than in the last few years before the war. For the postwar period see, e.g., results of student surveys in *al-Nahar*, 19 February 1997. For the prewar period see Halim Barakat, *Lebanon in Strife* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977), 72, 88-91; Sami Ofeish, *Ittijahat al-talaba al-jami'yyin al-lubnaniyyin fi lubnan nahwa al-intima' al-siyassi* (Attitudes of Lebanese University Students Toward Political Commitment) (BA thesis, Beirut Arab University, 1975), 73-74.

3. Do globalism and sectarianism coincide, or do they reinforce each other, or are they conflictive? If they are conflictive, we must explain, for example, how Rafiq al-Hariri, Lebanon’s prime minister between 1992 and 1998 and a leading and forceful regional globalist, acted and presented himself as a Sunni leader and blocked the passage of a secular draft law on civil marriage, as we will discuss later.

4. The issue of implementing optional civil marriage in Lebanon was debated extensively in March-May 1998. Many supporters of civil marriage, including some who actually had civil marriages, pointed out that they personally prefer it because it allows couples who have different religious affiliations to get married without having to convert (as usually required by religious courts). It is not clear whether those who prefer to avoid conversion are sectarian or religious or both, but it is clear that they are exhibiting a secular attitude toward marriage. For a sample of these interviews see *Daily Star*, 7 April 1998.

5. A series of booklets that appeared in 1975-77 under the general title *al-Qadiyya al-Lubnaniyya* (The Lebanese Cause) advocated the position of the right wing Lebanese Front. Some of these booklets called for the division of

Lebanon into Christian and Muslim entities. They also emphasized the presence of fundamental differences in values, religious beliefs, and ways of life among Christians and Muslims as an explanation for the need to separate. See, e.g., *Nizam siyasi mouqtara li lubnan al-jadid* (Proposed Political System for a New Lebanon), vol. 20, February 1977; *Lubnan al-moustaqbal: min al-insihar al-siyasi ila al-inshitar al-nafsi wa al-jughrafi* (Future Lebanon: From a Political Melting Pot to a Psychological and Geographical Split), vol. 12, June 1976.

6. For example, Anis Sayegh argues that sectarianism in Lebanon goes as far back as the Phoenicians in association with the initiation of sects. Anis Sayegh, *Lubnan al-ta'ifi* (Sectarian Lebanon) (Beirut: Dar al-Sira' al-Fikri, 1955).

7. For the primordialist approach see, e.g., Clifford Geertz, "The Integrative Revolution," in Geertz, ed., *Old Societies and New States: The Quest for Modernity in Asia and Africa* (New York: Free Press, 1963), 108-13. For the instrumentalist approach see, e.g., Paul P. Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison* (New Delhi and Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1991), 18-20, 22-26.

8. Kamal Suleiman Salibi, *The Modern History of Lebanon* (Delmar, N.Y.: Caravan Books, 1965), 71-72.

9. Yehoshua Porath, "The Peasant Revolt of 1858-1861 in Kisrawan," *Asian and African Studies* 2 (1966): 95-100.

10. Samir Khalaf, *Persistence and Change in 19th Century Lebanon: A Sociological Essay* (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1979), 95-97; Mas'oud Daher, *Al-Juzour al-tarikhiyya li al-mas'ala al-ta'ifiyya al-lubnaniyya: 1697-1861* (Historical Roots of the Lebanese Sectarian Question: 1697-1861) (Beirut: Ma'had al-Inma' al-'Arabi, 1981), 442-44.

11. Ahmad Beydoun, "Lebanon's Sects and the Difficult Road to a Unifying Identity," *Beirut Review* 6 (Fall 1993): 15-16.

12. Tabitha Petran, *The Struggle over Lebanon* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1987), 96-97, 113-15, 162.

13. For the previous agreement proposals see Hani A. Fares, "The Failure of Peacemaking in Lebanon: 1975-1989," in Deirdre Collings, ed., *Peace for Lebanon? From War to Reconstruction* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Reiner Publishers, 1994), 17-30. See also Table of the Major Peacemaking Attempts, 1975-1989 in the same volume, 312-13.

14. *Official Gazette*, special supplement no. 39, year 130, 27 September 1990.

15. Riad al-Solh, the National Pact's co-founder, stated repeatedly in the 1940s that the sectarian system was only a temporary arrangement that would be abandoned eventually.

16. The only article in the 1943 amendments to the constitution that addresses sectarianism is Article 95, which states: "As a provisional measure and for the sake of justice and amity, the sects should be equitably represented in the public employment and in the composition of the cabinet, provided such

measures will not harm the interest of the state.” *Official Gazette*, no. 4106, year 83, 10 November 1943, 11501.

17. Paul Salem, “The Constitution of Lebanon After the Amendments of August 21, 1990,” *Beirut Review* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 131.

18. Al-Nadi al-Thaqafi al-‘Arabi, *Bina’ al-jumhuriyya al-thaniya wa mushkilat al-salam fi lubnan* (Establishing the Second Republic and Problems of Peace in Lebanon) (Beirut: Al-Nadi al-Thaqafi al-‘Arabi, 1992), 105.

19. See also a discussion of these changes in the Ta’if Accord in Albert Mansour, *Al-Inqilab ‘ala al-ta’if* (The Coup Against the Ta’if Accord) (Beirut: Dar al-Jadid, 1993), 45.

20. Joseph Maila, *The Document of National Understanding: A Commentary* (Oxford: Centre for Lebanese Studies, 1992), 54.

21. Salem, “The Constitution of Lebanon After the Amendments,” 135.

22. Daoud L. Khairallah suggests in the same direction that “The full extent of the (Ta’if) accord’s commitment to deconfessionalization boils down to this: It gives the confessional establishment an unguided, nonbinding, open-ended mandate to abolish itself.” See Khairallah, “Secular Democracy: A Viable Alternative to the Confessional System,” in Collings, ed., 263.

23. See Michael Johnson, *Class and Client in Beirut* (London and Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Ithaca Press, 1986).

24. Hassan Krayem, “The Lebanese Civil War and the Taif Agreement,” in Paul Salem, ed., *Conflict Resolution in the Arab World: Selected Essays* (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1997), 427-29.

25. See Georges Corm, “The War System: Militia Hegemony and Reestablishment of the State,” in Collings, ed., 215-30.

26. See Fawaz Traboulsi, “Al-Takawwun al-tabaqi li al-sulta al-siyasiyya ba’d al-harb” (The Class Formation of the Political Strata After the War), *Ab ‘aad* 6 (May 1997): 87-90

27. Krayem, “The Lebanese Civil War and the Taif Agreement,” 426-27.

28. *Al-Nahar*, 31 July 1998.

29. See the summary and recommendations of a conference on corruption in the “Second Republic,” *Lebanon Report*, new series, 4 (Winter 1997): 20-21.

30. For the negative affects of sectarianism and clientelism on the Lebanese bureaucracy and corruption in the prewar period see Iskandar E. Bashir, *Civil Service Reforms in Lebanon* (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1977), 131-33, 80, 140.

31. For an example of bribes in Beirut’s port, see *Lebanon Report*, new series, 4 (Winter 1997): 19-20.

32. *Al-Nahar*, 20 March 1997.

33. The deans were appointed on 30 June 1997. See *al-Nahar*, 2 July 1997.

34. For the subordinate status of women under these codes see Lamia Rustum Shehadeh, “The Legal Status of Married Women in Lebanon,”

International Journal of Middle East Studies 30 (1998): 501-19. There are only fifteen personal status codes recognized in Lebanon. The Alawites, Isma'ilis, and Orthodox Copts have no codes of their own and follow the codes recognized as closest to them: the Ja'fari code for the first two and the Orthodox for the third. See Shehadeh, 503, 517.

35. For example, the Syndicate of Beirut Lawyers was engaged in an extended strike to support the introduction of civil marriage and personal status laws in 1952. See B. A., "The Lawyers Strike in Beirut," *Middle Eastern Affairs* 3, no. 3 (1952): 85-86.

36. *Daily Star*, 22 March 1998.

37. *Ibid.*

38. *Daily Star*, 27 March, 22 April 1998; *al-Diyar*, 2 August 1998.

39. *Daily Star*, 26 March 1998.

40. Ghassan Diba, "Al-Bu'd al-ijtima'i wa al-inma'i fi siyasad al-infaq" (The Social and Developmental Dimension in the Expenditure Policy), *Ab'aad* 6 (May 1997): 67-68.

41. Najib 'Issa, *al-Qiwa al-'amila wa siyasad al-'amala fi lubnan* (Labor Forces and Labor Policy in Lebanon) (Beirut: Lebanese Center for Policy Studies, 1996), 54-59.

42. See a detailed critique of this project in Nabil Beyhum, "The Crisis of Urban Culture: The Three Construction Plans for Beirut," *Beirut Review* 4 (Fall 1992): 49-62.

43. *Al-Hayat*, 23 August 1998.

44. Antoine Haddad, "Al-Faqr fi lubnan" (Poverty in Lebanon), *Ab'aad* 5 (June 1996): 171-75.

45. Kamal Hamdan addresses this issue as part of the continuing Lebanese crisis in peacetime. See *al-Azma al-lubnaniyya: al-tawa'if al-diniyya, al-tabaqat al-ijtima'iyya, wal-hawiyya al-wataniyya* (The Lebanese Crisis: Sects, Classes, and National Identity) (Beirut: Dar al-Farabi, 1998).

46. Hariri's Solidiere Company sells the large project of reconstructing downtown Beirut as a modern recreation of a Phoenician city. The ideological emphasis on the Phoenician past has always previously been associated with Christian-based right wing protagonists in the past. But this argument also fits with the interest in promoting the notion of a "Lebanese nation."

47. Salim al-Hoss, "Horizons of Prospective Change in Lebanon," *Beirut Review* 3 (Spring 1992): 11.