# Undemocratic Lebanon?: The Power-Sharing Arrangements after the 2005 Independence *intifada*

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## Introduction: Beyond the Authoritarianism-Democracy Dichotomy

Despite widely spread expectation that the 2005 Syrian withdrawal would be an opportunity to restore Lebanon's 'sovereignty, independence and freedom', Lebanon has experienced political instability and confusion, dysfunction such as paralysis of both the cabinet and parliament, long-term vacancy of the presidential office, the 33-day war with Israel in summer 2006, a series of street protests and sit-ins, armed clashes between civilians, and uprisings of the Sunni Islamic militants. Although supported by the West, Post-Syria Lebanon's democratisation, known as the Cedar Revolution or independence *intifada*, seems to have failed to normalise Lebanese politics and has not maintained peace and stability in the country.

Analysts and journalists argued that the major cause of the devastating failure of the Cedar Revolution was 'sectarianism'. In fact, this is not a new phenomenon; many studies on modern Lebanese history discuss "the problem of sectarianism" (Weiss 2009: 141). Such an argument can be categorised into three arguments.

The first is that Lebanon's long-lasting domestic political strife is due to a deep-rooted parochial mentality and mutual distrust between the sectarian groups. This type of sectarianism can be called sectarian *identity* (Abukhalil 2008; Harris 2009; Makdisi 2008). The second is that Lebanese political elites such as *za'im*, warlords, and party leaders[1] are so self-contained or egoistic that they often give highest priority to the sectarian interest rather than the national interest (Cammelet 2009; el-Husseini 2004; Jaafar and Stephen 2009). In this case, sectarianism can be defined as an irresponsible and self-seeking *practice* of the political elites. The third is that sectarianism is an *institution* embedded in Lebanon's political system of confessionalism — the sectarian power-sharing

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formula ― thereby reproducing *identity* and *practice*（Choucair-Vizoso 2008; Hajjar 2009, Hovespian 2008; Jaafar 2007; Johnson 2007）. Of course, these explanations of sectarianism as either *identity*, *practice*, or *institution* are not mutually exclusive. In reality, they interrelate and interact.

All three explanations indicate that sectarianism is the major deterrent to Lebanon's political development, and the Lebanese ought to overcome these difficulties in time. Thus, they tend to conclude that the basic rules of Lebanese politics have not changed since the 1989 Ta'if Accord or even the 1943 National Pact, as 'the curse of sectarianism' has yet to be lifted.

Apparently, althoug sectarianism remains one of the most decisive factors in Lebanese political dynamics, this does not mean that Lebanon has not shown any signs of change. Rather, Lebanese politics after the 2005 Syrian withdrawal look like, as William Harris termed, a "roller coaster ride"（Harris 2009）that has brought about a chain of significant political events causing change.

One of the most significant changes is the bipolarisation of the political elites and the citizens, and the subsequent formation of two powerful policy-oriented party coalitions, the Le Bristol Gathering（March 14）and the 'Ain al-Tina Gathering（March 8）. They were seemingly organised along policy issues rather than sectarian affiliations, and this resulted in cross-communal cooperation among the political elites from various sects.

This change does not promise to bring either deconfessionalisation or democratisation to Lebanon. Yet it should be stressed that even if sectarianism is a potential threat to Lebanon's peace and stability, the political struggle after the 2005 Syrian withdrawal did not develop into nation-wide bloodshed as it did in the 1975-90 civil war, despite the absence of the overwhelming security power which was on Syria's shoulder in the 1990s. Even the May 2008 armed clash, which marked the worst civilian violence since the end of the civil war, came to an end before long. Hence, it seems that new game rules are appearing in Lebanon today.

Nevertheless, current political literature on Lebanon, whether academic or journalistic, is filled with pessimistic discourse; that is, the country today is not under Syria's authoritarian control any longer, but nor regarded as a democratic state yet, because of 'the curse of sectarianism'（Hajjar 2009; 262, Makdisi, Kiwan and Marktanner 2011: 116-118; Salloukh 2009）. For them, Lebanon today is just between authoritarianism and democracy.

Such discourse seems to be based on the conventional democratisation theory. Raymond Hinnebush rightly argue that flaws of the theory are "the authoritarian-democratic dichotomy" and teleology of movement from one to the other, which "obscures both the great variety of regimes and the similarities they all share" and makes

the Middle Eastern states appear more exceptional than it is (Hinnebusch 2010: 441). Consequently, many of the studies on the post-Syria Lebanese politics tend to overlook on-going political changes such as the policy-oriented bipolarisation of the political elites and groups and its significance, and to leave the central issue untouched; that is, What is really going on in the post-Syria Lebanese politics?

Apart from the conventional, and perhaps normative democratisation theory, this paper will try to answer a simple question, What has changed in post-Syria Lebanese politics? and Why?. This will be done by focusing not only on the persistence of sectarianism, but on patterns and dynamics of elite politics during the period between the two parliamentary elections of 2005 and 2009.

## Ⅰ. The 2005 Parliamentary Elections: Policy-oriented Bipolarisation

The seventeenth parliamentary elections (May-June 2005) were Lebanon's first national elections after the 2005 Syrian withdrawal, and was welcomed by the Lebanese and international communities as it would open the door for a new era of Lebanon's 'sovereignty, independence and freedom'. This section will explore what changed in the post-Syria Lebanese politics with special reference to formation and deformation of the party coalitions based on cross-communal cooperation among the political elites.
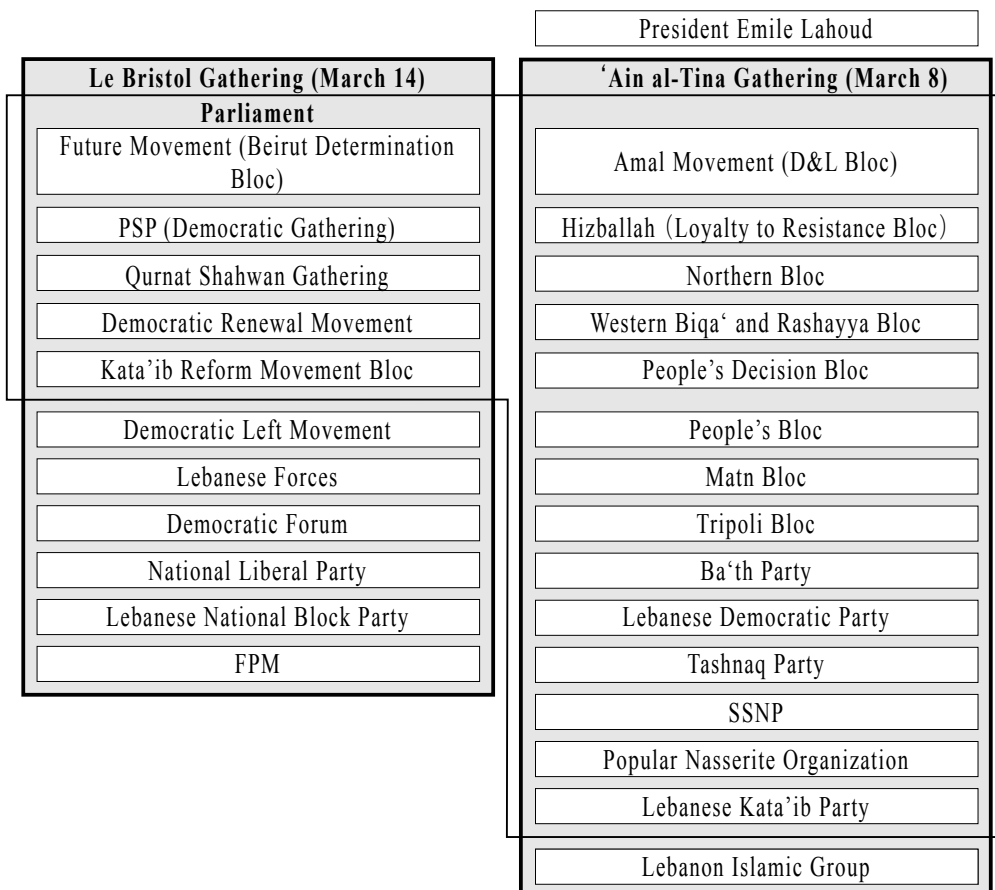
### 1. Electoral campaigns

The beginning of the electoral campaign dates back to October 2004 when Umar Karami's government was formed. From that point until the elections, gradual bipolarisation of the political elites was observed regarding the two major policy issues: electoral system reform and Lebanese-Syrian relations. Whereas the Le Bristol Gathering insisted on both amending the electoral law to set *qada* (a small district) as the electoral district and Syria disengaging from Lebanon, the 'Ain al-Tina Gathering persisted in *muhafaza* (a large district), which was regulated by the 1960 electoral law, and reinforcement of Lebanese-Syrian relations.

This bipolarisation was fostered by the assassination of Rafiq Hariri in February 2005, leading to the rise of the Le Bristol Gathering with penetrating anti-Syrian sentiment among the citizens. Although the drive towards formation of the party coalitions was sometimes seen as a product of their ambition to maximise power and interest, the bipolarisation was actually taking place along the lines of policy issues. Therefore, the coming elections were expected to mirror the nation-wide dispute over policy issues rather than Lebanon's deep-rooted sectarian rivalry, and thus to fully implement the democratic process (Figure 1).

Regardless, the electoral campaign did not focus on policy issues. Political elites and parties suspended or even ignored their policies, and tried to form *ad hoc* electoral coalitions in order to win the elections in each district. The most significant example was the 'Four Parties Coalition (*al-tahaluf al-ruba'i*)', formed by the parties from both the Gatherings; namely, the Future Movement and Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) from March 14, and Hizballah and Amal Movement from the latter.

Essentially, these four parties did not agree on policy issues; however, the political parties and elites could not win elections without support from the constituencies of other political or sectarian groups in the Lebanese electoral system. They temporarily suspended their policy discussions until the end of the elections. As a result, there appeared to be an axis of rivalries not between the electoral lists of the two Gatherings, but

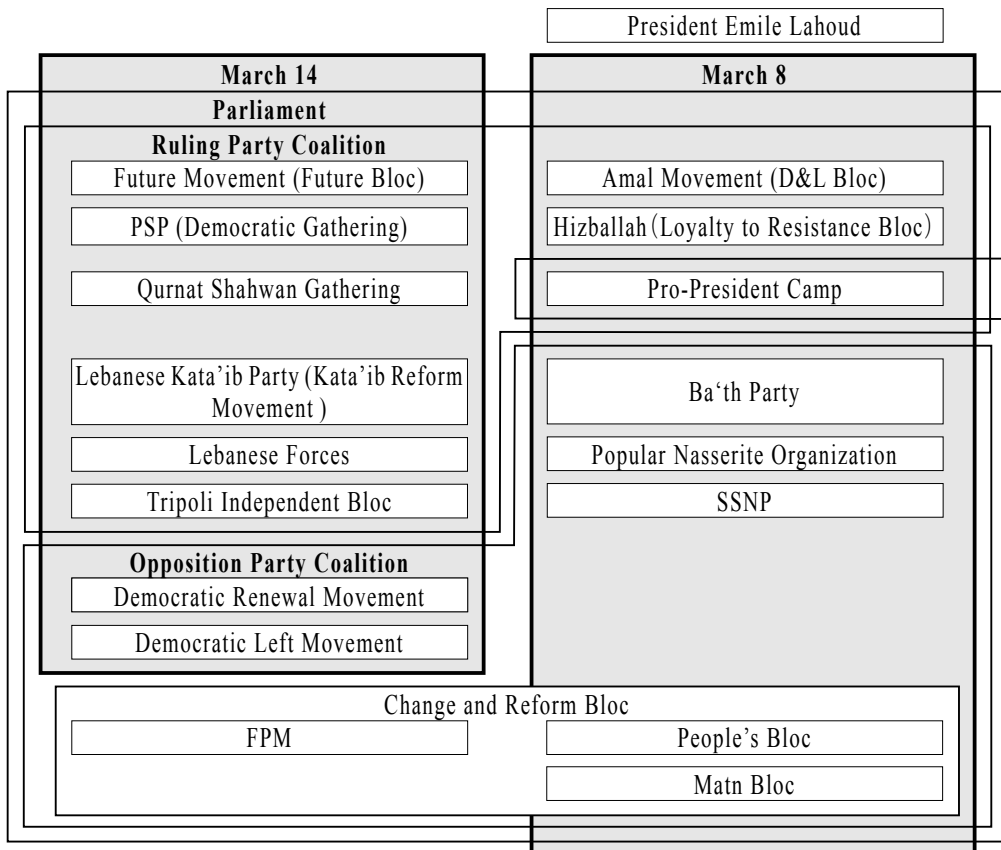Figure 1: Political Map of the Lebanese Political Actors (February–June, 2005)

| President Emile Lahoud |
| --- |

| Le Bristol Gathering (March 14) | 'Ain al-Tina Gathering (March 8) |
| --- | --- |
| **Parliament** | |
| Future Movement (Beirut Determination Bloc) | Amal Movement (D&L Bloc) |
| PSP (Democratic Gathering) | Hizballah (Loyalty to Resistance Bloc) |
| Qurnat Shahwan Gathering | Northern Bloc |
| Democratic Renewal Movement | Western Biqa' and Rashayya Bloc |
| Kata'ib Reform Movement Bloc | People's Decision Bloc |
| Democratic Left Movement | People's Bloc |
| Lebanese Forces | Matn Bloc |
| Democratic Forum | Tripoli Bloc |
| National Liberal Party | Ba'th Party |
| Lebanese National Block Party | Lebanese Democratic Party |
| FPM | Tashnaq Party |
| | SSNP |
| | Popular Nasserite Organization |
| | Lebanese Kata'ib Party |
| | Lebanon Islamic Group |

between the Four Parties Coalition and the others led by Micheal Aoun's Free Patriotic Movement (FPM). The result was that the Four Parties Coalition won 101 seats by a large margin of 74. The FPM-led opposition took only 27 seats (Figure 2, 3).

## 2．Formation of parliamentary blocs and cabinet

Figure 2: Political Map of the Lebanese Political Actors (First Siniora Government)

| President Emile Lahoud |
|---|

| March 14 | March 8 |
|---|---|
| **Parliament** | |
| **Ruling Party Coalition** | |
| Future Movement (Future Bloc) | Amal Movement (D&L Bloc) |
| PSP (Democratic Gathering) | Hizballah (Loyalty to Resistance Bloc) |
| Qurnat Shahwan Gathering | Pro-President Camp |
| Lebanese Kata'ib Party (Kata'ib Reform Movement) | Ba'th Party |
| Lebanese Forces | Popular Nasserite Organization |
| Tripoli Independent Bloc | SSNP |
| **Opposition Party Coalition** | |
| Democratic Renewal Movement | |
| Democratic Left Movement | |

| Change and Reform Bloc | |
|---|---|
| FPM | People's Bloc |
| | Matn Bloc |

Interestingly, the parliamentary blocs were not formed according to election results based on distribution of seats among the electoral coalitions. In reality, they were reorganised along policy issues, leading to a clear division between the Le Bristol Gathering (March 14) and the ʿAin al-Tina Gathering (March 8). Distribution of parliamentary seats among the blocs was 72 seats for March 14 and 35 seats for March 8, and thus the former gained the upper hand in parliament. FPM shaped the third force with 21 seats.

Figure 3: Distribution of the Parliamentary Seats I（2005）

| Four Parties Coalition and Allies | seats | Oppositions | seats |
|---|---|---|---|
| Future Movement　＊ | 36 | FPM | 14 |
| PSP　＊ | 15 | People's Bloc | 5 |
| Amal Movement　＊ | 15 | Matn Bloc | 2 |
| Hizballah　＊ | 14 | SSNP | 2 |
| | | Ba'th Party | 1 |
| Lebanese Forces | 6 | Popular Nasserite Organization | 1 |
| Qurnat Shahwan Gathering | 5 | Democratic Renewal Movement | 1 |
| Tripoli Independent Bloc | 4 | Democratic Left Movement | 1 |
| Kata'ib Reform Movement | 2 | | |
| Lebanese Kata'ib Party | 1 | | |
| Non Affiliated | 3 | | |
| | 101 | | 27 |

* The Four Parties Coalition

Figure 4: Distribution of the Parliamentary Seats II（2006）

| March 14 | seats | Non Affiliated | | March 8 | seats |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Non Affiliated | 3 | | |
| Future Movement | 36 | | | Amal Movement | 15 |
| PSP | 15 | | | Hizballah | 14 |
| Lebanese Forces | 6 | | | FPM | 14 |
| Qurnat Shahwan Gathering | 5 | | | People's Bloc | 5 |
| Tripoli Independent Bloc | 4 | | | Matn Bloc | 2 |
| Kata'ib Reform Movement | 2 | | | SSNP | 2 |
| Democratic Renewal Movement | 1 | | | Ba'th Party | 1 |
| Democratic Left Movement | 1 | | | Lebanese Kata'ib Party | 1 |
| | | | | Popular Nasserite Organization | 1 |
| | 70 | | 3 | | 55 |

Undemocratic Lebanon?

Lebanese media and academics often criticised the actions of the political elites during the election period for their undemocratic nature because they did not comprehend the will of the constituencies. Yet traditional static sectarian rivalries were not clearly observed here. Rather, the political elites seemed loyal to their policies, although they carried out Lebanon's traditional electoral strategies of forming *ad hoc* electoral coalitions. Even if the constituencies of their parties had a sectarian *identity*, *practice* of the political elites was not necessarily seen as reflection of it.

Whereas the formation of the parliamentary blocs was seemingly policy-oriented, the cabinet members were distributed based on the Lebanese political system of confessionalism; this distribution was not strictly defined but nonetheless corresponded to the number of seats held in parliament by the various sectarian groups (Hudson 1997: 113; Rigby 2000: 176). Consequently, the cabinet members consisted of members from both the ruling party and the opposition. Here appeared another agenda regarding the cabinet decision-making process: whether or not the opposition would have one-third of the cabinet seats, or obtain the 'blocking third (*thulth muatal*)' with veto power. At the end of July after a month-long dispute, Fouad Siniora's cabinet was approved by the parliament, in which the Four Parties Coalition held an overwhelming majority of cabinet seats (24 out of 30). The remaining seats were taken by FPM and its allies. Here the government was divided into the ruling coalition — the Four Parties Coalition — and the others, which did not reflect the policy-oriented bipolarisation in the formation of the parliamentary blocs.

## 3. From "constitutional vacuum" to "equilibrium breakdown"

Siniora's government quickly revealed its inability to make policies and govern, and soon faced political deadlock. This was mainly because of the above-mentioned 'cabinet-parliament twist,' wherein the Four Parties Coalition formed the overwhelming majority of cabinet members despite the fact that March 14 had the upper hand in parliament. Moreover, intensifying rivalries among the ruling and opposition cabinet members drove Siniora's government into a corner. Such rivalries were caused by differences of vision over a number of policy issues such as (1) implementation of UNSCR 1559 (2004), (2) investigations of Hariri's assassination, (3) Lebanese-Syrian relations, and (4) electoral system reform. Further, they were closely tied to the political elites' patronage networks for the distribution of public resources and opportunities.

The paralysis and dysfunction of Siniora's government brought about a change in the domestic political map. FPM decided to join March 8 by signing 'the FPM and Hizballah mutual understanding (*Waraqa al-Tafahum al-Mushtarak bayna Hizb Allah wa al-Tayyar al-Watani al-Hurr*)' in February 2006 (Ilias 2010). Hence, March 8, led by Hizballah, now

had 55 seats in the parliament, and that FPM gained a more powerful voice in parliament and in cabinet（ICG 2008:7）（Figure 4）. Consequently, both parliament and the cabinet became characterised by the same ruling-opposition bipolar structure of March 14 versus March 8, which could be seen as the emergence of a quasi two-party system（Figure 5）.

However, this led to further paralysis and, even worse, nation-wide deterioration of public security. In order to find a way out of the situation, ʻthe National Dialogue（*al-Hiwar al-Watani*）ʼ, an extra-institutional and extra-legal action for breakthrough, was organised by the fourteen major political elites in March 2006. It held a series of meetings until the breakout of the 33-day war in summer 2006. The central issues discussed were （1）normalising relations with Syria, （2）collecting weapons from militants outside Palestinian refugee camps, （3）the position of Emile Lahoud as President, （4）disarming Hizballah, and（5）reforming the electoral system（Shields 2008: 478）. Yet these efforts did not bear fruit; in effect, no issues were agreed upon due to contending relations between March 14 and March 8.

By the end of November 2006, when the six ministers from March 8 and one appointed by the President resigned, the total paralysis and dysfunction of Lebanese politics was revealed, bringing about political unrest and collapse of public security throughout the country. March 8 called out its supporters to organise a series of massive-scale street protests and sit-ins to overthrow Siniora's government, and March 14 organised counter demonstrations, which resulted in civil strife between supporters of the two camps. Street violence in early 2007 took a heavy toll on civilian lives, and reminded the Lebanese of the nightmare of the 15-year civil war. Further, the end of President Lahoud's term in November 2007 raised another issue: reform of the presidential election system. Again, March 14 and March 8 did not reach an agreement regarding this issue, which led to a more than six-month vacancy of the presidential post, known as "the constitutional vacuum（*al-faragh al-dusturi*）".
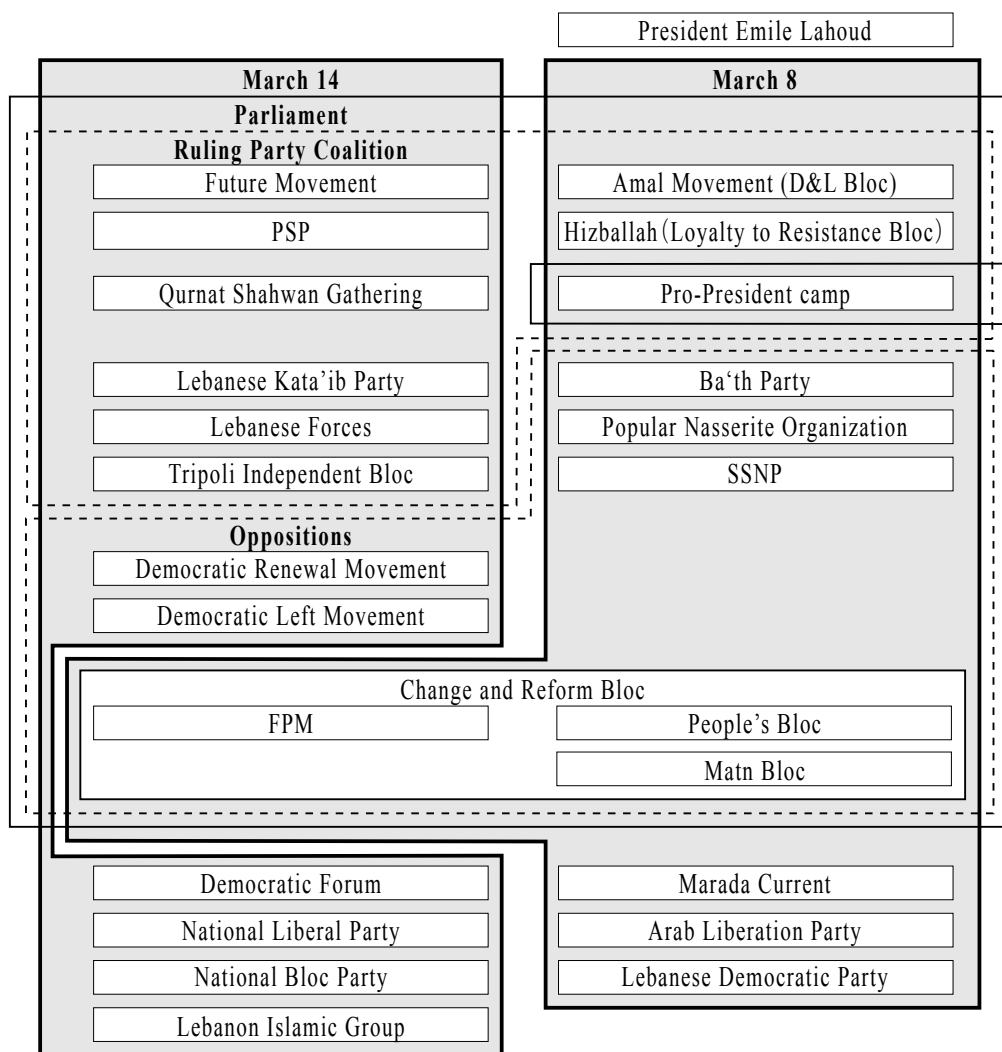
The thirty-month-long political deadlock after the 2005 elections enflamed rivalries between March 14 and March 8. The uncompromising postures of the political elites turned into successive street fighting between the supporters of each camp in May 2008, which was called "the equilibrium breakdown（*kasr al-tawazun*）"（*al-Hayat*, May 12, 2008）. As approximately 80 civilians were dead and over 200 injured, it was the worst civilian clash since the end of the civil war. Soon after, the two camps agreed on a ceasefire with the intermediation of the Arab League, calling upon supporters to stop the street fighting. Eleven of the major Lebanese political elites held another meeting of the National Dialogue in Doha, and put an end to the long lasting policy disputes; they unanimously agreed on the Doha Accord on May 21, maintaining that（1）the commander-in-chief Michel Suleiman would be the next president, （2）a national unity government of thirty

cabinet members (16 for March 14, 11 for March 8, and 3 for President) would be formed, and (3) electoral system reform for the 2009 elections would be implemented, in which the electoral district was qada, based on the 1960 electoral law.

In short, both before and after the 2005 elections, Lebanon experienced bipolarisation between the political elites and parties. This was essentially based on differences of vision over political issues, although it is correct to say that these were directly related to their own factional interests. Sectarianism was still in effect, but not

Figure 5: Political Map of the Lebanese Political Actors (February 2006–May 2008)

| President Emile Lahoud | |
|---|---|
| **March 14** | **March 8** |
| **Parliament** | |
| **Ruling Party Coalition** | |
| Future Movement | Amal Movement (D&L Bloc) |
| PSP | Hizballah (Loyalty to Resistance Bloc) |
| Qurnat Shahwan Gathering | Pro-President camp |
| Lebanese Kata'ib Party | Ba'th Party |
| Lebanese Forces | Popular Nasserite Organization |
| Tripoli Independent Bloc | SSNP |
| **Oppositions** | |
| Democratic Renewal Movement | |
| Democratic Left Movement | |

| Change and Reform Bloc | |
|---|---|
| FPM | People's Bloc |
| | Matn Bloc |

| Democratic Forum | Marada Current |
|---|---|
| National Liberal Party | Arab Liberation Party |
| National Bloc Party | Lebanese Democratic Party |
| Lebanon Islamic Group | |

necessarily a determinant factor of such political dynamism.

## Ⅱ. The 2009 Parliamentary Elections: Rise and Fall of the Quasi Two-party System

The 2009 parliamentary elections were to be held amidst intensifying antagonism between March 14 and March 8. Yet if viewed from a different angle, this fact illustrates that (1) despite such strong antagonism, both camps respected Lebanon's non-violent/democratic political process, and (2) the quasi-two party system appeared to be consolidating.

In reality, the elections were carried out with a high voting rate and no major political violence, and the results were accepted by the loser March 8 as well as the winner March 14. "All in all, the election, its conduct, and immediate post-election reactions indicated a vibrant and mature Lebanese democracy at work" (Hajjar 2009: 262). This section will explore the dynamism of the cross-communal cooperation among the political elites during and following the 2009 elections.

### 1. Electoral campaigns

As mentioned above, the proposed electoral system reform was one of the central issues in the policy dispute between March 14 and March 8. It took five months to reach an agreement after the Doha Accord in May 2008. In October 2008, the new electoral law was finally approved by the parliament, fixing *qada* as an electoral district.

The electoral campaigns substantially began with formation of electoral coalitions. At this time, two signs of change were observed. First, all electoral districts witnessed clear bipolarisation of the candidates, namely electoral lists affiliated with March 14 and March 8. This does not mean that all the candidates persisted in staying within either of the two camps; rather, they often formed *ad hoc* electoral coalitions to win seats irrespective of their policy and camp, as observed in the past elections.

For example, in Beirut 2 district, March 14 and March 8 candidates formed a joint list. In spite of this, and compared to previous elections, the policy-oriented bipolarisation of the political elites and parties was far more consolidated. Second, besides the two rival camps, there appeared to be a move to organise the third camp in order to break through the political stalemate and to restore the legislative and administrative capabilities of the Lebanese government. This third camp was often called *kutla wasatiya*, literally meaning not only the third, but also indicating moderation in terms of policy and ideology. Although this move, primarily led by President Suleiman, fell through before long, it can be seen as a positive sign of Lebanon's political development to overcome long-lasting

problems.

Thus, through the electoral campaigns and voting the bipolarisation of the domestic political elites and parties turned into consolidation of the quasi two-party system（Figure 6）. This was bolstered by contending relations between March 14 and March 8 regarding their visions over issues such as the Hariri international tribunal, Lebanon's relations with Syria and Iran, national defence strategy including disarmament of Hizballah, implementation of the Ta'if Accord and the Doha Accord, and fighting injustice and corruption. The election, and especially the campaign period, was remarkable for "its lack of attention to issues of real substance"（Cammett 2009）; but compared to the 2005 elections, it seemed that the political elites and parties were more loyal to their policies and the party coalitions, even during the electoral campaign. At least they did not find it easy to convert the camps from one to another due to the fact that bipolarisation had become *a priori* for the voters. Consequently, it is clear that in the 2009 elections the policy moratorium hardly appeared, and thus policy took a more significant role than seen

Figure 6: Political Map of the Lebanese Political Actors（The 2009 Parliamentary Elections）

| President Michel Suleiman |
|---|

| March 14 / Ruling Party Coalitions | March 8 / Oppositions |
|---|---|
| **Parliament** | |
| Future Movement (Lebanon First Bloc) | Amal Movement (D&L Bloc) |
| PSP (Democratic Gathering) | Hizballah（Loyalty to Resistance Bloc） |
| Lebanese Kata'ib Party | Ba'th Party |
| Lebanese Forces | SSNP |
| Democratic Left Movement | Islamic Action Party |
| Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (Ramgavar) | Tashnaq Party |
| Social Democrat Hunchakian Party | Lebanese Democratic Party |
| Lebanon Islamic Group | Solidarity Party |
| National Entente Bloc | Marada Current |
| Zahale in the Heart Bloc | People's Bloc |
| National Liberal Party | Mountain Unity Bloc |
| | FPM (Change & Reform Bloc) |
| | Popular Nasserite Organization |

Figure 7: Distribution of the Parliamentary Seats（2009）

| March 14 | seats | Non Affiliated | | March 8 | seats |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Future Movement | 28 | Non Affiliated | 1 | FPM | 19 |
| PSP | 11 | | | Amal Movement | 13 |
| Lebanese Forces | 8 | | | Hizballah | 13 |
| Lebanese Kata'ib Party | 5 | | | Marada Current | 3 |
| Armenian Entente Bloc | 3 | | | SSNP | 2 |
| National Entente Bloc | 2 | | | Ba'th Party | 2 |
| National Liberal Party | 1 | | | Tashnaq Party | 2 |
| Democratic Left Movement | 1 | | | Lebanese Democratic Party | 2 |
| Lebanon Islamic Group | 1 | | | Solidarity Party | 1 |
| Independent | 8 | | | | |
| Tripoli Solidarity Bloc | 2 | | | | |
| | 70 | | 1 | | 57 |

in past elections.

## ２．Formation of the parliamentary blocs and cabinet

The election resulted in March 14 winning by a margin of 13 seats and defending its status as the ruling party coalition（Figure 7）. Yet, as seen above, "regardless of who 'wins' or 'loses,' the nature of Lebanon's political system means that the outcome of the elections will have limited consequences for actual politics and policy making," because the Lebanese political system based on confessionalism "functions by consensus, the opposition retains de facto veto power, bolstered by the threat of armed force"（Cammett 2009）. Therefore, it was not surprising that Lebanese politics once more faced a deadlock.

A clear division was seen between March 14 and March 8 in the formation of the parliamentary blocs, leading to consolidation of the quasi two-party system. Distribution of seats among the blocs mirrored the election results based on the polls: 71 seats for March 14 and 57 for March 8. However, one of the biggest surprises was PSP leader Walid Jumblatt's leave from March 14. Jumblatt criticised his March 14 coalition partners for a campaign "driven by the rejection of the opposition on sectarian, tribal and political levels rather than being based on a political platform"（*The Daily Star*, August 3, 2009）. Jumblatt's decision overshadowed March 14's parliamentary initiative to become the majority and ruling party coalition.

The new cabinet led by Sa'ad Hariri faced obstacles mainly because of the failure to build consensus among the political elites. Hizballah secretary general Sayyid Hasan

Nasrallah accepted the electoral loss of March 8 but stated that the Lebanese needed to forget the election results, and that the cabinet members were appointed not according results but according to the sectarian power-sharing arrangement dictated by the Lebanese constitution. In fact, cabinet formation took more than five months to complete after the elections. After a series of meetings among the political elites, they finally reached an agreement on November 11. The cabinet comprised 15 ministers from the March 14-led Mustaqbal Movement, 10 from the Hizballah-led March 8 opposition, and 5 nominated by President Suleiman.

Despite its victory in the 2009 elections and consolidation of the quasi-two party system, March 14 did not take political initiative either in the parliament or cabinet, and thus failed to gain substantial power. Consequently, Lebanese politics again faced its paralysis and dysfunction.

## ３．From realignment to deconstruction?

It is reasonable to criticise political development before and after the 2009 elections for being undemocratic or as being a failure of democratisation due to few opportunities for meaningful input on the part of the poll and citizenry. Particularly, Jumblatt's decision to leave March 14 after the elections was often described as a typical sectarian mind-set and even as a spoiler to Lebanon's democracy, because his actions were likely to be a pragmatic strategy that reflected his sectarian interest rather than national interest.

However, Jumblatt's PSP was not the sole party that brought about realignment of post-Syria Lebanese politics. Hariri's Future Movement also began to change its posture towards March 8. During the time of cabinet formation in late 2009, Hariri was actually prepared to accept most of Hizballah's conditions. Apart from the question of the composition of the cabinets and the distribution of portfolios and veto power, he was prepared to reconcile any insistence on governmental control over Hizballah's weapons. Moreover, in late December 2009, Hariri visited Damascus to talk with Syrian president Bashshar Asad, who was backing March 8. This was his first visit since the assassination of his father Rafiq, which had decisively deteriorated his relations with Damascus, and was thus seen as a sign of improvement in relations between the two countries (ICG 2010: 13-17).

Hariri's change of posture towards March 8 and Damascus was actually criticised by supporters of March 14 as being a surrender to them, and was even viewed as a Damascus victory over Beirut after the five-year-long contending relations between pro- and anti-Syrian camps in Lebanon. Such an evaluation is understandable. Just like Jumblatt, Hariri excised his pragmatism and was likely to attach great importance to his sectarian and factional interests rather than to Lebanese national interests.

Such pragmatic actions of both Jumblatt and Hariri, however they were interpreted and evaluated, reintroduced policy-making capabilities to Lebanese politics, which had become dysfunctional after the 2005 elections, even if this occurred at the expense of the democracy that was to reflect the polls and citizenry. The new form of Lebanese politics, characterised by policy-oriented bipolarisation and subsequent emergence of the quasi two-party system, did not secure a smooth and sound political process or even public security without consensus-building among the political elites. March 14 as well as March 8 learned much through their experience of political development between the two elections. This realignment of the contending two camps may lead to deconstruction of post-Syria Lebanese politics.

In sum, the 2005 Syrian withdrawal triggered Lebanon's democratisation. Lebanese confessional politics were reinstated for the first time since the fifteen-year civil war and the fifteen-year Syrian control. Although the *ad hoc* electoral coalitions that ignored policy alignment were formed in the 2005 elections, *post hoc* policy-oriented political alliances reorganised in the parliament. In the post-election political process, this bipolarisation finally brought about the emergence of the quasi two-party system. However, due to the confessionalism-based Lebanese political system that was designed to function by consensus, this new form of Lebanese politics revealed an inability to make policies, leading to political deadlock and subsequent violent civil strife. Soon after, the political elites agreed that this problem needed to be concluded through democratic procedures, namely the 2009 elections

The 2009 elections witnessed the consolidation of the quasi two-party system. The *ad hoc* electoral coalitions were almost identical to the *post hoc* political alliances. The political elites were likely to be more loyal to their policy stances; they formed electoral coalitions along with the two camps and did not convert in the pre- and post-elections. Ironically, this consolidation of the quasi two-party system created unfavourable grounds for the Lebanese political system of confessionalism, which requires compromise from the political elites and consensus-building among them. It seems that the Lebanese, and especially Jumblatt and Hariri, now realise this after five years of political turmoil in Lebanon.

## Ⅲ. Political Institutions and Incentives for Cross-communal Cooperation and Non-violent Competition

As seen above, explicit bipolarisation of Lebanon's political elites and later the quasi two-party system appeared throughout the two elections after the 2005 Syrian withdrawal. What brought such transformation in post-Syria Lebanon? In this section, the political

institutions, particularly the electoral system, and incentives for cross-communal cooperation and non-violent competition will be examined.

## 1．Changing ways of social mobilisation

Many scholars have voiced that Lebanese socio-political culture is essentially based on sectarian and local clientalism, and that such clientalism has long been preserved by the country's political system of confessionalism (Hamzeh 2001: 167). The political elites, whether traditional *za'im* or modern party leaders, are power brokers in kind with the ability to manipulate elections and the officials they help to elect, and who can influence the administration and continuously provide their clients with a certain share of the state-pie such as government services, employment, contracts, and capital. In exchange for this, the constituencies are expected to show their loyalty and support to the political elites, particularly in the form of voting during election times, which enables the elites to hold office as parliamentary deputies or cabinet members. This patron-client network inhibits sectarian and localised structure (vertical relations).

However, in Lebanon's fragmented multi-confessional society and political system of confessionalism where each sectarian group has an allotted number of seats in parliament, the political elites cannot gain substantial power without support from the other sectarian groups. In particular, the electoral system urges the elites to form party coalitions with cross-communal cooperation and to appeal to a constituency beyond their own sect (horizontal relations) (Figure 8) (Aoyama and Suechika 2009: 14-18; Suechika 2002: 184-185)[2].

The nature of such Lebanese politics remains even after the devastating 1975-1990 civil war, because the political reform initiated by the Ta'if Accord was, as Rola el-Husseini termed, "a change *in* regime, not a change *of* regime" (el-Husseini 2004: 241). Essentially, it restored the pre-war political system of confessionalism with slight modifications. However, it is important to note that the political elites have been reshuffled in post-war Lebanon; the party leaders have become more influential than the *za'im*. They attempt to consolidate their popular support basis by implementation of 'mobilisation from below' based on ideology and policy rather than narrow clientalism of the sectarian and localised structure (Figure 9).

This is mainly due to the decline of the traditional *za'im* during the civil war era; the shrinking political arena and the state-pie led to an atrophy of clientalistic networks (Hamzeh 2001: 170-172). In this sense, the civil war fostered further modernisation of Lebanese politics by breaking down the *za'im*'s traditional clientalism (Aoyama and Suechika 2009: 14-18; Suechika 2002: 188-189). Under this revised type of social mobilisation by ideology and policy, popular support stems more from people's
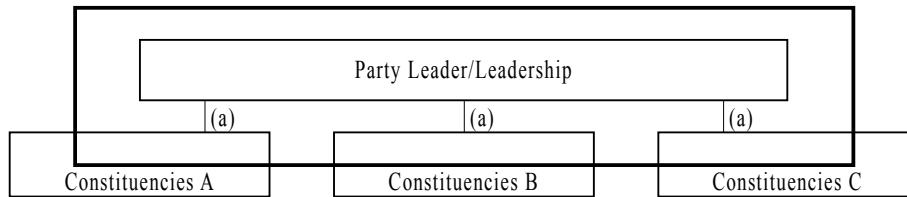
Figure 8: Traditional Patron-Client Network
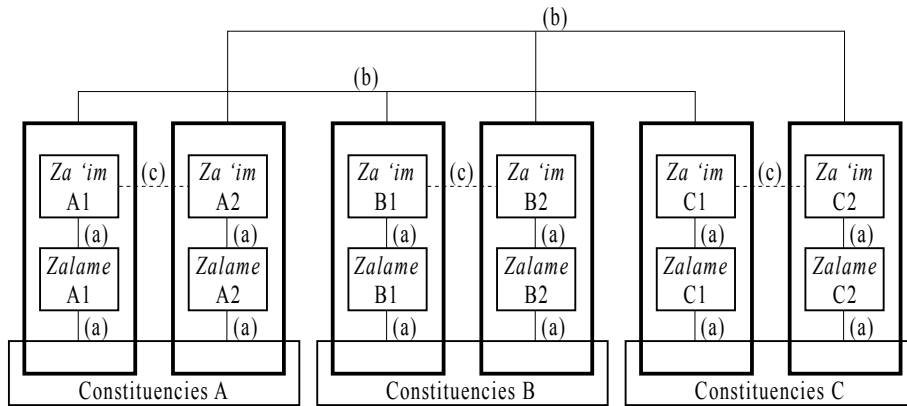


Note: A, B, and C indicate a sectarian group.
- (a) vertical relations: distribution of the state-pie and social mobilization
- (b) horizontal relations: cross-communal cooperation and electoral coalitions
- (c) contending relations within a sectarian group

Figure 9: Modern Ideological Mobilisation



Note: A, B, and C indicate a sectarian group.
- (a) Social mobilization based on ideology, charisma of the party leader, and capital resources

autonomous political affiliations than from primordial loyalty to their sectarian and local patrons.

## 2. Rising Lebanese nationalism, but ostensible?

Nevertheless, this does not mean that Lebanese politics has been deconfessionalised. This is because of the fact that sectarianism as an *institution* remains in Lebanon today, where the political elites are still urged to mobilise their constituencies using sectarian and local clientalism *as well as* ideology[3]. This dilemma has forced the party leaders to find a new way of social mobilisation by pursuing two contradictory goals at once: to consolidate their sectarian and local clientalism and to gain popular support beyond the sectarian lines. In other words, they need to find a 'universal ideology' for

social mobilisation that does not contradict the faith and political affiliations of their clients. The optimal solution for this dilemma can be nationalism. In reality, almost all of the political elites have adopted 'Lebanonism' or Lebanese nationalism. If not, they have at least spoken of and emphasised national interest rather than sectarian interests throughout the post-war years. Regardless of their sectarian affiliations, they have advocated Lebanese nationalism in many ways[4].

It should be emphasised that such nationalism is nothing more than ostensible strategic one as an instrument to strengthen social mobilisation basis. Even if the political elites persist in supporting Lebanese identity, there is no agreement on common understandings of what it means, because the cease fire of the civil war was the sole result of the deadlock of various competing ideologies over the question of what Lebanese identity means among the sectarian groups (Kerr 2005: 187; Fakhoury-Müehlbacher 2008: 4; Hanf 2003; Reinkowski 1997: 508; Russell and Shehadi 2005: 147).

The Future Movement and Hizballah are the two parties most successful at expanding social mobilisation basis with nationalist ideologies in post-war Lebanon. The Hariri's Future Movement has been playing the lead role in conflict-torn Lebanon national salvation and reconstruction, thanks to its vast capital resources and international business ties with global celebrities. The Hariris are not a traditional *za'im* family with a sectarian and localised structure, rather they are an up-and-coming entrepreneurial family with cross-communal and transnational human networks.

Whereas Hizballah, whose militia fought with the Israeli occupation forces in the south for almost two decades and finally drove them out from most of the Lebanese territory, is deeply proud of taking the major role in the national defence strategy. In addition, in 1992 Hizballah, despite its revolutionary ideology, joined the parliamentary elections as a legitimate political party and has vitalised their nationalistic discourse such as restoration of Lebanon's sovereignty and democracy (Alagha 2006; Hamzeh 1993)[5]. Hizballah is no longer a revolutionary force, but has become a major component of Lebanese politics. Thus, the policy lines of both parties are not based on their own sectarian interests, but rather for all Lebanese[6].

The bipolarisation between the March 14 and March 8 party coalitions was not just a coincidence, because only the Future Movement and Hizballah, as political parties in a modern sense with nation-wide and cross-communal popular support, were capable of rallying other political parties. In this sense, Lebanese politics are likely to largely depend on the dynamism of relations between the two parties.

Yet the rivalry between the Future Movement and Hizballah was nothing doomed. Before the Future Movement's engagement of March 14, the citizens were clearly divided between the two gatherings of Le Bristol and 'Ain al-Tina. The origin of this bipolarisation

dates back to September 2004 when the Le Bristol Gathering formed as an anti-Syrian camp. In February 2005, the ʿAin al-Tina Gathering took place, which unofficially but substantially endorsed the Syrian presence in Lebanon. At this time, Rafiq Hariri attempted to remain neutral between the two camps. His assassination marked the decisive moment when the March 14 and March 8 nation-wide rivalry appeared; it was widely reported that Damascus was the chief suspect of the Hariri assassination, which consequently pushed the Future Movement to join the Le Bristol Gathering.

Thus, the two powerful national parties became the core of each of the Le Bristol and ʿAin al-Tina Gatherings. One of the most significant policy issues between them was Lebanon's relationship with Syria. It was natural that the party coalitions formed along the competing lines of the two national parties, because other parties found incentives to join either camp due to bandwagoning during the elections.

In short, although no agreement on the question what Lebanese identity means was reached among the political elites, the post-war political system urged the political parties and elites to be Lebanese nationalists. While the traditional *zaʿim* declined as a result of the shrinking political arena during the war years, the political parties developed into powerful actors by setting national policies in order to gain direct cross-communal poplar support, particularly during the time of the elections. The two most successful cases were the Future Movement and Hizballah, which eventually became the heads of the two party coalitions, March 14 and March 8. It is not correct to say that this stemmed from sectarianism, such as that seen with the Sunnis vs. Shiites. This bipolarisation essentially reflected the will of the citizens and the political elites' vision of the future of the country after Syrian withdrawal.

## 3．Penetrating democracy as a domestic and international norm

As discussed above, the bipolarisation of the political elites, during which the Future Movement and Hizballah played leading roles, developed into the quasi two-party system by the 2009 elections. Regarding the 2005 electoral campaign, the electoral coalitions were not formed along the competing policy lines between March 14 and March 8. The Future Movement, PSP, Hizballah, and the Amal Movement formed the Four Parties Coalition. This was often criticised as an undemocratic action, as the coalitions did not account for their policy differences or the will of their constituencies.

However, this action was seen as their attempt to promote Lebanon's political stability. First, as there was no agreement on what Lebanese identity means among the political elites, they tried to prevent a political stalemate by putting policy differences aside and facilitating cross-communal cooperation. Second, it was widely perceived by the political elites as well as the Lebanese that because the Future Movement and Hizballah

were the two most influential parties, Lebanese politics would not proceed to policy-making without consensus between them. Accordingly, the formation of the Four Parties Coalition was the result of political compromise in order to salvage the country's legislative politics. "The incumbent elite is now unified around the rules of the game and certain issues, including fear of system breakdown. This unity has permitted the transition from a broken political system to a rather stable consociational system" (el-Husseini 2004: 245).

Ironically, the collapse of the Four Parties Coalition after the 2005 elections illustrated that Lebanese politics once more became policy-oriented and thus perhaps was viewed as a positive sign of democratisation in a sense. The dispute over policy issues regenerated explicit cleavage among the four parties: March 14 included the Future Movement and PSP, and March 8 included Hizballah and the Amal Movement. Accordingly, the intensifying rivalries between the two coalitions paralysed Lebanese politics. Of course, policy issues such as Lebanese-Syrian relations, electoral system reform, and the presidential elections were directly related to the interests of each political elite, leading to the breakup of the Four Parties Coalitions. Paradoxically, the most important point is that the narrow, interest-oriented mind-set taken by the political elites brought Lebanon back to policy-oriented politics and thus fostered further democratisation[7]. In the end, the Lebanese political elites once again divided into the two groups along the competing visions over post-Syria Lebanon, and consequently facilitated consolidation of the quasi two-party system between March 14 and March 8.

It should be noted that despite the political stalemate, the political elites did not withdraw their democratic posture, if not democratic value or procedure. On the contrary, most have advocated the importance of democracy as well as Lebanese nationalism in the post-Syria period. Their actions are now likely to be restricted by the word democracy. As we have seen, despite intensifying antagonism between the two camps and the political stalemate between 2007 and 2009, the political elites agreed that their contending relations needed to be concluded through democratic procedures, namely the 2009 elections. This phenomenon can be explained by both domestic and international factors.

In the domestic political sphere, cross-communal cooperation is essential to obtaining substantial power in Lebanon since all the sectarian groups are political minorities and cannot become a political majority without making coalitions with other groups. Perhaps use of arms is the sole option that enables them to become an overwhelming power, but the costs and risks are too high to ensure control of the whole country. This was proved by the bitter experience of the civil war. Therefore, for the political elites, the optimal solution for consolidating their power basis is to carry out competition within the legal framework of Lebanon's consociational democracy (i.e., forming coalitions and reaching agreements with others through talks) (Fakhoury-

Mühlbacher 2009: 361-371). Furthermore, the bitter memory of the civil war, shared by the citizens, restrains the elites' use of arms for domestic power struggles [8]. Use of arms will erode their popularity. For instance, in May 2008 when the "equilibrium breakdown" took place, almost all the Lebanese media criticised Hizballah paramilitary's armed uprising as well as the Future Movement's excessive responses.

Regarding international politics, since democracy has become a strong international norm in the post-cold war world, an undemocratic regime or regime established by undemocratic means would hardly be accepted and recognised by the international community. This was particularly true during the period of George W. Bush's administration between 2001 and 2009. This restrains the political elites' ambition to take power through undemocratic procedures such as arms use. Furthermore, the 2005 independence *intifada* calling for restoration of the Lebanese democracy, which was "welcomed by every single Lebanese citizen" (Knio 2005: 230), has penetrated the importance of democracy throughout the country. Under such circumstances, no one can replace Syria as a single power broker on their own, even if they are capable of doing so by force.

Consequently, the current political elites generally attempt to take power through advocating democracy, setting up national policy, and promoting inter-communal cooperation ostensibly. A notable example is Hizballah, which has transformed from a revolutionary Islamic organisation to a Lebanese national political party. In theory, Hizballah, with their overwhelming paramilitary and vast popular support from the Shiites, Lebanon's largest sectarian group, can take power by means other than elections, perhaps by using armed power or a popular uprising. In practice, Hizballah's paramilitary was used only to intimidate its rival factions, chiefly the Future Movement, and not to take power in Lebanon. Hizballah understood that further action would have provoked domestic popular antipathy towards them and intensified the West's criticism and pressure on Lebanon as well as on their patrons Syria and Iran. As the secretary general, Sayyid Hasan Nasrallah's rhetoric has been even more nationalistic than other political elites, saying that Lebanon has to be "a strong, just and capable state" under the unity of all Lebanese, and that democracy with cross-communal cooperation is the sole way to achieve this.

## Ⅳ. Into a New Abyss of Violence?: Extra-Institutional and Extra-Legal Actions

### 1. Old and New forms of extra-institutional and extra-legal actions

The uncompromising political stalemate among the political elites has eroded Lebanon's peace and stability. Donald Horowitz would not be surprised, saying that Arend

Undemocratic Lebanon?

Lijphart's theory of consociational democracy is too optimistic, and that its fatal flaw is that it lacks incentives for compromise (Horowitz 2002: 19-20; cf. Bloomfield 2003: 10-11; Russell and Shehadi 2005: 150). Perhaps this is true, at least in the Lebanese case.

Yet we need to bear in mind two factors peculiar to Lebanon. First, there has been the so-called 'consociation without reconciliation' in post-war Lebanon. Michael Kerr points out that the Ta'if Accord was based on "the false premise that national reconciliation had occurred", because the accord "presupposed that a national consensus existed in Lebanon at the end of the war, and that it was consecrating it with Syria as the godfather overseeing this process" (Kerr 2005: 178). Second, besides the post-conflict reconciliation, there have been deep-rooted ideological divergences on Lebanese identity among the sectarian groups, political parties, and social classes. Such drive towards 'a struggle for Lebanon' is traced back to the time of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire[9]. Above all, post-war Lebanon's 'consociation without reconciliation' is destined to face deadlock sooner or later.

This led to the creation of a new political situation in Lebanon. In order to overcome the uncompromising nature, there appeared two new extra-institutional and extra-legal actions: one was the formation of the National Dialogue, and the other was non-violent street protests.

The National Dialogue brought together leaders from the major sectarian groups, who were not necessarily holding office, to discuss several policy issues such as normalising relations with Syria and reforming the electoral system, as discussed above (Shields 2008: 478). However, this attempt did not help to dissolve the deep-rooted antagonism among them. They did not find incentives for compromise because all the issues were closely related to their respective interests. Therefore, it was by no means surprising that the Dialogue came to a standstill by early summer 2006. This attempt achieved a ceasefire and reconciliation among the political elites only when international assistance came in May 2008.

Regarding non-violent street protests as a form of extra-institutional (and sometimes extra-legal) action, "nonviolent direct action is often used to challenge institutional deficiencies and create those structural changes necessary for reform and continued political evolution" (Jaafar and Stephen 2009: 179). It was the independence *intifada* of 2005 that set the stage for this as well as civilian politics, if not elite politics, in Lebanon. However, by the end of 2006 March 8 realised this and began to abuse non-violent protests and sit-ins as means to settle deep-seated conflict. This resulted in March 14's response by organising mass counter-demonstrations. Before long, the political elites from both camps called on their followers to protest for reasons that had little to do with changing Lebanon's political system and national interests. Eventually, "today, the

Lebanese have awakened to the fundamentally different nature of strategically planned movements, wherein a group of mobilised individuals can, without recourse to violence, exact tremendous costs on a government and bring the country to a standstill" (Jaafar and Stephen 2009: 178). Although non-violent action is more moral and more effective than recourse to violence, as was seen in the Lebanese civil war, it did not bring peace and stability to post-Syria Lebanon.

Although the National Dialogue and the non-violent street protests did not bear fruit and may be seen as undemocratic due to their extra-institutional and extra-legal natures, they were implemented within the framework of nation-wide consensus-building and non-violence. The Lebanese today, who wish to achieve a political breakthrough, do not apply violent means as seen in the wartime and have been trying to find better ways to deal with the new political circumstances, both domestic and international.

## 2．International interference/assistance as a double-edged sword

Lebanon has been the epicentre of international conflict, and thus has experienced frequent international interference since the end of the Ottoman period. After the fifteen years of *Pax Syriana*, the 2005 Syrian departure from Lebanon left a political vacuum that would be filled by both domestic and international political actors. Lebanon shifted "from Syrian tutelage to western umbrella" (ICG 2005: 8-12), leading to an increase in political actors involved in Lebanese politics. This also stemmed from Lebanon's consociational democracy, as "consociation has become a tool favoured by the west for intervention in regions where its interests are threatened" in the post-cold war world (Kerr 2005: 40). In particular, domestic rivalries among the political elites were reflected by post-9/11 international relations, or the terrorism and anti-terrorism dichotomy. Whereas the US and France backed March 14, Syria and Iran persisted in assisting March 8. As Michael Kerr states, "confessional democracy will collapse if outside pressures make it impossible for politicians to compromise" (Kerr 2005: 25). The political elites have found it more difficult than ever before to compromise over political issues.

However, it would be naïve to say that the Lebanese were innocents manipulated by outside forces. Rather "they are equally adept at manipulating their backers and were even capable of inflicting defeats on foreign forces in Lebanon" (Johnson 2007: 138). In this sense, the Lebanese continued to rely on what Sami G. Hajjar termed "political rentierism"; the Lebanese political elites have followed linkage policies with external powers, and accordingly each of them has held privileged links with external governments and political forces in order to gain domestic political advantages (Hajjar 2009: 272; Seaver 2000; Sisk 1996). Whereas the Future Movement, PSP, and the Lebanese Forces strengthened their ties with both France and the US, Hizballah and the Amal Movement

aligned themselves with Syria and Iran.

Nevertheless, most scholars, including Kerr and Hajjar, also agree that external protectors only can bring long periods of peace to Lebanon. According to Marie-Joëlle Zahar's historical analysis of power-sharing in Lebanon, "in the Lebanese case, a foreign protectorate has been necessary — and perhaps sufficient — to secure domestic peace and stability, even without the support of all Lebanese communities" (Zahar 2005: 235). However, conditions should apply: "multilateral condominiums appear to have led to a more durable power-sharing arrangement than did the single-state protectorates". First, a multilateral agreement to abstain from competitive intervention made possible agreement on a new power-sharing arrangement. Second, the number of guarantors was also important for the stability of domestic peace; the larger the number of guarantors, the less likely it was that one player's withdrawal from the agreement would endanger the stability of a power-sharing regime (Zahar 2005: 236)[10].

A successful power-sharing arrangement of the 2008 Doha Accord, though viewed as "about process rather than structural changes" (Hajjar 2009: 270), was the result of such multilateral condominiums. The accord sought to establish dialogue and consensus among the political elites and to reject violence as political means. The process was led by the Amir of Qatar and his prime minister, with consultation from and participation of the Secretary General of the Arab League Amr Moussa, the foreign ministers, and other principals representing a number of Arab states as well as Iran and Turkey. In short, the Doha Accord and subsequent political process including the 2009 elections was a product of Lebanon's political dependence on the external status quo.

## Conclusion: Lebanese Politics *still* in Transition

Post-Syria Lebanese politics experienced explicit bipolarisation of the political elites as well as the Lebanese along lines of policy issues and later the emergence, if not consolidation, of the quasi two-party system of March 14 and March 8. This transformation of the domestic political map did not secure restoration of Lebanon's 'sovereignty, independence and freedom'. Rather, it resulted in a political stalemate and subsequent civil violence. Intensifying antagonism between the two camps, however, did not develop into another civil war, and was concluded through democratic procedure, namely the 2009 elections. Moreover, after the elections the quasi two-party system began to show signs of dissolution, mainly through the breakup of March 14, reactivating the government's functions.

Behind this political development were the political elites' incentives for cross-communal cooperation and non-violent competition, which were institutionalised by the

Lebanese political system of confessionalism and by domestic and international political influence since the beginning of the 1990s when the cold war and the civil war came to an end. The Lebanese elites were not able to gain substantial power without （1）expanding their popular support basis beyond the sectarian lines by advocating and practising 'Lebanonism' and （2）respecting and following democracy in both values and process. The most successful cases were the Future Movement and Hizballah. The contending relations between these two powerful national parties accelerated Lebanese bipolarisation and emergence of the quasi two-party system.

Certainly, this system did not allow for functional policy-making or governing, and brought about paralysis and dysfunction of the parliament due to their lack of ability to compromise. One may argue that the rise of 'Lebanese nationalism' and the penetration of 'democracy', both of which are ostensible and have strategic meanings, have not necessarily turned Lebanon into an average or conventional democratic state. Rather they have been shaping a new framework for Lebanese politics, one which sets self-restraint principles for the political elites to prevent another civil war, and searches for a new Lebanon with new rule-making and institutional-building by trial and error. A series of nation-wide consensus buildings and non-violent protests were designed to break through the stalemate, which were extra-institutional and extra-legal actions, but essentially non-violent ones that showed respect for Lebanon's democratic and institutional life.

Therefore, it is oversimplified to consider sectarianism as the major spoiler for post-Syria Lebanon's democratisation, or that such form of democracy is nothing but a "decoy" （Hajjar 2009: 262）. Such an argument, which is not unusual in both the media and academia and can be based on the conventional democratisation theory, can be based on the presumption that Lebanon would, sooner or later, advance toward the western-style secular democracy and nationalism.

This presumption is actually dictated by the Ta'if Accord. Yet considering the fact that the accord produced only 'consociation without reconciliation' among the political elites, it may be too optimistic and even normative[11]. Eventually, many studies on post-Syria Lebanese politics tend to focus excessively on its unchanging nature, namely sectarianism, and to overlook most changes. Even if institutionalised sectarianism remains in Lebanon, and 'democracy' of Lebanon does not meet global democratic standards, it should not be overlooked that "the restoration of normal Lebanese institutional life, rather than one of conflict, is definitely a much desired outcome for all the political elites as well as all Lebanese" （Knio 2008: 450）. In this sense, further analysis of the post-Syria Lebanese politics need to overcome not 'the curse of sectarianism （*ta'ifiya*）', but 'the curse of Ta'if' that dictated a normative blueprint of the future Lebanon with the western-

style secular democracy, which is correspondent to the conventional democratisation theory.

Lebanon is a divided and fragmented society and there is a definite lack of domestic consensus regarding the political nature and future of the country. If so, Lebanon, with its long-history of power-sharing arrangements, should have other options for democracy of its own: either the consociational or integrative approaches rather than secular democracy. Also, 'Lebanese nationalism' is not to be established in the form of the normative western-style nationalism or by nationalists. National identity in Lebanon has come into existence through a complex process based on pluralism: the common experience of a state, the simultaneous experience of war, and the failure of competing ideologies and nationalisms over the question, what 'Lebanonism' means among different social groups (Fakhoury-Müehlbacher 2008: 3; Reinkowski 1997: 508, 512; Ziadeh 2006: 161)[12]. Lebanese politics is at the heart of a transition process, wherein the political elites and the Lebanese are re-contextualising 'democracy' and 'nationalism' as well as their/national interests during this crucial transformation.

## Acknowledgement

## Notes

1 ) According to Volker Perthes, politically relevant elite (PRE) is a stratum that comprises those people in a give country who wield political influence and power in that they make strategic decisions or participate in decision-making on a national level, contribute to defining political norms and values (including the definition of "national interests"), and directly influence political discourse on strategic issues (Perthes 2004: 5). Based on this Perthes' definition, Rola el-Husseini argued that the political elites in post-war Lebanon can be categorised into the three; the first is "redefined elites" such as former warlords, the religious rebels, Syria's clients, the entrepreneurs, and military personnel, the second is "conjunctural elites" including notables and clergy, and the third is "emerging elites" such as the civil society activist, the technocrat, the heir, and the nationalist rebel (el-Husseini 2004: 245-258).

2 ) David Gordon correctly pointed out that such a patron-client network, although seemingly pre-modern, was one of the major sources of Lebanon's political stability (Gordon 1983: 77-102).

3 ) Nizar Hamzeh pointed out, "the participation of the individual has remained vertical and fragmented rather than horizontal which is a main characteristic of modern party directed-clientalism" (Hamzeh 2001: 176).

4 ) However, or perhaps therefore, the political elites see it only an instrument to speak about Lebanon and even exploit their national feelings for widening their inter-communal political support. So it is no use to argue whether or not the political elites (and their supporters to some extent) are 'real nationalists.'

5 ) In 2009, Hizballah published the second political document since the first appeared in 1985, in which they clearly declared they would not attempt to establish an Islamic republic in Lebanon (Hizballah 2009).

6 ) Beside the Future Movement and Hizallah, Micheal Aoun's FPM can be seen a national party with ideological mobilisation and cross-communal support.

7 ) Such narrow-minded nature of a political party is not peculiar to Lebanon. Even in the developed countries where democracy is mature, a political party is not necessarily representatives of national interest and policy. Rather they are nothing more than representatives of specific social and political groups.

8 ) "An overwhelming majority of Lebanese in the 1980s wanted a liberal-democratic end to the war, and an antiwar movement had developed in civil society" (Johnson 2007: 138).

9 ) In the late Ottoman period, the boundaries and framework of the present nation-states (Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine/Israel) were created as a result of the geographical division of Greater Syria by Britain and France. In this sense, "finding an explanation to Lebanon's bipolarity today does not solely reside in detecting the nature of confessional cleavages, but requires a profound analysis of Lebanon's ever-present antagonisms which goes back to the grounding of the Lebanese state in the forties" (Fakhoury-Müehlbacher 2008: 12).

10) Michael Kerr also argue that "[t]he fact that a power-sharing government's integrity and continuity is largely dependent on its relationship with external powers remains one of the fundamental limitations to the use of consocation in ethnically divided societies. The internal elites often have little influence over this political equation, hence the need for coercive or supportive consociational engineering" (Kerr 2007: 250).

11) Max Weiss argued that "[a]midst the shifting currents of sectarian politics and associational life, political, legal, and social scientific writing on the topic throughout the twentieth century has played a normative function, demonstrating how the malady of intercommunal strife and division was both treatable and resolvable through recourse to particular models of political or social engineering" (Weiss 2008: 151).

12) Scholars such as Theodor Hanf, Ahmad Beydoun, and Kamal Salibi claimed that national identity can arise and grow from a history of common (or at least: simultaneous) existence, statehood, suffering, and failure (Reinkowski 1997: 508).

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