THE IMPACT OF EXTERNAL INTERVENTION ON POWER SHARING AGREEMENTS: THE CASE OF LEBANON'S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

By

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For the first Lebanese president
to be elected without foreign intervention
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Jana Nasrallah

Abstract

Lebanon has attracted the attention of historians and travellers since its early formation in the 18th century as a typical case of a society with different religious sects, each protecting its socio-religious traditions and prerogatives. It has always been considered an unusual state with its paradoxes and conflicts, often paving the way for different kinds of external intervention. Lebanon has also experienced several civil wars, some of which took place even before its formation as an independent state. These wars invited foreign intervention, consequently resulting in the implementation of new power sharing formulas. The latter often fail to establish durable peace, however.

This thesis examines the impact of external intervention on the production of power sharing agreements in Lebanon. It traces this process from the Mount Lebanon experience, through the National Pact and Ta'if Agreement, and to the most recent Doha Accord. The thesis examines the overlapping domestic, regional, and international circumstances that led to the initiation of internal crises and to the later renegotiation of new power sharing agreements. Moreover, this study focuses especially on the conflicts and external interventions revolving around presidential elections as examples of the aforementioned overlapping circumstances.

Keywords: Consociational Democracy, Civil War, Divided Societies, Doha Accord, External Intervention, Power-Sharing Formula, Mount Lebanon, National Pact, Presidential Elections, Ta'if Agreement.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, Lebanon has been considered a typical case of a divided society, composed of 17 politically-active communities, of which some have distinct communal agendas. Domestic politics has reflected this order, as in the case of other divided societies, as has foreign policy (Khazen 2000: 32). Some have even described Lebanon as one of the “most unusual states in the world marked by its conglomeration of paradoxes and contradictions” (Hudson 1995:3).

Although Lebanon is one of many countries that has suffered from sectarian cleavages leading to civil war and state collapse, followed by the re-establishment of peace through a new power sharing formula imposed by external powers, it is regarded as a distinct case in the way the national feelings of the Lebanese were developed, overlapping closely with sectarian loyalties and exacerbated by outside interventions. The interaction of all these factors has contributed to the perpetual fragmentation of Lebanese politics (Ibid: 25). This study will focus on the role of external intervention in the creation of power sharing formulas for Lebanon’s deeply divided society. It will show how the formation of Lebanon as a political entity was marked by numerous problems which, at different stages of its history, developed into severe crises and civil confrontations. Although such problems were not provoked by religious differences, they were quickly labeled as sectarian, leading to a number of wars throughout the 19th and 20th century. Moreover, communal development underwent continuous change; the disputes between factions were partly attributed to internal politics, but also a result of Lebanon being situated in region
ravaged by and unstable situation (Khazen 2000: 33). The scale of such clashes usually invited foreign intervention, resulting in the implementation of new power sharing formulas, which failed to establish long periods of political stability.

Although some historians regard the mutassarrifiya of Mount Lebanon as a starting point of this pattern, it was the system of the two qa’immaqamiyas that inaugurated this institution. Having been established at a time of crisis, it was inevitable to give to one community what was its right, without having it taken away from the right of another community. This is what the French consul M. Bouree called ‘the organization of civil war’ (Ziadeh 2006: 68).

Given the adoption of power sharing formulas at different stages of Lebanese history, it is fair to say that the assumption of Bouree proved right for the mutassarrifiya that ‘legalized’ political distribution based on sectarian divisions, and paved the way for direct foreign intervention in the political system. It also arose during the period of the unwritten National Pact that established confessional representation in the political system. The clearest representation was provided by the Tai’f Agreement that was seen as reducing the power of the Christian president, and shifting it to the Council of Ministers in its collective capacity, but one headed by a Sunni Muslim, and also by ensuring equal confessional representation in the Parliament.

1.1 Research Questions and Relevance of the Study

At numerous stages in Lebanon’s history, Lebanese politicians have failed to resolve their conflicts without foreign intervention. This was mainly due to Lebanon’s geographic location, sharing borders with the two disputing arch-rivals Syria and Israel, and
the wide variety of sects (17 in total) that paved the way for intervention in the Lebanese internal affairs, accompanied by traditional ties with western countries not limited to Britain, France, and the United States of America.

The central question of this thesis focuses on why and how external forces intervene in Lebanese internal affairs, and what role do they play in the negotiation of power sharing formulas for Lebanon’s divided society. This thesis also considers the importance of foreign intervention in the selection of the president as an example of the intrusive nature of the regional and international arena. This is not to deny Lebanese actors agency in determining who would be the republic’s next president. In fact, and at different stages of Lebanese political history, they were instrumental either in naming the next president or obstructing the candidacy of others. Nevertheless, they usually invited external intervention in this very domestic challenge to the detriment of Lebanese sovereignty.

Throughout Lebanon’s political history, the selection of the president has involved external intervention – with the only exception of Charles Helou (1964-1970). Foreign powers’ meddling in the Lebanese political scene is most intense in the selection of the president of the republic. Crises and power shifts between influential players in Lebanon increased their confrontation on who would have the upper hand in choosing the new resident of the presidential palace. Although the same foreign powers were usually involved in the making of the power sharing formula, each time the Lebanese political system required choosing a new president, problems, either political or civil, arose. The gravity of such confrontations ranged from short-term hostilities as in 1958, to long lasting and more brutal clashes as in the case during 1975 civil war. This study will tackle all these stages showing how Lebanon was obliged to interact with one of the most unstable regional orders in the post-Second World-War international system. Consequently, this study will highlight
regional conflicts that affected its political situation, not only limited to inter-Arab disputes, but also including the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This study will examine the reasons that make such formulas and shifts in power insufficient to resolve domestic crises. It will also show how power sharing agreements become crisis-management tools that collapse as a result of new clashes, which resolving entails a new power sharing formula, thus producing a cycle of political crisis and new power sharing agreements.

With such a complex political entity, subordinate to complicated local, regional, and international factors, Lebanon represents a clear example of consociational democracy and changing power sharing formulas, amended according to shifts in international and regional powers. The consociational model cannot provide long-term conflict regulation of ethno-national conflicts in Lebanon in the absence of coercive exogenous pressures. The external actors in the Lebanese conflict largely determined the success of the power sharing formula. “Power sharing agreements were brokered in Lebanon, not just on the strength and balance of the divided communities that engaged in them but equally on the strength and interests of the regional and international actors that agreed them” (Kerr 2005: 3).

Many historians, political scientists, and sociologists have studied the Lebanese situation over the years. Arend Lijphart (2008), regarded as the ‘father’ of consociational democracy in fragmented societies, examines the Lebanese case as a typical example of a power sharing formula. Micheal Hudson (1997) discussed its history from a theoretical angle (1968), while Michael Kerr (2005) compared between Lebanon and Northern Ireland as two divided societies victims of external intervention. On the Lebanese scene, Fawwaz Traboulsi (2007) traced the impact of foreign intervention on Lebanon’s modern history. Farid El Khazen (2000) defended the viability of the Lebanese political system and blamed external variables for its collapse. Bassel Salloukh (2008), on the other hand, examined the
impact of foreign intervention on Lebanon’s foreign policy, while Karim Pakradoni (1984; 2001) and Nicholas Nassif (2002; 2006) studied the impact of foreign actors on Lebanon’s presidential elections. This study aims to contribute to the aforementioned literature, focusing mainly on the relation between foreign interventions, the subsequent implementation of power sharing formulas, and the latter’s failure to establish durable peace. As such, all new power sharing agreements captured the essence of previous ones, accompanied by minor amendments. Thus all power sharing formulas throughout Lebanese history were a mean to solve problems, not to provide a long-lasting and stable peace. This failure is mostly evident in the country’s surrender to internal clashes that managed to renew violence during different stages, which showed that the different power sharing formulas were merely a tool of managing Lebanese crises instead of adopting a viable political system between the Lebanese, and had to be amended in the wake of shifts in the domestic and regional balance of power. The process always manifests itself clearly during the overlapping domestic and regional power struggles involved in the selection of a new Lebanese president.

1.2 Methodology

The research method applied in this study is the case study model. Power sharing formulas are studied in different periods of Lebanon’s history. Moreover, presidential elections are discussed and analyzed as an example of a struggle between overlapping domestic and external actors. The presidential election contains almost all aspect of external intervention and reflects how shifts in regional powers affect the internal situation and led to war’s ignition. The Lebanese president is almost always selected through a regional and international consensus rather than as a result of pure domestic political contests. Hence,
the selection of presidential elections as a case study is genuinely justified and helpful for studying the impact of external intervention on power sharing formulas. However, this case study suffers from being too focused on a single issue. This is why analyzing the four power sharing formulas that Lebanon witnessed throughout history will be necessary to provide a comprehensive picture of external intervention that shaped politics in Lebanon. It will also show how the sectarian political system, divided among different sectarian groups, facilitates and sometimes invites different kinds of regional and international interventions.

1.3 Plan of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into five chapters. The next chapter defines the parameters of power sharing formula in divided societies and presents the different arguments concerning its establishment in consociational societies, but mainly Lebanon. It focuses on sectarian conflicts and reviews all the periods that witnessed different forms of external intervention that contributed greatly to the fragmentation of its political culture and consequently built a sectarian society veiled by consociational concepts and reflected in a power sharing formula. The third chapter offers a review of external intervention in Lebanese presidential elections as an important factor in the eruption of severe crises in the country. It highlights different kind of foreign interventions and the constitutional void that usually results from the lack of international and regional consensus regarding the name of the new president. The final chapter examines the Ta’if Agreement as a new power sharing formula established by the will of external actors to end the Lebanese civil war. It shows the amendments introduced to this new formula in comparison with the National Pact. This chapter also deals with the major changes in the international and regional scene that affected Lebanon and led to UNSCR 1559, and examines also the Doha Agreement briefly.
CHAPTER TWO

THE THEORY OF COSOCIATIONAL DEMOCRACY
AND POWER SHARING

2.1 Lebanon a Typical Case of Consociational Society in the Third World

Noted for its authoritarian politics, the Middle-East witnessed lengthy ethnic tensions and conflicts. Lebanon was the first country in this region to develop a power sharing aimed at defusing conflict among its several sectarian communities (Hudson 1997: 106). It has been considered a typical sample of a power sharing formula which was largely imposed by external forces. Lebanon has been subject to conflicting foreign interests since the discovery of the cape route to India in the late 15th century, which transformed the Eastern Mediterranean into an economic and strategic backwater to the Great powers (Hudson 1985: 34). European interest in the region affected Lebanon the most, a country that became from that period dependent from external interference that shaped its formation as a political entity.

After France’s failure in its nation-state-building ventures in the Middle East, Lebanon was left divided between Christians Lebanese nationalists and Muslims Greater Syrian or Arab Nationalists (Kerr 2005: 3). However, as a political entity Lebanon was historically divided not only along sectarian, but also regional and family lines. It witnessed incessant rivalry among the various sects within each of the two dominant Christian and Muslim groups (Hudson 1985: 5). Thus, Lebanon cannot be considered as a nation-state, but rather a federation of seventeen ethno-religious communities looking to protect their socio-religious traditions and prerogatives. This fact made it difficult for Lebanon to evolve
from a confessional, sectarian “mosaic” to a more homogenous society (Irani 2008: 7). Accordingly, Lebanon would be always threatened by danger of the emergence, or re-emergence, of ethno-national conflict over the formation of governments since it contained ethnic groups that “had actively partitioned the country in the past and would like to promote a similar strategy in the context of any future civil war” (Kerr 2005: 3).

Lebanon has witnessed four power sharing formulas in its post two of them were established during the era of Mount Lebanon the _qa’immaqamias system_, and the _Reglement Organique_ which formed the nucleus of sectarianism. The other two consociational agreements took place in the independent republic. The first was the National Pact of 1943. Although established by local elites, its viability was a function of a coincidence of positive internal and external cross-cutting factors. The second consociational agreement was the Ta’if Agreement which was imposed in 1989 on all Lebanese communities since none of the elites were in any position to reject it. Hence, “the pre-war fractures were set and recast in an internally modified, externally regulated consociational mould” (Ibid: 36). The four Lebanese power sharing formulas had common denominators: they all acknowledged sectarian divisions, and were shaped by external powers. In fact, each formula was a reformulation of the previous one. This may explain why these formulas failed to provide Lebanon long-lasting peace.

However, power sharing in Lebanon is considered the only durable option for this divided country. In Cyprus, for example, power sharing lasted only for three years, in Nigeria for nine years and was only marginally consociational. As for Lebanon, it lasted for thirty-three years and its failure came as a surprise for some since it represents the most successful case of consociational democracy in the Third World (Seaver 2000: 247). No wonder that the Lebanese case is interesting to all theorists who discuss consociational
democracy. Thus, it is rare to find a study on the role of external intervention in power sharing in sectarian societies without referring to the Lebanese case as a model. Lebanization entered the political dictionary decades before Balkanization and Iraqization, which all become synonyms with fragile divided societies.

### 2.2 Power Sharing as a Regulating Tool in Divided Societies

Before discussing how external intervention affected the establishment of the Lebanese power sharing formulas, it is necessary to define consociational societies and determine the pre-requisites for a successful power sharing formula in divided societies.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines consociation as a “political system formed by the cooperation of different social groups on the basis of shared power” (Kerr 2005: 26). It is synonym with power sharing because the two terms define a “political system with a fragmented political culture governed through democratic rules by an elite cartel that is aimed to maintain stability” (Di Mauro 2008: 454). In fact, consociationalism encourages governments to be engaged in a cartel of ethno-sectarian elites in order to manage their perspective ‘flocks’ and live with each other. It is a confederation of protected identity groups in which the consociational state rests upon distinct ethno sectarian ‘pillars’ instead of promoting a monolithic national identity (Hudson 1997: 105). Moreover, one of the main targets of consociation is to stop governments from being ethnic cleansers. It is the best available political form after domestic conflict. It is also a way to prevent recurrent ethnic wars. Usually consociational societies are not planned but rather emerge as Brendan O’Leary noted, “What cannot be won on the battlefield is best resolved through a political settlement” (O’Leary 2005: xxi).
Although there is no universally applicable consociational formula suitable for all divided societies (Kerr 2005: 27), there are many factors that are conducive to successful consociational democracy (Lijphart 2008: 32): Elites should be able to accommodate the divergent interests and demands of the subcultures, to do so they should have the ability to surpass cleavages and cooperate with the elites of rival subcultures, this requires a commitment to the maintenance of the system and to the improvement of its cohesion and stability, and, finally, all the above requirements are based on the assumption that the elites understand the perils of political fragmentation. Furthermore, there are many other conditions favorable to the establishment and continuation of this type of democracy as shown in successful consociational democracies in the Low Countries, Switzerland, Austria and Lebanon. These conditions are mainly related to the inter-sub-cultural relations at the elite level, inter-sub-cultural relations at the mass level, and elite-mass relations within each of the sub-cultures (Ibid: 32).

The existence of external threats to the country plays a major role in initiating or strengthening the cartel of elites in consociational democracies. Confronting external threats requires internal unity and cooperation among the elites and strengthened ties among the sub-cultures at the mass level, as well as the ties between leaders and followers within the sub-cultures. In the Lebanese case, the external threat had different and opposite impacts. In 1943, the French threat played a unifying role and grouped the Lebanese elites together in the struggle for independence. They agreed on the National Pact as a strategy “to resist a disintegrating penetration of the system”, while in 1975 these external factors were to become a “lasting negative condition” at the outbreak of the war (Muhlbacher 2009: 80). Ironically enough, this war would not end unless the international and regional
actors involved pressed toward the establishment of a new power sharing formula known as the Ta’if Agreement.

On the other hand, many other favorable factors stated in the consociational democracy literature are present in the Lebanese model and might have paved the way for the different power sharing formulas adopted throughout Lebanese political history. First, Lebanon has a plural and heterogeneous society characterized by 17 confessional groups that are very different from each other. Nevertheless, none of Lebanon’s largest communities (Maronite, Shia, and Sunni) possessed a predominant demographic majority over all the others. This prevents the potential domination of one grouping over the other (Ibid: 79).

Theorist have also added favorable factor which is directly related to the size of the country and to the relatively low load on the system. It is argued that smallness is a positive factor, especially when linked to a neutral foreign policy, since this reduces the burdens on the political system (Ibid: 80). This factor was not applicable in the small Lebanese state especially that neutrality was not respected and the power sharing pact left Lebanon vulnerable to the instability of Middle Eastern conflicts (Kerr 2005: 113).

2.3 The Impact of External Factors on Power Sharing: Successes and Failures

Although the above factors are important, they are insufficient to provide a successful consociational model, since they neglect the influence of external conflicts on internal stability. Lebanon is a typical case showing how external players are decisive in drawing the power sharing formula. In other words, political fragmentation in Lebanon has two dimensions that are interrelated through the dynamics of internal insecurity and
external rivalries. The internal insecurity derives from multiple, diverse, and often contradictory identifications of its peoples, while the external rivalries are due to the area’s vulnerability to and attraction for foreign political agendas. Furthermore, minority groups and every traditional group is in some sense a minority group—which face historical injustices look to outside power for protection. Regional or international powers took advantage of this situation and cultivate client sects. “Both socio-cultural parochialism and external intervention tend to be functionally disintegrative for the political system, insofar as they perpetuate loyalties that conflict with identification with the modern Lebanese entity” (Hudson 1995: 17-18). Although the cessation of elite consensus affects negatively consociational democracy, regional factors are important variables in determining elite cleavages and system collapse (Seaver 2000: 249). The wishes of domestic elites are often secondary to the desires of the externally involved actors (Kerr 2005: 40). Nevertheless, power sharing devices did not always provide peace and democracy, and were not always able to prevent inter-communal conflict, as ethnic conflict throughout the developing world suggest. (Seaver 2000: 252). This is mainly because conflict regulation strategies adopted are dependent on external factors which hold the responsibility of their implementation through coercive consociational engineering. Hence, power sharing cannot function successfully in the absence of positive exogenous pressures. “In this sense, consociational government is not a model for long-term ethnic conflict resolution but, rather, should be viewed as a tool for conflict regulation, provided that a stable external political environment exists to guarantee the political structures” (Kerr 2005: 2). The Successful of power sharing agreements requires not only the strength and balance of the divided communities concerned, but equally urged the strength and interests of the regional and international actors that made them. If the establishment of power sharing is inconvenient for their interests they can prevent consociation. On the other hand, if the external actors
have a positive and not wholly selfish interest, and if they account for the interest of the
different domestic elites in consociation, then consociation may work unless it is hindered
by other regional actors (Ibid: 30).

Since consociational societies rely on the regional factors, any major political shift
or change in the regional environment will crack the plaster of consociation and fracture its
internal and external balance. Commitment to democratic practices is also affected by
external variables and will do little to stabilize consociation in an ethnically divided society
especially when it is surrounded by a region where democracy is not valued (Ibid: 33). The
main dilemma facing consociation in ethnically divided societies is reflected in the
dependence of power sharing agreement on external powers. The paradox is that, although
consociation may not be favored by internal elites since it is imposed implicitly or
explicitly upon them by external forces, they become largely dependent on the good will of
those forces to maintain the internal balance. “In other words, the external elites must at
least have an interest in keeping the internal an external equilibrium” (Ibid: 35). On the
other hand consociational democracy may also complicate and aggravate inter-communal
tensions instead of calming them. The Netherlands, for example, became a more deeply
plural society with the establishment of consociation in 1917, while Lebanon witnessed
entire collapse given that consociation institutionalized confessional differences, which
subsequently exacerbated inter-communal hostilities and led to the 1975 civil war (Seaver
Democracy an external intrusion and a hostile regional scenario tend to divide subcultures
and elites and to disband the system” (Di Mauro 2008: 466). Thus, the international
environment plays an ambiguous role in consociational regimes, that may even be
negatively affect the power sharing agreement.
2.4 Lebanon: A Victim of International and Regional Conflicts

When situation in Lebanon deteriorated rapidly in the 1960s, some analysts considered that external conditions – mainly the Palestinian-Arab/Israeli conflict – to be the cause. Others considered that internal conditions – in particular, political confessionalism – had weakened the state at the moment when its decisive intervention might have saved the situation. “The fact that the civil strife lasted so long is taken as an indictment of a system which institutionalized separatism at a time a unified response was needed” (Hudson 1997: 107).

The decisive issue that led to the failure of the Lebanese power sharing formula was the absence of a foreign protector to “prevent confessional groups from seeking outside allies, and to exclude competitive foreign intervention into Lebanese affairs” (Zahar 2005: 229). Despite their agreement to share power according to the verbal provisions of the National Pact, the Christians and Muslims continued to disagree on a number of issues. “Lebanese drew outsiders into domestic politics to redress internal inequalities or to counter perceived threats from one another” (Ibid).

Since its independence in 1943, Lebanon has witnessed two critical situations. The first was a major political crisis in 1952 followed by a short-term armed revolution in 1958. The second began with a series of confrontations in 1969 that led to civil war in 1975. These crises had an obvious external dimension and were directly linked to changes in the regional balance of power politics (Khazen 2000: 104). Although this study is mainly concerned with external intervention in establishing power sharing agreement in Lebanon,
it is important to highlight the impact of regional disputes, and their interrelations with international factors, on the fragmentation of the domestic order.

The main regional circumstances that affected Lebanon were: the economic separation between Lebanon and Syria in the middle 1940s; the 1948 Arab-Israeli war and the establishment of the state of Israel; the rise of Nasserism leading to the re-emergence of Arab Nationalism in the 1950s; the Suez war in 1956 which involved many regional and international players; the formation of the United Arab Republic in 1958; and, finally, the ‘Arab cold War’ through the 1960s involving particularly Nasser and the Ba’thist regimes in Syria and Iraq (Khazen 2000: 104). Lebanon had to generate a new political equilibrium that would contain the spread of Nasserism. Though this was the case in other Arab countries, Lebanon was affected differently given domestic divisions (Ibid: 106).

The pre-war period also witnessed intensive crises at regional and international levels which negatively affected the Lebanese internal scene. It started with the post-1967 war aggravation of the Palestinian dimension in the Arab-Israeli conflict followed by the launch of the Arab-Israeli peace process in the 1970s which had significant influences on the Lebanese political scene, mainly portrayed by dividing its masses, destroying the elite’s consensus and Lebanon’s proclaimed neutrality. Moreover, the inter-Arab tensions deriving from the Palestinian situation produced a shift in the region’s balance of power, thus widening divisions within the Lebanese society and allowing for Syrian intervention in Lebanon politics. The situation became more complicated with the 1967 Six-Day War and subsequent Palestinian raids across the border line separating Lebanon and Israel. However, Palestinians attacks emanating from Lebanese territories were legitimized by the 1969 Cairo Agreement and seriously threatened the Lebanese stability. No doubt that the 1967 war was a turning point in the Middle Eastern conflict and its impact over Lebanon taking
into account the significance of Israeli occupation of the Golan Heights meant that
Lebanon strategic importance for Syrian geopolitical situation in the region, greatly
increased (Seaver 2000: 258). On the other hand, the 1973 Arab-Israeli war and the
separating paths that Syria and Egypt followed afterwards regarding Arab-Israeli-
Palestinian conflict (Khazen 2000: 105) followed by the 1978 Camp David Accords and the
Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty in 1979 destroyed what was left of Arab unity. Conflicting
parties in Lebanon were polarized, and the fear of a permanent settlement of Palestinians in
Lebanon increased (Irani 2008: 7). This situation aggravated with the expulsion of
Palestinian armed factions from Jordan to Lebanon after the confrontations of what became
known ‘Black September’ in 1970, which was the culminating point of ongoing clashes
between Jordanian and Palestinian Commandos. Finally, Israel’s raids on Beirut in 1968
and 1973, accompanied by its support for Maronites during the civil war, and its occupation
of parts of Southern Lebanon in 1978, dealt a serious blow to the Lebanese regime (Seaver
2000: 258). It was clear by then that Lebanon is affected by regional events more than any
other state in the region. “Lebanon’s multi-confessional character, ideological divisions,
economic crisis, festering problems of socio-economic inequality, Maronite preponderance,
and proximity to Israel, made its regime vulnerable to intervention and exploitation by
other regional actors” (Seaver 2000: 264).

A historical review should be the starting point of this analysis, because it will help
to explain the reasons behind Lebanon’s vulnerable political entity largely based on
sectarianism.
2.5 Mount Lebanon: The Nucleus of Conflicts and Confrontation

The early stages of Lebanon’s formation started with the *Imara* of Mount Lebanon at the end of the 16th century. It was given self independence within the Ottoman Empire. The main qualifications that interest this thesis are the Christian majority, cultural openness to Europe, traditional European intervention in the internal affairs of the *Imara* (Traboulsi 2007: 4), and “a geographical location that made from Lebanon an almost ideal breeding ground for the development of pluralistic proto-national groups” (Abraham 1981: 13). Two groups were the most powerful and their inter-relations had shaped the destiny of Mount Lebanon: the Maronites who derived from early Christianity and the Druze; an offshoot of Ismaili Islam.

The Maronites had active relations with the Vatican from which they aimed to have a certain hold on, and connection with, the Christian powers of Europe. However their target was not fulfilled till the 17th century when their “temporal affairs obtained the special care and supervision of the French government” (Churchill 1994: 20). On the other hand, Druze were the feudal landlords of Mount Lebanon and its ruling political class (Zahar 2005: 220). These factors added to many others which negatively affected the relationship between Druze and Maronites and ended in bloody massacres that left a clear imprint on the history of Mount Lebanon. One of the most important factors was the citizens’ classification in the Ottoman Empire based upon their religious affiliation: This was reflected in Mount Lebanon with the Druze who were employees and soldiers, while Christians were deprived from these privileges, and worked as peasants, dealers and in free professions (Traboulsi 2007: 4).

The economy also formed another vital factor especially that it had led to demographical changes in Mount Lebanon where its southern part was gradually
transformed from a Druze majority to what will be late known as a Christian-Druze mixed region with a Christian majority. This happened when Emir Fakhr al-Din, the multazim of the Druze mountain then emir liwa of the Sanjak of Sidon-Beirut, encouraged Christian peasants to emigrate from their areas in the North of Mount Lebanon, especially Kiserwan, to the southern part where the Druze formed a majority. He needed Christian peasants to be engaged in the sericulture which he had introduced to Mount Lebanon and had exported its products to European countries. The Christian peasants who replaced the expelled Shias worked as partners in the farmlands and delivered most of the crops to the Druze families (Ibid: 8).

Under these historical, social, economic and demographic circumstances, official Mount Lebanon was born by the second half of the 18th century, when Muhammad Ali, ruler of Egypt, launched an attack against the Othman Empire through Palestine in 1831 and put Lebanon under the rule of his son Ibrahim Pasha (1832-1840) (Barak 2007: 1). This era witnessed the conversion of many members of the Shihab family to Christianity, especially to the Maronite sect. The multazims of the Shuf and Kiserwan were selected solely from these. One of them was Emir Bashir Shihab II (1788-1840) who cooperated with the Egyptians and succeeded, by 1821, in expanding the area of his iltizam from Mount Lebanon southwards to other adjacent coastal or island districts. “It is only at that time, that they could be spoken of as emirs of Mount Lebanon, or of ‘the Lebanon’, in the broader sense of term, not only locally but also by European travelers, and even in the chanceries of the Western World” (Salibi 2008: 68). However, Emir Bashir II was forced to abdicate on 10 October 1840 after the Egyptians were defeated by the Ottomans who, in turn, were supported by Britain (Barak 2007: 1). This fact was satisfactory to both their opponents “the Ottomans who had long been losing patience with them, and the Druze who
had never fully accepted the legitimacy of their government, and who had ultimately come
to regard them as scheming enemies” (Salibi 2008: 6). The Ottoman Empire effectively
began to control Mount Lebanon after deposing Bashir III (reigned 1840-1842) in January
1842. Consequently, Emirate system of Shihabi Family was ended and the actual
independence enjoyed by Lebanon since the 16th century was terminated (Barak 2007: 1).

From 1840 till 1860, and after the exile of Bashir II (1788-1840), Lebanon
suffered from a political vacuum which resulted in an authority crisis. It also witnessed the
first clashes (1841-1845) between Maronites and Druze, which continued off and on for
two decades. These clashes were mainly rooted in a struggle over land and control of
taxation especially because Maronites in the southern sector rejected the authority of Druze
who were their enemies. Hence, this period is regarded as one in which “religious bigotry
and hostility exploited by foreign powers and the Ottoman government resulted in religious
upheavals and, finally, in 1860 culminated in a massacre of Christians in Lebanon and
Syria” (Abraham 2007: 17).

In fact, the crisis started many years earlier, when Ottoman and European discourses
of reform made the region a site of a colonial encounter between Christians attached to the
west and the Islamic Ottoman Empire seen as its perennial adversary. This encounter
profoundly altered the meaning of religion in Mount Lebanon. Moreover, it “emphasized
sectarian identity as the only viable marker of political reform and the only authentic basis
for political claims” (Makdisi 2000: 2). In other words, although religious suspicious
existed, the Maronite-Druze conflict of the 19th century was not based on religious grounds.
It was the responsibility of outside forces who utilized this misunderstanding to create and
heighten religious tensions and conflicts. Nevertheless, influential circles within Lebanon,
such as the Maronite clergy, used, at the same time, religion to support its own political and
communal ambitions (Abraham 1981: 17). Regardless the reasons behind these confrontations, the violence of 1841 ushered in the age of sectarianism, allowed the Europeans and Ottoman Empire with the fingerprint of the Austrian Chancellor Metternich to impose the first political and administrative division of Mount Lebanon into two separate entities ruled by ‘deputies’, a Maronite and a Druze, each administering the area with a majority of his own jins or kind (Ziadeh 2006: 57): the northern was inhabited by Christians, mainly Maronites, and was ruled by a Maronite, and the southern was ruled by a Druze, although a significant number of Maronites resided there (Barak 2007: 2). This separation, known as the two qa’immaqamiyas system, triggered a new wave of violence concerning the Mountains identity (Traboulsi 2007: 25).

The escalating situation led Istanbul to dispatch Shakib Afandi, the Ottoman foreign minister, to Beirut on 14 September 1845, to quell this rebellion against ‘the house of obedience’ (Ziadeh 2006: 58). The solution he suggested, which became known as the Nizam of Shakib Afandi, redrew the communal divisions and updated the representation regulating the two areas. The nizam mentioned a very significant condition that attempted to weaken the local force by depriving its representatives from any foreign protection. In this context, the nizam prohibited the counselor to be employed by foreign Consuls or to part with a foreigner (Abraham 1981: 101). The nizam failed to fulfill its target in reintegrating Lebanese province under Ottoman control. However, international intervention did not diminish. Maronites proudly claimed French patronage over them, while Druze enjoyed British support, especially because Britain aimed to counter-balance and limit the impact of France in its areas of influence. Thus, began the long process of the internationalization of sectarian conflicts in Mount Lebanon (Ziadeh 2006: 58).
The *Nizam* of Shakib Afandi and the *qa‘immaqamiyas* system “reflected the first rupture, texts and political entity, with a local form, a geographical delimitation and an initiatory international recognition” (Ibid: 55). It is considered as the corner stone of Lebanese nation-building that underlined communal representation with all its conflicts and compromises. This happened when the Lebanese society- after the collapse of the *imara* in 19th century- opened up space for a new form of politics and representation based on a language of religious equality. Religious identity was privileged rather than elite status as the basis for any project of modernization, citizenship, and civilization (Makdisi 2000: 7).

In sum, the *qa‘immaqamiyas‘* system was formulated by a non-Lebanese power and ratified by a group of regional or international powers. Since, politics in Mount Lebanon were internationalized (Ziadeh 2005: 62). Despite the existence of two communities, Druze and Maronites, the conflict in Mount Lebanon, at the beginning, was not religious, but rather portrayed as a class struggle between feudal lords and peasants. However, external intervention, mainly French and British, swayed the conflict from its original path towards a sectarian route. This situation allowed foreign forces to intervene in the internal affairs of Mount Lebanon, under the pretext of saving threatened communities. This is how religious factions were polarized, a move that caused unrest rather than stability. The following clashes between Maronites and Druze, mainly the massacres against the Christians in 1860 and the resulting new political arrangement of these two communities, would be obvious evidence. From then, external intervention would become direct with no need for any pretext.

At the end of the *qa‘immaqamiyas* period, Maronites achieved a clear superiority at different economic, political and social levels, at the expense of the Druze who witnessed a continuous economic deterioration (Ziadeh 2006: 72). The Maronites’ political success,
achieved by a militant clergy, gave birth to a strong ethnic proto-national feeling which formed the basis for gruesome massacres of against Christians, especially Maronites of the Shuf in 1860 (Hudson 1985: 28). Moreover, each community was on guard against any provocation, and any Maronite peasant action against any Druze muqata’jis was sufficient to start sectarian strife (Ziadeh 2006: 72). Consequently, Sectarian confrontations came on the heels of the mainly Maronite peasants’ insurrections, under the leadership of Tanious Chahine, against the feudal muqata’jis. They had put the Ottoman tanzimat in a critical position and opened the door for direct European intervention especially that anarchy in Mount Lebanon was intolerable to the European powers who had done so much to foment it (Hudson 1985: 37). For their part, the Ottomans moved in to restore the disrupted social order. The French, mainly concerned for Maronite safety, landed troops to relieve the Christians. The British who traditionally backed the Druze to balance French influence were increasingly worried about growing French impact among Maronites (Zahar 2005: 223).

After thirty two weeks of negotiations between the representatives of the Sublime Porte, France, Britain, Austria, Prussia and Russia, the Reglement Organique of the Mutassarifiya was established and the nucleus of a modern political entity was born. Two protocols were drawn up and signed. The first protocol dealt in his six articles with the conditions of the proposed European intervention in Syria while the second one declared that “the contracting powers do not intend to seek for, and will not seek for, in the execution of their engagements any territorial advantages, any exclusive influence, or any concession with regard to the commerce of their subjects, such as could not be granted to the subject of all other nations” (Churchill 1994: 220-221). The two sets of the Reglements of 1861 and 1864 were of a special importance at different levels. Primarily, they were
considered the first international texts recognizing the extended autonomy of Mount Lebanon and legitimized direct intervention, no longer masked in diplomatic language, in the affairs of Mount Lebanon. Accordingly, the mutassarrifiya became a genuinely international protectorate with all the European powers actively engaged in its intrinsic communal politics (Ziadeh 2005: 77). Second, it established sectarianism as the regulating principle of politics in Mount Lebanon. Although the Reglement Organique merged the two qa‘immaqamiyas into a new organization (Traboulsi 2007: 43), the Mutassarrifiya aimed to avoid the contradictions and ambiguities of Shekib Efendi’s regulations by creating a rational, workable, and above all, elitist sectarian system (Makdisi 2000: 161). Every article in the Reglement indicated that this new order was to be sectarian. This is clear in articles One and Two of the Reglement:

The first article noted that “the administration of Mount Lebanon shall be assumed by a Christian governor (hakim masihi) appointed by the Sublime Porte to which he reported directly. The Sublime Porte shall give this appointee, who can dismissed, all the privileges of executive powers. The governor shall strive to keep peace and order in all parts of the Mountain and collect the miri taxes. Each of the segments (unsure) of Mount Lebanon’s population shall be represented at the mutassarrifiya by an agent (wakil) appointed by the notables (kubara and wujaha) from each community (Ta‘ifa)”.

The second article declared that “the entire Mountain shall have a great (Kabir) Administrative council, consisting of the following 12 members: 2 Maronites, 2 Druze, 2 Roman Catholics, 2 Greek Orthodox, 2 Mutwalis (shia) and 2 Muslims. The Administrative Council is empowered to distribute the {imposition of the} miri taxes, to supervise the incomes and expenditures and to give its counsel in all matters submitted to it by the Governor for consultation” (Ziadeh 2005: 71).

On the other hand, the Mutassarrifiya maintained the role of major actors in political and social affairs. Although the principle of election was mentioned in clause eleven, major players did not vary: feudal and communal leaders, great families and owners
of money and property. Regarding the church, the Reglement of 1864 failed to contain its expansive role by limiting its almost extra-legal status, and ended up legitimizing it by bestowing on it a special legal status (Ibid:75).

It is obvious that in the aftermath of 1860, all members of Mount Lebanon recognized that a new age of sectarianism was introduced. All citizens were forced to make a basic choice, either to resist or to support sectarianism. In other words, they had “either to believe in a past that allows for the possibilities of coexistence or to believe in a past that forever denies it” (Makdisi 2000: 164).

This is how sectarianism was introduced or, in fact, forced to Mount Lebanon, since man is not sectarian by nature or impulse but by education and socialization, as Butrus al-Bustani once noted (Ibid).

2.6 Great Lebanon: The First Constitution and the Second Power-Sharing Formula

Mount Lebanon enjoyed a half century of communal peace under 1864 regulations. No doubt the division accomplished by foreign governments that had ended up the struggle for diplomatic superiority, muffled the causes of conflict but did not eradicate it. Consequently, they were rekindled during World War I and its aftermath it, particularly those between the British and the French (Hudson 1985: 37).

This peaceful situation lasted until 1920 when the French High Commissioner, General Gouraud, proclaimed the creation of Great Lebanon by attaching large Muslims areas to Christian Mount Lebanon. This proclamation, which came in the wake of the Ottoman Empire’s demise after World War I, multiplied external political complications
Moreover, France’s policies in Lebanon and towards the Greater-Syria Nationalists in Syria pushed the latter to intervene in Lebanese politics especially that Syrians exploited sectarian, factional, and personal divisions against France (Zahar 2005: 227). In sum, “the offspring of European diplomatic rivalries and sectarian drives, the new state was born schizophrenic; its Catholics were relieved to find French protection, and its Sunnites were embittered by the betrayal of Arab nationalism” (Hudson 1985: 37).

Under these circumstances, the declaration of Great Lebanon could easily be conceived - and systematically was - as an exclusively colonial division of Ottoman spoils along the lines of Sykes-Picot and San Remo Agreements of 1916, or as a French encroachment into a British dominated Levant. For unlike the similar divisions made by France of Syrian territories between 1922 and 1924, Greater Lebanon did not disappear. It has been expanded to include- to the territory of Mount Lebanon- the towns of Beirut, Tripoli, Tyre, and Saida, the regions of Baalbek and the Bīqa’, and the districts of Rashayya and Hasbayya. The expansion of Lebanon also increased the country’s religious heterogeneity. The Maronites no longer constituted the absolute majority but were still the largest community ten per cent greater than the Sunnis.

Accordingly, Lebanon, with its jigsaw population of Muslim and Christian sects, was first constituted as a territorial state in 1920 (Salibi 1988: 5). This ‘new’ Lebanon was ruled directly by governors appointed by the High Commissioner until 1926. At first, the governor was supported by an executive of seven director-generals (of whom only two were Muslims). The High commissioner also appointed an Administrative Commission of 15 members, of whom only five were Muslims. Faced with massive Muslims boycott, the High commissioner enlarged the commission to 17 members (6 Maronites, 3 Greek Orthodox, 1 Greek Catholic, 1 Druze, 4 Sunnis and 2 Shiites) the majority of whom where
land owners and merchant notables. Thus sectarian quotas were established from the start of new state (Traboulsi 2007: 88). In 1922 this council was replaced by a Representative Council elected through universal male suffrage which limited to an advisory role. The High Commissioner and governor had a final say in all matters and could overturn any decision of the Council. They had the authority to adjourn or dissolve the Council (Ibid). However, this ‘national democratic’ representative body was distinguished by two main characteristics: first, Maronite control over the Representative Council, and second, the heavy-handedness of the French Mandate in backing their candidates and vetoing their opponents. The British colonial administration’s traditional criticism of French methods was blunt: “… the procedure adopted is that only those candidates who the High Commissioner wished to be elected have been elected” (Ziadeh 2005: 90). This representative council became the Constituent Assembly, which in 1926 wrote the Constitution that, with the important modifications of November 1943, remains in effect today (Hudson 1985: 38).

“The 1926 Constitution aimed to bestow legitimacy, both textually and discursively, on this contested enclave by endowing the state of Grand Liban with a national spirit” (Ziadeh 2005: 91). The process of drafting the Constitution highlighted the deep contradictions among the various segments of Lebanese society who were involved in this task (Ibid). The project for this Lebanese state was originally envisaged by the Christians in the country, more specifically by those of the Maronite sect who acquired the powers of the Lebanese system. Muslims refused to accord the country their allegiance. Their argument was that the Lebanese state project was imposed upon them and they never been consulted about it before it was transformed into reality. Moreover, unlike Christians, Muslims considered that the Lebanese were not historically a nation by itself, but part of a
greater Arab nation since their territory was historically part of Arab Syria (Salibi 1988: 5). In fact, the pan-Arab platform rejected since 1920 the artificial division of the Arab world into states and pressed of Arab unity considering that Arab separated states did not exist before. Proceeding from this conviction and receiving Arab sympathy and support, Muslim opposition rejected with particular fervor the legitimacy of the Lebanese state and clashed with the prevailing Christian Lebanese attitude over the issue (Ibid: 9). However, when it became increasingly clear that Lebanon was there to stay, Muslims accepted the country as a functioning state but not as the nation-state which the Christians wanted it to be (Ibid: 5).

In 1926 the Constitution was established. It was in form a modern one, modeled on the French 1875 Constitution of the Troisieme Republique, with some inspiration from Belgian and Egyptian constitutions. It stipulated the separation of the three powers: legislative, judiciary and executive. It declared Lebanon a parliamentary bicameral democracy (Ziadeh 2005: 91). Thus, France established the second power sharing formula since the Mutassarriфа and its regulations were considered fundamental. However, as will be later discussed, these power sharing policies left Lebanon vulnerable to political sectarianism, feudalism, and clientalism (Makdisi 2000: 164).

2.7 The National Pact: Legitimizing Sectarianism in the Independent Republic

Lebanon had to wait for new international circumstances to receive its independence. This moment matured during the Second World War when the French presence in the Middle East was weakened by the German invasion of its territories. However, this independence was unable to become a reality without British ‘help’. Once
again Lebanon was influenced by the French-British competition over the Near East, but this time it was rewarded with independence.

Under the French mandate, Lebanon suffered continuous riots and inept administration with the establishment of the Vichy authority after the German occupation of France in 1940. However, when British and Free France forces invaded Syria and Lebanon from Palestine, they proclaimed, through leaflets dropped from allied aircrafts, the independence of the two countries. This was formally announced in November 1941 by General Georges Catroux (Goria 1985: 24). In the summer of 1943, parliamentary elections were held and resulted in a victory for Bechara Khoury’s Constitutional Bloc over Emile Edde’s National Bloc. “This was a mandate for Maronite-Sunni cooperation in the interest of Lebanese sovereignty, to which the British were now inclined, and which they were in a position to guarantee” (Ibid).

On 21 September 1943, the Maronite Bechara Khoury was elected President and formed with the Sunni pan-Arab nationalist Riad Solh, a government based on principles considered as a precondition for political coexistence between Christians and Muslims (Ibid) in the new state. These principles were known as the National Pact of 1943 that had been viewed as an example of pragmatism. It was the outcome of the lowest common denominator among the independence leaders’ aspirations (Khazen 1991: 5).

No doubt, the National Pact would not have materialized the way it did without the intervention of international and regional players, mainly Syrian, British, and Egyptian. Their involvements facilitated negotiations between Lebanon’s Sunni and Maronite politicians (Ibid: 17). Syria gave the green light for Sunnis, and mainly Solh, to cooperate with ‘pro-Arab’ Maronite leaders for an independent Lebanon. On the other hand, Khoury received Arab blessing and encouragement to take steps leading to the independence of
Lebanon within its 1920 borders. This happened in a British-sponsored meeting in June 1942, in Cairo, between Khoury, Egyptian Prime Minister Mustafa Nahhas Pasha and Syrian President Jamil Mardam. Accordingly, cooperation between Khoury and Solh commenced in the summer of 1943 and led to the National Pact (Ibid: 18). Thus, it is only when the interests of external forces seemed better served by an independent country in harmony with a pro-Western (i.e., British) Arab order, did Lebanon receive its independence. “That was the Pact’s hidden agenda, which resulted in the legitimization and rationalization of Lebanon’s confessional politics” (Ibid: 5-6).

In fact, Lebanon had two ‘founding documents’: a formal constitution and an informal verbal understanding between Khoury and Solh. The latter was the National Pact, which underlined that Lebanon should be completely independent, sovereign, and neutral. It added that Christians, especially Maronites, would cease looking to France for protection or seek military pacts with Western powers; on the other hand Muslims, especially Sunnites, should not try to make Lebanon part of a larger Arab Islamic state and should accept its existing geographic boundaries (Hudson1985: 44). In effect, the latter aspect led many observers to label the Pact as the “double negation agreement” (Krayem 2003: 1).

Although the French mandate was marked by the alienation of the Muslim community as a whole from what it regarded as a French-Maronite hegemonic project, the National Pact of 1943 brought Muslims into the system, as Lebanon embarked on independence. On the other hand, “the founding fathers of independent Lebanon decided that a fixed, permanent formula for communal representation would be necessary in order to reduce insecurities and remove sectarian competition from the normal political process” (Hudson 1997: 106). Hence, the National Pact distributed political power among the three major communities in Lebanon. It made the powerful President of the Republic a Maronite
Christian, the less powerful Prime Minister a Sunni Muslim, and the least powerful of all, the Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies, a Shiite Muslim. Moreover, it established the power sharing formula among the sects as it already appeared in article 95 of the constitution. However, a ratio of 6 to 5 (Christians: Muslims) was maintained based on the 1932 census. Christians thus outnumbered Muslims in the parliament and the higher ranks of the civil service and the military (Ibid).

Regarding the constitution itself, it contained a fundamental contradiction. It mentioned equalities among all Lebanese citizens on judicial, civic and political levels. At the same time, it institutionalized their judicial and political inequality as subjects of a sect in the system without enjoying equal access to political power and public office. In this sense, the three main articles regarding sectarianism (9, 10 and 95) remained as they appeared in the initial 1926 constitution (Traboulsi 2007: 109).

The National Pact was not supposed to be a long-term consociational formula solving inter-confessional conflict. It was a reformulation of an inter-confessional political administration that developed under the Ottoman millet system and the French mandate. It sidestepped temporarily the national question and the contradictory ideological and cultural differences of the Lebanese. However, in doing so, it unintentionally formed the cornerstone of Lebanese political life for the rest of the twentieth century (Kerr 2005: 112). It was actually a realpolitik internal compromise to gain independence, paved by positive regional and, more importantly, international variables. Thus, the accord “was very much a creature of its time, rather than a clearly thought-out program for government” (Ibid: 124).

From the beginning, the agreement and its consequent power sharing formula “were open to bargaining, custom, personality and extra-constitutional compromise within a regional context” (Ibid: 125). It balanced the internal dynamics of power sharing on one
hand, and the regional and international orientation of the state on the other. If the balance is inclined to the benefit of a part, then the dual constitutional formula and the whole Lebanese system came under pressure. “This was to be the First Republic’s most enduring feature” (Ibid: 125).

The 1943 formula governed Lebanon until early 1975. During this period and for three decades, between early 1940s and early 1970s, the newly independent Republic of Lebanon enjoyed economic growth and relative political stability. Although Muslim-Christian tensions were never erased, they were managed fairly successfully over the period from 1943 to 1975 (Ibid). However, this era witnessed two limited wars, in 1958 and 1969, which were not different in their causes from previous ones.

2.8 Conclusion

Three power sharing formulas were established since the formation of Mount Lebanon in the 19th century until the independence of the Republic of Lebanon: the Reglement Organique of the Mutassarifya, the constitution of 1926, and the National Pact of 1943. As examined in this chapter, institutionalizing sectarianism was the common factor between all these formulas. Another common factor was external intervention. Although none of these factors offered a final solution to the conflict among Lebanese sects, and war was renewed many times, no alternatives were discussed outside these frameworks. On the other hand, the power sharing formula did not allow for normal politics. This was most evident in successive presidential elections. Regional and international relations among the dominant powers were pivotal at this level. The latter topic is the subject of the next chapter.
CHAPTER THREE

IMPACT OF EXTERNAL INTERVENTION ON LEBANESE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

3.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the foreign intervention in Lebanese presidential elections especially that they had been, since the country’s independence in 1943, an important factor in the eruption of severe crises. Although these crises were of a political nature, they usually evolved into serious security issues. In fact, each president caused a political or constitutional crisis in the final year of his term. This made the president enjoy power at the start of his term before heading for a crisis towards the end. Actually, his power is often derived from the weakness of his predecessor. The only exception was President Fouad Chehab, who was asked to renew his mandate by a proposal made by two thirds of the Parliament (79 out of 99 deputies), which he refused. Chehab also succeeded in securing the transfer of power to his successor Charles Helou without inheriting him any domestic or external crises, though it should be mentioned that Chehab assumption to power following Camille Chamoun, was accompanied by the revolution of 1958.

This chapter also shows that the presidential campaign is a shuffling of names by Arab and Western countries that influence Lebanon. It marks different kinds of international and regional intervention. It shows how different agreements brought different presidents: an Egyptian-American in the case of Fouad Chehab, an Israeli-American on Bashir and Amin Gemayel, and a Syrian-American in the case of Elias Sarkis. The outcome of any disproportion in the agreement created either a constitutional void which resulted after the expiration of mandates as with President Amine Gemayel in 1988, or an
assassination as with President-elect Bashir Gemayel in 1982 and President Rene Muawad in 1989.

### 3.2 The 1958 Revolution and the American-Egyptian Agreement

How did the regional and international settings appear on the eve of the presidential elections of 1958?

In the mid 1950s, during the presidency of Camille Chamoun (1952 – 1958) the foreign policy of Lebanon tilted towards the west. Chamoun wanted Lebanon to join the Baghdad alliance signed by Iraq and Turkey on 24 February 1955, and which had caused strong resistance among many Lebanese leaders. Chamoun did not abandon his plans until he realized that it if he were to continue with them, it would lead to a social division and the possibility of sectarian conflict (Timoviev 2000: 245-246).

Chamoun supported ‘Eisenhower’s Doctrine’, which permitted the US to provide economic, structural and military intervention in friendly countries with which it shared common interests, and were regarded as threatened by international Communism. Chamoun’s adoption of ‘Eisenhower’s Doctrine’ in 1957 provoked a dispute between him and the Egyptian President Jamal Abdel Nasser, who enjoyed increasing support in Muslim areas of Beirut. Arabism increased Christian anxiety, especially among Maronites, who felt provoked and consequently prepared for confrontations (Ibid: 257).

The opposition, composed of the National Unity Front, was not armed nor militarily trained to overcome the armed forces of the government. So, Kamal Joumblatt, the Druze leader and one of the politicians leading the 1958 Revolution, sent his special envoy Amine Abou Fakhreddine, to Syria. He was received by the Chief of Syrian Intelligence Abdel
Hamid Sarraj. Joumblatt refused Sarraj’s proposal to provide a sum of money forwarded by Abdel Nasser in exchange for weapons and ammunition. As a consequence, Syrian arms were handed in to Sa’eb Salam, a Sunni leader of the Revolution. (Ibid: 261-262).

Three ambassadors, the American Robert Mc Clintock, the French Roy Roches and the British George Middleton, met regularly since March 1958 to discuss and monitor the situation in Lebanon and consider possible methods to support the presidency of Chamoun in light of intelligence regarding the possibility of an armed struggle between Chamoun’s supporters and the opposition, the latter being manipulated by the United Arab Republic (Nassif 2002: 351). On 8 May 1958, the leftist’s Nassib Metni, owner of the Telegraph newspaper, was assassinated. The opposition accused the government, while Chamoun’s supporters claimed it was a operation by the Soviet KGB to discredit the current regime in Lebanon and increase disturbances. Syrian Security agencies were also accused of trying to destabilize the situation (Timoviev 2000: 26). Clashes erupted in Beirut, Tripoli, Saida, Bekaa, Shuf after the assassination, mainly between allies of Chamoun, namely the Phalange Party and the Syrian Socialist National Party, and the People’s Resistance, armed by Syria.

The military coup in Baghdad that overthrew King Faisal expedited the resolution of the Lebanese crisis. Almost immediately, Chamoun called upon the US Ambassador Robert Mc Clintock to hand him a formal request to receive aid under the UN Charter Article 51 and the dual agreement with the US under the “Eisenhower’s Doctrine”. The American response to the rapid changes in the Middle East was quick as they deployed US Navy Forces on the empty shores of Ouzai on July 15. In a matter of hours, Beirut’s suburbs turned into a military war zone. All proposals to reach a local reconciliation failed and the armed conflict resumed, so the Americans intervened to provide the solution. On 16 July
1958, as US soldiers deployed on Ouzai shores, Robert Murphy, the American Envoy, visited Beirut for few hours and left after Fouad Shehab was selected president. He waited to report the decision that was concluded by the US Administration after his arrival to Beirut, concerning the nomination of the next President. Murphy received it as following: “only the General was able to reestablish security and order and save the unity of the country after the 1958 revoltion” (Nassif 2002: 421). Murphy was touring Jbeil citadel with Raymond Edde accompanied by the US Ambassador when a US Navy military vehicle arrived carrying a telegram to the Ambassador, who read it and handed it to Murphy. The latter addressed Edde: “you are the first Lebanese person to know about the agreement with Abdel Nasser who agreed on the election of Fouad Chehab as the next president, as reported by the US Ambassador in Egypt” (Ibid: 359).

The American diplomat was not the only one to have known the name of the new president. So did the Egyptian Ambassador in Beirut, Abdel Hamid Ghaleb. This was obvious since Egypt enjoyed a strong position in the Arab world under the leadership of the Egyptian president Jamal Abdel Nasser, who was popular among Lebanese Muslim leaders and their supporters. His ideals spread over Lebanon as well as the Arab world. The Arab region was in a crisis and Lebanon was used to bearing the repercussions of these crises in neighboring countries.

Chehab was elected President on 31 June 1958 by a majority of 48 votes against 7 naming Edde, the other presidential candidate. Although certain he would not be elected, Edde wanted to assert that the election was not held under influence of the Sixth Fleet of the US Navy stationed on Lebanese shores.

The revolution of 1958 portrayed foreign intervention as an absolute must to resolve any internal Lebanese dispute. Back in the days of 18th century mutassarrifiya, it became
familiar to say that the Lebanese foreign policy was up for the consuls to decide. They established intervention in Lebanese politics as a mean to protect the different, and disputing, confessional groups. Clashes rarely broke out in the absence of foreign intervention, which was also behind the solution of its self-provoked crisis. Regional and international shift in powers were most evident when it came to choosing the next Lebanese president, whose name was never selected based on local considerations only.

3.3 The Election of Elias Sarkis and the American-Syrian Agreement

International and regional players are not the only factors affecting the selection of the Lebanese president. Another important factor was the Lebanese Civil War that erupted in 1975, and was the main reason for selecting the Governor of the Lebanese Central Bank, Elias Sarkis, to the Presidency in 1976. How did the internal scene look like on the eve of Lebanese civil war outbreak?

The early 1970s was marked by Lebanon’s entry into the age of ideology and mass politics manifested in a high degree of political mobilization of the institutions of civil society. This interacted with the emergence of the PLO factor on Lebanese scene, which generated the radicalization process. In parallel, leftist parties were growing fast. Arab nationalist parties were equally active, notably the pro-Iraqi Ba’th Party. The Syrian social Nationalist Party also made political headway during this period (Khazen 2000: 73-74). On the opposite side was the Phalangist Party which embodied and defended Maronite and Christian aspirations in Lebanon. The Phalanges opposed military and political involvement of Palestinian guerillas in Lebanese affairs. In 1976 a large coalition of major Christian conservative parties was formed under the name of the ‘Lebanese Front’ which was
confronted by the Lebanese National Movement formed mainly of leftist parties (Irani 2008: 8-9).

The ‘Lebanese Front’ called first on regional powers, then on global intervention in order to preserve their presence and survival during the war. Upon this request, Syria intervened in Lebanon during the summer of 1976 against the Muslim-Leftist-Palestinian coalition. These developments took place while Lebanon was preparing itself for presidential election. Syria, along with the US, needed a president who will legitimize its military intervention to enforce security during what became to be known as the ‘Two-Year War’ (1975-1977). Elias Sarkis was the most to fit the required portfolio. Although Syria did not know him, its approval was based on the recommendations made by Rashid Karame and Sami Khatib, both Syrian allies in Lebanon. They promoted Sarkis as the one of the heirs of Shehabism, backed by his support for improving Lebanese ties to its Arab neighbors, and who was politically disarrayed from war figures such as Pierre Gemayel and Camille Chamoun.

Suggesting the name of the next Lebanese president was a decision of the Syrian Vice President Abdel Halim Kahddam, assisted by General Hikmat Shihabe, Chief of Staff of the Syrian Armed Forces, and General Naji Ali, Commander of the Air Force, and their three deputies Ali Douba, Mohammad Khwali, and Ali Madani (Nassif 2002: 395). The Syrian-backed ‘Lebanese Front’ nominated Elias Sarkis, whereas Kamal Joumblatt, backed by the Palestinians, opted for Raymond Edde, head of the National Bloc party. It was impossible to separate the presidential elections from the internal political divide, which was closely linked to regional and international powers support for both sides. Joumblatt refused to support Sarkis as he was not on good terms with the Syrians, a dispute rising from their refusal to back his inclination, accompanied by a supporting stance from PLO
leader Yasser Arafat, towards resolving the situation by military force. On May 6, two days before the election, Assad met Arafat who agreed on the election of Sarkis on May 8. Although Arafat backed Joumblatt in the early phases of presidential nomination, he secretly subordinated to the Syrian choice, thus pushing Joumblatt to the edge. (Ibid: 402)

Joumblatt had relied in his battle on the Saudis. He declared to his ally in the National Movement George Hawi, the leader of the Lebanese Communist Party, that the Saudis were offering 15 million US Dollars to back Edde’s campaign. Joumblatt captured the overlap between Lebanese politics and regional struggles: “we can reach an agreement with the Arabs especially since they approved that we have an influence in the Presidential elections. They came with 15 million US Dollars from Saudi Arabia. We not only have now a political assertion but the funds as well. We have 15 million US Dollars for Edde’s campaign and political support from Egypt and financial support from Saudi Arabia” (Ibid: 404). However, the battle was not easy: the presence of the Syrian Army in Lebanon and the Syrian-controlled Palestinian Saiqa Organization made it more complicated, especially when the latter was put against other Palestinian organizations and National movement forces dispersed all over Lebanon. On June first 1976, few days after Sarkis’ election, thousands of Syrian soldiers entered Lebanon. This was the price of the American-Syrian Agreement on solving the presidency crisis at that time.

The presence of the Syrian Army in Lebanon established security. However, it had the other purpose of controlling the decisions of the Lebanese authorities. The meeting between Raymond Edde and Dean Brown, the American envoy of the US President Gerald Ford, exposed the reasons behind the US-Syrian agreement regarding the election of Sarkis. In that meeting, Brown asked Edde that if he were to ever become President then he had to seek the aid of the Syrian Army to establish security. Edde replied: “If you the Americans
have decided that and consider it as a necessary condition, then I can give you fifty names of Maronites that will give you what you want. Certainly, I will not request aid from the Syrian Army to establish security in Lebanon. If Elias Sarkis does agree then go to him. I refuse to put Lebanon under the control of the Syrians”. On May 19, after 24 hours of electing Elias Sarkis President, Dean Brown concluded his mission in Beirut and returned home (Ibid: 421). The honeymoon between Syria and the conservative Christian Lebanese camp lasted for less than two years. Even before Syria moved to defend the Muslim-Leftist-Palestinian coalition, some Christian leaders had elicited support from Israel in a bid to counter the Syrian and Palestinian presence in Lebanon (Irani 2008: 9). Thus Lebanon entered into a new era of direct Israeli intervention in its affairs, one that culminated with the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon.

Lebanon was directly affected by two main regional events: Nasserism and the rise of PLO. Although Nasserism started as a destabilizing factor, it ended by putting an end to the revolution of 1958. In contrast, PLO not only exposed Lebanon to the influences emanating from inter-Arab and Arab-Israeli politics but also militarized and accelerated conflict (Khazen 2000: 108). A changing aspect of foreign meddling in the Lebanese situation was its shift towards military intervention, through PLO and Syrian Armed Forces, rather than sticking to diplomacy.

3.4 The Israeli Invasion: Bashir Gemayel’s Election

The regional and international factors that affected the internal political situation in Lebanon witnessed great changes while Sarkis’ mandate came to an end in 1982. At the time the Syrians were no longer the strongest factor in the Lebanese equation. Their role
was weakened by the Israeli invasion that brought Bashir Gemayel to the presidency. During this time, Lebanon was scattered between the Lebanese Forces headed by Bashir Gemayel, which fully controlled Christian regions, and the National Lebanese Movement which was allied with the Palestinian Liberation Organization that enjoyed a major military presence covered by stipulations of the Cairo Accord signed in 1969. Syria moved to support the latter after it had intervened on behalf of the Lebanese Front against the National Movement in 1976. However, Syria and its allies were defeated by the outcome of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. Accordingly, Syria was unable to play a major role in selecting the new Lebanese president. Israel, whose troops reached Beirut, was the strongest regional player at that time. This affected the destiny of the president-elect who was assassinated before he assumed his position.

In 1982, Michel Edde, the Information minister and a prominent Maronite figure, was the favorite candidate for the presidency had it not been for the Israeli invasion. This was reported by the former American ambassador to Beirut, John Gunther Dean to Edde when the two met in a Parisian suburb 10 years later: “do you remember?! You could have been the Lebanese President in 1982 had not it been for the Israeli invasion” (Nassif and Bou Monsef 1998: 24). Edde had received similar news from President Elias Sarkis (1976-1982) on his hospital bed in Johns Hopkins in Baltimore – USA in 1984, as he said: “the Presidency was taken from you; it was guaranteed had it not been for the Israeli invasion (…)” (Ibid).

Yet Bashir Gemayel, the strongest leader in Christian areas, wanted an extension for Sarkis until the regional conditions supported his chance for the presidency. At least, this is what Sarkis told Edde: “Bashir Gemayel appreciates him and does not mind his arrival to the Presidency if local and regional conditions permitted it as a transitional phase allowing
for Bashir to come to the presidency” (Ibid). However, Michel Edde always feared a
dangerous Israeli move similar to the 1948 war which would postpone the presidential
elections. Edde’s fears came true when Israel invaded Lebanon and reached the outskirts of
Beirut rendering Bashir Gemayel the sole contender for the presidency. When Edde who
was on his way back from Moscow, was told by a friend that the invasion had begun, he
commented: “Bashir was to be the next President” (Ibid).

Since the beginning of 1982 Bashir was certain that the Israelis would make a move
against Lebanon (Pakradoni 2001: 40). He informed Karim Pakradoni, one of his closest
confidents, of the details of a meeting he held with the Israeli Minister of Defense Ariel
Sharon in Beirut on 13 January 1982 in Bashir’s home in Achrafieh. Several Israeli officers
attended, including the Deputy Commander of the Military Sagi Yahousha, and the
coordinator of relations with the Lebanese Forces, Intelligence Officer Manahem Nafout
known as ‘Mandy’. From the Lebanese side there were Pierre Gemayel, President Camille
Chamoun and a number of assistants. Sharon informed the attendants of the Israeli decision
to invade a large portion of Lebanon to take out the military infrastructure of the Palestine
Liberation Organization (PLO) and destroy its capabilities, without excluding the
possibility of a further invasion to encompass more than what was covered in the 1978
(Nassif 2005: 666).

In light of these developments, Bashir began to mark his name as a contender for the
presidency among Arab countries and international actors. Israeli support was not enough
to guarantee him the presidency particularly, since Washington regarded him as a ‘gang
leader’. Some among the American administration even considered him to be a terrorist and
dubbed “the Carlos of Lebanon except that he was known while the other Carlos was not”
(Pakradoni 1984: 215). Moreover, Washington and Paris considered an extension for
Sarkis as a more probable solution and the best one considering internal circumstances and the difficulty to reach a consensus on the name of a new president given the crisis in the country.

Bashir began to establish connections with the PLO and Damascus. He met, for several times in February and March 1982, with Abou Zaim, the representative of Yassir Arafat, and Mohammad Ghanem, Chief of Military Intelligence of the Syrian Army in Lebanon. He also sent special envoys in April and May to Cairo, Riyadh, Baghdad and Oman. The meetings aimed at informing these countries that Israel decided to invade Lebanon, as well as to infer the attitudes of these countries toward Gemayel’s candidacy for the presidency. The envoys reported that the Arabs were not eager to nominate him. The PLO and Saudi Arabia did not declare their potential candidate. As for Egypt and Iraq they were leaning towards Raymond Edde. The Jordanian position was conservative (Ibid: 260). Thus, Gemayel’s chances for the presidency were not so good on the local, Arab and international levels. However, the Israeli Prime Minister Menachim Begin was the most enthusiastic for his nomination and worked hard to convince the Americans. He told Bashir in a meeting held at Begin’s house in early 1982: “I wish to see you President of the Republic, elected constitutionally, assisted by a Sunni Prime Minister and a unified Government. Shimon Peres and I are in agreement on the situation in Lebanon. And when we come to Lebanon no one in Israel will object. I add that I want to assemble a unified force to expel the Syrians” (Menargues 2004: 210).

With the Israeli invasion, everything changed, paving the way for new possibilities in the presidential campaign. Under normal conditions Bashir’s presidential triumph was difficult. What was unacceptable few months ago became possible after Israel occupied the first Arab capital, Beirut. On 30 June 1982, Bashir received an official invitation to visit
Saudi Arabia from an Arab Ministerial Committee assembled to discuss the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. This committee included representatives from Saudi Arabia, Syria, the PLO, Algeria, Kuwait and Lebanon. US organized Gemayel’s trip. It was the first ‘Arab Acknowledgment’ of the Lebanese Forces and an indirect acknowledgment of Bashir’s nomination to the presidency (Pakradoni 2001: 43). Meanwhile, Pakradoni lobbied for Bashir with Damascus, and met with the Syrian Vice President Abdel Halim Khaddam on 20 June 1982, informing him that Bashir will declare his nomination and that his success is highly possible. Khaddam replied: “Think again Karim”. They agreed however to stay in contact and met again on August 16 a week before Bashir was elected in the presence of two members in the Phalange party, George Saade and Joseph Abou Khalil (Ibid: 44). At the time, Syria did not enjoy a strong influence in the selection of the Lebanese president, and was only informed of the nomination decision.

Philipe Habib, the American presidential envoy to the Middle East, played a crucial role in Bashir’s election. The Druze leader Walid Joumblatt said to Habib that “you are now part of the system” (Boykin 2002: 337). Habib advised President Sarkis to stay in office for another year until things settled down, but Sarkis refused. The Lebanese Ambassador to the UN Ghassan Tueni, later commented that “Habib did not object to Bashir as much as he thought he had be” (Ibid). Habib and the US Ambassador to Lebanon, Robert Dylan, were both convinced that there was only one person capable of unifying Lebanon and that was Bashir. Ten days later the Israeli invasion began. A secret meeting was held at the US Embassy in Yarze on 16 June 1982. It included Robert Dylan, Philipe Habib, his assistant Maurice Draper, and Bashir Gemayel. During the meeting Habib asked everyone to leave him alone with Bashir. He then told him that: “the US has decided to support your nomination for the presidency; we will take care of Saudi Arabia and the Muslims here. We only ask you to help us with your behavior. You are the only one
Bashir was elected on 23 August 1982 and assassinated on 14 September. The following day the Political Bureau of the Phalange Party unanimously nominated Amine Gemayel for the presidency. The only other contender for the presidency was Chamoun. Foreign intervention again played a big role in Amine’s election. On 16 September, the Israeli Defense Minister Ariel Sharon went to Bikfaya to pay respects and to secure guarantees that Amine was committed to Bashir’s policy. Sharon met with Pierre and Amine Gemayel. Both confirmed to him their commitment. Consequently, the Israel Government rapidly supported Amine.

The day after Bashir’s assassination, Sharon met with the leaders of the Lebanese Forces. He informed them of three possible scenarios: either a transitional government led by a Maronite is formed to carry out executive duties, or parliament convenes to elect a new president, or term of President Elias Sarkis is extended. Sharon added: “do your best to constitutionally gain power. If you fail, we will support you, but beware: time is short. The Americans are confused whether to extend for Sarkis or nominate Camille Chamoun for presidency. Their hesitation will not last long. Be smart in dealing with them, we spent months convincing them that Bashir was a good choice, and that Maronites were a stabilizing factor in Lebanon. This calls for haste. Act legitimately”. (Ibid: 408).

US ultimately supported Amine rather than Chamoun. President Ronald Reagan decided to send a multi-national force to Beirut again to stabilize the situation and enforce the American proposal and resolve the crisis in Lebanon. France preferred an extension of Sarkis’s term, but the latter strongly refused and made it clear that he will not stay another minute after the end of his term on 23 September. As for Syria, it acted composedly and did
not commit to the claim that Amine was better than Bashir, while unofficially keeping doors open to cooperate with the former without having to actually approve his candidacy (Pakradoni 2001: 9-10). The Syrians instructed President Suleiman Frangieh to vote for Amine, after they granted the latter their approval during a meeting inside a car in Dahrel Baydar, with head of Syrian Intelligence in Lebanese colonel Mohamad Ghanem. “Amine committed to liberating Lebanon from Israeli occupation, maintaining national unity, and committing to Arab consensus regarding the conflict with Israel” (Nassif 2010).

President Amine ruled with unconditional support from US until the dispute between him and the Progressive Socialist Party’s leader (PSP), Walid Joumblatt and the leader of Amal Movement, Nabih Birri, erupted. His power began to fade rapidly after the ‘Mountain War’ in late 1983 and the ‘February 6 Uprising’ in 1984, after which the Americans evacuated Lebanon and began to reassess their diplomacy in light of the new balance of powers that emerged. Secretary of State George Schultz described Lebanon in 1984 as ‘infected by the plague’, calling for it to be quarantined (Nassif 2007).

Similar to previous elections, war generated the president. It is to be noted that in 1982, the war was not only between local factions, but included an Israeli invasion of the Lebanese territory. Although such invasion provided strong support for Bashir Gemayel, he was clearly aware that the lack of Arab approval will prevent him from ruling. Regional factor played a decisive role in choosing the president, and prevented any solo-player from dominating the Lebanese scene. After Bashir’s assassination, the Syrians, suffering from a dented power because of the invasion, lacked alternatives and thus supported Amine for the presidency. At the same time, they refused to submit to the balance of powers, and required pledges before granting Amine their approval.
When President Amine Gemayel’s constitutional mandate ended in September 1988, no agreement for a successor was in place. Consequently, he went to Damascus on September 21 to meet with Syrian President Hafez Assad. The purpose of his visit was to reach an agreement on who should be president next, and save the situation in Lebanon from total collapse. Traditionally, the sitting president contributes to the selection of his successor, but clearly Gemayel was not the only player in the elections. There was also Syria and its allies in Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, the United States of America, the Lebanese Forces, the Lebanese Army and the Maronite Patriarch. Syria wanted to control Lebanon and legitimize the presence of its army. It also expected the next president to go through with political reforms and accept the principle of distinctive relations between the two neighboring Arab states. As for Washington, it was looking for a convenient president who could be acceptable by the Syrians and the Christians (including the President of the Republic, the Lebanese Forces and the Lebanese Army). The nominated candidate would then be known as the ‘compromise president’ (Pakradoni 2001: 11).

The Gemayel-Assad summit discussed the possibility of electing Micheal Daher, a parliament member, to the Presidency according to the agreement between President Assad and the American Envoy Richard Murphy in the Syrian capital on September 18. The meeting lasted for nine hours, with the name of Daher, nominated by Syrian Vice President Abdel Halim Khaddam, as the sole candidate for presidency the Syrians were willing to accept. It was rejected by Christian leaders, namely President Gemayel, the Maronite Patriarch, the Army Commander and Lebanese Forces’ Samir Geagea, who were neither concerned with regional-international understandings, nor with this agreement. These parties were capable of hindering any settlement that did not fit their interests. In fact, this
was the first time an internal force succeeds to impede an international-regional agreement on the presidential issue. This pushed Murphy on September 18 to threaten the Christians after his return from Damascus by saying ‘Micheal Daher or chaos’ (Nassif 1995: 5). When Gemayel left for Damascus, General Michel Aoun, the Army commander, took the initiative and called Samir Geagea, the Lebanese forces leader. They met for the first time after the first rupture, which began on 27 September 1986 after the assassination of Colonel Khalil Kanaan, commander of the Fifth Brigade in the Army, which Aoun accused the Lebanese Forces of plotting and executing. They agreed on rejecting the nomination of Daher for the Presidency. When word reached Damascus about the meeting, Assad understood then that Gemayel no longer had any influence and that there was no point in making agreements with him, an assumption Gemayel also realized. He returned from Damascus disappointed. It was the last attempt to resolve the problem of selecting a successor with Syrian approval. Deputy Pierre Helou later recounted “Assad was in the first two hours inclined to listen but as for the next two hours, they were very bad” (Ibid: 15).

Gemayel’s presidency came to an end on 22 September 1988 at midnight. He left the presidential palace without a president. Fifteen minutes before midnight, he issued his last decree, appointing the Army Commander Michel Aoun as head of an interim government. Aoun formed a six-member government, whose ministers were the generals of the military council of the Lebanese army. Muslim members promptly resigned their posts. The transitional government decree raised a constitutional debate for two reasons: Article 62 of the constitution set the circumstances in which the Council of Ministers is assigned the powers vested in the President of the Republic which could be “death, resignation, accusations of constitutional breach, commitment of an act of high treason, sickness or incapacity to fulfill his responsibilities”. These circumstances did not apply on President
Gemayel. The second reason relates to the promulgation of a decree for an interim government in the presence of an existing one that refused to leave, although it had already resigned. However, Syria supported the government led by Selim Hoss benefiting from the internal turmoil that did not allow the formation of a new government. As a result, Lebanon entered a period of constitutional vacuum managed by two governments, one headed by General Aoun, the other by Selim Hoss.

Understanding how critical the foreign consensus was for the selection of the Lebanese president, lacking such an agreement lead to a constitutional void. Failure to adopt a name approved by regional and international powers in 1989 resulted in Amine Gemayel leaving the presidential palace without handing in the power to a legitimate successor.

3.6 Muawad’s Election and Assassination: The End of the American-Syrian Confrontation

On 14 March 1989, Michel Aoun waged the ‘war of liberation’ to expel the Syrian Army out of Lebanon. The US disapproved of Aoun’s methods. They agreed with him on the principle of liberation yet objected to the manner and timing of the destructive confrontation. The differences between them were not only on the means utilized but also on the objectives. Aoun wanted to expel the Syrians from Lebanon while the Americans saw that there was no opportunity for such. The decision for peace in the region had not yet matured. It required an additional year and another major event in the region: the Second Gulf War in 1990. Until that time the Americans wanted Lebanon to remain stable and calm. They wanted the election of a new president to inherit the Military Government and
end the confrontation with the Syrians. That would undermine Aoun’s objectives and isolate him (Ibid: 11). In response to this controversy Aoun provoked the Christians in the areas under his influence. In 21 April 1989, citizens demonstrated in the vicinity of the American Embassy in Awkar in order to put pressure on the American Administration to request support for Aoun’s plans for ‘Liberation’. Prior to the demonstrations the Military Government decided to deport the First Secretary of the American Embassy, Daniel Simpson, after he had developed animosities with the Christian leaders in addition to Bkirki after emphasizing Micheal Daher as a Syrian-American ‘compromise candidate’ (Ibid).

At that time, Syria was looking for a president to put an end to Aoun’s government by force. Michel Edde argues that he was tested by the Syrian leaders and failed. He visited Damascus accompanied by three of Syria’s Lebanese allies, Michel Smaha, Sami Khatib and Mohsen Dalloul who were trying to promote his name there. However, in a meeting with the Chief of Staff of the Syrian Army Hikmat Shehabi, Edde said replying to a question on resolving the Aoun problem that he does not encourage Syria to support a military operation against the Maronites. He was against ending Aoun’s phenomenon by force. At the end of the meeting Dalloul and Smaha told him ‘you lost the presidency’, because he disagreed with the Syrians on waging war against (Ibid: 17).

In June 1989, three months prior to the Ta’if Agreement signing in Saudi Arabia which will put an end to the civil war in Lebanon, Renee Muawad revealed his secret to his wife, Nayla, and Former Minister Fouad Butros who said that the information presented by Rene Muawad made him completely sure that he was going to be elected President of the Republic. At Ta’if, Muawad constantly missed Lebanese parliamentary meetings. None of his colleagues knew about his movements in Ta’if or Jeddah. It was later uncovered that two meetings were held secretly from other deputies, one between Muawad and King
Fahed, and another with the Royal family (Nassif and Bou Monsef 1998: 100). What helped his position with the US and the Saudis at the time were his close relations with a group of Lebanese wealthy businessmen. Yet, he still needed Syrian approval which was orchestrated by the Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament Hussein Husseini, noting that Muawad’s name had already been recommended in 1988 by both Patriarch Sfeir and President Gemayel to the Americans and the Syrians (Ibid: 16).

Muawad was elected president on 5 October 1989 and assassinated on November 22. After the assassination, Husseini visited Damascus to convince Syrian officials to nominate Pierre Helou. He reportedly spent the whole night trying to convince Vice President Abdel Halim Khaddam who already had Elias Hrawi in mind, who was the original candidate of the Syrians before Muawad. When Husseini’s mission was accomplished he returned to Lebanon. Helou declined to nominate himself as he feared to pay the price of opposing Michel Aoun, something Hrawi was ready to do (Nassif 1995: 17). In the wake of Helou’s reluctance, nominating Hrawi became a reality and he was elected.

Popular support for General Aoun escalated, while rival demonstrations were launched in favor of Geagea. The division within East Beirut culminated in the eruption of conflict between the Lebanese Army and the Lebanese Forces on 31 January 1990. These inter-Maronite conflicts weakened the capacity of the two forces, singular and joined, to impact or influence on the political compromise that was in the process of implementation (Krayem 2001: 7). Domestic positions and foreign plans overlapped. Many Arab and Western mediations went in vain. Aoun firmly opposed the Tai’f Agreement approved by both Patriarch Nasrallah Sfeir and the Lebanese Forces, and was betting on significant variable changes which did not turn out in his favor.
On 2 August 1990, Iraq swiftly invaded and occupied Kuwait. The United States mobilized one of the greatest military coalitions in history with the consent of the superpowers. Embarrassed, American president George Bush sought to expand his alliances especially with Arab countries, among which Syria held a distinctive position due to its historical and traditional feud with neighboring Iraq. Damascus greatly benefited from Washington’s need. In mid August Assad met with the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, John Kelly who handed him a message from Bush. On September 13th and for the first time, the Minister of Foreign Affairs James Baker visited Damascus. He held a long meeting with the Syrian President during which they reached an understanding on how to deal with crises in the Gulf and Lebanon. Washington agreed to overthrow Michel Aoun as per Syrian conditions (Pakradoni 2001: 223). On 13 October 1990, and at the request of the Lebanese Government, the Syrian Army launched a military operation which ended with General Aoun requesting political asylum at the French Embassy. This started a new era under the Syrian tutelage gained from an American green light.

3.7 Lebanon under the Syrian Tutelage and an American Green Light

Elias Hrawi undertook a radical shift in Lebanon under the banner of the Ta’if Agreement. Perhaps the only constant at that time was his close relationship with Syria and the careful coordination with its president in every relevant aspect of foreign and domestic politics. He did not deny that the ambition to gain the confidence of the Syrian President pushed him, up until June 1990, to hold 19 summit meetings with Assad and other Syrian officials in Damascus. Most were not revealed so as not to ignite internal sensitivities between Muslims and Christians (Nassif and Bou Monsef 1998: 9). The first opportunity to gain Assad’s trust arose in October 1990, when regional issues came to light. The Second
Gulf War gave the green light to militarily overthrow General Aoun. Hrawi surprised Syria by legitimizing the Syrian Army’s entry into East of Beirut, then controlled by Aoun. Hrawi sent his son-in-law Fares Boueiz to Damascus asking for official support from the Syrian Army after holding two summits on August 19 and September 29, 1990. Full coordination on all the details of the battle was discussed. At 6 am on Saturday 13th of October, operations were launched, and Syrian fighter jets soared over the Presidential Palace in Baabda (Ibid: 10). In short, the Syrians possessed the Lebanese file without any rival, especially after they entered the eastern regions that were previously out of their military control.

In 1995 it was again time for presidential elections. The country reached the constitutional deadline of 23 September to elect a new president. Hrawi was constantly repeating that he did not want to extend his term, although discreetly aiming for it the most. The extension was agreed upon under Syrian imposition. However, there had been a struggle to amend Article 49 of the Constitution which uncovered two different trends within the country: the first included Prime Minister Rafic Harriri and Hrawi, who wanted the amendment to allow the extension of Hrawi’s term, while the second included the speaker of the Parliament Nabih Berri and minister Suleiman Frangieh, who pushed for an amendment allowing the Commander of the Army Emile Lahoud to compete for the presidency. This dispute continued until October 10 when President Hafez Assad ended it by reporting to Al-Ahram Egyptian Newspaper that there is agreement in Lebanon for the extension of Hrawi’s term. In effect the Lebanese did not need their parliament to meet and elect their president, as Syrian President Hafez Assad had publicly declared the name of the president to the media in an unprecedented step in Lebanon. The struggle for the constitutional amendment was the first occasion in which Lahoud’s name was suggested for
the presidency, and his name remained in circulation even after the extension for Hrawi until the 1998 elections when he was elected president, as if the amendment was just a preface to elect him 6 years later.

As was the decision to elect Hrawi made by the Syrians in 1989, so was the 3-year extension of his term in 1995. As for the Americans, they were less enthusiastic in negotiating and trading (Ibid: 19). The spokesperson for the American State Department, Nicolas Burns, stated that “I do not comment on any internal affairs of any country except if this matter concerns us and I think it would be unwise to comment on the political situation in Lebanon”(…). The French did not declare a clear opinion on this issue, but claimed that this is a Lebanese internal matter, and that it was the responsibility of the Lebanese Parliament to decide freely the mode of the election – as reported in Annahar newspaper of 20 October 1995.

It was apparent that Syria was the sole decider of the Lebanese president in the post Ta’if period, especially since it controlled the political situation in Lebanon and after the United States had let it go after the end of the Gulf War. The situation improved for the Syrians after their political foes were neutralized, the Commander of the Lebanese Forces was imprisoned in 1994, Amin Gemayel resided in Paris as a voluntary exile since 6 October 1988, and Michel Aoun was exiled in 1991 to France as agreed upon between French and Lebanese authorities. Consequently, no real Christian opposition existed. This was evident in the 1992 parliamentary elections when Christians refrained from participating.
3.8 Conclusion

The election of the Lebanese President was never a choice of the Lebanese. Although the system in Lebanon is parliamentary-democracy whereby elected deputies elect the president of the republic, this is but a formal procedure because the president is chosen by influential Arab and Western powers. Thus the parliamentary meeting convening to elect the president is merely perfunctory, to legitimize this agreement. This scenario repeats itself every six years, unless a renewal or extension of the mandate of the current president is considered an alternate option. Any likely changes to this tradition are a subject agreement between regional and international players whose consent translates into the election of a new president, who rules for 6 years, and if necessary, for further time.

Yet, regional players changed as the Arab leadership moved from Egypt’s Jamal Abdel Nasser to Syria’s Hafez Assad. Both countries played crucial roles in the selection of Lebanese presidents along with another regional player, Israel, who managed to impose two presidents during their occupation of Lebanon in 1982. Nevertheless, there was always an American approval that must have converging interests when determining the name of the next president. In this sense, the election of the president results from intersecting international and regional interests, linked in part with the interests of the local players, thus increasing the influence of external powers in naming the candidate.

However, external intervention in presidential election is an example of international and regional impact over politics in Lebanon. It is the outcome of the role performed by external actors in dictating the power sharing formula in this country. The next chapter will focus on this issue by highlighting circumstances that led to both the Ta’if and Doha Agreements. It will also mark the major changes achieved on the internal level in comparison with the first power sharing formula since independence, the National Pact.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE TA’IF AGREEMENT: A NEW POWER SHARING FORMULA

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the Ta’if Agreement, known as the Charter of National Reconciliation, signed on 22 October 1989. This agreement ended fifteen years of civil war in Lebanon. It demonstrates how the Ta’if Accord amended the power sharing formula that was based on the 1943 National Pact and had regulated politics in Lebanon for almost thirty-three years (1943-1975), but failed at the end to provide a long-lasting peace. This chapter thus discusses the major changes introduced in the Ta’if Agreement which altered Lebanon’s power sharing formula. It also highlights the regional and international circumstances that led to the Ta’if Agreement. Consequently, this chapter will shed light on international and regional changes, starting with the attack of 11 September 2001 on New York and Washington, and the ‘War on Terrorism’ that followed, leading to the invasion of Afghanistan and, two years later, Iraq. It will show how these events led to major shifts in international and regional alliances, which affected the Lebanese scene. It will as well discuss the circumstances leading to UN Security Council Resolution 1559, issued by the Security Council on 2 September 2004, calling for the democratic election of the Lebanese president, in addition to the withdrawal of all foreign force, and the disarmament of remaining Lebanese militias. The resolution forced the withdrawal of Syrian Armed Forces and its intelligence apparatus from Lebanon, thus marking an end to years of tutelage. However, this resolution was not implemented had it not been for the assassination of the former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafic Hariri on 14 February 2005. Since then, Lebanon has entered a new era of instability, and witnessed another institutional void after the end of
Emile Lahoud’s mandate. Lebanon required a new agreement to settle this crisis and elect a new president. These developments, accompanied by other incidents, the most serious being the clashes of May 2008 between opposing Lebanese factions, paved the way for the Doha Agreement.

4.2 The Ta’if Agreement: A Power Sharing Formula Imposed by External Forces

Undoubtedly, the Lebanese civil war ended only when favorable regional and international conditions paved the way for a resolution of the crisis through the signing of the Ta’if Agreement (Irani 2008: 12). The timing of this agreement can only be explained with reference to regional struggles (Kerr 2005: 157). This was obvious knowing that in the course of the Lebanese war several attempts were made to settle the conflict. Lebanese parties had put forward more than seventy reform proposals. Similar attempts were also made by regional and international mediators. The main efforts at the regional level were made by Syria, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, while at the international level the US, France, Germany and the Vatican exerted an important role at stopping the bloodshed (Irani 2008: 12). However, two important factors made these attempts fruitless: First, the international and regional conditions were not ripe enough to put an end to the Lebanese crisis. Second, the solution cannot be achieved through the wishes of the regional or the international players in isolation from each other. A consensus among these players was necessary to ensure the success of any agreement and to prevent any player from sabotaging the effort. Accordingly, “Lebanon had to wait for the ripe moment when domestic, regional, and international factors converged to end the war, and allow the negotiation and implementation of a new power sharing agreement” (Salloukh 2008: 286). The Ta’if Agreement was presented to the Lebanese as a package deal based on two requirements: It
ended the war but with the acceptance of incomplete sovereignty for a considerable period of time, especially that the Lebanese could not wait any longer for the regional conflict to be resolved; nor did they a choice to isolate the aspect of the conflicts from its regional dimensions (Krayem 2003: 11). Thus, Ta’if was regarded as a synthesis of rather conflicting interests and ideas. It gained the status of a process rather than a long-term fixed agreement. One must realize that implementing it in the initial form would have lead to further conflict. Therefore, the need emerged “for a creative interpretation of the basic document making the formula flexible enough to permit its own transformation” (Ibid).

The Ta’if Agreement, negotiated in an atmosphere of urgency and crisis in the wake of Aoun’s ‘war of deliberation’, as discussed in the previous chapter, resulted from a “major horse-trading between the Americans and Syrians with a Saudi broker role” (Irani 2008: 12). Since 1976 the Syrian regime had become the ultimate player in Lebanese politics. Its troops that entered Lebanon under the Arab Defense Forces (ADF) did not secure the country, even though its mandate expired in 1982 (Kerr 2005: 168). Accordingly, regional and international pressure was exerted on the Syrian regime to put an end to the Lebanese crisis. These pressures were mainly exercised by France and the Arab Tripartite Committee which was formed following the Casablanca Summit in May 1989. This Committee, which included the leaders of Saudi Arabia, Morocco and Algeria, formulated a document containing suggestions for political reforms in Lebanon and presented it to the 62 deputies of the Lebanese parliament who gathered in the city of Ta’if in Saudi Arabia in order to find a solution to the Lebanese conflict (Erlich 2005).

The Ta’if Agreement was subjected to many criticisms: First of all, the Lebanese parliament was considered as a non-representative body especially that its remaining deputies that negotiated the agreement were elected in 1972, before the outbreak of the civil
war. Second, the rumor at the time was that the agreement, which the Lebanese were about to negotiate, had been translated from English to Arabic just in time for the conference (Kerr 2005: 168). Nevertheless, the Ta’if Agreement is considered of great historical value for Lebanon. “It is the first general, written agreement among a broad spectrum of parties, militias, and leaders in Lebanon on fundamental political issues since the beginning of the war in 1975” (Salem 2001). It ended the war, paved the way for the re-establishment of a workable state and a renewed political system (Ibid). Our concern with the Ta’if Agreement in this thesis is on how it dealt with two main issues: restoring the power sharing formula after the end of the civil war, and the institutionalization of sectarianism. No doubt any meaningful discussion should take into consideration the regional and international factors without which the agreement would not have been achieved.

At the international level, the US wanted to solve the Lebanese conflict to contain its spill-over effects on the region. At the time, US-Syrian relations were not good. On another hand, Syria could not afford to remain in international isolation forever (Kerr 2005: 169). Regionally, Saudi Arabia aimed to reduce Syrian dominance in Lebanon, considering itself the balancing Arab power vis-à-vis Syria. Hence, it played a peace broker role in the Middle East and offered support to the Lebanese deputies (Erlish 2005) who were invited to endorse the agreement. The main concern of Saudi Arabia was to reinstate “the traditional elites to power in Lebanon, particularly the Sunni community, whose position had been hijacked by Syria during the war” (Kerr 2005: 169). However, the agreement could not succeed without the approval of the Syrians who enjoyed military power and presence over Lebanese territories. This explains the reasons behind the visit of the Saudi Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal to Damascus to hold consultations with the Syrians at the end of the discussions in Ta’if. He assured the Syrians that their strategic interests in Lebanon would not be harmed. Moreover, he guaranteed that the Ta’if Agreement would express Syria’s
position as the key power in Lebanon (Erlish 2005). Accordingly, “the Ta’if Agreement initiated a new era of internationally legitimized and unfettered Syrian hegemonic control in Lebanon. It was this external variable, backed by regional and international support that ended the civil war and brokered a return to power sharing” (Kerr 2005: 157). The Ta’if Agreement was thus approved and blessed by the international community. The USA and the USSR expressed the international community’s support in a Summit meeting in Malta. The United Nations Security Council also declared on October 31, 1989 its support of the agreement (Krayem 2003: 10).

At the internal level, the Ta’if Agreement introduced many amendments to the power sharing formula in Lebanon. The presidency was no more the “single most powerful office” (Salloukh 2008: 286) since Ta’if shifted the executives powers of the president to the Council of Ministers in its collective capacity. Executive power is no more confined to the Maronite President; it is distributed through the Council of Ministers, the highest executive body of the state, where all communities can claim representation (Salem 2001). However, with the wide array of constitutional powers given to the Prime Minister, Ta’if was regarded as taking powers from the Maronites and giving them to the Sunni. After all, collective power sharing within the Council of Ministers was greatly in the hand of its head, who enjoyed the authority of convening the ministers, and the ultimate authority of a co-signature with the President on the ministerial decrees. Moreover, Shia prerogatives in the political structure improved by extending the Speaker’s term of office from one year, to a four year renewable tenure. This change enhanced the speaker’s influence as he could play a key role in the formation of the government without being open to the political pressures and bargaining to which a one-year mandate had left him susceptible (Kerr 2005: 164). However, the Shia were not pleased by the way their role was strengthened, considering that what they received constitutionally did not match their demand for a share of power
commensurate with their status as the largest confessional group in the country (Salem 2001). This issue would re-emerge in the Doha Agreement in 2008.

Muslims benefited from Ta’if at the expense of Christians, especially Sunnis vis-à-vis Maronites. This can only be true compared to their traditional position guaranteed in the National Pact of 1943. However, regarding their demographic reality that witnessed a sharp decline during the 1975 War, the proportional distribution of parliamentary seats and first-level posts within the public administration between Muslims and Christians, the latter enjoyed a constitutional position disproportionate to their demographic strength. They controlled the Maronite presidency and retained parity in Parliament (Kerr 2005:161). The political representation in the Chamber of Deputies between Christians and Muslims was amended and the 6:5 Christian-Muslim quota was replaced with parity. It remains to be noted that although the Ta’if Agreement led to the increase of parliamentary seats from 99 to 108 equally distributed between Muslims and Christians, Syrian influence managed to increase the number to 128, with most of the remaining vacancies appointed directly by the most influential player on the Lebanese scene at that time, Syrian President Hafez Assad.

Saudi and Syrian fingerprints were evident in the distribution of the sectarian quotas in the Ta’if Agreement. The Saudis aimed at maintaining a strong Sunni position in government in order to keep the old equilibrium, considering themselves to be the guardians of Lebanon’s Sunnis. On the other hand, the Syrians elevated the Shia without allowing them to politically prevail over the Maronites or the Sunnis, and thus maintaining a long-lasting balance between growing Lebanese factions. Therefore, theoretically, Muslim rights were taken from the unwritten Pact and put into the text of the Constitution for the first time (Ibid).
In this new re-distribution of power, the drafters of the Ta’if Agreement hoped to create a balance between the three Presidencies: the Maronite head of the Republic, the Sunni Prime Minister, and the Shia Speaker of Parliament. Thus a *troika* was created, one that gradually became the effective decision-making nucleus of the political system, enjoying the power of a decisive and executive authority. Officially, however, the organ that formally expresses the government will is the cabinet of ministers in its new capacity (Salem 2001). In fact, the basic character of the Lebanese political system did not witness a fundamental change with the Ta’if Agreement. Although it created a new balance of power, the new-born agreement did not change the way the political system works. “It was a change *in regime* not a change *of regime*” (Di Mauro 2008: 458). Although it underlined a desire for future de-confessionalisation, it institutionalized the sectarian system that had prevailed in Lebanon before the 1975 war. Consequently, it contained a clear contradiction between the aspiration to abolish sectarianism and its implementation (Rais 2008). Nevertheless, it introduced a “more equitable confessional formula as compared to the National pact of 1943” (Salem 2001).

Ta’if marked no radical break with the past; it redefined the unwritten National Pact that “remains in effect, with the three main positions of power in Lebanon still being reserved for the three main communities” (Kerr 2005: 167). The unwritten National Pact was succeeded by a new written agreement. It is not a lasting solution to Lebanon’s conflicts, rather an internal framework for peace (Jabra and Jabra 2001: 83).

However, Ta’if would not have succeeded had it not been for the full implementation of Syrian conditions. It was well known that this was an agreement between the Americans and the Syrians through the Saudis. “While there were other regional and international interests being played out during the negotiations, every actor
knew the solution had to be Syrian one, yet almost all wanted to dilute Syria’s influence and Arabise the arrangements as much as possible” (Kerr 2005:169). Syria was in a strong position especially that the US needed to implement any agreement regarding the settlement of the Lebanese conflict. Moreover, Syrian President Hafez Assad flexed his muscles militarily until any linkage between Syrian troop’s withdrawal and political reform was dropped (Ibid). Accordingly, the Ta’if Agreement legitimized the Syrian presence inside Lebanon; the country was left under *de facto* Syrian control. It provided Syria with the freedom to assist the new Lebanese government in asserting its authority over the entire country, and re-establishing its territorial integrity. Such measures provided Syria with a formal right to keep its troops in Lebanon without intervention from any external force (Rais 2008). Moreover, the agreement did not define any specific date for the Syrian troops’ withdrawal from Lebanese territory. Instead, it mentioned the redeployment of Syrian troops to the Bekaa area two years after the implementation of domestic political reforms. Who had the right to determine whether domestic political reforms and their implementation were successfully achieved? The answer was obviously Syria, who received a green light to keep its forces in Lebanon as long as it wished, especially that the future of its mission and the presence on its troops on Lebanese territories was deemed as a bilateral issue between the Syrians and the Lebanese. Most importantly, the Ta’if Agreement linked Lebanon to Syria by ‘special relations’ and common interests through policy coordination. As a result, Lebanon committed to a pro-Syrian foreign policy alignment at the regional and international level (Salloukh 2008: 288). “When many of the Christians disagreed and protested about the exclusion of a time frame from the Agreement, Prince Faisal (Saudi Foreign Minister) spelt the situation out to them: “you either take it, or you break it”“ (Kerr 2005: 168). Muslims, who would have appreciated such a Lebanese-
Syrian relationship in 1943, were no longer in the same position. Many of their deputies were frightened to voice their disagreement about the Syrian position in Lebanon (Ibid).

The Ta’if Agreement amended thirty-one important constitutional provisions which were approved by the Lebanese Parliament on 21 August 1990. They were signed into law by President Elias Hrawi on 21 September 1990 (Krayem 2003: 12), who was elected directly after the assassination of Muawad. War was over. Lebanon now had a new power sharing formula drawn up by external forces. Moreover, Syria reinforced its hegemony over Lebanon through its alliance with the members of the troika. In fact, the understanding among these three presidents as individuals indicated that “the three institutions, qua institutions, have paled in importance” (Ibid: 16). The Ta’if Agreement that replaced the rule of the individual by the rule of the institutions became of a lesser importance with this fundamental contradiction. In sum, the Ta’if Agreement offered on paper an idealistic elite cartel based on cooperation. Yet, its realization depended on “a far-fetched and unrealistic capacity of elite commitment to concordant models of behavior” (Muhlbacher 2009: 330).

Under Syrian dominance, sanctioned by regional and international approval, it became extremely difficult for communities that refused to be co-opted by the system to call for external protection. In other words, “communal groups which refused to be assimilated by the rising Lebanese-Syrian constellation were no longer able to protect their political particularities” (Ibid). Post-war Lebanon was marked by dividing the Lebanese community into dominating pro-Syrian and marginalized anti-Syrian factions through forming grand coalitions that did not reflect all segmental orientations. Accordingly, “once Lebanese communities fail to safeguard their cohesiveness and intra-segmental cleavages intensify, communal veto powers automatically lose their efficiency” (Ibid: 343).
The Ta’if Agreement played a major role in restoring the government and re-establishing a country torn by civil war from 1975 to 1990. However, it formed additional evidence to external intervention in establishing a new power sharing formula. In fact the signing of the Ta’if Agreement would not have been possible without regional and international consensus which fixed its timing and shaped its content. Moreover, it was uncertain if this agreement would be implemented the way it did had it not been for the outbreak of the Second Gulf War as a repercussion to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1991. The US requested Syrian approval to join the international coalition against Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, and in response, they were willing to offer Syria complete tutelage over Lebanon.

4.3 Emile Lahoud’s Presidency and Syria’s Control and Decline

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Elias Hrawi was elected following the assassination of Renee Muawad in 1989. His six-year term was extended in 1995, following Syrian demand from the Lebanese executive and legislative authorities, to amend the constitutions that forbade the renewal of the presidential term. On 24 November 1998, the election of Army Commander General Emile Lahoud was a verification of Syria’s control over Lebanon. Even though the constitutional period had passed into its second week without a resolution, all signs indicated that Lahoud would be the next president. It became a matter of time until the Syrians gave their final word. This period of waiting for parliament to elect the president, and in midst of constitutional constraints, led to great turmoil in the country until rumors of amending Article 49 emerged again. But this matter was quickly resolved in the meeting held between the Syrian and Lebanese Presidents,
Hafez Assad and Elias Hrawi, on October 5. In the meantime Turkey was threatening to wage war against Syria, and assembled its troops along the common borders. The meeting between Assad and Hrawi, held in the form of an honorary lunch banquet for the Lebanese president, convened in the presence of Syrian officials and lasted seven hours, after which a closed session paired both Presidents.

After his return to Baabda, Hrawi received his son-in-law Fares Boueiz who declared to the press that “everything has been resolved”. Then Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, called Lahoud and “congratulated him” on his selection for the presidency, as reported on the front page of Annahar newspaper on 6 October 1998. On October 15, Lahoud was elected president for a six years term. Some believed that Turkish threats to Syrian, and American efforts to reinitiate peace negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis, halted by the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and their possible implications on the Arabs and Syrians, would definitely affect the latter’s presidential selection. Still the Syrians did hold Lebanon with an iron grip, so tight that they had the only say in choosing the head of state in 1998. The Lebanese, hoping to have an opinion in choosing their president, had to wait for the end of Lahoud’s term in 2004, which would be accompanied by changes in regional and international balances, with direct implications on Lebanon’s internal affairs.

Even though Syria was able to impose an extension for President Lahoud in 2004, it was regarded by some as a suicidal move for which Syria paid a great political price, and indeed that was the case. Although President Hafez Assad selected President Lahoud in 1998, it was Bashar Assad, heir to the presidency after his father passed away in July 2000, who pushed for an extension of Lahoud’s term. At many stages during the six years of Lahoud’s term, many regional and international developments took place. The turning
point was the terrorist attacks of September 11 on New York and Washington, that introduced a new and evolving geo-political atmosphere in the Middle East, labeled the ‘War on Terrorism’. The US formed a wide western coalition to invade Afghanistan in 2002, aiming to topple the extremist Muslim Taliban Movement that ruled the country with an iron military and social grip, and that harbored the leader of Al-Qaeda Osama Bin Laden, an even more brutal organization that the Americans believed was responsible for the deadly terrorist attacks. As ‘phase two’ of such war, a US-led coalition invaded Iraq in 2003 after more than a decade of international sanctions, and toppled in no more than three weeks, the rigid regime of Saddam Hussein. Thousands of American troops were now positioned in Iraq, who shares long unmonitored borders with Syria (Erlich 2005). Hence, the American green light for Syria as the sole player on the Lebanese political scene turned red, and Syria began to lose ground in Lebanon, especially after it refused to cooperate with the western coalition countries in Iraq in 2003, in contradiction to its position in 1990.

It became evident that Lebanon was heading towards a period of intense competition with broader regional ramifications. The US wanted to “reshuffle the geopolitics of the Middle East and neutralize Israel’s enemies” (Salloukh 2009: 139). Tactics and strategies changed. New policies required a new line of allegiances that Bashar Assad refused to acknowledge or recognize. Syria refused to cooperate with the US on the two main regional issues: Iraq and the occupied Palestinian territories. Consequently, Washington decided to undermine Syria’s control over Lebanon, which it historically considered as its own political and security backyard. “The Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty restoration Act introduced by Congress on 12 April 2003 was part of this strategy” (Ibid). US pressure against Syria climaxed with the promulgation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1559 on 2 September 2004. This resolution was the
result of American and French diplomatic cooperation. It called for an end of the Syrian reign in Lebanon by declaring support “for a free and fair electoral process in Lebanon’s upcoming presidential election conducted according to Lebanese constitutional rules and devised without foreign interference or influence”. It also called on “all remaining foreign forces to withdraw from Lebanon”, and mandated the “disbanding and disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias”. Assad did not choose compromise with the on-growing front to reduce his influence in Lebanon. A geopolitical battle erupted, and the Syrian president decided to go on the offensive by extending the tenure of the Lebanese president, neglecting talk of an impending UN Security Council resolution.

Only one day separated the adoption of Resolution 1559 and the decision by the Lebanese parliament to amend the constitution to allow for a three-year extension of Lahoud’s term. However, the resolution was not implemented and the power of the Syrian sponsorship would not be eroded until the dramatic assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. This assassination created a domestic, regional, and international tidal wave that obliged Syrian troops to evacuate from Lebanese territories after thirty years of domination (Ibid: 140). However, UNSCR 1559 proved to be a tool of inter-communal division rather than a legal instance of international conflict regulation (Muhlbacher 2009: 349). Furthermore, this resolution caused a rift within Lebanese society between two camps: the first included political factions who called for the immediate implementation of its provisions, particularly the points calling for the disarmament of all Lebanese militias, i.e., Hezbollah. The second group strongly opposed the resolution and regarded it as intervention in Lebanese internal affairs, particularly with respect to its call for unimpeded presidential elections. This controversy was aggravated by Hariri’s assassination, and divided the country between two camps: the so-called 8 and 14 March camps. Whereas the
first group included mainly Hezbollah and the Amal movement, and later on Free Patriotic Movement headed by Michel Aoun, the second camp gathered the Future Movement led by Saad Hariri, the Christian parties – but mainly the Phalangists and the Lebanese Force, and the Progressive Socialist Party lead by Walid Joublat.

Parliamentary elections held in June 2005, a few months after Hariri’s assassination, deepened these divisions, carrying them from the streets to constitutional institutions. The first parliament elected after the Syrian withdrawal on 26 April 2005 was divided between an-anti Syrian majority backed by Western powers, mainly US and France, and the opposition allied to Iran and Syria. Lebanon was again the victim of major changes on the international and regional levels which affected it deeply, and posed challenges to its fragile and vulnerable society, and divided it after almost fifteen years of apparent peace and harmony. Lebanon was again transformed into an open society and a fertile ground where regional and international actors battled each other by backing one Lebanese faction against the other. Fourteen politicians and journalists were assassinated between 2005 and 2007.

In sum, then, and although the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon was considered a turning point that could have paved the road toward democratic recovery, sectarian interests were placed ahead of democratic standards and rights; and soon national sentiments were replaced by sectarian chauvinism (Salloukh 2009: 134).

4.4 The Doha Agreement: An Unprecedented Step in Selecting the Lebanese President

The situation became more complicated with the end of Lahoud’s tenure, who was subject to international and partial regional isolation after Hariri’s assassination and the
withdrawal of Syrian forces. However, he refused to resign and insisted on fulfilling his mandate till the last minute. Lahoud’s term ended on 23 November 2007, at time when international and regional disputes peaked. The consequent result was the absence of an international and regional consensus that might allow for the selection of the new Lebanese President. The internal situation was not less complicated and disputes between 8 and 14 March also hindered presidential elections. Lahoud left the presidential palace without a successor on hand. Accordingly, Lebanon witnessed a new constitutional void that will last until a new agreement is signed in Doha on 21 May 2008.

The Doha agreement became a necessity after the clashes that exploded in Beirut and some regions of Mount Lebanon and the North between Hezbollah and its opposition allies, on the one hand, and the Future Movement in Beirut and Druze supporters of Progressive Socialist Party in the Shuf and Aley areas in Mount Lebanon, on the other. The clashes broke out when the government headed by Fuad Siniora, a former Hariri aide and a prominent member of 14 March, issued two decisions to remove Hezbollah’s telecommunications network and the head of airport security, Wafiq Shuqayr. Hezbollah regarded the move as a declaration of war by a government that it labeled ‘unconstitutional’ after the resignation of its five Shia ministers in November 2006. Hezbollah also accused the government of being “instigated and supported by Washington, Saudi Arabia, and Terje Roed-Larsen at the UN, part of an escalatory scheme aimed at dismantling the party’s military wing and prosecuting its leadership” (Salloukh 2009: 145). This limited war, that began on 8 May and lasted for three days, was alarmingly dangerous, since it was the first domestic conflict of such scale since the end of the civil war in 1990. In addition, had they taken longer that they did, the clashes threatened to develop into all-out sectarian strife between the two largest Muslim factions, Sunnis and Shias. This would not have threatened
Lebanon only, but risked spilling over to neighboring Arab countries, especially those with a growing number of Shias.

Between May 16 and May 21, 2008, the Lebanese political scene was present in the Qatari capital Doha. Political leaders who formed the Committee of National Dialogue discussed the details of the situation under direct patronage and involvement of high ranking Qatari officials. Once reached, the Doha Agreement apparently resolved 18 months of political crisis. However, the situation was still precarious in relation to major changes taking place in the Middle East. As mentioned above, variations in the geopolitical situation in the region were in correlation with Iran’s growing position in the region, and its dispute with the international community over its nuclear program.

However, the Doha Agreement was unprecedented in openly naming the next Lebanese president in its first provision. “The parties have agreed on having the Lebanese parliament speaker, on the rules in effect, invite the parliament to convene within 24 hours to elect consensus candidate General Michel Suleiman, knowing that it is the best constitutional method to elect the president under these exceptional circumstances”.

Hence, this agreement bluntly violates the provision of the constitution under the pretext of saving the deteriorating situation in the country. Accordingly, Suleiman was named president even before being elected by parliament, as constitutional procedures require. Although the Lebanese constitution banned the selection of top officials in the public administration without constitutional amendment approved by the parliament, the international and regional consensus on choosing Suleiman, commander of the army at that time, meant that constitutional principles could be shelved, proving once again that foreign intervention in the presidential elections can sometimes overcome constitutional rules and procedures. Suleiman took the oath on 25 May 2008. “The Doha Agreement is thus akin to a regionally brokered sectarian ceasefire, allowing the country and the new
On a certain level, Hezbollah became stronger after the Doha Agreement. It legitimized its powers and influence in the Lebanese system despite the use of force domestically. In fact, “the pro-Western 14 March coalition backed by the United States and Saudi Arabia made a significant concession in giving Hezbollah and its allies veto power” over government decision (Daaboul 2008: 2). Moreover, the disarmament of Hezbollah was not even mentioned in the agreement. This issue was tackled in paragraph four of the agreement but in a veiled way without naming Hezbollah directly. It noted that “the parties commit to abstain from having recourse or resuming the use of weapons and violence in order to record political gains”. However, it postponed the future role and status of Hezbollah’s weapons arsenal future deliberations under a national dialogue to be convened by the new president, a concession to accommodate the demands of the 14 March group. The Christian faction scored a major victory regarding the electoral law. The agreement mentioned that it should be based on the middle-size electoral districts of 1960, with Beirut’s amended to mainly satisfy the electoral strategies of Hariri’s Future Movement (Salloukh 2009: 146). Writing in the International Herald Tribune on 26 May 2008, Ramy Khouri captured the essence of the Doha Accord when he noted that it was “the first concrete example in the Arab world of a negotiated, formal political agreement by local adversaries to share power and make big national decisions collectively while maintaining close strategic relationships with diverse external patrons in the United States, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Syria” (Ibid).

To be sure, however, the Doha Agreement did not address the fundamental problems that plague Lebanon. It did not resolve sectarian conflict, nor did it provide for a more equitable distribution of political power in the country (Ed 2008: 10). It cemented
Hezbollah’s power which will prove difficult to undo with time. Hezbollah’s victory was also a major setback for Saudi Arabia, the champion of the region’s Sunnis, and for the Americans, who lost a major round in their strategic contest with Iran (Ibid).

### 4.5 Conclusion

The Ta’if Agreement was enshrined in the Lebanese constitution through a series of amendments that became an integral part not only of the power sharing formula in Lebanon, but for the distribution of powers and political influence in the country. It represented a major shift in the balance of sectarian powers, thus reflecting the outcome of fifteen years of civil war, as well as changing demographic in Lebanon and geopolitical conditions in the Middle East. On the other hand, the Doha Agreement was regarded as an interim accord. None of its principals and items were incorporated into the constitution. Most of its stipulations served a short-term purpose, including naming the president, the form of the new government, and distribution of ministerial seats among 14 March, the opposition, and the new president. The Doha Agreement has thus introduced new principles into the Lebanese power sharing formula. Some of these principles include the new Shia veto over cabinet formation and decisions, and the precedent of establishing a national unity government.
CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

To anyone who has paid some interest in following Lebanese politics, this small country in the Middle East was the greatest in attracting all kinds of external meddling. Not that external intervention was welcome by the Lebanese: it dictated their constitution in 1926, pushed towards their unwritten National Pact in 1943, and paved the way for their independence from the French mandate later in the same year. Nor was the outcome of external intervention always positive: it contributed to the outbreak of a long and bloody civil war in 1975, one that allowed many regional states to settle their scores in Lebanon, especially by providing arms and money for different Lebanese factions. Foreign intervention has also reconstituted the state and drew a new power sharing formula known as the Ta’if Agreement in 1989, nominated most of the elected presidents since 1943, imposed the Doha Agreement in 2008, and re-distributed power among major Lebanese sects.

Presidential elections are instances of evident and flagrant demonstrations of foreign intervention in Lebanon, usually carried out in the presence of foreign forces on its soil (multinational forces, the US Marines, the Israeli Defense Forces, and the Syrian Armed Forces). This allowed foreign powers to impose their presidential candidate. However, the regional and international consensus on the name of the next president was not easily applied on every occasion, especially in the presence of an internal force, strong enough and capable of changing the political balance of power, or, alternatively, the existence of an external influential force that did not approve of the presidential candidate.
In this case, the nominated candidate would be assassinated, as in the case of President-Elect Bashir Gemayel in 1982, and Rene Muawad in 1989, who was killed only days after taking the presidential oath.

Lebanon’s exposure to external intervention is rooted in every internal Lebanese side’s bandwagoning with a regional or international ally, be it Egypt, Syria, Israel, the US, France, or more recently, Iran. The search for such allies found explanation in the presumption that a foreign supporter will allow the local actor to strengthen its position on the Lebanese political scene vis-à-vis other domestic actors. This is primarily due to a weak state structure and the lack of a strong sense of a trans-sectarian national identity, where members of the different Lebanese sects grant allegiance to their communities at the expense of the central state. This fact did not only facilitate foreign interventions, but allowed actors to enjoy ever-increasing roles in solving complicated internal difference, and thus become decisive factors in solving – and complicating – internal problems.

President Suleiman Franjiyeh was quoted once as saying that ‘Lebanon’s strength springs from its weakness’. He was proven wrong by the fact that all major crises engulfing the country made it pay a ‘double price-tag’, a result of the state’s weakness that made foreign intrusions a necessity. Alas, Lebanese have grown accustomed to handing their problems to external actors who, in turn, impose new power sharing agreements. One example of this process is the outbreak of the 1975 civil war, which only ended with external intervention and a fundamental review of the National Pact of 1943. A new power sharing formula was thus needed. Accordingly, Ta’if Agreement was signed under a regional and international sponsorship.

This fact ensures that presidential elections usually requires international and regional consensus notwithstanding the constitutional terms of the power sharing formula.
that has been effectively drawn by international powers. The flagrant example of this process was the assassination of President Muawad. Although the latter was elected as a result of Ta’if Agreement, he was assassinated because he was chosen without Syrian blessing. Nevertheless, when external factors underwent major change, Lebanon was also affected.

Later on, and under Syrian tutelage that resulted from the Ta’if Agreement and the outcome of the 1975 war, presidential elections were held without much difficulty. The usual obstacles that faced them, the internal conflict that it caused, and the infamous involvement of numerous foreign players, was limited with most domestic actors obeying the Syrian dictate in the selection of the next president. Notably the Syrians also managed to extend presidential mandates as they wished, shelving constitutional obligations as they wished. They hence managed to swiftly convene the parliament for amending the constitution to allow for extending the terms of Elias Hrawi and Emile Lahoud (in 1995 and 2004 respectively), both times under the caveat of a ‘once time only’ amendment.

The dominant pattern for more than a decade changed in 2004: Syria was no longer a solo player on the Lebanese scene. The hegemony approved by the United States in 1990 was no longer permitted in 2004. Lahoud’s term was extended neck-in-neck with the issuance of UN Resolution 1559. The changing patterns on the Lebanese scene would become more obvious in 2007: Lahoud’s term ended and the dominant powers neutralized each other’s maneuvers. Lebanon consequently remained without a president for many months.

A vacant presidency, a string of severe clashes in May 2008, and continuous days of political negotiations going into the smallest of details in Doha, finally resulted in a ‘one-and-only’ agreement that this time selected the country’s president in 2008. The foreign
role in the presidential elections was rarely denied. What changed in the Doha Agreement was the fact that a Lebanese president was now chosen by a conglomerate of regional and international states.

With the Doha Agreement external intervention in Lebanon’s domestic affairs took new manifestations. Whereas in the past external powers used to select the Lebanese president but leave it to the Lebanese deputies to name and elect him, in Doha the president was named before the parliamentary session, rendering parliamentary election a redundant act. Moreover, the role of external powers has shifted from having a decisive say in major Lebanese political events, to meddling in the slightest details such as handling Lebanese negotiations on which parliamentary electoral law to adopt, such the case of Doha Agreement in 2008, to determining the identity of the prime minister, as was the case in January 2011. It seems, then, that more and more institutions are coming under the tutelage of external actors.

The era of one singly regional country selecting the Lebanese president might have come to an end. It remains to be seen however how many more regional and international actors will take part in the next presidential elections, or in the formation of the next cabinet.


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