LEBANESE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

Reforming the Consociational System:

Decentralization and Proportional Representation in Lebanon

By

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To Andre & Andre

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Reforming the Consociational System: Decentralization and Proportional Representation in Lebanon

Renko Verheij

ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to contribute to the ongoing debate about Lebanon's constitutional design. By taking liberal consociational theory as a starting point, it explores where the present power-sharing system deviates from what the theory recommends. After determining that the Lebanese consociation is corporate overall and fails to meet the recommendations of group autonomy and proportional representation, it examines how the lack of these elements prevents stability and democratic governance. Consequently, it argues how a further implementation of liberal consociational theory by reforming towards a more decentralized state and a more proportional representation of the Lebanese population can lead to a more effective power-sharing system. The conclusion that follows from this research is therefore that consociationalism should not be abandoned in Lebanon but reformed and further implemented along the lines of its liberal variant.

Keywords: Consociational Democracy, Lebanon, Decentralization, Proportional Representation, Democratization.

Table of Contents

CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. Introduction.....	1
1.2. Research Questions.....	4
1.3. Methodology	5
1.4. Map of the Thesis	7
CHAPTER TWO – CONSOCIATIONALISM AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION IN LEBANON	8
2.1. Introduction.....	8
2.2. Consociational Theory	8
2.2.1. The Origins and Elements of Consociationalism	9
2.2.2. The Development of Consociational Theory	12
2.2.3. The Debate.....	14
2.2.4. Methodological Criticisms	20
2.2.5. The Value of Consociationalism in Divided Societies.....	22
2.3. Consociational Theory and Lebanon	24
2.3.1. Lebanon and the Four Consociational Elements of Power-Sharing.....	25
2.3.2. Implementing Liberal Consociational Theory in Lebanon	29
2.4. Conclusion	31
CHAPTER THREE – DECENTRALIZATION	34
3.1. Introduction.....	34
3.2. The Debate about Decentralization.....	35
3.2.1. Decentralization and Stability	35
3.2.2. Decentralization and Accountability	40
3.2.3. Risks and Challenges.....	44
3.3. Decentralization in Lebanon.....	46
3.3.1. Proposals for Reform.....	48
3.4. Analysis and Conclusion	51
CHAPTER FOUR – PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION	57
4.1. Introduction.....	57
4.2. Lebanon’s Electoral System	58
4.3. Reforming the Electoral System	63
4.3.1. Proportional vs. Majoritarian.....	64
4.3.2. Alternatives to PR and Majoritarian Systems	65
4.3.3. Types of Proportional Representation Electoral Systems	67
4.3.4. Proposals for Reform.....	68
4.3.5. Analysis	70
4.4. Conclusion	71
CHAPTER FIVE – CONCLUSION	73

5.1. Restating the Argument	73
5.2. The Implications of the Argument.....	77
BIBLIOGRAPHY	81

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

The origins of consociational theory can be found in the works of several scholars of the post-war period but the most profound role has been played by the Dutch political scientist Arend Lijphart. It was him who first used the term ‘consociationalism’ in an article that he used to express his discontent with Gabriel Almond’s influential typology of political systems (Almond, 1956). Almond describes two systems; the Anglo-American (Britain and the United States) and the Continental European (France, Germany and Italy). The political systems of the other Western states (e.g. the Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries) were supposed to be a mix. Almond’s theory was based on the relationship between homogeneity of the political culture and the stability of the system. Lijphart, on the other hand, sought to explain the concurrence of stability and heterogeneity in that third, mixed group of states. He labeled the systems of those democracies as consociational and examined which elements of their constitutional structure led to their stability.

Since the development of consociational – or power sharing – theory, Lebanon has been one of the classical examples of a state with a consociational structure. Lijphart regarded the country as a supportive case (Lijphart, 1969). Because of its collapse a few years after his famous article was published, the successfulness of the Lebanese constitutional structure became more subject to debate (Hudson, 1976).

Nevertheless, the system that was implemented at the end of the civil war as part of the Taif Accord only differed from the preceding system on technical points; thus, its consociational character was maintained deliberately.¹ At present, more than twenty years later, the Lebanese state has continued to enjoy relative stability and this success is again ascribed to the power sharing elements in its institutions by various scholars (Lijphart, 1999; McCulloch, 2012; McGarry & O’Leary, 2007). Besides, more thorough research about the origins of the Lebanese civil war often concludes that the factors leading to it were external rather than internal, and that the latter ones were related to the pre-determined character of Lebanon’s consociation, i.e. the fixed allocation of both executive and legislative power between the various Lebanese sects (Dekmejian, 1978; Hudson, 1988; El Khazen, 2000).

As already becomes clear from this distinction between pre-determined and self-determined – or, respectively, corporate and liberal – consociations, the theory does not entail a rigid prescription but can be implemented to different degrees and in different forms. There are, however, four elements that define a consociational democracy in Lijphart’s point of view (Lijphart, 1977):

1. Government by a grand coalition.
2. The mutual veto or concurrent majority rule.
3. Proportionality as the principle of representation.
4. A high degree of autonomy for each segment to run its own internal affairs.

Moreover, consociational theorists generally favor the liberal over the corporate type (McCulloch, 2012; Lijphart, 1999; McGarry & O’Leary, 2007).

¹ For instance, the allocation of parliament seats was altered and part of the presidential discretion was relocated to the Premier and the Parliament. In essence, however, the pre-Taif and the post-Taif systems were equally consociational.

As mentioned before, Lebanese consociation is not liberal but pre-determined – the country has a corporate electoral law as it grants a fixed number of parliamentary seats to each sect and the three primary offices in the executive branch are divided among the Maronites (President), the Sunnis (Prime Minister), and the Shia (Speaker of Parliament). Besides, only two of the four consociational elements have been implemented properly in Lebanon; government by a grand coalition and the mutual veto. Thus, there is no truly proportional representation in the Lebanese parliament or government and the autonomy that the different sects enjoy has not been institutionalized by proper decentralization.² While successive pacts have been negotiated, none of these proscribed a detailed process of devolution of power to local communities. Although the Taif agreement mentions the necessity of administrative decentralization, it does not provide a realistic manner of implementation. This thesis will argue that an introduction of proportional representation and decentralization, as argued by liberal consociational theory, could lead to enduring stability as well as to increased effectiveness of the Lebanese power sharing system.

Since no constitutional structure is perfect and the Lebanese government, in particular, suffers from a number of flaws – of which most are related to its capacity and effectiveness, any inquiry into the possibilities for reforms can be fruitful. When more clarity can be created about what should be reformed and how, it will become more probable that a government can develop itself in a positive way. The benefits for the population can be significant in this case. Moreover, as the Middle East and North

² The idea behind the allocation of parliamentary seats is to proportionally represent all the sects. However, although no census has been conducted in Lebanon since 1932, agreement exists on the fact that the Christian share has declined and the Sunni and Shia parts have grown over the past decades. As a result, the current distribution of seats is disproportional rather than proportional.

Africa region continues to experience tumultuous times and constitutions continue to be formulated and modified, the importance of knowledge concerning constitutional design is at a new peak. Consociational theory is just one of several approaches to this field; however, a significant – and growing – amount of evidence exists that power sharing is the most fruitful formula for divided societies. This thesis will therefore contribute to the debate about reforms in Lebanon as well as to the debate about constitutional design in general by addressing the questions: will decentralization of the Lebanese state lead to greater stability and effectiveness? And will reforms of Lebanon's electoral law towards a system of proportional representation contribute to a more stable and effective Lebanese government?

1.2. Research Questions

- 1) Will decentralization of the Lebanese state lead to greater stability and effectiveness?

What needs to be examined first to answer this question is: to what extent is the Lebanese state decentralized? What are the effects of this level of decentralization on the government's stability and institutional effectiveness? The second step would be to explore what the effects of further decentralization would be and to formulate a recommended policy of decentralization. Questions that shall need to be answered to make such recommendations are: why is the Lebanese state not decentralized optimally? What are the obstacles, and why would certain stakeholders oppose it? How can these obstacles be overcome?

- 2) Will reforms of Lebanon's electoral law towards a system of proportional representation contribute to a more stable and effective Lebanese government?

The starting point will be an inquiry into Lebanese electoral rules and the results they create. How do they influence politicians and their electorate? Consequently the focus of the research will shift to what can be learned from other experiences with proportional representation in divided societies and whether such a system will be beneficial for the Lebanese state in terms of effectiveness and stability. This requires an exploration of the knowledge about electoral systems in general and about proportional representation in particular. If there are certain elements in divided societies that are conducive to a successful PR system, the question will become if these elements can be found in Lebanon.

1.3. Methodology

The thesis is a single case study where the theory of consociationalism has been applied to Lebanon. It examines the degree to which Lebanon abides by consociationalism as well as explore the possibilities for and consequences of further implementation. However, although the foundation is consociational, the theory has been used as a guideline and a starting point. As the areas of focus are decentralization and the electoral law, the research has been based on all relevant academic literature concerning these subjects. Besides, in order to fully examine Lebanon's possibilities for reform, primary sources such as policy briefs, reports and newspapers have also been

utilized. Interviews have been conducted with specialists when necessary to shed light on untreated aspects of the Lebanese political system.

When the available knowledge about decentralization and proportional representation is thoroughly reviewed and examined; and when sufficient data and information about the Lebanese situation concerning these two subjects is gathered, an attempt will be made to demonstrate that the most harmful flaws in Lebanon's constitutional design can be found in its lack of decentralization and in its defunct and undemocratic electoral system. Because the country suffers from deep vertical cleavages and because these divisions, in combination with the current constitutional structure, produce a deadlock on almost every institutional level, the thesis examines how reforms can provide group autonomy – thus assure the different sects of protection of their rights; while simultaneously have the effect of mobilization through enhanced accountability. The combination of these two improvements, it will be argued, might prove to be an acceptable, implementable, and durable solution. To support this argument, examples of deeply divided states that have successfully decentralized and, as a result, enjoy accountability as well as secured minority rights will be used as evidence. Furthermore, by pointing out that it is precisely these elements that cause the government's ineffectiveness and by clarifying that it is on these two parts that Lebanon is unsociational, the foundation will be laid for the thesis' argument of further implementation of consociational theory.

In addition to this, an attempt will be made to firstly discover what the right degree and manner of decentralization and proportional representation would be for Lebanon and, secondly, what the obstacles to the adoption of such reforms would entail.

The result will be an analysis of how to increase the Lebanese state's stability and effectiveness through institutional reform.

1.4. Map of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into five chapters, including this introduction. In the second chapter the theoretical framework will be central. The history and development of consociational theory will be examined and a thorough but concise description of the theory will follow. Subsequently, this chapter will deal with Lebanon's consociational system and the shortcomings of the Lebanese state. Liberal consociational theory will then be applied in order to discover what kind of reforms the theory would argue for in Lebanon's case. The third chapter will cover the general debate on decentralization and will then address the questions why Lebanon should be decentralized and how. Chapter four will basically have the same structure but will concern electoral law. Thus, the debate on closed-list PR in plural societies will be included and then applied to the case of Lebanon in order to find out why and how it should be implemented. In the fifth and final chapter all the findings from the previous chapters will be drawn together in order to conclude how a further implementation of consociational theory can lead to reforms in Lebanon that increase the state's stability as well as effectiveness. Problems and likelihood of adoptability will also be analyzed and discussed.

CHAPTER TWO

CONSOCIATIONALISM AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION IN LEBANON

2.1. Introduction

This chapter examines consociational theory. Attention is devoted to the origins and development of the theory in the 1960s. Since Arend Lijphart is considered to have been the most influential political scientist during this process, his early works on the Dutch political system are also discussed. Subsequently, this chapter looks at the evolution of the theory throughout the ensuing decades. The arguments of its proponents and critics are considered as well.

The second section of the chapter starts with a discussion of Lebanon's political system and the extent to which it abides by liberal consociational theory. Consequently, liberal consociational theory and Lebanon's version of it are compared in order to discover which reforms would be entailed by a more extensive implementation of consociational theory. Finally, the analysis concludes by inquiring how the Lebanese system's shortcomings in light of consociationalism relate to its flaws in the opinion of experts.

2.2. Consociational Theory

2.2.1. The Origins and Elements of Consociationalism

The origins of consociational theory can be found in the works of several scholars of the post-war period but, as mentioned before, the most profound role has been played by the Dutch political scientist Arend Lijphart. It was him who gave the term ‘consociationalism’ its current meaning by introducing it in an article that he used to express his discontent with Gabriel Almond’s influential typology of political systems (Almond, 1956; Lijphart, *Consociational Democracy*, 1969). Almond describes two systems; the Anglo-American (Britain and the United States) and the Continental European (France, Germany and Italy). The political systems of the other Western states (e.g. the Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries) were considered a mix of both types. Almond’s theory was based on the relationship between homogeneity of the political culture and the stability of the system. Lijphart, on the other hand, sought to explain the concurrence of stability and heterogeneity in that third, mixed group of states. He labeled the systems of those democracies as consociational and examined which elements of their constitutional structure led to their stability.

When Lijphart started analyzing the Netherlands’ political system, Dutch society was characterized by deep vertical cleavages between its different segments. Each of the four groups – Catholics, Calvinists, socialists and liberals – had its own political parties, unions, media, schools, and even leisure clubs. The term ‘pillarization’, which comes from the Dutch word *verzuiling* and is used to describe this period in the history of the Netherlands, therefore serves as an adequate description of such a state of affairs. In *The Politics of Accommodation: Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands* (1968), Lijphart carefully analyses which factors caused the deeply fragmented Netherlands to

have such a stable democracy. Shortly after, however, he published an article with a much broader approach by including states with similar characteristics such as Switzerland, Austria, Uruguay and Lebanon (Lijphart, 1969). By examining these cases he came to the conclusion that there are several factors conducive to consociational democracy. These are:

1. Distinct lines of cleavage.
2. A multiple balance of power.
3. Popular attitudes favorable to a grand coalition.
4. An external threat.
5. Moderate nationalism.
6. Relatively low total load on the system.

In the years that followed, Lijphart further developed his theory and continued to add cases to his research. This resulted in *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration* (1977). Probably the most important aspect of this book is the argument that a consociational democracy is defined by four elements:

1. Government by a 'grand coalition'.
2. The mutual veto or 'concurrent majority' rule.
3. Proportionality as the principle of representation.
4. A high degree of autonomy for each segment to run its own internal affairs.

The grand coalition is considered by Lijphart as the primary characteristic of a consociational democracy. This coalition should be formed by political leaders of all the significant segments of the plural society, but it may take several forms; for example a cabinet in a parliamentary system or a coalition of a president and other top office holders in a presidential system. The main idea behind it is that by being part of the coalition, the various political elites are expected to cooperate with each other and that this moderates conflicts.

The second characteristic, the mutual veto, has the objective of further protecting minority rights. Where the grand coalition already ensures this protection to a certain extent, the right to veto important decisions taken by this coalition prevents the minority from being outvoted by a majority of the coalition, thus providing them with a complete guarantee of political protection.

Proportionality concerns political representation as well as the allocation of public funds and civil service appointments. Not only does this principle further divide powers, it also removes a large number of potentially divisive problems from the decision-making process. Consequently, the consociational government becomes more effective since some of its burdens are ameliorated.

The fourth and final characteristic of a consociational democracy is segmental autonomy and federalism. Lijphart himself describes it as “rule by the minority over itself in the area of the minority’s exclusive concern” (1979, p. 500). Criticisms of this characteristic suggest that it strengthens the communal cleavages by dividing the segments of a society even more. Lijphart does not deny this. Instead, he agrees that the organizational networks of the subcultures are being strengthened by this approach, but he also believes that “it is in the nature of consociational democracy, at least initially, to make plural societies more thoroughly plural. Its approach is not to abolish or weaken segmental cleavages but to recognize them explicitly and to turn the segments into constructive elements of a stable democracy” (1977, p. 42).

2.2.2. The Development of Consociational Theory

In order to discover how consociational theory has developed, it is important to first examine Lijphart's most recent work on power-sharing prescriptions. In an article that was published in 2004, he argues once more for implementing consociationalism in the design of constitutions for deeply divided societies (Lijphart, 2004). Through the recommendations that are made in this work it is possible to discern what Lijphart's perspective on the theory has become after four decades. The first and second point concern proportional representation (PR) in the legislative electoral system. As was already argued in his earliest work, proportionality enjoys preference over all alternatives, whether it is a plurality, majoritarian or mixed system. PR treats all groups equally and guarantees minority representation most properly. Compared to his first writings, however, Lijphart provides slightly more detailed guidelines for the type of PR. Lists should be favored for instance, and closed lists have the advantage of encouraging the formation and maintenance of strong and cohesive political parties. Guaranteed representation of particular minorities through a fixed allocation of seats should, on the other hand, be avoided.

The next four recommendations Lijphart puts forward in this article are all related to the consociational element of government by a grand coalition. In his earlier work it was described as the primary characteristic of a consociational democracy and given the attention devoted to it in this most recent publication, the perspective has not changed in that respect. Lijphart argues for a parliamentary system with sufficient guarantees for executive power-sharing. Again, however, rigidity – and especially by

specifying the groups that are entitled to a share in power – should be avoided when possible in order to prevent discriminatory choices.

In comparison with the writings from the 1960s, Lijphart's latest work reveals that his perspective on consociational theory has developed, albeit not significantly. The core of the theory, which centers on accommodating the different groups that exist in a society by implementing power-sharing mechanisms, has not altered. However, in the more recent articles prescriptions have become more detailed and the most meaningful addition is certainly the advice against a pre-determined power-sharing system. History has demonstrated that a fixed allocation of seats and offices in the legislative or the executive branch of government can lead to instability. Unsurprisingly, most other scholars share this opinion and this has resulted in a new conceptual dichotomy: corporate and liberal consociational theory.

Corporate and liberal or, respectively, pre-determined and self-determined consociationalism differ on whether the constitution should ascribe certain shares in power to specific groups. The former implies that the segments of a plural society are identified in advance, the latter that they are allowed to identify themselves. Strong supporters of liberal consociational theory are John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary (2007). In their article concerning the 2005 Iraqi Constitution, they argue that the liberal consociational approach to federalism in Iraq was the right choice because it allowed the various ethnic groups to decide in favor of either a high degree of decentralization – as the Kurds did – or of a stronger central government. While some advocated a corporate approach, for instance Senator Joseph Biden, by arguing for a pre-determined tripartite federation with a Shi'a, Sunni and Kurdish part, this would have neglected the

divisions within the Shi'a and Sunni communities on this issue. An 'integrationist' approach – which would have led to a strong centralized state – would have been detrimental as well in the opinion of McGarry and O'Leary because it would have failed to recognize the strong Kurdish desire for self-governance. Thus, they argue, a liberal consociational approach was the optimal option as it leads to the most democratic outcome which increases the chances for stability.

Similarly, Allison McCulloch (2012) maintains that the liberal variant deserves preference over corporate elements. The main problem with the latter would be that they freeze one moment in time, and because this moment of implementation is usually when groups are most polarized, the basis for future governing remains one of deep entrenchment. As a consequence, internal diversity within segments will not be accommodated and adapting to demographic changes is either difficult or impossible as groups are unlikely to forsake the rights they have been granted during the drafting of the constitution. Liberal consociationalism, on the other hand, avoids locking people into groups based on potentially outdated census results. By providing the freedom to choose which political parties and politicians to support, it also ensures representation of the ones who do not feel connected to a specific ethnic group. Moreover, it allows the political system to adjust to changing identities or to the breakdown of segmental cleavages.

2.2.3. The Debate

Consociational theory and its supporters have been criticized on many grounds, methodological and substantive. The criticisms commenced almost immediately after

the term consociationalism was first used and have remained ever since. Yet for a review of this debate it seems most logical to start from the perspective that is put forward by consociational theory itself. This point of view, which pictures the debate as one between accommodation and integration or power-sharing and majoritarianism, is, ultimately, closest to what consociationalists have in mind.

As mentioned before, consociational democracy's main aim is the accommodation of different segments in a plural society. Instead of simply letting the majority rule, as is the case in the Anglo-American democratic model, it attempts to include all the significant groups in the governing system of a state that is divided along ideological, religious, ethnic or any other lines. Consociationalists believe that integrationists too easily presume that a single nation is in existence, or that it should be constructed. They fully recognize and allow the fact that certain states have more than one people (O'Leary, 2006). Despite their good intentions and highly desirable goals, integrationist recommendations and proposals are a recipe for conflict in the opinion of a consociationalist. A unified nation perhaps appears preferable to one that is segmented along ethnic lines but when rival national self-determination claims or rival allegiances to wider civilizations exist, advocacy for integration is partisan and provocative. This is why Brendan O'Leary speaks of the realism of power-sharing: "consociationalists smile wryly and agree that it would be better if their polity had a 'normal' set of institutions for dividing and competing for power. But experience has taught them that deep and protracted conflicts between national, ethnic and religious communities requires that power be systematically shared, as well as divided and subject to competition" (O'Leary, 2006). Hence, it is clear and agreed upon that homogeneity and shared

identity are societal characteristics that result in increased stability and a state less complicated to govern. The point of debate is, however, how easily this shared identity is constructed and which institutional structure is most conducive to this outcome.

John Nagle and Mary-Alice Clancy (2012) describe this debate about the fluidity of ethnicity and speak of transformationists or constructivists as opposed to supporters of consociational democracy. The former base their criticism of consociational approaches on the argument that ethnic identity is ‘not stamped in our genes’ (Van Evera, 2001) but is rather something that has been produced by ‘human action and speech, and that as a result they can and do change over time’ (Fearon & Laitin, 2000). Nationalist leaders in the former Yugoslavia like Slobodan Milosevic, for instance, sought to construct “ethnicity as a hard category, and ethnic groups as clearly bounded, monolithic, ambiguous units whose members are linked through ineffable bonds of blood and history and who thus have a single, objective common interest, which is identified with the status quo elites” (Gagnon, 2004). Transformationists reason that when ethnic identities and a feeling of connectedness to a specific group can be created so easily, reversing this process should be possible with similar ease.

According to Nagle and Clancy, this logic is not viable for several reasons. First of all, ethnicity is never created without any precedent. Political elites who attempt to mobilize groups on ethnic grounds always patch things together by drawing upon certain historical, religious or racial characteristics. Second, this necessary sociological base is often taken for granted by the bearers of the identity. People often strongly believe that their ethnicity is natural and unchanging, which makes it very resilient. Finally, feelings of ethnicity are hardened by conflict because security plays a major

role and trust of other groups is severely undermined. These sentiments often prove to be remarkably persevering.

Another criticism is that consociationalism not only fails to dissolve but even entrenches the various segments of a society and therefore perpetuates ethnic conflict (Taylor, 2009). Moreover, as Donald Horowitz (1985) maintains, a consociational system only leads to stability when the elites of the different groups are willing to cooperate; thus, when the cleavages are too deep, institutions that create incentives for cooperation and reconciliation are needed to successfully manage ethnic conflicts. Both these perspectives are based on the assumption that consociational institutions prevent the development of a shared identity or any other cross-cutting cleavages, while centripetal institutions will promote such developments. By creating mechanisms that bolster the moderate center, such as Horowitz's Alternative Vote (AV) system, they believe the result will be a mixed government while simultaneously drawing extremists towards the center (Horowitz D. , 2004).

This denial of the resilience of ethnic identities can, however, have dangerous consequences. The exclusion of those parts of society that cannot identify with this moderate center is likely to result in increased instability. Majoritarian aspects inevitably lead to underrepresentation of minorities and therefore undermine inclusiveness. Moreover, empirical evidence in support of these institutions is hard to find. Perhaps the only case where the AV system has had the effect of moderation is Papua New Guinea, though several scholars believe that this is related to the very specific circumstances of the island (Reilly, State functioning and state failure in the South Pacific, 2004).

Moreover, it has not been proven in any sort of way that liberal consociational institutions indeed prevent the development of cross-cutting cleavages. Instead, developments in the Netherlands during the 1960s serve as excellent proof of the opposite. While the Dutch institutions formed a classic case of consociational democracy and the society suffered from very deep vertical cleavages, the social structure of the population experienced a number of rapid changes. At the end of the 1960s, ethnic divisions were largely replaced by political divisions based on left and right wing ideologies. Crosscutting cleavages were suddenly abundant (Lijphart, 1968). These occurrences not only prove that the creation of a shared identity is not prevented by liberal consociational institutions; they also generate questions about the factors inducing them. The Dutch case of ‘depillarization’ has of course been studied extensively and a number of important influences have been discovered: secularization, expansion of the social scale, and a changing political attitude of the public all had a crucial role in this process in the Netherlands (Bax, 1990; Bosmans, 1986; Dekker & Ester, 1996; Von der Dunk, 1986). An overarching influence, however, related to the factors mentioned before, was formed by the development of the state and the economy. This, in turn, was possible due to the stability that characterized the preceding decades; for many a result of the consociational democracy (Daalder, 1974; Lijphart, 1968).

Naturally, the single case of the Netherlands is not enough reason to suppose that consociational theory offers the most effective recommendations for constitutional engineering in divided societies. Larger numbers are necessary for such a conclusion and this is what motivated Pippa Norris to publish the book *Driving Democracy: Do Power Sharing Institutions Work?* (2008). The work combines detailed studies of

contrasting paired cases with comparing large-N time-series cross-sectional data. Norris classifies the core institutions of consociationalism in a slightly different way than Lijphart did in his classic consociational work. However, she focuses on what she regards as the four most important pillars: proportional representation, a parliamentary executive, decentralization, and an independent fourth estate. Apart from the last element, they are very similar to how consociational theory was understood during its earliest years. Moreover, the philosophy of sharing power that serves as its foundation remains the same.

Norris concludes that the results of the large-N study are consistent with the findings of the paired case-studies. Both demonstrate that power sharing arrangements increase the chances for successful democratic governance. Thus, she maintains that “societies which are deeply divided, whether by identities based on religion, language, region/nationality, ethnicity, or race, which are emerging from deep-rooted conflict should consider adopting power-sharing arrangements in democratic constitutional settlements” (Norris, 2008). The research further indicates that the four pillars of power-sharing are also separately more conducive to stability and democracy. PR electoral systems are more democratic than majoritarian systems, especially in divided societies, as they facilitate the election of representatives from minority communities. Concerning the executive, the results support the argument that parliamentary monarchies lead to a consolidation of democracy more often than presidential republics. Norris believes this is related to the fact that a parliamentary system provides a mechanism for the prime minister to be replaced without a major constitutional crisis. She stresses the importance of vertical power-sharing arrangements such as federalism and decentralization.

Compared with unitary states, the former are associated with a stronger performance of democracy.

2.2.4. Methodological Criticisms

Another major source of consociational theory's controversy is its lack of preciseness, the awkward typology, and its problems in terms of measurement, or, in the words of Giovanni Sartori (1970), the "conceptual stretching" inherent in the theory. Brian Barry (1975) devoted most of his famous critique to arguing how Lijphart's selection of supportive cases was flawed because the concept of consociational democracy consists of so many content-filled claims that the term is too overloaded. This line of argumentation was followed during the ensuing decades. M.C.P.M. van Schendelen (1984) added to the aforementioned that the definitions used for the theory's key concepts are too imprecise. Sue Halpern (1986) reconfirms this and she puts forward as an example the 'grand coalition' element. She claims that because of the definition's imprecision it has become a "catch-all concept" and asserts that "the researcher using the model as a guide is thereby encouraged toward creativity, not exactitude – towards identifying grand coalition somewhere within the folds of a state's political fabric" (Halpern, 1986, p. 190). Van Schendelen concludes that Lijphart probably cared little about empirical validity or consociationalism's robustness when tested systematically, and more about its broad applicability and potential for engineering societies. For Ian Lustick (1997) these arguments are reason to assume that the motivation behind consociational theory shifted from explaining – as a social science theory is supposed to do according to Lustick – to prescribing. He asserts that

with such a posture “methodology is a political weapon rather than a tool for improving theory, allowing Lijphart to shift between impressionistic and precise uses of definition and evidence”.

Similarly, Matthijs Bogaards (2000) speaks of consociational theory’s difficulty that it entails an empirical as well as a normative typology. This would mean that recommendations for the implementation of consociational democracy, based on the normative typology, cannot be supported by empirical evidence based on the use of the theory’s empirical typology. Or, in Bogaards’ words: “unless the normative and empirical typologies overlap completely, there is no basis for policy recommendation” (Bogaards, 2000, p. 417). The argument is based on Lijphart’s response to the methodological criticism he received. In order to diminish the problems related to definition and measurement he developed a new concept with the name ‘consensus democracy’ (Lijphart, 1984). Although this concept indeed strengthened the empirical value, much of the normative relevance was relinquished and the establishment of two different typologies that Bogaards mentioned became a fact.

Paul Dixon (2012), in a response to the aforementioned article on consociationalism by Nagle and Clancy, provides another insight into the methodological debate. In addition to the criticism of conceptual stretching, Dixon argues that consociationalists also use rhetorical skills to create a false dichotomy. By depicting the debate as one between consociationalism and transformationism they simultaneously attempt to encompass all that includes power-sharing and force its critics into the camp of majoritarian democracy. Dixon claims that his constructivist approach is neither consociational nor transformationist. However, as Nagle and Clancy

(2012) rightfully remark in their reply, Dixon does exactly what he accuses consociationalists of doing. By stating that consociationalists base their recommendations on primordialism and the inalterability of ethnicity, he creates a straw man. Liberal consociational theory has its foundations in the presumption that feelings of ethnicity might change, albeit not immediately. This also makes his proposed constructivist approach, which allows “for the possibility that in some situations group identities can be fluid” (Dixon, 2012, p. 113), superfluous.

All the criticism concerning the problems of definition and measurement undoubtedly has some grain of plausibility. Lijphart (1999, p. 9) himself admits that “an especially valid and serious criticism is that its key concepts have been very hard to define and measure precisely”. The question is, however, if that is enough reason to abandon an endeavor with important theoretical and policy implications. Conceptual stretching can indeed diminish the empirical value, but too much conceptual rigidity should also be avoided. Since one single model with detailed constitutional prescriptions for multiple states cannot and should not be developed, the stretching that is inherent to consociational theory is understandable and necessary. Moreover, the common core of institutions that are regarded as consociational – sharing power among the different segments of a society – is sufficient to justify the degree of stretching and thus the employment of the theory as well.

2.2.5. The Value of Consociationalism in Divided Societies

Given all the controversy that has surrounded consociational theory ever since it was widely used, it is a legitimate question to ask whether it can serve as a valuable

guideline for policy. The empirical value of it, although highly relevant for comparative politics as a whole, has no significance here. The aim is not to contribute to the soundness of the theory but to formulate beneficial reforms. Hence, the question is whether power-sharing, as prescribed by consociational theory and as opposed to majoritarian forms of governance or a mere division of powers, increases the chances of establishing a stable and effective government.

The answer to this question should not only be sought in the empirical evidence produced by Lijphart's work on consensus democracy or Norris' book about power-sharing. The two primary characteristics of executive power-sharing and group autonomy enjoy widespread support beyond the consociationalist community. Ted Robert Gurr (2000), for instance, has conducted an expansive study for his book *Peoples Versus States: Minorities at Risk in the New Century*. Consociational democracy is hardly mentioned but the conclusion is nonetheless that institutions of autonomy and power-sharing can usually accommodate ethnic conflict.

It is unsurprising then that power-sharing enjoys broad support among academics and experts. Besides, in addition to significant empirical evidence, logic also appears to support a consociational approach. The theory's aim is inclusiveness because exclusion is conducive to inequality, suppression and instability. An abundance of power in the hands of the majority in a deeply divided society is bound to be misused. Examples of such a course of events are already too great in number. This also explains why variations on the consociational model have been adopted so often and independently from each other: in the United Province of Canada in 1840, in the Netherlands in 1917, both in Lebanon and in Switzerland in 1943, in Austria in 1945, in

India in 1947, in Malaysia in 1955, in Colombia in 1958, in Cyprus in 1960, in Belgium in 1970, in Czecho-Slovakia in 1989, in South Africa in 1994, in Northern Ireland in 1998, and in Iraq in 2005. The power sharing systems that were set up in these cases followed all or most of the four basic consociational principles. Furthermore, the decisions to implement them were made under conditions of great tension and potential violence in divided societies.

In sum, despite its methodological flaws and the doubts it has generated when used for empirical means, consociational theory still offers the most potent and useful model for constitutional design in deeply divided societies. No decent alternative has thus far been advanced: it has the best record and is logically most sound. The next section will therefore analyze Lebanon's case of consociationalism and describe which reforms would be argued for by consociational theory.

2.3. Consociational Theory and Lebanon

Since the theory's earliest days, Lebanon has been regarded as being characterized by consociational politics. In his 1969 World Politics article "Consociational Democracy", Lijphart describes the small Levantine state's version of the grand coalition. With the top executive offices divided among different religious groups, the National Pact from 1943 included a consociational form of executive power-sharing. However, partly due to its turbulent history, Lebanon has not only been recognized as having consociational components by proponents of the theory, but also by its opponents (Hudson, *The Lebanese Crisis: The Limits of Consociational Democracy*, 1976; Dekmejian, 1978; Makdisi & Marktanner, 2009). Hence, the purpose of this section is not to examine whether Lebanese institutions should be considered

consociational but to discover to what extent they abide by the theory's prescriptions for power-sharing. Subsequently, the shortcomings of the Lebanese political system in the opinion of experts will be compared to the shortcomings in light of consociational theory.

2.3.1. Lebanon and the Four Consociational Elements of Power-Sharing

Government by a grand coalition or executive power-sharing:

As aforementioned, Lijphart (1969) considers the Lebanese arrangement of assigning the main executive offices, i.e. the Presidency (Maronite) and the Premiership (Sunni), to different groups as consociational. However, since this structure has evolved and knows a long history a more detailed examination of Lebanese executive power-sharing is necessary.

Mount Lebanon's first power sharing regime dates back to 1860 and is known as the *Réglement Organique*. The semi-autonomous province of the Ottoman Empire was then experiencing an unstable period that resulted in an internationally brokered agreement which restored order. Originally, each major community was allotted two seats on a twelve seat administrative council but after Maronite protests, because of their numerical majority, this was changed four years later into a composition of four Maronites, three Druzes, two Greek Orthodoxes, one Greek Catholic, one Sunni Muslim and one Shia Muslim. The Republic of Lebanon was founded in 1926 under the French mandate and a second power-sharing regime was established that guaranteed sectarian representation at all levels. With Lebanon's independence in 1943 the National Pact, an informal agreement, was adopted. The main element was the division

of the two executive offices as described by Lijphart. Later on a provision was added that guaranteed a Shia Speaker of Parliament and Cabinet posts were shared proportionally among the largest sects during this period. A large share of executive power, however, was vested in the presidency, which clearly gave the Maronite community an increasingly disproportional advantage over the other groups. In addition to this, seats in parliament were divided among Christians and Muslims according to a 6 to 5 ratio respectively, further augmenting the powerful position of the Christian community. Many agree that this was one of the factors leading to civil war in 1975.

The Ta'if Accord, negotiated in 1989, was the basis for the end of the war. When most parties had ratified it in 1991, Lebanon's power-sharing institutions altered, but were not significantly different from the ones under the National Pact. Major parts of presidential power were transferred to Cabinet in its collective capacity, and to Parliament. The power of the Sunni community was increased through the Prime Minister and that of the Shia community through the Speaker. Provisions adopted in the Accord require consensus among the President and the Parliament and its speaker for the designation of a Prime Minister and the formation of a cabinet. Besides, the preamble of the constitution now calls for a pact of mutual existence, which is interpreted as requiring that the main sects must agree on crucial policy decisions in Cabinet.

Current Lebanese institutions as they are under Ta'if, and the consociational prescription of government by a grand coalition or, in broader terms, executive power-sharing, meet each other very closely. The system ensures that the major groups in the country are entitled to a significant share and are forced to cooperate on crucial issues.

Liberal consociational theory, however, argues for a self-determined character and therefore against the fixed allocation of offices as is the case with the Presidency, Premiership and Speakership.

Mutual veto or concurrent majority rule:

The preamble of the Lebanese constitution, adopted through the Ta'if Agreement, states that “[t]here shall be no constitutional legitimacy for any authority which contradicts the pact of mutual existence”.³ As mentioned before, this provision is normally interpreted as implying that every sect needs to enjoy sufficient representation in any government. In addition to this, concerning major issues – which are described as the state of emergency and its abolition, war and peace, general mobilization, international agreements and treaties, the state’s general budget, comprehensive and long-term development plans, the appointment of top-level civil servants or their equivalent, reexamination of the administrative division, dissolving the Chamber of Deputies, the election law, the citizenship law, the personal status laws, and the dismissal of cabinet ministers – a two-third cabinet majority is needed to adopt a resolution. The combination of these two rules leads, in practice, to concurrent majority rule on these issues and normally grants all major sects a veto right.

Proportionality as the principle of representation:

Although consociational theory recommends proportional representation on all levels of government, the electoral system would benefit most from proportionality. Before the constitution was amended by the Ta'if Accord, the Lebanese Constitution guaranteed a 6:5 ratio for Christians and Muslims respectively in parliament. After the

³ Article ‘J’ of the preamble of the constitution of Lebanon. English version retrieved from <http://www.presidency.gov.lb/English/LebaneseSystem/Documents/Lebanese%20Constitution.pdf>

approval of the agreement in 1989, however, this changed to equal representation. Within these two groups the 128 seats are sub-divided among the different confessions on a fixed basis. There are 26 electoral districts and in each of these a number of deputies are elected, composed of various sects. The amount and composition is fixed but differs from district to district. Voters can only vote for candidates from their district and have one vote for each seat, which often leads to votes casted for a list with one contestant per available seat. It is a simple majority system and that means that the candidate to first-past-the-post wins.

Although the allocation of seats among the largest sects ought to be proportional, it is based on a census that was held in 1932. It is generally accepted that, due to demographic changes, this division is highly disproportional at present. Certain groups are considerably over- and others underrepresented. Thus, representation in Lebanon does not follow the power-sharing prescription of proportionality. Moreover, the pre-determined character is contrary to the self-determination recommended by liberal consociational theory.

Segmental autonomy and federalism:

The confessional segments in Lebanon enjoy a high degree of autonomy. Personal status law, for instance, is considered the jurisdiction of religious authorities. This is, however, not what consociationalism recommends. An institutionalized form of group autonomy and decentralization can ensure that segments become constructive elements of a stable democracy; a complete lack of unified family laws cannot serve this purpose. Moreover, although the Ta'if Accord contains a section prescribing administrative reform towards decentralization, the Lebanese state remains highly

centralized and local authorities extraordinarily weak. Despite the existence of municipalities and local governments, devolution of power is minimal. Because there is almost no fiscal decentralization the municipalities are close to completely dependent on the central government's revenue redistribution; consequently, local political autonomy is absent. Besides, there is a clear democratic deficit on the municipal level and there is a missing link between local and national elections which prevents migration from one level to the other and thus a broader democratization process.

Group autonomy, especially in the form of decentralization, is an important element of consociational democracies and also widely believed to increase government effectiveness and democratization. The segments of Lebanese society are very autonomous in many areas; however, this system is utterly unorganized and in no manner incorporated into the state or subject to its rule of law. As a result, Lebanon clearly fails to abide by liberal consociational theory in this respect as it has no institutionalized system of decentralization or segmental autonomy.

2.3.2. Implementing Liberal Consociational Theory in Lebanon

After comparing the four elements of power-sharing, as prescribed by liberal consociational theory, with the Lebanese political system, it becomes clear that Lebanon is a consociational political system since it is characterized by a high degree of executive power-sharing that is further strengthened by veto rights for the larger minorities. Yet the pre-determined allocation of offices is a form of corporate instead of liberal consociationalism. Besides, concerning the elements of proportional

representation and group autonomy Lebanon does not even remotely resemble the prescriptions of the theory.

Experts on this subject who are not related to the consociational school of thought also underscore shortcomings of the Lebanese political system in these areas, especially in terms of the electoral system and decentralization. Bassel Salloukh (2006) argues that Lebanon's simple plurality system, in combination with the distorted distribution of seats among the electoral districts, has led to the hardening of clientelism and the confessional political system during all post-war elections. Similarly, Nawaf Salam (2004) maintains that the flaws of Lebanon's electoral system lie in its majoritarian character. Together with the electoral districts it would cause favoring of the traditional leadership and the "precedence of sectarian and local interests over national issues and the considerations of public interest". Moreover, both Salloukh and Farid El Khazen (2003) emphasize that the current system leads to instrumental cross-confessional alliances that only serve electoral ends instead of having a moderating effect on sectarian identities.

Furthermore, Lebanon's lack of decentralization has also been mentioned repeatedly by scholars as a source of the political system's malfunctioning. Riad Al-Khoury (2006) contends that the capacities of municipal governments are low, both in dealing with the central government and with their constituencies, and that an evaluation of their internal capacities also demonstrates the limitations of the present structures. Despite a long municipal tradition, local authorities enjoy practically no autonomy from the central government. Al-Khoury believes that, as a result, the potential to increase efficiency and accountability is left unutilized. Sami Atallah (2012)

also emphasizes the need for administrative decentralization. He argues that in addition to their low capabilities, most municipalities are too small and suffer from bureaucratic oversight. Regional, directly-elected councils could better serve as a new tier of government and an integrative developmental approach could then be adopted. Consequently, democratic participation would be enhanced and politicians' incentives to deliver public goods would increase. This topic will be addressed in the next chapter, however.

2.4. Conclusion

This chapter started with an analysis of the development of consociational theory and the debate it created. Most significant among the alterations after decades of prominence is definitely the split into two variants: corporate and liberal consociationalism. Unsurprisingly, the latter is universally preferred over the former and should therefore be regarded as a successful development of the theory. Admittedly, the concepts remain hard to define and measure as a result of the stretching that is inherent to the theory. However, rigid prescriptions and recommendation can and should never be made on a universal basis. Specific circumstances that differ from case to case should always be taken into account and therefore demand a degree of stretching and flexibility.

This does generate questions, however, about the empirical support for recommendations on the basis of consociational theory. Consensus democracy and power-sharing are simply not the same as consociationalism. Yet the four elements of power-sharing that are prescribed by the theory do find support in the work on

consensus democracy and many other studies. Besides, that support can also be found in research not related to the consociational community. Consequently, power-sharing, as prescribed by consociational theory, enjoys broad support among scholars, experts and practitioners. Such consociational arrangements have been implemented a multitude of times throughout history and around the world, often with great success.

The second section of this chapter compared the four key elements of liberal consociational theory to the Lebanese power-sharing system. As has become clear, Lebanon's constitution ensures government by a grand coalition and the division of the main executive offices among the three largest sects. Due to qualified majority voting on major issues, a mutual veto is also given to the main groups. Thus, Lebanon abides by liberal consociational theory concerning these two elements, except that the fixed allocation of quotas gives it a corporate character. The elements of proportional representation and segmental autonomy, on the other hand, are severely mispracticed. A pre-determined allocation of parliamentary seats in combination with a distorted distribution of seats among the electoral districts has caused the representation of the Lebanese population to be highly disproportional instead. Besides, although the Lebanese segments enjoy a high degree of autonomy, this is a result of the absence of unified personal status laws. Liberal consociational theory argues for an institutionalized form of decentralization and Lebanon clearly fails to meet this requirement.

Moreover, not only the consociationalist school and its supporters regard the lack of decentralization and proportional representation in Lebanon as major flaws in its constitutional design. A wide array of scholars have argued for the implementation of

these two elements as necessary reforms. The feasibility of such amendments has, however, also been debated extensively. Yet perhaps the combination of these two far-reaching measures will make them less far-reaching. Decentralization and group autonomy have the ability to secure minority rights greatly; while proportional representation will, at first, produce a diminishment of the parliamentary strength of certain groups. By starting with the former, the latter might become more acceptable. Implementation and feasibility are, however, the subjects of the last chapter. The next chapter first examines how and why decentralization might lead to an improvement of the Lebanese power-sharing system.

CHAPTER THREE

DECENTRALIZATION

3.1. Introduction

Liberal consociational theory argues for the implementation of segmental autonomy in deeply divided societies with the goal to recognize and strengthen communities so that they can form constructive elements of a stable democracy. Although the various ethnic groups in Lebanon enjoy a large degree of autonomy, this has not been institutionalized. The aim of this chapter is therefore to examine how a proper implementation of liberal consociational theory's element of segmental autonomy can lead to an improvement of Lebanon's power-sharing system.

While there are different methods to provide groups with a degree of autonomy, federalism and decentralization are considered most productive in terms of stability but also in terms of a consolidation of democracy. However, different perspectives exist on the definitions of federalism and decentralization and on their different forms. Concerning decentralization, the clearest distinction is offered by a division into fiscal, administrative and political decentralization. Fiscal decentralization implies the expansion of the local authority's control over revenues and expenditures, while administrative decentralization is the transfer of responsibilities for planning and managing public functions. Political decentralization is more far-reaching because it requires the subnational governments to be politically autonomous from the center. This means, for instance, that they have to be elected directly by their constituents and it

often also implies a transfer of legislative power (USAID, 2009). Federalism, on the other hand, refers to a constitutional distinction between at least two different levels of governance, where each tier has certain specified areas of autonomy. It is therefore a broad term which can be applied to centralized and decentralized federations (Norris, 2008).

This chapter opens by analyzing the debate about the possible benefits and disadvantages of decentralizing in a deeply divided society. Although devolution of power is believed by many to lead to economic development as well, the subject of this section will be its relation to stability and accountability and the risk of secessionism. The second section covers the Lebanese structure of decentralization, and briefly describes the various existing perspectives on how to transfer responsibilities to local authorities. Finally, the chapter concludes by analyzing and comparing these proposals to the conclusions that can be drawn from the academic literature.

3.2. The Debate about Decentralization

3.2.1. Decentralization and Stability

“According to consociational theory, federalism offers an excellent opportunity for group autonomy if the groups are geographically concentrated”, says Lijphart (1999, p. 15). O’leary (2006) similarly maintains that creating a pluralist federation is one of the methods proposed by power-sharing theorists to establish a social contract between two or more people in the same state. The reason many believe that a federal structure tends to produce better results when ethnic groups are concentrated in different areas is that under such circumstances it is more easily achievable to let the borders of the

regions coincide with the ethnic boundaries. If this is indeed the case, federalism and decentralization can contribute greatly to meeting the consociational principle of minority rule over the minority itself in matters that are the minority's exclusive concern (Lijphart, 1979).

However, not only supporters of consociationalism or the power-sharing paradigm believe that devolution of power can produce greater stability in divided societies. Horowitz (1985), an opponent of most elements of Lijphart's theory, believes that strong decentralization can reduce ethnic conflict significantly. Part of his argument is based on an interesting case study of Nigeria during a period wherein it drastically reformed its federal structure. The First Nigerian Republic (1960-66) consisted of three main regions, each of them controlled by a single ethnic majority and a party representing it. These three parties used their dominance on the regional level to fight over power on the central level. As a consequence, ethnic conflict was strong and manifested itself on the highest level, over most of the crucial issues. Because the three groups only represented a small majority within their regions but used their power to further consolidate it, the minorities were severely underrepresented. Instability led to a coup in 1966 and this was followed by thirteen years of military rule.

The Second Nigerian Republic thus started in 1979 after a modification of the federal system in 1967, which divided the country into twelve states instead of three. At the start in 1979, this modification of twelve years earlier had therefore already led to the reemergence of civil politics. Seven more states were added in 1976 and this further strengthened the developments that were set in motion by the previous expansion. The main reason that the two different federal frameworks produced such different results

would be that the three large regions from the First Nigerian Republic created something very similar to a winner-takes-all system where only the three largest ethnic groups – and concomitantly three political parties – benefited from. The nineteen states of the Second Nigerian Republic, on the other hand, substituted this for “something akin to proportional representation”. Consequently, the power of the largest groups was reduced which made it unreasonable for them to pursue dominance over the country; moreover, conflicts shifted from the interethnic to the intraethnic level because under the previous system opposition within the group was futile or punishing while it was now rewarded with power in the state. Hence, Horowitz (1985) concludes that the new structure of decentralization had five pivotal consequences for the intensity of interethnic conflict in Nigeria:

“First, the proliferation of states dispersed some of the conflict into more parochial forums. Second, the new states provided arenas in which intraethnic conflict might also occur. Third, a result of this was to enhance the position of some political parties at the expense of others ... paving the way for greater interethnic cooperation in the all-Nigerian arena. Fourth, as the new states fought to advance their interests, a few nonethnic issues and actors were also introduced. And, fifth, the separate state bureaucracies provided career opportunities for groups not well represented in the federal civil service.”

The analysis of Nigeria’s experience with two different federal systems thus provides a convenient insight into the effects decentralization can have on ethnic conflict. Knowing, however, that an improper design of the structure can exacerbate interethnic strife also sheds light on the importance of contemplation and attention for details.

Another argument that has been advanced by various experts in ethnic conflict is that territorial autonomy can reassure groups about their security in a deeply divided society (Hartzell & Rothchild, 1999; Hartzell, Hoddie, & Rothchild, 2001). States that are characterized by the combination of deep vertical cleavages based on ethnicity and

a political elite within these groups that holds essentialist views are often also characterized by “the existence of diffuse fears for the survival of group cultures or physical existence or over the possibility of downward mobility” (Hartzell & Rothchild, 1999). The essentialist – instead of pragmatic – views are usually both consequence and cause of conflicts since anxiety over survival and subordination is easily utilized by leaders to increase their support. This leads to more intense conflict and the overlooking of transethnic ties that might have been strong before.

What plays an important role in such situations is the capacity and structure of the state. It can either be captured to unequally promote the interests of one or more specific groups, or it is simply too weak to ensure an equal distribution of services and application of the law, or to provide security. When such feelings of insecurity are created by state weakness and exclusion, the solution could be offered by institutional arrangements. Hartzell and Rothchild (1999) argue that, in such instances, territorial autonomy has the ability to recognize and empower ethnic communities with political and administrative authority and can thus reassure groups about their capacity to control social, cultural and economic matters.

Hartzell and Rothchild support their argument with an empirical analysis of the successfulness of territorial autonomy to manage ethnic strife after civil conflicts. Their study involved 29 cases that all occurred between 1945 and 1999 and were ended by a negotiated peace settlement at least five years before the collection of the data. The settlements were coded as stable when civil war did not break out again during this period of five years. Marking the cases as either with or without implementation of territorial autonomy revealed a 31.7 percent increase of the probability the settlement

proved stable when decentralization was included in the resolution. As the authors conclude, the analysis demonstrates that territorial autonomy by itself is not sufficient to stabilize ethnic conflicts. However, they assert, it also indicates “that territorial autonomy can be used as part of a creative and constructive approach to conflict management. If territorial autonomy is combined with other safeguards and can be used to reassure groups in deeply divided societies about their security and ability to exercise a limited authority, then these arrangements may help to lay the foundation for a stable, accommodative politics” (Hartzell & Rothchild, 1999, p. 269).

Moreover, a number of other scholars also contend that ethnic conflict can be addressed effectively by mechanisms of regional autonomy (Bermeo, 2002; Gurr, 2000; Hechter, 2007; Stepan, 1999). Their arguments are usually grounded in a combination of logic and analysis of the historical record. The overarching stabilizing factor appears to be the accommodation of demands for a degree of self-control; leading to stability in multiethnic states from all varieties, including India, Switzerland, Canada, Belgium, Spain and Nigeria. Considering the empirical record it seems probable that decentralization can indeed contribute to stability in a deeply divided society by reducing ethnic conflict. To be durable, however, stability should be reinforced by a consolidation of democracy and this is best achieved by an increase in accountability and responsiveness. The question whether decentralization can make this attainable as well is central to the next section.

3.2.2. Decentralization and Accountability

While the link between decentralization and stability already enjoys broad support among scholars, the advantages related to accountability and responsiveness are even more widely advanced (Bardhan, 2002; Diamond, 1999; Norris, 2008). Besides, state actors such as USAID and the EU, and international agencies such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank promote further decentralization of states around the world on the ground that it would increase the quality of governance. The basis of their arguments is usually that the transfer of power to democratically elected local and regional bodies creates multiple points of access for citizens which increases public participation and therefore also accountability and responsiveness. These effects should be even larger in divided societies because provisions for regional autonomy also have the ability to establish more homogeneous entities, which makes it possible to transfer issues that might lead to a deadlock on the central level to a regional body where they are easier to resolve.

One way to look at accountability is through the level of trust between citizens and politicians. When people can – or have the feeling that they can – hold officials accountable for their policies, trust in them will be built. Accountability and trust are therefore very closely related and this means that the confidence in local authorities can serve as a helpful indication; moreover, it is easily comparable to the level of confidence in national governments. For this reason, Larry Diamond (1999) has compared surveys of trust and confidence in countries with relatively decentralized governments. For instance, in South Korea, “one year after the first direct elections for provincial governors and city mayors, 51 percent found the new local executives more

diligent and responsive than the old officials appointed by the central government; only 4 percent found them worse” (Diamond, 1999, p. 126). Also, in three consecutive annual surveys in Turkey, 1994-96, the public expressed more confidence in local than in national authorities.

Diamond believes that the smaller scale of constituencies is a major factor in this relationship between improved accountability and decentralization. Firstly, local interests may gather too few votes to be considered at the national level which makes it difficult for local communities to turn a national legislator out of office for failing to meet their distinctive local needs. Besides, even if many local communities are dissatisfied, there may still be national issues that push more local needs off the agenda, which will then not be considered, let alone addressed. Thus, as Diamond asserts, “[d]evolution of power to localities provides a more precise means of redress. Voters at the local level can replace a local government that is corrupt, insensitive to their demands and priorities, or merely incompetent at getting the garbage collected” (Diamond, 1999, p. 126).

Equally important and characterized by an equally strong relation with accountability is public participation. Several studies have found that a higher degree of decentralization increases public participation and this, in turn, increases the level of government accountability because the officials endure more pressure from a large number of people to be responsive. Decentralization would have this effect because it brings government closer to the people and therefore creates a feeling of being able to exert more control. The research that was conducted by Huther and Shah (1998) confirms this. Their study of 80 cases demonstrated that decentralization is clearly

positively correlated with public participation. Moreover, the World Bank also concludes that “this relationship is statistically significant which suggests that citizen participation and public sector accountability go hand in hand with decentralized public sector decision making” (World Bank, 1999).

Similarly, Norris (2008) concludes that decentralized arrangements, as compared to unitary states, are associated with a stronger performance of democracy, while federal states show even higher democratic indicators, and this is after controlling for many other factors related to democratization. She bases her findings on both large-N studies, covering all 191 nation states in the world and using Freedom House, Polity IV, Vanhanen and Cheibub indicators⁴, and on pairing the case studies of India and Bangladesh. The case studies reveal why India was able to transform its political processes and has been governed by a stable coalition of more than 20 parties after 1999, while the Bangladeshi parliamentary seats are concentrated in just four parties, with two dominant ones. Both these parties gain power from patron-client relationships which protect and reward their supporters. The result is a deadlock in government and high levels of corruption, intolerance and malfeasance. In India, federalism has facilitated the proliferation of parties as smaller parties can gain credibility and electoral support within the smaller federal states. The decentralized structure has therefore also facilitated multiparty competition and the politics of coalition building. Bangladesh, on the other hand, although in many constitutional aspects similar to India, remains highly centralized with weak local authorities. Norris therefore concludes that “with more significant forms of vertical power-sharing, the Bangladesh party system could have

⁴ Freedom House and Polity IV have been mentioned before but are different from the Vanhanen and Cheibub measurements in their definition of democracy. Vanhanen (2000) measures participatory democracy and Cheibub (Cheibub & Gandhi, 2004) contested democracy.

developed more checks and balances, breaking the feudal hold of dynastic leadership which has encouraged kleptocracy and the destabilization of the state” (Norris, 2008, p. 184).

As described, the link between devolution of power to local authorities and accountability has been thoroughly examined by a variety of scholars and evidence of its existence appears to be abundant. Bringing the political decision-making closer to the people and their local needs creates more trust among the citizens in the officials, leads to greater democratic participation and enables them to vote unresponsive politicians out of office and replace them with ones that are less corrupt and more capable of meeting the citizens’ demands. All these effects are likely to be even larger in a divided society because under such circumstances decentralization can additionally serve as a tool to move issues from the central level, which might suffer from a deadlock created by conflict between different ethnic parties, to a more homogeneous local level. As a result, the conflict will no longer serve as a cover and excuse for not addressing the needs of the local population and accountability will only be enhanced even further.

Since it is now safe to conclude that decentralization can contribute to an increase of both stability and accountability, the following section will address the challenges and pitfalls of regional autonomy in order to discover how to reach the maximum effect and prevent possible negative consequences.

3.2.3. Risks and Challenges

The most regularly made argument against strong decentralization is that it would strengthen ethnic and regional identities and therefore exacerbate ethnic conflict (Nordlinger E. , 1972). Granting legitimacy to ethnic groups and reinforcing segments might lead them to produce legislation that favors their group over others. Besides, providing them with more autonomy might create a will for even greater independence instead of having a satisfying effect and this could lead to a desire of secession, civil war and the breakup of the state.

It cannot be denied that decentralization has in some instances led to an increase in ethnic conflict and calls for secessionism. Dawn Brancati (2006) has investigated why this is the case and why decentralization in so many other situations has led to the opposite, i.e. a decrease in ethnic conflict. She has conducted a large-N statistical analysis of thirty countries around the world from 1985 to 2000. It is based on an original dataset of local election results and data about ethnic conflict and secessionism. The key findings of the analysis are that political decentralization itself reduces ethnic conflict by granting autonomy to groups concerning their political, economic and social affairs and therefore by securing their rights. Decentralization, however, can also have the indirect effect of an increase of ethnic conflict by promoting regional parties. In other words, it is the growth of regional parties that in some cases leads to conflict and secessionism.

Hence, when designing a system of political decentralization it is important to take into account certain factors that might contribute to the growth of regional parties. According to Brancati, there are a number of different features that may affect their

strength. Important ones are the size of the regions, the number of regional legislatures, the way an upper chamber is elected and the concurrency of national and regional elections. Brancati therefore believes that the possible effect of decentralization on ethnic conflict and secessionism can easily be diminished by limiting the size of the regions and the amount of regional legislatures, by ensuring that a large share of the upper chamber is not elected by regional officials, and by holding national and regional elections concurrently. This way an excessive increase in the power of regional parties can be prevented and the negative consequences of decentralization are minimized.

Another criticism is that decentralization in states with a weak central government cannot have the same beneficial results as in states with high institutional capacities. This argument is based on the belief that devolution of power from central to local authorities inevitably reduces the capacity of the already weak national government while it should be strengthened instead. Such a line of reasoning depicts the issue as a zero-sum game. A growing number of scholars and practitioners, however, are of the opinion that that is not the case. Rather, the redistribution of power from a centralized to a decentralized level, if executed properly, constitutes a positive-sum game. This is the case because devolution, for all the reasons mentioned before, increases accountability and legitimacy of local governments but also of the state as a whole. When the system starts functioning better as a result of a proper institutional structure and division of power between its different levels, the outcome will eventually be a stronger central government with higher capacity and legitimacy (Diamond, 1999). Thus, decentralization might even be more beneficial and necessary in states with a weak central government.

3.3. Decentralization in Lebanon

Independent Lebanon's structure was influenced by the French model, which led to a heavily centralized government. During the 1950s however, a process of deconcentration was started by dividing Lebanon into *muhafazat* (singular *muhafaza*), which are administrative units at the governorate level, and subdividing these into *qada'*, administrative units at the district level within the *muhafazat*. The reason this is a form of deconcentration and not of decentralization is that on both levels the authority is vested in an appointed official who represents the central government. For the governorates this is the *muhafiz* and the districts are headed by a *qaim maqam* (Kiwani, 2004).

Attempts at decentralization have been made in Lebanon. Municipalities Law 69/63, for instance, encouraged the unrestricted establishment of a municipality in every city or village. Another law that was adopted in 1977 restricted this slightly by setting some conditions for establishing a municipality, but also codified a broad jurisdiction for the municipal council.⁵ Besides, municipal elections were held in 1963 but the first elections after that were greatly delayed, in part by the civil war between 1975 and 1990, and were not held until 1998. That year's reinstallation of local elections reinvigorated municipal life, increased citizen participation at the local level, and

⁵ According to Article 49, the Municipal Council is in charge, among others, of the following tasks: To formulate and adopt the municipality's annual budget; determine the tax rate and fee to be collected as allowed by law; manage the municipal funds; plan, improve, and expand streets, establish gardens and public places, and execute designs related to municipality, etc.; and establish shops, parks, racing places, playground, toilets, museums, hospitals, dispensaries, shelters, libraries, etc. Furthermore, based on Article 50 of the above Decree-Law, the Municipal Council is entitled to establish or manage directly or indirectly, among others, the following: Public schools, nurseries, and technical schools; public hospitals, sanitariums, dispensaries, and other health establishments and institutions; museums, public libraries, theaters, cinemas, amusement centers, clubs, playgrounds and other public and sports shops as well as social, cultural and artistic institutions; and local means of public transportation (Atallah, Establishing Regional Administrations for Integrated Development, 2012).

provided an impetus for more decentralization; however, municipalities – and decentralization in general – have remained very weak for several reasons (Atallah, Establishing Regional Administrations for Integrated Development, 2012).

First of all, in 2012 there were 985 municipalities. In a country the size of Lebanon with a population of only 4.5 million that means that most of these are too small to be viable. 70 percent of the municipalities, for instance, has a population of less than 4,000 inhabitants. Almost 400 out of the total number of 985 do not have a single employee. Besides, total municipal expenditure amounted to 6.3 percent of the total government expenditure (Atallah, 2012). Thus, even if the resources were divided among a far smaller number of municipalities, they would still be very weak financially. An even larger problem with the current system of deconcentration is that local authorities suffer from a severe lack of independence from the central government. Because no proper fiscal decentralization has been implemented, the municipalities depend largely on the distribution of resources by the central government. To this end, an Independent Municipal Fund (IMF) has been established but it is controlled by the Ministry of Interior and the funds are distributed without clear and transparent criteria (Beyond Reform and Development, 2012). As a result, local authorities enjoy a very low level of fiscal autonomy. Political independence, already restrained by the lack of resources, is further limited by the way the Ministry of Interior utilizes the prerogatives it enjoys through its Municipal Affairs Unit and the *muhafazat*. Since the national government is generally suspicious about decentralization trends, it exploits the vagueness of the constitution by expanding its role and weakening the municipalities' autonomy (Al-Khouri, 2006).

An attempt to address part of these problems has been made by providing the possibility to form Municipal Unions. They are created by a decree from the Council of Ministers, upon the suggestion of the Minister of Interior and Municipalities either through an initiative from the Minister of Interior and Municipalities or upon the request of the municipalities (Atallah, Establishing Regional Administrations for Integrated Development, 2012). At present, there are 48 Unions which include 680 municipalities. They are headed by a president who is elected by the presidents of the municipalities from their midst. The Unions are, however, constrained by the same obstacles as the municipalities. Although they enjoy certain prerogatives, such as providing public projects of common interest from which all or some of the member municipalities can benefit, the inaccuracy of the legal context leads to conflicts between the Unions and their members over their jurisdiction. Besides, also the Unions face a lack of resources and administrative capabilities. In addition to this, they need approval from the *qaim maqam* for expenditures over 2,000 USD.

3.3.1. Proposals for Reform

As mentioned before, the 1989 Ta'if Accord entails a section about administrative decentralization. Its value can, however, be questioned as it does not provide any details about how to reform. Moreover, its provisions are rather ambiguous as it starts with the statement that “the State of Lebanon shall be a single and united state with a strong central authority” yet later on calls for “expanded administrative

decentralization”.⁶ It also appears to place more emphasis on deconcentration than on actual devolution of power since it stresses the need to broaden the powers of the *muhafiz* and the *qaim maqam*. Kiwan (2004) believes that this ambiguity was partly the result of a climate of nostalgia for national unity, which is an understandable feeling after fifteen years of civil war. In any event, the vagueness of the text and the failure to provide a clear way forward that characterize the Ta’if Accord prevent it from serving as a solid foundation for reforms towards decentralization.

Kiwan (2004) herself does propose a certain system of decentralization. She believes the municipality constitutes the most desirable form for local government because it has the most experience and because it would “embody democracy at its best” (Kiwan, 2004, p. 69). According to Kiwan, the municipal council is attentive to the citizens’ needs, in constant touch with them and accountable. She further contends that if Lebanon would be decentralized by granting powers to larger regions, the confessional system would prevail and local authorities would be captured by the same traditional elites. In Kiwan’s opinion the solution therefore lies in enlarging the margin for independence in decision-making at the municipal level and by increasing their fiscal autonomy.

The nongovernmental organization Beyond Reform and Development (2012) has published a policy brief on decentralization in Lebanon. Their proposed way forward consists of three main elements. Firstly, they state that an Administrative Decentralization Law needs to be adopted and that it should include administrative districting based on social and economic clustering instead of on sectarian grounds. In

⁶ From an English translation of the Taif Agreement. Retrieved from [www.un.int/wcm/webdav/site/lebanon/shared/documents/Constitution/The%20Taif%20Agreement%20\(English%20Version\)%20.pdf](http://www.un.int/wcm/webdav/site/lebanon/shared/documents/Constitution/The%20Taif%20Agreement%20(English%20Version)%20.pdf) taif agreement

addition to this, the law should ensure an increase in the local governments' capacities and strong accountability mechanisms. The second element proposed in the policy brief is an improvement of the Independent Municipal Fund. By removing the political and clientelistic motivation that now influences the distribution of funds the IMF can be more independent and contribute to the fiscal autonomy of the municipalities. Finally, it is argued that the municipal elections law needs to be amended. Measures, such as pre-printed ballots, voting based on place of residence instead of place of origin and an independent elections commission, have to ensure freer and fairer elections.

Another campaign with the purpose of greater decentralization in Lebanon has been led by the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies (LCPS). In various reports and policy briefs, LCPS and its director, Sami Atallah (2012; 2011), propose reforms that are fairly similar to the ones proposed by Beyond Reform & Development (BR&D). They argue for a revision of the IMF in order to ensure a fairer distribution of fund and more fiscal autonomy for the local governments, and they argue for a clearer delineation of competencies to avoid dependence on the Ministry of Interior and conflicts between different bodies. A difference between the two sets of proposals is, however, related to the recommended structure of local authorities. While BR&D does not mention the formation of a body on a higher level than the municipality, the LCPS stresses the need to introduce regional councils. These would have to be large enough to deal effectively with developmental projects, as opposed to many of the municipalities. LCPS is aware that drawing the geographical boundaries of these new regions would be a highly political process which may lead to regional and confessional conflicts. It is therefore recommended that the government sets up a national commission to study and propose

boundaries for the regional councils and a legal framework that defines their mandate, governance structure, responsibilities, and resources.

Furthermore, Atallah and the LCPS (2012) recommend that these regional councils will be elected directly and will be headed by a directly elected president. They believe this is needed to enhance accountability and the connection between politicians and citizens. Moreover, the relationship between citizens and the central government will also improve when local officials can be directly elected and held accountable. They admit that concerns are often raised about the possibility that regional councils will fall hostage to sectarianism and clientelism and it is not denied that this can indeed occur. They stress, however, that an opening up of the democracy with regular elections and transparency does provide the best chances to exclude this possibility and eventually creates the best system.

3.4. Analysis and Conclusion

This chapter started by analyzing the different arguments for and against decentralization in deeply divided societies. Many believe that territorial autonomy can contribute greatly to stability under such circumstances. One reason for this is that territorial autonomy can lead to enhanced group autonomy if segments of the population are concentrated in geographic areas. By allowing the minority to rule over the minority itself in matters that are the minority's exclusive concern, a group can be reassured about their capacity to control social, cultural and economic matters. Moreover, especially in weak states with populations that are divided by deep vertical cleavages, the central government is unable to ensure an equal distribution of goods and services or

assure groups about their security. Decentralization can accommodate the resulting demands for self-control and fears about the survival of the group because it has the ability to recognize and empower ethnic communities with political and administrative authority.

Moreover, the degree of interethnic conflict can be reduced by producing a shift to intraethnic conflict; hence, over socioeconomic policies. Decentralization can lead to such a change since it creates a forum for opposition within the ethnic group. On a regional scale it will first of all be easier to gain a share in power than on the national level. Second, when the ethnic group forming the majority in a certain region enjoys broad authority over that area and is therefore responsible for governing it, it will most likely also be held responsible for its policies by the members of that group; and that creates opportunities for opposition from within. This was demonstrated by Horowitz's (1985) case study of Nigeria. The two very different experiences with two different systems of decentralization in that divided society showed how influential these institutions can be. While the first arrangement led to an exacerbation of ethnic conflict, the second clearly alleviated it. This was mainly a result of the shift it produced from inter- to intraethnic conflict. However, not only case studies support decentralization's relation to an increase of stability. Also a number of large-N statistical analyses, conducted by several scholars, conclude that territorial autonomy often serves as a stabilizing factor in ethnic conflicts.

Another widely claimed result of proper decentralization that this chapter has examined is the supposed increase in accountability. A wide variety of research has described how bringing the government closer to the people enables them to exert more

influence on the politicians' policies. Because this leads to more responsiveness on the side of local authorities, citizens start to trust the government more which, in turn, leads to more public participation. All these elements – trust, participation, responsiveness and accountability – are all interrelated and of utmost importance for the consolidation of democracy and the establishment of an effective political system. Moreover, these effects of decentralization are supported by both case studies and large-N analyses. Pippa Norris (2008), for instance, uses both methods and concludes that decentralized state structures, as opposed to unitary ones, are associated with a stronger performance of democracy. Besides, the link between devolution of power and accountability is also understood to be strong by international and national organizations focusing on democratic development, such as the World Bank, the EU and USAID.

The most prominent counter argument is that strong political decentralization will lead to a strengthening of ethnic identities and calls for greater autonomy, which might even lead to secessionism and civil war. The historical record, however, demonstrates that the cases wherein the implementation of regional autonomy has had such results are extremely rare. Moreover, when the basic ingredients for strong sentiments towards complete autonomy and thus secession already exist, it is highly unlikely that a centralized state will alleviate these sentiments. Research has, however, demonstrated that regional parties play an important role in secessionism and that certain decentralization structures have the effect of strengthening such parties. In order to prevent this, certain issues could be addressed or avoided; for instance, limiting the size of the regions and the amount of regional legislatures; preventing that a large share

of the upper chamber is elected by regional officials; and by holding national and regional elections concurrently.

The different proposals for decentralization that have been advanced by several Lebanese academics all seem to agree on two things: local authorities' need for greater autonomy and the necessity that they are elected directly. What is not agreed upon, however, is on which level this authority should be concentrated. Some argue that it should be the municipality because that is an existing structure; others recommend a larger, regional body because a large number of municipalities would be too small. Concerning the power that would need to be transferred to these local governments, municipal or larger, no clear boundaries are set by any of the proposals. They all appear to agree on fiscal and a certain degree of administrative decentralization. However, devolution of political power is not mentioned. As a result, it is not clear whether it is rejected or that they do not have a clear opinion about it.

Strong political decentralization and federalism are sensitive subjects in Lebanon. Due to a mainly Christian push for federalism that reached its climax during the civil war, it connotes partition and war for many Lebanese. It is indeed very probable that if the wartime, federal demands of the militias – who at the time controlled regions militarily, politically, and economically – had been met, the Lebanese state would have been broken up in several separate states, based on religion. Furthermore, opponents of a federalist structure are also concerned that the rights of minorities living in areas where the majority is from another sect will not be secure. Although the major groups are all concentrated in different regions, each of these areas also has pockets of other sects. Regional autonomy would therefore result in, for

instance, the Christians in the South living under a Shia dominated authority and the Shia in Jbeil under a Christian local government.

When the academic and historical record of decentralization is taken into consideration, lessons might be learned. First of all, devolution of power can provide stability when group autonomy is enhanced by appropriate institutions. In order to provide group autonomy, political decentralization is necessary. Segments of a deeply divided society should be granted significant political authority if they are to be reassured about their rights and security. Second, this group autonomy will be greatest when the regions have one group forming a clear majority – as is the case with the *muhafazat*. Moreover, an increase in the responsiveness and accountability of local governments will be maximized when the regions are more homogeneous. The aim should be to cause a shift from inter- to intraethnic conflict. This will be achieved when fewer groups are responsible for policies on a regional scale and opposition within the group is enabled as well as encouraged. Only then will the sectarian deadlock that characterizes the national level be evaded.

It is unavoidable that these regions will have minorities as well. For this reason, decentralization should be accompanied by strong safeguards against the violation of minorities' rights. Some might argue that the history of Lebanon proves the risk of secessionism is too great; however, when secessionism was indeed a risk, the country was experiencing severe political and military conflict which makes those circumstances incomparable to the present ones. Thus, to conclude, a further implementation of liberal consociational theory by providing group autonomy through a proper decentralization process would lead to an improvement of Lebanon's political

system. It would be more stable as groups would be reassured about their capacities to ensure a fair application of laws and distribution of services; it would be more effective as conflicts would shift from the inter- to the intraethnic level; and it would be more democratic as both subnational and national authorities would eventually be more accountable and responsive. Equally important for the functioning of a political system and closely related to decentralization, is the electoral law for national elections. The next chapter will examine whether Lebanon abides by liberal consociational theory in this field and, if not, whether a following of the theory's recommendations would be lead to improvements of the political system.

CHAPTER FOUR

PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

4.1. Introduction

While the previous chapter discussed how the proper implementation of liberal consociational theory – namely greater institutionalized group autonomy through decentralization – would lead to a more stable and effective political system in Lebanon, this chapter examines Lebanon’s adherence to the consociational element of ‘proportionality as the principle of representation’; by some accounts the theory’s most important component. When Lijphart formulated this recommendation he did not solely speak about representation in the legislature, but also about other branches of the government. However, since proportional representation in parliament is its most critical aspect, this chapter will address only the legislature and not, for example, the executive.

Two questions will thus be central to this chapter: is the current electoral framework in Lebanon such that it guarantees proportional representation of the entire population? And, if not, would implementing such a framework lead to an enhanced political system producing more stability and effectiveness? The first section will therefore describe and analyze the Lebanese electoral law that has been in use since 2008. It will examine whether it generates parliaments that reflect the Lebanese people in a fair, free and proportional law, but also if it might have other beneficial or detrimental effects on the state. The second section addresses the other question by

reviewing the academic literature on electoral systems and their relation to stability and effectiveness in divided societies. This will cover the mainstream debate between majoritarianism and proportionality, ‘preferential’ voting systems, and the different types of proportional electoral systems. As will become clear, one type clearly stands out in terms of increasing the likelihood of creating a stable and effective government in postwar Lebanon.

4.2. Lebanon’s Electoral System

Lebanon’s electoral law has been amended numerous times since the country became independent in 1943. The last time this occurred was in 2008 as it formed an important part of the Doha Agreement, which ended a severe political crisis. Thus, the most recent national elections, in 2009, were held under this 2008 Law and as it has not been modified since, it is also the current legal framework. One aspect that has not changed since independence is that the parliamentary seats are allocated to the different sects on a fixed, confessional basis. Before the 1989 Ta’if Accord this allocation provided for a 6:5 Christian to Muslim ratio, while since then the seats are equally divided among them.

Parliamentary seats distribution per confessional group				
Confessional Groups	Seats	Share of 128 seats (Share of 64 seats)	Share of the Total Registered Voter Population	Share of the respective Muslim or Christian electorate (registered voters)
Muslims	64	50%	> 59.5%	100
Sunni	27	21% (42.1%)	26.8%	45.0%
Shi'ite	27	21% (42.1%)	26.3%	44.1%
Druze	8	6.2% (12.5%)	5.6%	9.4%
Alawite	2	1.5% (3.1%)	0.8%	1.3%
Christians	64	50%	> 39.9%	100
Maronite	34	26.5% (53.1%)	21.8%	54.5%
Greek Orthodox	14	10.9% (21.8%)	7.7%	19.2%
Greek Catholic	8	6.2% (12.5%)	5.1%	12.5%
Arm. Orthodox	5	3.9% (7.8%)	2.9%	7.2%
Arm. Catholic	1	0.7% (1.5%)	0.6%	1.6%
Evangelist	1	0.7% (1.5%)	0.5%	1.3%
Minorities	1	0.7% (1.5%)	1.3%	3.3%

7

Electoral districts play an important role in the system and have been altered multiple times. Based on the administrative boundaries of the *qada'*, the current law divides Lebanon into 26 districts with the exception that three consist of two merged *qadaa* and that one single *qada'* is divided into two districts and Beirut into three. The reason that the districts are of such concern to the different political parties is that each district has a fixed number of seats which are divided among multiple or one sect. In Jbeil, for instance, two Maronite and one Shia representative are elected. Because these allocations are not directly linked and therefore never completely in proportion to the demographic balance of the districts, their size and composition have great influence on the eventual outcome of elections.

⁷ Source: Democracy Reporting International (2008), *Assessment of the Election Framework: Election Law of 2008*, p. 19.

Those who are allowed to vote do so in the district where they are registered and have one vote for each seat elected by that district. This Party Block Vote (PB) system works on a first-past-the-post (FPTP) basis as the list with the highest number of votes wins all the seats. Although voters are officially allowed to divide their votes according to their own will, the fact that Lebanon does not make use of pre-printed ballots and that ballots with already composed lists are spread by the parties through families and community leaders normally means that an entire list formed by one or more parties wins all the seats of the district.

The fact that there are no requirements to use official pre-printed ballots for elections causes serious deficiencies to their democratic character. Not only does it enable the candidates to spread prepared ballots and therefore prevents voters from making a choice for each vote they can cast, it also infringes the secrecy of the vote since the ballots can be traced back to the voters after elections. For instance, by using scent or slightly different fonts. Naturally, this creates many opportunities for vote-buying and manipulation. For these reasons, the practice of using prepared ballots is allowed almost nowhere else in the world. Introducing pre-printed official ballots has been proposed to the Lebanese parliament in September 2008 but was outvoted by fifty to twenty, clearly underlining the benefits traditional parties enjoy from the current lack of official ballots (Democracy Reporting International, 2008).

A possibly even greater flaw of the current electoral framework is its disregard of the 'equality of votes' principle. Due to the quotas for parliamentary seats allocated to the 18 different sects and especially the requirement of a 50 percent share for Christians, given that they only represent 40 percent of the registered voters, equal

geographic representation and equality of votes cannot be respected without granting Muslim voters control over certain Christian seats. While under the 2005 electoral law – with a completely different delimitation of electoral districts – the range of voters per seat was much narrower (between 19,471 and 23,115) and the seats were geographically distributed fairly equally, the 2008 law changed this significantly. The number of voters represented per seat after the elections in 2009 ranged from 17,656 in the predominantly Christian district of Kesrwan to 38,873 in the predominantly Muslim Bint Jbeil district. This means that some votes are more than twice as powerful as others. A major reason for this adjustment was that under the previous law, a total of 38 out of 64 Christian seats were in districts where there was a majority of Muslim voters, leading to complaints from Christians that they could not control who represented them (Democracy Reporting International, 2008).

Considering that parliamentarians are expected to represent the Lebanese population in general and not a specific confessional group, the quotas, although unequal, could perhaps be justified on similar grounds as for example a quota for women. However, as a result of the discrepancy between the Christian share of the population and their share of seats in parliament, an equal degree of control over 50 percent of the seats cannot coincide with an equality of votes per seat. Given that under the current legal framework for elections the preference is given to a larger control over Christian seats by the Christian community and thus a higher inequality of votes, the 2008 election law not only violates Article 29 of the Lebanese Constitution, which stipulates that there should be equal geographic distribution, but also international standards. Article 25 of the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights

(ICCPR), which Lebanon has ratified, states that electoral systems should respect the requirement of equality between voters.⁸ The UN Human Rights Committee has further clarified this in a general comment on the article:

The principle of one person, one vote, must apply, and within the framework of each State's electoral system, the vote of one elector should be equal to the vote of another. The drawing of electoral boundaries and the method of allocating votes should not distort the distribution of voters or discriminate against any group and should not exclude or restrict unreasonably the right of citizens to choose their representatives freely.⁹

The consequences of this inequality of votes are an unequal distribution of legislative power and thus a distorted democracy. An example of where this can lead to is offered by Lebanon's own history as a number of scholars and analysts have regarded the overrepresentation of Christians in the pre-1975 Lebanese state as one of the factors causing the failure of the political system and the eruption of a civil war (Dekmejian, 1978; Lijphart, Power-sharing and Group Autonomy in the 1990s and the 21st Century, 1999; McGarry & O'Leary, 2007). Although the quotas were then adjusted by the Ta'if Accord at the end of the war in order to make the distribution of seats in parliament more proportional, the underlying problem was not addressed. Indeed, a fixed allocation of seats freezes only a certain moment in time and means that any demographic change cannot be addressed. Hence, disproportionality has been inevitable all along.

Furthermore, although the current electoral system could, in theory, encourage interethnic cooperation and thereby lead to the formation of crosscutting cleavages, the actual effects are quite different. Because the multi-confessional districts require the

⁸ Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Retrieved from <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx> on 30 March 2014.

⁹ UN HRC General Comment on art.25, point 21. Retrieved from http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/TBSearch.aspx?Lang=en&TreatyID=8&DocTypeID=11 on 30 March 2014.

formation of multi-confessional lists, parties representing different ethnicities are indeed encouraged to form alliances. However, as Bassel Salloukh (2006) argues, these alliances are merely formed with the objective of securing electoral victories and have usually fallen apart immediately after the elections were held. These strategies have thus not only prevented the creation of crosscutting cleavages, they have secured the hold on power by established, conservative political groups and diminished the chances of more progressive parties to gain a foothold in parliament. As a result, Salloukh argues, the electoral framework has institutionalized the clientelistic and sectarian politics of certain parties instead of replacing them.

4.3. Reforming the Electoral System

The previous section has demonstrated how the corporate consociational characteristics of Lebanon's electoral system, i.e. the fixed parliamentary quotas based on confession, have led to a disproportional representation of certain sects in the legislature. If MPs would not solely represent members of their own confession but Lebanese in general, as stated by the Constitution, then the current quotas would not necessarily have to endanger the equality of votes; a core democratic principle. However, since members of a sect feel the necessity to control who is elected for the seats belonging to that sect, MPs are clearly expected to also represent their own confession. The result is a much lower number of voters per seat in certain districts that have a predominantly Christian population. This inequality of votes is therefore a direct consequence of Lebanon's corporate consociational structure and has already contributed to instability in the past. Reforming this system is thus imperative. The

following section will identify how this should occur and argues that a proportional representation (PR) system with closed party lists, as recommended by liberal consociational theory, will deliver the best results for Lebanon in terms of stability and effectiveness.

4.3.1. Proportional vs. Majoritarian

Under the current system, Lebanese representatives are elected on a FPTP basis and that means it should be regarded as majoritarian or simple plurality based. An inevitable characteristic of such systems is that the votes casted in favor of candidates not gaining a seat are wasted because they are not represented by the eventual results. In Lebanon, for instance, this had the effect that in the 2005 elections the ‘March 14’ list won all the seats of the then North II district with just 52 percent of the votes while the ‘People’s Will List’ of Michel Aoun won 39 percent of the votes but not a single seat (Democracy Reporting International, 2008).

Although political scientists have long considered plurality systems superior to other variants with regard to democratic quality and government effectiveness, this is probably merely a reflection of the Anglo-American orientation of the discipline – as the United Kingdom and the United States are the prime examples of majoritarian systems. Namely, since more thorough and extensive research has been produced, especially on countries with a more heterogeneous population than the US and the UK, the opposite appears to be the case. Proportional representation, plurality’s counterpart, is now believed by most scholars to post the best records, particularly with respect to representation, protection of minority interests and voter participation (Lijphart, 1991).

Indeed, it is for these reasons that consociational theorists regard electoral power-sharing mechanisms like PR as a very powerful tool to create a stable democracy. Because proportionality guarantees the representation of minorities in the legislature, it also creates strong incentives for cooperation, bargaining and compromise through the give and take of legislative politics. Moreover, the granting of proportional stakes in parliament, as opposed to majoritarian systems, also has an impact on the public as it increases their confidence in the government's legitimacy and encourages public participation (Norris, 2008). In any event, PR systems are inherently more democratic as they lead to the most equal and fair representation of the outcome of elections with no votes being wasted.

4.3.2. Alternatives to PR and Majoritarian Systems

While proportional and first-past-the post electoral systems are clearly the most discussed and also most used methods around the world, a few techniques that differ slightly from them exist as well. In fact, some of them have very vocal supporters who argue that PR, despite its broad support among scholars, is less likely to lead to sustainable democracy in divided societies than the alternative presented by them. Since these systems share the characteristic that voters can rank-order their choices for different parties or candidates on the ballot paper, they are commonly referred to as “preferential” electoral systems (Reilly, 2002). The two most debated variants, the “alternative vote” (AV) and the “single transferrable vote” (STV), enable electors to indicate how they would vote if their favored candidate was defeated and they had to choose among those remaining.

Horowitz (1985) is the AV system's most prominent advocate. Although he argues that plurality voting should always be avoided in divided societies for its failure to ensure proper representation of minorities, he believes that alternative voting can better manage ethnic conflict than PR because it generates incentives for moderation. It is used in single-member districts by letting voters indicate who their second choice would be. If no candidate wins an absolute majority of votes, the candidate with the lowest number of first preference votes is eliminated and the votes he gained will be distributed among the other candidates based on the second preference of the people who voted for that candidate. This continues until one candidate reaches an absolute majority. Horowitz' line of reasoning is that this forces candidates to appeal to different groups and that it will lead to the election of the one who does so most successfully, and is therefore the most moderate. The single transferable vote system is fairly similar to this but works with multi-member districts and on the basis of a quota. The candidates who reach the quota directly win a seat directly. The seats that remain open after this are divided by using the same formula as AV; the candidate with the lowest number of first preference votes is eliminated and his votes are divided among the other candidates on the basis of the electors' preferences (Reilly, 2002).

The critics of AV systems rightfully argue that it is majoritarian and works on a FPTP basis. Thus, the outcome will always be disproportional and minorities will be underrepresented. Although more moderate candidates might be elected than under a regular plurality framework, the underrepresentation of groups can only have detrimental effects in a divided society. STV might lead to more proportionality but causes several other complications. Since all the candidates have to be ranked by the

voters it can only work in small districts and this inevitably has an adverse effect on proportionality and minority representation. Moreover, small sized districts are much more sensitive to gerrymandering (Lijphart, 2008).

4.3.3. Types of Proportional Representation Electoral Systems

The conclusion that should be drawn from the analysis above is that PR electoral systems not only form a powerful power-sharing mechanism, they are also the only way to ensure fair and equal representation of minorities in the legislature. It is mainly for this reason that a proportional electoral framework should be preferred over majoritarianism, but also over preferential voting systems such as Horowitz' alternative vote, especially in divided societies. However, although the latter might be clear now, the question still remains what type of PR deserves preference over the others, as there are many different variants; party lists or not, closed or open lists, and low or high thresholds are all crucial elements of PR electoral systems.

Although it is true that there is no one-size-fits-all model, academics appear to agree that one type stands out in terms of leading to sustainable democracy and good governance: closed-list PR. The rationale behind this is easy to understand. Because the emphasis in this system lies on political parties instead of on individual candidates, it increases party discipline and checks on executive power, while it reduces incentives for personalistic voting (Cammett & Malesky, 2012). When votes are casted on an entire list that has been composed by a political party, politicians are not required to campaign for themselves but for the party and are therefore less likely to cultivate a personal vote, which leads to stronger and more programmatic party politics.

Consequently, coalitions among parties are stronger and the accountability of parties for their agenda will increase which leads to a higher likelihood of public goods expenditures over particularistic benefits (Carey & Shugart, 1995).

Moreover, this rationale is also supported by empirical evidence since Melani Cammett and Edmund Malesky (2012) conducted a quantitative analysis of the effects of closed-list PR on good governance and stability. Encouraged by the aforementioned logic, which had already been presented by several other academics, they investigated the relation between the implemented electoral system and the survival of regimes after a period of conflict. After controlling for several other factors, the results of their research demonstrate that “countries with closed-list PR are 57 percent less likely to resume conflict than those without such arrangements” (Cammett & Malesky, 2012, p. 994). Subsequently, they analyze the relation between closed-list PR and better governance; and between good governance and peace duration in order to clarify the link between electoral systems and stability. The research demonstrates that closed-list PR is indeed associated with improved governance on a wide array of measures. Hence, they argue that the institutionalization of parties and enhanced checks and balances lead to better governance, which, in turn generates more stability and increases the sustainability of peace.

4.3.4. Proposals for Reform

Both the Lebanese public and its politicians seem to agree that the current electoral system should be reformed. There is currently consensus that a new electoral law should be adopted before parliamentary elections are held. The opinions about how this should

occur and what it should lead to, however, differ greatly and thus far it does not seem as if a new law will be implemented very soon. Over the past few years, two laws have been proposed that include elements of proportional representation: the National Commission on Electoral Law's "Boutros Commission" draft, submitted in 2006, and the Proportionate Electoral Law proposed by former interior minister Marwan Charbel in 2011. It is important to note, however, that both these proposals do not aim to replace the fixed parliamentary quotas by truly free and fair elections. While the Boutros draft foresees a bicameral system that combines majoritarian and proportional elections, and the draft proposed by Charbel is based on proportional elections where votes are casted both on a party and a candidate, they both combine these amendments while preserving the confessional system.

Academics have been vocal about the need for electoral reform as well. Nawaf Salam (2004), for instance, argues that the majoritarian system has led to the representation of merely a minority of the voters. Consequently, the only solution to this problem is the adoption of a proportional system. Yet although he mentions that eventually a non-religious electoral law will have to be implemented, Salam bases his recommendations on proportionality within the current framework of a fixed allocation of seats among the different Lebanese sects. Furthermore, Bassel Salloukh (2006) asserts that the problems with districts and the lack of genuine interethnic alliances could be addressed by using closed-list PR in a single electoral district. However, Salloukh stops short of arguing for disposing of the corporate character of the current electoral system.

Finally, civil society has also been engaged in persistent campaigning for reform. The Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE) and the Civil Campaign for Electoral Reform (CCER) are just two examples of organizations that have set it as their goal to move Lebanon towards an improved electoral framework. Yet these organizations appear to focus on more modest amendments. Introduction of pre-printed ballots, an independent electoral commission, and lowering the legal voting age to eighteen years – although all pivotal reforms – are currently higher on the agenda than secularizing the system (Civil Campaign for Electoral Reform). Hence, the most outspoken advocate of a non-religious parliament is possibly the Ta'if Accord as it states that the parliamentary seats shall only be divided on a confessional basis until the Chamber of Deputies passes an election law free of sectarian restrictions.

4.3.5. Analysis

That Lebanon's electoral law should be amended is clearly not the question; it is an opinion shared by Lebanese from almost every corner of the society. Besides, when the current law was adopted in Doha in 2008, it was agreed that it would only be used once. Agreeing on how the system should be reformed is, however, a totally different situation. Characteristic of a society as divided as Lebanon, modifying something as critical as an election law is perceived as a zero-sum game; often leading to a stalemate where no party is inclined to make any concessions. This challenge aside, it is remarkable to discern how options for relinquishing confessionalism are not even on the table. Although this should not come as a surprise from the traditional political parties, as it would make it easier for others to challenge their hold on power, it is surprising

that both academics and civil society activists are hesitant to campaign for something that is actually included in the Ta'if Accord. While most intellectuals agree that PR should be preferred over majoritarianism, they also appear to agree that the first step should be to adopt this within the current corporate consociational framework.

This hesitance or pessimism is understandable when one considers the importance and challenge of preserving stability in such a volatile context. However, as the analysis above has made clear, maintaining the fixed sectarian quotas means that the real problem with Lebanon's electoral system will not be addressed. It is precisely this characteristic that causes it to be disproportional and undemocratic; inequality of votes will remain inherent to the system so long as this corporate element will not be abandoned. Moreover, for the long term it will certainly be in the interest of stability to establish a truly proportional electoral framework where every Lebanese citizen has an equal amount of influence over the legislature.

4.4. Conclusion

This chapter has examined whether Lebanon abides by liberal consociational theory's element of 'proportionality as the principle of representation'. After analyzing the current Lebanese electoral system, the answer to this question can only be negative. Firstly, the allocation of seats in parliament among the eighteen groups, although perhaps once proportional, is momentarily clearly disproportional. While the Christian sects constitute around 40 percent of the registered voters, they are entitled to half of all parliamentary seats. Secondly, liberal consociational theory distinguishes itself from the corporate variant by recommending a self-determined character of power-sharing

institutions, instead of pre-determined. The Lebanese electoral law with its quotas is a classic example of such pre-determinedness. It can even be said that the course of events in Lebanon has strongly contributed to the development of general consociational theory into its current two variants as the eruption of civil war in 1975 is considered by some to be partly caused by the fixed quotas. Hence, Lebanon's electoral system does clearly not abide by liberal consociational theory's recommendations since it is disproportional and pre-determined.

The second question addressed by this chapter is whether an introduction of proportionality, in the form of closed-list PR, would contribute to the stability and effectiveness of the country's political system. A wealth of literature, both consociational and non-consociational, has been devoted to the effect of electoral systems on stability and democracy. Although some alternatives to the majoritarian versus proportional debate are in fact interesting ideas, the superiority of closed-list PR in divided societies has been demonstrated both theoretically and empirically. The conclusion of this chapter should therefore be that a further implementation of liberal consociational theory, by switching to a self-determined proportional electoral system, would lead to a more stable and effective political system.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

5.1. Restating the Argument

This thesis set out to explore Lebanon's system of power-sharing and its deviation from liberal consociational theory. In order to discover whether the presence or absence of the theory's four main elements – government by a grand coalition, the mutual veto, proportionality, and group autonomy – in Lebanon has a considerable effect on the state's stability and overall functioning, the aim was to investigate what the consequences are of the fact that two of these elements are missing. The questions that were therefore central to this thesis were: would a higher degree of institutionalized group autonomy through decentralization contribute to the stability and effectiveness of Lebanon's power-sharing system? And would a proportional electoral system lead to a more stable and effective power-sharing system in Lebanon?

A thorough analysis of consociational theory's origin, development and content was undertaken. Since both its empirical solidity and the recommendations it advances have been controversial from the onset, the validity and value of the theory have been subject to an extensive debate for several decades, including academics as well as practitioners. A crucial development of the theory was its split into two variants: liberal and corporate, or, respectively, self- and predetermined consociationalism. Although many of the methodological arguments against consociationalism undeniably have some validity – especially those aimed at its degree of conceptual stretching, the search

here was for its value as a prescription for constitutional design in deeply divided societies. The soundness and rigidity of consociationalism as a theory therefore had to be separated from the value of its recommendations, i.e. the implementation of the four power-sharing elements. Fortunately, the effectiveness of these elements has also been examined by scholars positioned outside of the consociational framework. Moreover, they have also been applied to deeply divided societies without any consociational motivation, long before the theory first came to light. A review of all the research about these elements' conduciveness to stability and democracy, from large-N statistical to qualitative case studies, can only lead to one conclusion: an implementation of the power-sharing elements as prescribed by liberal consociational theory increases the chances of building a stable and democratic state.

The second part of chapter two investigated to what extent the Lebanese political system abides by liberal consociational theory; that is, whether the four elements of government by a grand coalition, mutual veto, proportionality and group autonomy can be found in a proper and institutionalized form. An analysis of the Lebanese structure demonstrated that the first two, although with a pre-determined character, have indeed been implemented and give Lebanon its consociational nature. Group autonomy, on the other hand, does exist in Lebanon but mainly due to state weakness and an absence of personal status laws. This means that this element's aim of securing minority rights by giving them control over issues that are their concern is not met because it is not anchored at the local level but covers instead personal matters such as family law. Moreover, the element of proportionality as the principle of representation is absent as well. While Lebanon's fixed parliamentary quotas might

have the underlying philosophy of ensuring proportional representation of its different sects, a changing demographic balance has caused the allocation of seats to be highly disproportional at present.

This confirmation of the hypothesis that Lebanon does not abide by liberal consociational theory regarding the elements of proportionality and group autonomy meant that the subsequent step was to inquire if an adjustment of Lebanon's institutional design towards a proper implementation of the theory would indeed be beneficial in terms of stability and effectiveness. Chapter three therefore focused on the question whether an institutionalized form of group autonomy through decentralization of the Lebanese state would have these results. Given the abundance of support for decentralization's beneficial effects on democratic governance, coming from academia, civil society and national and international organizations, this aspect is hardly subject to debate anymore. Unsurprisingly, actually, as the rationale behind it is both convincing and sensible; bringing the government closer to the people increases accountability, trust and citizen participation.

More contentious, however, is whether strong decentralization also leads to more stability in deeply divided societies. Supporters of this argument maintain that, especially in states with a population that is divided by deep vertical cleavages, decentralization has the ability to recognize and empower ethnic communities with political and administrative authority. It can therefore accommodate demands for self-control that often arise when the central government is too weak to reassure minorities about their security and a fair redistribution of resources; with a more stable democracy as the result. Moreover, proper decentralization can cause a shift from inter- to intra-

ethnic conflict. An interethnic conflict on the national level forces people to combine their power based on ethnicity instead of scattering themselves by supporting different smaller parties. When power is transferred to the local level, which is much more homogeneous than the national one, this force is no longer present. Besides, a much more accessible forum – because of the smaller scale – is given to smaller opposition parties within the ethnic group to contest the ruling elite.

Opponents of strong decentralization in deeply divided countries, on the other hand, believe that it only increases the risk of secessionism. The strengthening of ethnic identities would lead to even greater calls for autonomy and might therefore increase instability, instead of reducing it. As the historical record demonstrates, however, these cases have been extremely rare. Logically, it also seems hard to believe that, when calls for secessionism already exist, a severely centralized government will be likely to alleviate these sentiments. There is, however, a demonstrable factor that is related to decentralization and leads to louder and stronger calls for secessionism: an increased role for regional parties. Yet measures can – and should – be adopted to prevent an exaggerated role of regional parties; for instance a limited amount of regional legislatures.

Central to chapter four was the question whether the implementation of proportional representation would improve the functioning of Lebanon's power-sharing system. To be able to answer this question a thorough analysis of the Lebanese electoral system and its flaws was required. This examination made clear that the fixed parliamentary quotas have a considerable impact on the functioning of the system. Because of their disproportionality, respect for the principle of equality of votes and

Christian control over Christian seats cannot occur simultaneously. Hence, under the current electoral law, some votes have more than twice the weight of others; a highly undemocratic situation. Such an unequal distribution of legislative power has already caused severe instability in the past. Moreover, the current first-past-the-post majoritarian system leads to a winner takes all situation, which makes it very difficult to challenge the sectarian elite, and, above all, to the waste of a high number of votes. In addition to this, interethnic alliances are forged to secure electoral victories and do not generate sustainable interethnic cooperation. The implementation of true, self-determined proportional representation (PR) would address these problems and therefore lead to a more stable and effective power-sharing system. In addition to this, the closed-list type of PR reduces incentives for personalistic voting while it increases party discipline and programmatic party politics. As has been demonstrated quantitatively as well as qualitatively, this leads to better governance which, in turn, further increases stability.

5.2. The Implications of the Argument

In theory, Lebanon should benefit greatly from the aforementioned reforms. Both decentralization and PR have proven to be capable of generating stability and effectiveness, especially in states with societies suffering from deep vertical cleavages. It should therefore also be unsurprising that such amendments are being proposed and campaigned for; civil society, academics and politicians have been calling for laws on decentralization and proportional representation. The question is however, for both subjects, whether the proposals are radical enough to genuinely put Lebanon on the

right track. The draft laws on decentralization would all be a step in the right direction as they would lead to greater autonomy and power for local authorities, but since no real devolution of political power is included in any of them, it might not be sufficient to accommodate demands for self-control. There is a similar problem concerning the proposals for a PR electoral law. They recommend a move from simple plurality voting to proportionality, but fail to address the main problem: a fixed allocation of parliamentary seats that is above all disproportional. Only a deconfessionalization and removal of the pre-determined character will lead to a sustainable and democratic electoral system.

Criticisms of such radical reforms claim that Lebanese society is not ready for them or that the political climate is not suitable momentarily and that it would be better to engage in incremental reforms. However, if reforms are not powerful enough to produce significant change to the way the country is governed, such small steps will probably not lead to larger ones. One of the main reasons for strong decentralization and a PR electoral law is that they will both produce a more democratic political system which opens the way for politicians who represent the Lebanese people and their interests, instead of the interests of the sectarian elite's narrow clientelistic base of support. Moderate changes might not have this effect. Besides, if the concern is Lebanon's stability in an unstable regional environment, these radical reforms are exactly what is needed. They will not only lead to a political class that puts Lebanon's independence and stability first, as opposed to the interests of foreign patrons, they will also ensure all ethnic groups' fair share of political power.

Others might complain that these reforms are simply not feasible. The established political parties are benefiting from the current rules of the game and will therefore do everything it takes to defend them. This is obviously true, but it is also exactly the reason that reforms sufficiently altering those rules of the game should be proposed and supported. If that is not the aim, or if the struggle is abandoned because it simply does not seem feasible, then the chance of success only diminishes.

The complex case of Lebanon, with its remarkable political system and turbulent history, is often drawn on for arguments against the efficacy of power-sharing. A devastating fifteen-year civil war and a perpetual sectarian deadlock is proof for some that consociationalism has not delivered the expected results and should therefore be abandoned. These arguments are, however, overly simplistic since they fail to pay attention to crucial factors causing those unstable periods in Lebanon. Besides, they also always fail to present an adequately substantiated alternative. Majoritarian and integrationist perspectives may be more optimistic – no supporter of consociationalism will deny that an integrated, homogeneous society deserves preference over a divided, heterogeneous one – but this optimism would likely have disastrous consequences if implemented. A realistic perspective acknowledges that there are deep vertical cleavages in Lebanon that cannot be transformed overnight; a stable democracy has to be built first. The successful implementation of liberal consociational power-sharing arrangements in different situations and places have led a wide array of scholars to conclude that it is probably the only way to create a stable democracy in deeply divided societies. This thesis supports that claim. The analysis and case study suggest that consociationalism in Lebanon should not be abandoned but reformed. Although the

flaws of the Lebanese state can definitely be attributed to certain elements of its political system, these elements are exactly the ones that should be reformed according to liberal consociational theory.

In sum, and despite the aforementioned anomalies, Lebanon should be considered a consociational democracy. Its constitution is such that it requires government by a grand coalition and guarantees veto power over essential issues to the major groups. There is a power-sharing system that has considerable consociational characteristics. Liberal consociational theory, however, argues for a self-determined structure, meaning that a pre-determined allocation of power, which is found in Lebanon on multiple levels, should be avoided. Moreover, liberal consociational theory also argues for the implementation of two other elements: proportionality as the principle of representation and institutionalized group autonomy. Both of these are clearly not present in Lebanon. Because an overwhelming majority of academics and practitioners agree that both decentralization and proportional representation lead to a more stable and effective democracy in deeply divided societies, and because they base this belief on sound evidence and logic, the conclusion can only be that a proper implementation of liberal consociational theory may lead to more stable and effective democracy in Lebanon.

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