



# The Challenges of Pluralism in Lebanon and the Culture of Change in the Lebanese Political Thought

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## Abstract

This paper aims at presenting the challenges of pluralism in Lebanon and the challenges when it comes to the culture of change in the Lebanese political thought. It also tries to analyze from a historical perspective what was the political change that occurred in the Lebanese feudal system as well as Lebanon's modern history. Additionally, it also attempts to analyze the nature of the continuity of the Lebanese political model and the emergence of the concept of consociational democracy. The paper employs a qualitative method, classifying the different factors, internal and external, that shows what are the real challenges and obstacles and the current status-quo of the culture of change in the pluralistic Lebanon.

The paper develops a framework for change in the pluralistic Lebanon especially during this current time. Its theoretical importance is in adding to the literature on the culture of change in the Lebanese political thought; Lebanon being a pluralistic society, which is a prerequisite for its democracy.

**Keywords:** Pluralism; Consociational Democracy; Lebanese Model; Lebanon; Feudal System;

## Introduction

Before delving into an analysis of the culture of change in constitutional and political thought in Lebanon, it is essential to address a fundamental question raised by Georges Corm regarding the role and purpose of Lebanon. He asks whether Lebanon was established for itself or for someone else. Additionally, he questions whether Lebanon still serves as an Arab necessity and if it should play a role in that context. Furthermore, he suggests reversing the question and asking why Lebanon does not function primarily for the well-being of its citizens. What is Lebanon's role toward its citizens, and what are the citizens' responsibilities toward it? Is it an inherent inevitability that Lebanon exists to serve others before its own people? [1].

An indirect response to these inquiries can be found in Michel Shiha's lecture titled "Lebanon in its Character and Presence", delivered at the Lebanese Symposium on October 29, 1953. Shiha asserts that as Lebanese people, we have a rich history that we have lived and been shaped by. However, we remain largely ignorant of this history [2].

Taking a closer look, Kamal Al-Salibi agrees with Michel Shiha, suggesting that in Lebanon, there existed the potential for a violent explosion that could only be contained through proper political guidance. While the country had numerous valid political opinions, what it lacked was effective governance to channel them constructively [3].

According to Emile Bejjani, Michel Shiha does not limit himself to contemporary circumstances but instead reaches back to the farthest point in history, arguing that the establishment of Greater Lebanon on September 1, 1920, marked the resurgence of the Lebanese nation. Bejjani asserts that by examining our history and the chronology of our constitutional institutions, it becomes evident that the first republic for Lebanon did not emerge with the 1943 constitution, as categorized by Kamal Al-Salibi. In line with this historical context, neither the 1943 nor the 1990 constitution abolished the 1926 republic. Instead, each retained its provisions as a republican-parliamentary system, with the 1943 constitution merely annulling the articles related to the Mandate [4].

Hassan Krayem contends that by 1920, Lebanon was under direct French colonial rule, known as the Mandate. Lebanon's subjugation to colonial rule led to the development of dependent capitalist relations, through which French capital could dominate the Lebanese economy and structure development in line with French interests. After independence in 1946, representatives of the bourgeois class came to power in alliance with political feudalism. These historical conditions, which subjected Lebanon to international division of the labor market, assigned Lebanon the role of a warehouse for Western products and exports, as well as a mediator for Arab markets in general [5].

This paper will begin with a brief historical overview on Lebanon, then it will tackle political change as a concept in general. After that, it will the change in the feudal system. In every part, a contextual background and commentary will be provided. After that, it will tackle the nature of the consociational model, then the continuity of the Lebanese model, in addition to observations and a conclusion.

## Historical Overview

As a result of World War I, the Middle East came under the direct

control of France and Britain, following the Sykes-Picot Agreements of 1916. Consequently, Lebanon and Syria fell under French mandate. On September 1, 1920, the French established the state of Greater Lebanon. Beirut, the Bekaa, and southern Lebanon were incorporated into the autonomous Mount Lebanon. This division of geographical Syria into smaller states, enforced by the French, had significant consequences for Lebanon. Firstly, the new state achieved a more balanced demographic representation between Muslims and Christians. According to the initial, albeit inaccurate, census of 1922, Greater Lebanon comprised 330,000 Christians, 275,000 Muslims, and 43,000 Druze. Secondly, this division laid the groundwork for uneven development within the country, with different agricultural economies emerging in regions like the Bekaa [6], the South, and Akkar [7]. Lastly, the French implemented a sectarian political framework, institutionalizing it through the 1926 constitution and subsequent amendments in 1927 and 1929. Proportional sectarian representation became the norm in public offices and political positions [8].

Thus, Krayem suggests that the crucible of political sectarianism was established in 1860 under the special system of autonomous Mount Lebanon, as a result of imperialist interventions by European powers. However, it was French imperialism that laid the foundation for the sectarian system in Lebanon from the proclamation of the State of Greater Lebanon in 1920 until the institutionalization of the 1926 constitution. The main distinction between political sectarianism during the 1860-1920 era and the 1920-1943 era lies not in imperialist intervention but in the socioeconomic structure and the stages of labor force development. In 1860, the sectarian structure reflected pre-capitalist production relations, whereas after 1920, it became the political system of the bourgeoisie and its dependent capitalist system [8].

“French intervention in Lebanon can be traced to the 19<sup>th</sup> century when in 1860, during the Ottoman period, 6,000 troops were sent to restore peace, help the Christians and contribute to the reconstruction of Mount Lebanon. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century France envisaged a direct French military occupation of Mount Lebanon to create a ‘little France, free, industrious and loyal’. Still, the French envisaged their missionary and educational role as a supplementary asset in their competition with the British. The creation of Greater Lebanon in 1920 was mainly determined by the interests of France in dividing and controlling Syria. In May 1926 Greater Lebanon was renamed The Lebanese Republic. The constitution defined its flag as the tricolour French flag with the cedar in the white strip, and adopted French as an official language alongside Arabic. Certainly, the French mandatory authorities left an impact on the local culture, economy and politics. During World War II, in November 1941, General Catroux declared France’s recognition of Lebanon’s and Syria’s independence and invited the representatives of their respective governments to sign a treaty with France to terminate the mandate. After Lebanon’s independence in 1943 French interest in Lebanon continued to be felt in politics and economics mainly because France wanted to support liberal and democratic values and protect Lebanon’s political stability against external threats [9].

This last passage by Geukjian, shows us that France certainly left an impact via its intervention in the socioeconomic structure as well as the local culture of Lebanon. So, we can say that France or the French imperialism had an impact on the Lebanese economy (the way of doing business, banking, etc.), the culture and the social dynamics of the people; as well as the political thought (democracy, liberalism, equality, etc.). This might not be the case that was spread all over the country, as their impact was more influential of a faction than the other or others. French cultural influence in Lebanon strengthened confessionalism and estrangement between communities, contributing not so much to the penetration of European ideas and knowledge, but rather to the strengthening of a sense of exclusivity among the Maronite Christians who hoped for protection from France.

Between 1920 and 1943, the State of Greater Lebanon existed under a French Mandate. During this time, it became the Lebanese Republic. Lebanon was designated a French protectorate by the League of Nations after the First World War with the aim that Lebanon would later become an independent state instead of being a French colony. But French influence among the Lebanese predates the mandate that linked the two countries politically. Historically, French influence in Lebanon stemmed from close ties with Maronites, who are Eastern Catholics.

### Political Change

Iliia Harik refers to Weber, who does not provide a comprehensive and consistent account of political change, nor does he seem interested in discussing development. Instead, there are a few notes about the changes taking place in the three types of authority he describes. For instance, there are ideas about the changes that occur within the patriarchal branch of traditional authority, specifically changes in the means of control. Initially, control was exercised through household administration, but later it expanded to include the ruler's personal servants, slaves, and soldiers to impose authority on a larger scale. As a result, the patriarchal branch became a deeply rooted component of heritage [10].

Another significant change that concerns Weber is the routinization of charisma. Here, the focus is on what happens to a charismatic leader when their charm fades away. Weber shows that shortly after its emergence, charismatic authority transforms into traditional or rational authority, or a combination of both. However, Weber suggests that while “the pure form of charismatic authority can only be present at the beginning,” charisma should be considered as a type of authority that exists in varying degrees within all other types of authority, as noted by Shils. This implies that charismatic authority should not be seen as a comprehensive political system but rather as a kind of hegemony that manifests in different ways [10].

Harik adds that change is a tangible historical process that always moves in one direction, but it is not necessarily unique or non-recurring. Change does not have to remain within the realm of the tangible and the incomparable; its significance lies in its historical context, in relation to previous and subsequent specific events. In other words, the process of change is not necessarily a linear cause-and-effect process. It is a complex series of events that can be transformed into rational patterns of relationships given the complexity of variables. Therefore, examining one ideal type of political system does not guarantee that change will occur sequentially in the pattern envisioned by Smith. Each change does not necessarily occur in only one variable, as originally defined. Change can happen as a result of a modification in any of the variables that make up the ideal type [11].

Harik points out that in the societal type, the source of legitimate authority is the national group or, more commonly, the homeland. The focus here is on the community of people, the population, rather than an abstract principle or impersonal custom. What legitimizes leaders is their alignment with the national symbols and values embodied in the nation. The notion of the homeland has an emotional aspect, and there is no clear or established method to determine who qualifies to be a leader based on patriotism. However, those who inspire their fellow citizens with their embodiment of the spirit of the homeland are legitimized in the eyes of the people. The legitimacy of authority depends on affiliation with the basic bond that encompasses the group and active participation in the feelings and values of the group. In the sectarian type, individuals are residents, not necessarily citizens [12].

In the sectarian pattern, the concept of the people is not of a legal nature as it is in the traditional pattern but rather an ethno-cultural concept. This is the main difference between the sectarian pattern and the traditional pattern. In the traditional style, the concept of the people is specific, representing all citizens who are connected to each other and to their leaders through civic bonds. In the traditional

system, individuals are the ultimate source of legitimate authority only in the sense that their relationships as citizens are expressed in a stable and sustainable manner through law. Business is considered legal if it complies with the law. The ambiguous slogan of "the will of the people," in national thought, is evident in the traditional style and represents the principle that citizens express their wishes in accordance with law and procedures [12].

What Harik is trying to say or to explain is that when change is being done towards control, patriarchal system becomes a deeply rooted component of this change or as he calls it the heritage. But he claims that charisma should be taken into consideration as a type of authority. He also explains that the significance of change lies in its historical context and in relation to previous events. He also argues that the legitimacy of leaders comes from their alignment with national symbols and values that are embodies in a nation.

Hence, Lebanon has no ability to change the geo-politics, nor does it have the power to change the Arab regimes. The basic treatment is "cultural" that is crowned with a culture of caution in foreign relations, a culture of independence, a culture of non-internal bullying - that is, one group against another and one sect against another - and the culture of collective memory where Everyone remembers what they went through and takes lessons from this history, the culture of the legal basis, meaning that the law is the only reference for anything, and the culture of public affairs that leads to the outcome of the public interest at the expense of private interests.

### Change in the Feudal System

Harik states that change in the political system can arise from two sources: the immediate and distant surroundings, as well as from within the regime. However, the discussion here focuses on the limited use of "peripheral" sources, which are confined to the society in which the political system is situated. These peripheral sources can include technological innovation, wealth distribution, internal trade, migration, means of communication, education, and various social organizations such as churches, businesses, clans, families, or production teams. The most distant sources of change encompass colonialism, war, international trade, communications, and similar factors. All of these factors have the potential to bring about change, but whether or not they actually affect the political system depends on how and why these social factors become politically significant. Understanding this is crucial in the realm of politics. When change arises from within the system, it may result from the initiative of the actors involved or from underlying tendencies that seek change from within the system itself [13].

Harik further explains that in the Lebanese feudal system, the most significant changes originated from the periphery of this system, particularly from the Maronite people and their church. However, not all peripheral powers had the same level of participation or influence within the political system. The relationship between the church and the political system raises important questions. Were there overlapping areas of interest between the two? Firstly, it should be noted that the clergy held power over the people, at least in religious and personal matters. As custodians of religious secrets and the right to conduct rituals, the clergy gained general influence over the people and were in constant competition with secular authorities. Secondly, the Church in Lebanon was a national organization and the oldest among Lebanese social and political organizations [13]. Through its history and missions, the Church preserved and disseminated the Maronite national myth. Consequently, as an organization that embraced new ideas and principles contradicting those of the feudal system, the Church's existence posed a potential threat to the system. Thirdly, the Church, as a large-scale organization controlling extensive land and financial resources, had an interest in maintaining public order and relied on secular authorities to carry out its work. Thus, not only did the Church support secular authorities, but it also sought to establish influential relationships to ensure its demands were met. Finally, as the spiritual guardian of the Maronite people,

the Church deeply cared about their fate and well-being and their relationship with their rulers. In summary, potential areas of conflict arose when the Church's relations with the people and their concerns overlapped with the relations that secular authorities had with the people themselves [13].

Based on the above, Harik draws several generalizations. First, even though traditional system institutions do not typically have procedures for introducing or adapting to change, change can still occur in various ways. Institutions often possess enough generality and flexibility to allow a reasonable degree of change without contradicting the concept of proper and appropriate behavior within the system. Actors with legitimate authority can introduce changes that may not necessarily undermine the system's notions of correct behavior, or they may introduce radical changes intentionally or unintentionally. However, there are limitations to the actors' ability to bring about change, as we will explore below [14].

Second, the actors' capacity to initiate events largely depends on the nature of power relations among them. As noted by David Apter in his comparison of Uganda and Ghana, a traditional system where power is distributed among a number of semi-independent chiefs is less capable of introducing and adapting to change than a system where power is concentrated in the hands of a single central chief [14].

Third, disaggregated changes lead to tension and instability in the system. Disaggregated change refers to a situation in which changes occur in one of the changing components of the political community without corresponding changes occurring in other cases. Disjointed changes, that is, those which occur in one part or group of society but fail to reach or affect other parts or groups in a similar way, lead to the same result as disaggregated changes. This results in instability when the various claims to legitimate power come from roughly equal powers, none of which by themselves can bring about the necessary changes to the entire system. Fourth, changes that aim to alter the basis of the regime's legitimate authority and political institutions elicit greater resistance than other attempts at change. Fifth, in the traditional system, the disruption of the existing balance of power among the actors creates a tendency among them to break through traditional restrictions and obstacles and seek power outside the political system. By inviting outside forces to enter politics, the inviting forces are, in effect, paving the way for new forces to become legitimate. Thus, the external groups that some actors use to complement their powers within the system tend to seek to legitimize their actual participation in the political process. The influence and success of these outside groups in this endeavor are related to their degree of organization, motivation, and internal political spirit [15].

Sixth, these new forces will prove difficult or impossible to stop or control by the actors who originally invited them and encouraged their acceptance as participants in the political system. Seventh, if the new elements emerging in the political system are at the same time subject to the jurisdiction of the actors, then their attempts to legitimize their political activity will create conflict with the actors. The conflict will also arise if two different readings are presented on the same subjects, such as the claims of the feudal lords and the Church on the same Maronite subjects. Eighth, and finally, in the event that the new powers have their motivation in forming beliefs different from the existing formation on which the system is based, they will seek to change the legitimate basis of power in accordance with their own values. Their conflict with the existing actors will be general and systemic. In other words, changes in legitimacy will prompt demands for changes in both institutions and actors. For example, the Maronites attacked the basis of the feudal system's claim to power and then demanded the reorganization of institutions on a new basis. The new institutions that they called for drew specific authority based on the active forces whose selection was based on renewal as well [16].

What can be said from all the aforementioned is that Lebanon's



feudal elite ran Lebanon as a private club with a limited membership. Whether they were Christians or Muslims, they were often landlords on a big scale or members of the intelligentsia with enough financial resources to buy anything or even to run for a seat in the Parliament. Moreover, relations between feudal families, which still keep their dominant position in Lebanese politics today, formed the basis of the dynamics of conflict during the feudal period as well. These families basically recognized each other's equal status. This leads us to say that Lebanon is not a state governed by a democratically elected government. It is a composition of competing feudalities with a slim mask of democracy and legitimacy thrown carelessly on top of them.

Antoine Masarra says that constitutional thought is the distinctive aspect of Michel Shihā's production. It is the aspect that, despite its originality, depth, and openness, is the most vulnerable to misunderstanding, fragmentation, and distortion. He adds that it is possible to identify the six most prominent concepts in Michel Shihā's constitutional thought. The first is the concept of Personal Federalism (*Fédéralisme Personnel*), as Articles 9 and 10 of the Lebanese Constitution establish a federal system within the framework of a unified state. The second concept is the concept of Positive Discrimination (*Discrimination Positive*) or Proportional Representation (*Proporz*). Michel Shihā emphasizes that democracy is not simply summed up by the equation "half + one = democracy." It is a more complex issue that falls within the context of participation and the application of majority rule [17].

Based on historical experience, Michel Shihā found a flexible formulation of the rule of specialization in the old Article 95 of the Lebanese constitution. The rule is not reprehensible, but it is applied in various forms in more than forty countries. Shihā describes the House of Representatives as "a meeting place for participating sects."

Regarding the sectarian issue, the fourth point, Shihā, according to Masarra, in his book "Legal Theory in Plural Parliamentary Systems", uses the phrase "sectarian" between quotation marks or avoids using it, as he seeks to distinguish his approach to sects from the prevailing concept of sectarianism. Michel Shihā defines sectarianism (*Confessionnalisme*), according to the dictionary, as "narrow attachment to a religious sect." However, he argues that in Lebanon, this concept is "a guarantee of fair political and social representation for participating sectarian minorities." He also states, "What the sectarian concept gains, the nation loses." [18]

Masarra continues listing the six most prominent concepts in Michel Shihā's constitutional thought and reaches the fifth point, which is "the confusion between interpretation and justification." Masarra argues that the confusion in Lebanese and Arab political thought between interpretation (*Explication*) and justification is the most prominent reason for not understanding the originality of Michel Shihā's constitutional thought. Shihā's thought is explanatory and diagnostic of the Lebanese constitutional structure, rather than a justification for the reality of its actual practice. Masarra points out that no constitution is ready for use as a fully furnished apartment, and constitutional governance (*Gouvernance Constitutionnelle*) requires the development of concepts, mechanisms, and conditions [19].

As for the "harmony between religion and the state," Masarra explains that Michel Shihā does not rely on prevailing stereotypes about "separating religion from the state" and "secularism." Instead, he aligns with contemporary comparative research on the necessity of distinguishing between religion and power by drawing boundaries between the two. Shihā emphasizes "absolute freedom of belief" in the constitution, which falls within the context of the principle contained in the National Agreement Document (*Taif*) of achieving "the principle of harmony between religion and state."

Regarding the limits and areas of change in Lebanon, Masarra considers that there are two external political dilemmas, and their solution is cultural. The first dilemma is geopolitical, as Lebanon is

located in a hostile Zionist neighborhood and in the vicinity of a weak Arab regional system. The second dilemma lies in Lebanon's exception in relation to neighboring Arab regimes, as some are tyrannical, some are dictatorial, and some are undergoing a peaceful democratic transition. Masarra argues that Lebanon lacks the ability to change geopolitics or alter Arab regimes. Therefore, he suggests that the fundamental solution lies in cultivating a cultural mindset, including a culture of caution in external relations, independence, non-internal bullying, collective memory, legality (*Culture de Légalité*), and public affairs. Masarra believes that these cultural aspects should inform constitutional and administrative affairs and guide the process of change within the defined dilemmas [20].

Based on all of what was mentioned, we can say that coexistence – if we can call it like that – in Lebanon is neither a choice nor an opinion, nor an alternative among others, but an imperative imposed by the balance of power and the nature of the Lebanese society. Lebanon cannot and should not be partitioned, because as a country it is one of the most successful examples of concordance and harmony. Pluralism in Lebanon is a humane wealth, and Christian-Muslim concordance is established by a population united by a common history, common sufferings, almost common customs, and most importantly, one destiny.

While Al-Majzoub considers that Lebanon's neutrality or neutralization means its isolation, he quotes Edward Hanin, who wrote about Lebanese neutrality, stating that "those who are outside neutrality are outside Lebanon in particular." Hanin defines neutrality as authentic and complex, neutral from all directions and at all times, in a state of war or peace, with no flaws or defects. He describes it as honest, loyal, impartial, wise, precise, and true. According to Hanin, neutrality is like the North Star that guides the government and the people of Lebanon [21].

Al-Majzoub explains that the concept of neutrality has evolved over time. Before the First World War, it referred to a country that voluntarily refrained from participating in wars between other countries. However, the concept underwent a revolution during the war, with a new idea emerging that called for every country to take a stand against aggressors. This idea influenced the Charter of the League of Nations, which distinguished between legitimate and illegal wars. The framers of the Charter did not abolish the neutrality system to preserve state sovereignty but differentiated between permissible and prohibited wars. With the establishment of the United Nations, the traditional concept of neutrality was thought to have disappeared as the organization focused on collective security and the responsibility of all member states to respond to threats to peace [22]. The term "neutralization" is used by some who claim Lebanese neutrality, but according to Al-Al-Majzoub, it has a different meaning in public international law. Neutrality applies to an entire independent country, while neutralization applies to a specific part of a country's territory. Neutrality does not deprive a state of its right to arm itself, whereas neutralization necessitates disarming the parties involved [22].

Regarding the social changes during the war, Corm describes them as difficult. The economic structure of Lebanon underwent significant transformations influenced not only by internal events but also by regional economic and financial tensions. These changes, coupled with the impact of the war, led to social changes in Lebanon. Corm emphasizes that these social changes resulted from two powerful sources: the regional oil boom and local hostilities. He believes that these changes have contributed to social and economic chaos and the reconfiguration of social and regional inequalities in Lebanon [23].

Abdallah Daou, in his book "The Lebanese People and the Unifying State," argues that war is not the cause but the result of societal problems. He states that war arises from ignorance, the inability to find solutions, and the control of anti-intellectual forces over society [24]. Al-Salibi suggests that true national integration in Lebanon

required political parties that transcend sectarian and regional divisions. There was a need for real political parties, similar to those in modern democracies, led by individuals aspiring to national leadership at the presidential level. However, with the "National Pact," only the Maronites had the ability to become heads of state. Thus, the Maronites alone were in a position to form political parties. In the absence of genuine political parties with non-sectarian national followings, the political life in Lebanon became a landscape of shifting alliances between politicians who formed fronts or parliamentary and nonparliamentary blocs [25].

Regarding the country's socio-economic inequality, which produced tensions exploited by the Islamic opposition against the government, Al-Salibi indicates that both the ruling establishment and opposition leaders were equally to blame. Successive presidential terms unleashed the development of capitalism in the country. However, Al-Salibi adds that the Lebanese Republic, after gaining independence, seemed to only care about its own development and progress. He also notes that Lebanon, with its free economic system, attracted wealth from the Middle East, just as Michel Shihha predicted [26].

A significant portion of Lebanon's governance problems lies in its political culture and people's understanding of society, neighborhood relations, sovereignty, and the state. President Fouad Chehab, in his statement on August 4, 1970 refused to run again for presidency, and considered that the prevailing mentality does not allow for changes. For six years, President Elias Sarkis continued to call for rallying around legitimacy, that is, the most ambiguous and vague concept in Lebanese culture [27].

Al-Salibi concludes with three key points regarding the issue of reconsidering Lebanese history. "Firstly, the civil war showed that no single group could impose its opinion on others, emphasizing the need for rational concessions between the Lebanese people based on certain facts. Secondly, there is a growing political consensus among the non-fighting majority, which makes the continued existence of an independent Lebanon possible, regardless of its history before 1920, which means there is no longer a need to invent a special history for Lebanon prior to that date. Thirdly, the Arab world has come to accept and appreciate the delicate structure. This means that recognizing the Arab identity of Lebanon no longer poses a threat to the continuity of Lebanon's sovereignty and unity, nor to the status of any group of Lebanese people".

Finally, Al-Salibi wonders, after all of the above, whether "the Lebanese Republic, in this reality, is something worth preserving. The most inveterate opponents of the political system would stop to think about this now and then. They acknowledge the necessity of preserving this system while making some basic reforms in it. As for the Christian leaders, they were convinced that the political system fits perfectly with Lebanese society by providing sectarian representation in governance at all levels, where sectarianism is a fact of life that must be considered. Therefore, the 'National Pact' is something that cannot be tampered with".

In this, Al-Majzoub agrees with him and considers that before the civil war in Lebanon, we used to hear and read a lot about Switzerland, and many groups of Lebanese people showed great appreciation for the democratic and parliamentary system applied in Switzerland. They demanded the transfer of the Swiss experience to Lebanon in the event of any defect in the Lebanese system, confirming that working according to the Swiss system is sufficient to remove the causes of class, factional, or sectarian conflict and to strengthen the spirit of democracy and provide welfare and prosperity to citizens. He added that during the civil war, the Lebanese right put forward some ideas and projects to deal with the crisis, the most prominent of which was the idea of adopting the Swiss canton system to transform Lebanon into a federal state capable of achieving "unity in pluralism." In the midst of the Lebanese war, and after the failure of the idea of partition, the axes of the right proposed the idea of cantons as a way out of the crisis and an alternative to the formula whose rules were established by the National Pact [28].

Abdullah Daou says in the introduction to his book "The Lebanese People and the Unifying State" that the state is the finest manifestation of human society. Regarding the interaction between the state and society, Daou says that the state is the mother of society and the mother of all groups in the homeland, where all components of society grow under its nourishing light. As the dissonance grows, ignorance and degeneration grow, and the individual as well as society loses the ability to be happy and reassured, the state collapses, and society and the nation submit to the will of other societies [29].

Daou points out that the Lebanese state rests on democracy but according to a model that bears uniqueness, distinguishing it from the democracies of the world. The nature of the components of the human community residing in the Lebanese geography bears great diversity in their religious convictions and beliefs, which they inherited through generations. They were keen to cling to this great inheritance for no reason other than the fact that the Lebanese geography and the geography adjacent to Lebanon is the mother of all these convictions and religious beliefs [30].

Regarding the rights and wrongs of consociational democracy, Daou says that it was devoted in Lebanon to discovering the nature of the life of our ancestors over the long centuries: their constant agreement, even in the most extreme cases of conflict, to preserve Lebanon for all that is in it, from the 'Antelias Pact' and what came before it, up to the 'Taif Agreement' and beyond. The Lebanese people are governed by the agreement of the fathers, consecrating the agreement of the grandparents and a commitment to the agreement of the children and grandchildren. The concept of national consensus, which organizes the cohesion of the state and society, is withdrawn to touch the issue of the formation of one of the state's tools, which is the government, then it shifts from the concept of consensus on the establishment of the state and the stability of society to an agreement to abolish the basic rule of democracy, which is that the political numerical minority agrees upon voting to hand over power to the numerical political majority achieved in this ballot [31].

Regarding the formula for the government of national reconciliation, meaning that the opposition enters the government and holds executive government portfolios, Daou points out that this formula is required by exceptional national circumstances that prioritize the responsibility of issuing the fateful political decision over the responsibility of the oversight of one part of the people over the executive performance of the other part, which proved by the current ballot to be the majority. These governments should remain the exception, not the rule [31].

Daou points out that Article 2, Paragraph A.7 of the Taif Accord Document states the following: "With the election of the first House of Representatives on a national, non-sectarian basis, a Senate will be created in which all religious families will be represented, and its powers will be limited to crucial issues." Article 22 of the Lebanese Constitution, according to Article 1 of the Constitutional Law dated 9/21/1990, stipulates the following: "With the election of the first House of Representatives on a national, non-sectarian basis, a Senate will be created in which all religious families will be represented, and its powers will be limited to crucial issues." Daou cites a statement by the late Lebanese President Camille Chamoun in his book "A Crisis in Lebanon" where he literally says, "To all those who are interested in finding a real and final solution to the Lebanese question raised from now on: It is Islam that, on the basis of its faith, cannot accept any parallel or superior authority. It does not wish to live in Lebanon unless it imposes its control on it, and the Lebanese Christian defends, with great enthusiasm that astonished the world, his existence closely linked to his national soil. Therefore, if a proposed solution is to be effective and lasting, it must consider these two factors. It should be of a kind that not only secures the future for the Lebanese people but also allows them to develop, without reservation, their legitimate aspirations, culture, and ambition to live in a modern state free from sectarian and non-national constraints." [32]

In 1983, Antoine Masarra made the following observation: "During eight years of war, a lot of factors have changed in political work." And he goes on to ask, "Shouldn't it also urge a reconsideration of the concepts and the interpretation of the Lebanese political system?" [33].

In the light of the above 'givens' in Lebanon's political culture, the National Pact known by the Tai'f Accord [34] could be viewed as an arrangement that helped ensure free and peaceful democratic confessional co-existence until the mid-1970s. Needless to say, it was a static arrangement, though not necessarily conducive to immobilism. It was reformable and adaptable, particularly in its domestic political content, but only in a gradual way, and, above all, in a favorable regional environment-something over which Lebanon had no control.

In the end, all communities stood to benefit, though in varying degrees, from the preservation of a reformed National Pact prior to the outbreak of hostilities in 1975. But the development of events was such that it was virtually impossible to draw the line between the internal and external dimensions of the conflict and, by extension, that of the Pact. Each community was capitalizing on the other's demands.

Despite today's general dissatisfaction with the National Pact, there has always been a yearning for the good old days of the Pact. This feeling is shared by many Lebanese, particularly those who came to appreciate the virtues of political liberty and reap the fruits of economic prosperity in contrast with the conditions prevailing in some neighboring countries. Nonetheless, few are willing to revive it in its original double negation form.

### What is the Consociational Model?

Antoine Masarra states that "the four main characteristics of the consociational model are:

- 1- Broad coalition government, which distinguishes the consociational model from the British model, which is based on a government versus opposition structure.
- 2- Proportional representation instead of a majority rule.
- 3- Mutual veto as a means to protect the minority against majority decisions. Participation in the coalition government alone is not enough to protect the minority group, so this group must have the right of veto in vital areas.
- 4- Self-administration in certain matters to avoid deadlock in decision-making through the veto right, granting subcultures in consociational democracy self-administration in directly relevant domains." [33]

Masarra suggests that "the concept of consociational democracy emerged from comparison and was internationalized through publications related to the Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland, Austria, and Canada. Then the concept expanded to some Third World countries, especially Lebanon, Malaysia, Cyprus, Colombia, Uruguay, and Nigeria. The political scientist Arend Lijphart formulated this concept in a clearer and more comprehensive manner. Gerhard Lehmbruch initially used the term proportional democracy (Proporzdemokratie), then the term concordance democracy (konkordanzdemokratie) when discussing Austria and Switzerland. G. Bingham Powell particularly described it as 'social fragmentation,' while Jurg Steiner analyzed 'friendly agreement' in comparison to majority rule. Eric Nordlinger studied 'conflict management in divided societies.'" [33]

Lijphart says that consociational democracy violates the principle of majority rule, but it does not deviate very much from normative democratic theory. Most democratic constitutions prescribe majority rule for the normal transaction of business when the stakes are not too high, but extraordinary majorities or several successive majorities for the most important decisions, such as changes in the constitution. In fragmented systems, many other decisions in addition to constituent ones are perceived as involving high stakes, and therefore require

more than simple majority rule. Similarly, majority rule does not suffice in times of grave crisis in even the most homogeneous and consensual of democracies [35].

He continues to say that consociational democracy means government by elite cartel designed to turn a democracy with a fragmented political culture into a stable democracy. Efforts at consociationalism are not necessarily successful, of course: consociational designs failed in Cyprus and Nigeria, and Uruguay abandoned its Swiss-style consociational system. Successful consociational democracy requires: (1) That the elites have the ability to accommodate the divergent interests and demands of the subcultures. (2) This requires that they have the ability to transcend cleavages and to join in a common effort with the elites of rival subcultures. (3) This in turn depends on their commitment to the maintenance of the system and to the improvement of its cohesion and stability. (4) Finally, all of the above requirements are based on the assumption that the elites understand the perils of political fragmentation. These four requirements are logically implied by the concept of consociational democracy [35].

Lijphart also says that there are three factors that appear to be strongly conducive to the establishment or maintenance of cooperation among elites in a fragmented system. The most striking of these is the existence of external threats to the count. In all of the consociational democracies, the cartel of elites was either initiated or greatly strengthened during periods of international crisis. consociational democracy, in the sense that it helps the elites to recognize the necessity of cooperation, is a multiple balance of power among the subcultures instead of either a dual balance of power or a clear hegemony by one subculture. The stability of Lebanon, according to Lijphart, is partly due to its productive economy and the social equilibrium it has maintained so far, but it may not be able to continue its successful consociational politics when the burdens on the system increase [35].

Michael C. Hudson argues that the Lebanese political system is "attuned to incessant adjustment among primordial groups rather than policy planning and execution." As a result, its "apparent stability . . . is deceptively precarious: social mobilization appears to be overloading the circuits of the Lebanese political system [36].

According to Masarra, Lebanon has specific advantages, particularly the presence of a religion with a bureaucratic tendency and a weak or opposing environment to such a tendency. Therefore, the Lebanese experience is crucial for understanding and studying the consociational model's effectiveness and standard value [33].

### The continuity of the Lebanese model

Masarra states that "classifying the Lebanese political system as a consociational system allows for interpreting the model and studying its continuity. First and foremost, the National Pact is related to a general model that cannot be understood without referring to this model. To avoid confusion, Masarra points out that it is necessary to distinguish between the national pact expressing historical constants and the national pact of 1943, which represents specific and circumstantial arrangements of consociational principles." [37]

"Ethnic proportional representation," says Masarra, "is also a general point of confusion to the extent that the legitimacy of this rule is continuously questioned. Masarra asks, is the majority rule inherent to democracy? He states that in homogeneous democracies, there is a possibility for the minority to transform into the majority through changing public opinion and electoral context. However, in plural societies, the ethnic, sectarian, or linguistic minority is politically bound to remain a minority in isolation and can only rely on rapid demographic growth."

Masarra points out that there are two political schools: constitutionalism and shahabism, with the latter being a continuity of the former. Similar to the constitution and the National Pact, shahabism is not ideological or dogmatic but rather a practical



approach. The questions raised by shahabism are precisely those raised by the Lebanese consociational system: how to prepare the country for change, how to strengthen the presidential and executive powers, how to change the conditions of representation and political action so that the poles on which the effectiveness and stability of the system depend can act cooperatively and collectively, and how to unleash the freedom of parties and politicians who nothing can be done without them just as nothing substantial can be done with them [37].

On the other hand, according to Masarra, "to say that the Lebanese system is based on compromise means that it is based not only on mutual concessions, but also on power relations, and therefore on negotiation as in any plural system or international. The role of radicalism and resistance in the Lebanese political society prevents the emergence of a defeated party in a historical series of "the dominant and the dominated" and leads to a general moderation that has become an integral part of the mentality of a consociational people." [37]

Messarra also points out that depoliticizing education is a national policy in a plural society. Whenever some try to plan or forcefully impose an educational concept at the collective level or prevent desired diversity from certain parties, it leads to further fragmentation [37].

Regarding the Lebanese representation system, Messarra states that it "branches from the basis of the consociational model, which requires an elite with a strategic position in the system and the delegation of decisions to the representatives of the most important factions who are genuinely capable of containing conflicts. However, if each sect turns into a quasi-parliament during crises, it is because the sects do not feel genuinely represented in the Parliament [37].

#### Four main factors

Antoine Masarra specifies that "the viability of the model depends on four main factors. First of all, it depends on mental structures. Second, it depends on the 'Federalization' of the system (Fédéralisation du Système) whose principles are recognized by the constitution itself. The unified state and the federal state are not two contradictory types, according to the traditional constitutional theory. The Lebanese political system, like many other systems belonging to the category of consensus democracies, forms a federation on a personal basis in a unified country. In plural societies, federalism can be implemented on a territorial basis when the main divisions coincide with geographic boundaries. In the past, consensus has been stalled due to the repeated use of vetoes and subsequent settling of scores on sovereignty issues that are not, by their nature, issues likely to be settled. Third, the viability of the model depends on the regulation of relations with the surrounding environment, which is currently in full transformation. The destabilization of Lebanon resulted, in particular, from the armed Palestinian presence, the cold war between the Arabs, the US-Soviet conflict in the region, and the Arab-Israeli conflict. Fourth, the viability of the model depends - and this is essential - on a balanced balance of forces, with defensive structures that allow, in the event of a ban, to preserve the pluralistic character of society, which is the condition of its democracy [38].

Antoine Masarra concludes: "The consociational model makes it possible to reconcile the need for a strong central authority that controls external interventions and attempts at internal domination, and the need to preserve socio-cultural properties. Eventually, says Masarra, the success of consociationalism will make it possible to overcome it because this success ensures the psychological reassurance of the groups of which a pluralist society is composed." [38]

Masarra points out that the term "consensus" in Arabic has nothing to do with the commonly used word "consensus," as consociationalism is tied to the context of constituent nation-building [39].

#### Observations

Before analyzing the culture of change in the Lebanese political

thought, it is necessary to recall the fundamental questions posed by Georges Corm at the beginning of this chapter: whether Lebanon was established for itself or for someone else. Whether Lebanon still serves as an Arab necessity and if it should play a role in that context. Furthermore, Corm suggests reversing the question and asking why Lebanon does not function primarily for the well-being of its citizens. What is Lebanon's role toward its citizens, and what are the citizens' responsibilities toward it? Is it an inherent inevitability that Lebanon exists to serve others before its own people? Contrary to what the majority of the Lebanese and other peoples of the world believe, the first republic as a Lebanese regime was not born with the independence constitution of 1943 but rather dates back to the constitution of 1926 when it was the first democratic and constitutional republic of its kind in the Arab world. Change is a tangible historical reality that always moves in a specific direction, but it is also an unpredictable course of events that can be transformed into rational patterns of relationships with variables.

We also conclude that change in a feudal political system can come from two sources: the nearest and farthest periphery, and from within the system itself. In the Lebanese feudal system, the most important changes came from within. Regarding the areas and limits of change in Lebanon, we conclude that there are two external political dilemmas, and their resolution involves culture. The first is geopolitical, given Lebanon's location in a hostile Zionist neighborhood and close proximity to a weak Arab system. The second lies in Lebanon's exceptionalism compared to neighboring Arab regimes in terms of the tyranny of some of these regimes and the dictatorship of others.

Lebanon, then, has no ability to change geopolitics or Arab regimes. The fundamental treatment lies in a cultural approach, characterized by caution in foreign relations, independence, noninternal bullying (such as inter-team and inter-sect conflicts), collective memory where lessons are learned from history, reliance on the rule of law as the only reference, and a focus on public affairs that prioritize the public interest over private interests.

#### Conclusion

We conclude that the limitations and major areas of change are reflected in all of the above, encompassing both dilemmas. The changes that have taken place in the Lebanese economic structure are significant, resulting not only from internal events but also regional economic and financial tensions that have strongly affected Lebanon, leading to social change. Hence, the social question is directly linked to the economic one.

From a historical perspective, three conclusions are drawn regarding the reconsideration of Lebanon's history. Firstly, the experience of the civil war has shown that neither side of the Lebanese people can easily impose its opinion on the other, indicating that Lebanon's problems can only be solved through rational concessions. Secondly, there are signs that the country has reached a stage of political consensus, essential for the non-combating majority. Thirdly, the Arab world has come to accept the Lebanese republic as it is, understanding the sensitivity of Lebanese society. Consequently, the recognition of Lebanon's Arab identity no longer poses a threat to the continuity of sovereignty, unity, or the status of any group in Lebanon.

In relation to the consociational model, which Lebanon is distinguished by, we can deduce that it has four characteristics. Firstly, a broad coalition government; secondly, proportional representation instead of a majority-based system; thirdly, mutual veto as a means to protect the minority against majority decisions. However, we observe here that participation in the government coalition alone is not sufficient to protect the minority group. Therefore, this group must be given the right of veto in vital areas. Fourthly, self-administration in certain affairs to avoid stagnation in decision-making through the right of veto.

Therefore, we conclude that the Lebanese system is based on a power-sharing arrangement, meaning that it is built not only on mutual concessions but also on a balance of power and negotiation,

as in any pluralistic system. We also see that the viability of this model depends on four main factors. Firstly, the federalism of the system, which the constitution itself recognizes its principles, as the unity of the state is not contradictory to its federal nature. Secondly, the viability of this model also depends on organizing relations with the surrounding environment. Thirdly, it depends on a balanced power equilibrium with defense structures that allow the preservation of the pluralistic nature of the society, which is a prerequisite for its democracy.

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