Arrested Development in Beirut：Migration, Security and Dilemmas of Consociational Democracy

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This article analyses two major dilemmas in contemporary Lebanon: Firstly, based on the theory of consociational democracy it identifies an increasing divide between the state that is building on a national security consensus among the power sharing elites and the society, which suffering from the political paralysis concerning reforms is depending on the market, the private initiative and the international donor community in coping with the challenges rooted in inadequate infrastructure, failing public services, corruption, and migration including the influx of Syrian refugees. Secondly, it discusses the contradiction between the cosmopolitan self-image of Beirut versus social exclusion of Palestinians, Asian and African migrant workers, and sexual minorities. Even if the Lebanese government points to terrorism and the refugees crisis as the biggest threats to the Lebanese state a closer analysis points to the increasing divide between state and society, which leads to a rise to a social crisis that involves all layers in the Lebanese society except the elite. Much of the discontent with this situation among Lebanese citizens and the Palestinians is today directed against the Syrians who are portrayed as the roots of the problems in Lebanon. It is an open question though that how long time the Lebanese society accept this narrative: the mass mobilization behind first You Stink movement in 2015 and then Beirut Madinati in 2016 indicates a political awareness in Beirut that holds the government and political system responsible for the huge problems and at the same time acknowledges that political reforms leading to a better economic distribution of Lebanese resources and power sharing not only for the elites but for the Lebanese society as such is the only way ahead and the best bulwark against a breakdown of the state.

Keywords: consociational democracy, migration, Syrian refugees, urban development, security, Beirut

Beauty of Decay

Being a flaneur in Beirut, exploring city life, and studying the topography of the streets one unavoidably sense the truth of the widespread cliché, "Beirut was once known as the Paris of the Middle East". The shabby boulevards, the corniche, the cafes—scattered between the ugly apartment and office buildings made of concrete—and the old ottoman villas and ruins from the past with an aura of beauty of decay reminds the flaneur about the golden time before the civil war 1975-1990[1]. It is not only a memory of a wealthy, beautiful, and vivid city with stylish architecture and broad boulevards but also of cosmopolitan life style in the midst of an Arab Middle East controlled by suppressing autocrats and devastating wars. This narrative of cosmopolitan Beirut of the past is still very much alive today in the way the city prefers to present itself for its citizens as well

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[1] "Beauty of decay" was inspired by Walter Benjamin (1955) *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*.

as its visitors—but, as we will see, not for the Syrian refugees, the Palestinians, not for migrant workers from Asia and Africa, and not for the gays and the Lebanese women who openly prefer a single life. As the American professor of sociology, Steven Seidman (2012), so brilliantly has documented it in his essay "The Politics of Cosmopolitan Beirut: From Stranger to the Other", there is another side of the coin of the cosmopolitan narrative and that is exclusion, intolerance, and mistrust.

However, on the surface Beirut gives the visitor an impression of cosmopolitan life rich of opportunities for enjoying the cafes, culture and intellectual sites as well as shopping and the pleasures of consumerism. Especially in Hamra where the famous American University of Beirut (AUB) is located and occupies a vast area between the corniche and Bliss Street and the other lesser famous but highly respected Lebanese American University (LAU), which is more modestly located with a cozy campus on the transition between Hamra and Verdun—another vivid part of West Beirut. For many years, Beirut was for most Western visitors identical with Hamra but in recent years, Verdun and in East Beirut Gemmayze, preferred by diplomats, and the Christian area Ashrafiya, increasingly has become popular areas with restaurants and cafes. Going east via Ashrafiya one arrives at Mar Mikhael with the Armenia Street filled with bars and partying people all night through. In the center where East meets West Beirut is the downtown area, which today is almost deserted. The area was bombed to ruins during the civil war but was rebuild and present itself with the central Clock Tower Square, the Parliament, government buildings, the Prime Minister's Palace (Grand Serail), a new souq and towards the sea Zaituna Bay, a newly built marina with expensive fish restaurants and a lining up of luxury yachts worth millions of dollars, show rooms for Mercedes, Ferrari, and other goods for the wealthy who are able to oversee the sea and the area from their luxury apartments in the new seafront apartment buildings. From the marina, the corniche runs west and transform itself from the playground of the rich to a popular leisure area for the not so wealthy below Hamra and AUB and further out. The downtown area is deserted for several reasons: The Prime Minister, the charismatic and in 2005 murdered Rafiq Hariri, initiated after the civil war the reconstruction of downtown using his own company Solidère in a way many were not comfortable with because they considered Solidère corrupt, because they did not like the way small shop owners were kicked out of the area in a ruthless expropriation process, and because the area is built as a showroom displaying Beirut as an attractive and modern city for international investors and not for the ordinary Lebanese people. It has also been the site of large demonstrations in 2005, 2008, and especially in 2015 during the big garbage crisis, where up to 100,000 demonstrators protested against the government—unfortunately did the demonstrations evolve into some cases of violence and clashes between thugs and the police, which performed badly. Since then all entrances to the central downtown area have been blocked for cars and are controlled by guards with weapons investigating all pedestrians going in to the area. A big wall has been constructed around the Grand Serail where free movement also is hindered by barbed wire. Many shops, cafes, restaurants are consequently closed and the rest most often empty[2].

A City Constructed by Migrants

As a city, Beirut is built and developed mostly by migrants (Gustafsson, 2016). Further east of Beirut is Ashrafiya, Armenians arriving after the massacres in Turkey at the ending of World War I settled in an area,

which today is known as Burj Hammoud and has become a municipality of its own with the locale female officers on the streets directing the traffic, shops advertising in Armenian language for their goods and food and Arminian churches scattered around in the area. South of Beirut is al-Dahiya (the suburbs), a cluster of suburbs mainly inhabited by around a half million Shia Muslims who settled here during the civil war after they were pushed out of their land and homes when Israel in 1978 invaded and occupied South Lebanon. The central part is Harat Hreik, the location for Hizbollah's head quarter, which was the legitimation for the Israeli Blitzkrieg in July 2006 that bombed the area to ashes. Only a year after the summer war Hizbollah managed to have Harat Hreik rebuild (Fawaz, 2014; Fawaz, 2007).

Bordering up to Harat Hreik are the Palestinian refugee camps Shatila and Burj al-Baratnah, which together with 10 other Palestinian camps in Lebanon were established after the Arab-Israeli War in 1948 following the declaration of the State of Israel. Established almost 70 years ago the Palestinian camps have developed into small cities—rather shantytowns—in the city. Burj al-Baratnah e.g. covers 1 sq. km and houses approximately 42.000 inhabitants. About half of those are refugees that arrived from Syria after the war broke out in 2011. Some of these are Syrian Palestinians but most of them are Syrians nationals who rents small rooms in the camp partly because they are cheap compared to the prices outside the camps, partly because they hide themselves from the Lebanese authorities because they are in Lebanon without being formally registered: Approximately half of the estimated one and a half million Syrian refugees in Lebanon are for different reasons not registered neither by the authorities nor by United Nations (UN). In Beirut they live in the camps or in slums, often a whole family in a small room; the males and young boys illegally takes jobs for a salary way below the salary given to Lebanese Palestinians and even more below the salary Lebanese citizens normally will get while the females and children are lining up begging at the junctions and gateways into Beirut or on the pavements in Hamra and elsewhere. Hence, social dumping and an explosion in unemployment together with rising prices on housing and inflation increasingly challenge life in Lebanon. All of these problems were making life in Lebanon hard before the Syrian War but now they are blamed on the refugees (Andersen, 2016).

Syrian Refugees not so Welcome Any More

When the Syrian refugee crisis started sending a million refugees to Lebanon in less than two years, Palestinians and Lebanese welcomed them: They were familiar working with Syrians who used to migrant between Syria and Lebanon for jobs. Nobody knows how many Syrians actually lived and worked in Lebanon before the crisis but many estimates the number was up to a half million. Today many of these migrants are by the Lebanese and Palestinians "constructed" as refugees, which means the residents in Lebanon today see them as refugees taking their jobs, creating inflation, and causing all the problems in the Lebanese society such as the rapid developing drug problem and related criminality including rapes and child prostitution[3]. In the first years, the Lebanese also welcomed the Syrian refugees because Syrian showed kind hospitality for the Lebanese fleeing the Israeli bombs during the summer war in July 2006 and because it was expected that the crisis in Syria would be short. Now both Palestinians and Lebanese are exposed to the problems of having approximately one and half refugees living in their country and they are afraid the Syrians like the Palestinians in 1948 will settle in Lebanon and stay there forever. Their attitudes towards the Syrians have thus transformed from kind hospitality to mistrust, anger, and enmity, which causes violence and tensions between the different

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[3] The terminology "constructed as refugees" was coined by Paul Tabar.

populations. The problems are especially manifest in the slums and in the Palestinian refugee camps where unemployment, drugs, and criminality are increasingly challenging life for the people who are the most vulnerable in Lebanon. In addition, Lebanese citizens from the so-called middle class feel the problems seeing Syrians taking the jobs in bars, restaurants, hotels, an explosion in the numbers of piracy taxies where the fare is low and putting pressure on a service and tourist sector, which already suffers from shortcomings because the rich Golf Arabs stay away from Beirut punishing Lebanon for allowing the Shia Muslim and Iran supported party Hizbollah a strong political role domestically and military support to the Syrian Bashar al-Assad regime abroad. Thus the situation for the Syrian refugees in Lebanon is very bad and tragic but rapidly the problems for the complete Lebanese society including in Beirut is growing exponentially[4].

The Blackmail Narrative of the Government

The narrative by the government to the international community is that the stability of Lebanon as a state is threatened by the refugees and that lots of funding is needed if a breakdown with the risk of terrorism and new waves of refugees on the borders of EU should be avoided. The fact, though, is that the government and the state is doing almost nothing to help the social problems and challenges the Lebanese society is facing; neither concerning the social problems in general nor the problems arising from the influx of Syrian refugees. The political structure based in a power sharing among the former warlords from the civil war has resulted in building up a security state where the politicians controlling religious sects and constituencies will stand together if there are any threats to the power sharing structure and otherwise are political paralyzed on almost all other issues including social and public services, which hence are left to the private initiatives, constituencies, civil society, international donors, and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to be taken care of.

Thus, Lebanon is divided between a state run by sectarian leaders who controls state institutions in a power sharing architecture that only benefits the elites and a society, which are left to its own in managing the problems and challenges, including the refugee crisis, which the society is facing. For the visitors, especially the Danes coming from a country with a strong state that controls, regulates, and takes care of almost everything in the citizen's life from birth to grave, the Lebanese state's absence feels charming and looks like freedom. The reality for the citizens is that the societal anarchy and freedom is an expression of the absent state that performs badly concerning public service.

Between Orientalism, Cosmopolitanism, and Power Play

The public discourse in Beirut tells a cosmopolitan story about a multicultural city that gives space to the secular, the modern, and the westernized as well as to the religious, the fundamentalists, and all the other groups with different cultural faces that pearl up between these two poles. Of course, there is a reality behind this cosmopolitan narrative: Women do not need to cover their bodies and hair—but they are welcome to do so—and they are probably some of the biggest consumers of implants in lips and tits in the world, there are no shortage of bars and restaurants serving alcohol. Compared to other Arab States the freedom of expression is wide, and the cultural and intellectual life is vivid and globalized. All these in a way show that Western Middle East scholars with an orientalist touch to the study of the Arab world feels disappointed when arriving in Beirut:

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[4] Ibid.

"This is not the real Middle East", they would say, because women are not forced to wear the hijab. For those researchers Yemen and Saudi Arabia and the country sides of Egypt and other parts of North Africa compare to their imaginations of the Middle East. However, digging a little bit deeper under the surface of the cosmopolitan aura of Beirut another side of the city induces itself: A side impregnated with sectarianism, clientelism, traditional sexual relations, tribal structures combined with paternalistic power performance, and racism.

Accordingly, what from one perspective is a cosmopolitan life style is from another narrative that blurs deep-rooted and constitutional sectarian fault lines. In order to better understanding these two polarities, the state-society divide and the cosmopolitan-sectarian contradiction, that constitutes politics and power in Lebanon, we will have a closer look on the political system in Lebanon.

The Dilemmas of Lebanese Consociational Democracy

On March 28 2017, an important soccer match in the Asian Cup Qualification took place at the national stadium in Beirut. The match was between Lebanon and Hong Kong and the home team won at 2:0. One could expect the normal nationalistic enthusiasm among the crowd watching the game celebrating a national victory but the opposite happened: Hooligans supporting different clubs in South Lebanon and Beirut started fighting each other because they accused players from the other teams playing badly. The whole event developed into a nasty fight throwing stones at each other. Clearly, the spectators identified themselves much more with their local constituencies than with the Lebanese nation: This is a quite accurate metaphor of identity politics in Lebanon showing that the belonging to a religious group, a sect, a constituency is more important than identification with the nation. The narrative of the cosmopolitan Lebanese nation covers a reality marked by sectarianism and xenophobia structured by authoritarianism based in family and tribal structures inside the 18 officially recognized confessions that build the Lebanese nation.

This divide between confessions in Lebanon is sustained in the National Pact from 1943 building on the constitution from 1926 that stipulates the distribution of official executive political posts in the state of Lebanon. This power sharing divide was conceptualized as "consociational democracy" by the Dutch-American Professor in political science, Arend Lijphart, in an influential article in 1969. In a deeply divided society like the Lebanese a democratic system is threatened by conflicts with the risk of evolving into civil war as was the case 1975-1990 and a way to stabilize the state is to create a political system that guarantees the strongest ethnic or as in Lebanon religious groups positions and representations in the state power. However, as Lijphart and others point out, it does not come without problems: if the balance of power is shaken either because one or more of the groups seek more power than they are entitled to, the risk is exactly serious conflict, even civil war or a suppressing authoritarian and sectarian based rule as we are now witnessing in Iraq. Another risk is that the cooperation of the elites only serves the elite and leaves the rest of the society in a role of dependency on these elites with the result that only the closest circles around the power sharing leaders gain while the society as such is left on its own. This is the reality in Lebanon today. Security of the state, which equals security of the power sharing structure, is the highest and basically only priority of the ruling elites—besides of course serving their own interests being politically or economically (normally both). This situation has more or less paralyzed the political system in Lebanon since 2013.

The Origin of the Political Order in Lebanon

Lebanon emerged in 1920 as a French mandate and a republic in the new Middle East created by the United Kingdom and France in the Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916) and ratified in the peace settlement after the First World War in the wake of the break-up of the Ottoman Empire (Fieldhouse, 2006, pp. 304-334). From the start the mandate was marked by rivalry between different religious groups, especially Christian Maronites and Muslims, the latter being themselves divided between a majority of Shia Muslims and a minority of Sunni Muslims. Another important religious group is the Druze, and officially today Lebanon has 18 distincts, officially recognized religious groupings that all have to co-exist in a state which covers a territory of only 10,542 sq. km (approximately a quarter of the territory of Denmark). Adding to this religious patchwork, the presence of Palestinian refugees complicates the political situation in Lebanon. A little more than 100,000 arrived in 1948, but due to demographic growth and the arrival of more Palestinian refugees following conflicts in neighboring countries, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) had registered 455,000 before the Syrian Civil War erupted in 2011, although many of the registered no longer live in Lebanon[5].

The constitution created in 1926 reflected the challenge of establishing a coherent state and a stable political system in the form of consociational democracy: It gave representation to all the religious groups in the parliament; still they formed militias in the following decades, though without any of them gaining strength achieving full control of the state. Instead a National Pact in 1943 based on a 1932 census led to a vulnerable consensus on sharing power: All the recognized groups were still to have representation in the parliament, but the pact also stated that the president of the republic should be a Christian Maronite, the prime minister a Sunni Muslim, and the speaker of the parliament a Shia Muslim. In 1946 Lebanon ceased to be a mandate territory and was granted formal sovereignty and independence, but neighboring and regional states, in particular Israel, Syria, Iran, and Saudi Arabia, as well as powers like France and the USA, continued to interfere in Lebanese politics through their relationships with, support to and mobilization of different factions in the small republic, which, together with a vulnerable political and sectarian power structure, led to civil war in 1958 and again to the long civil war in 1975-1990.

The presence of the Palestinian refugees and the attacks on Israel they launched from Lebanese territory caused clashes with Israel in 1968 and, after the crisis in Jordan in 1970 in particular, a new wave of Palestinians refugees arrived in Lebanon, followed by the leadership of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). Palestinian attacks into Israel, together with increased tensions between Christians and Muslims and interference by Syria (military intervention from 1976 to 2005) and Israel (military interventions in 1978, 1982, 1993, 1996, and 2006) threw Lebanon into civil war in 1975. Following peace negotiations in Taif in Saudi Arabia in 1989, the civil war came to an end in 1990. The Israelis continued to occupy South Lebanon, where they had established a so-called security zone in 1978. It was only in May 2000, after a yearlong fight with Hizbollah, who had been established with the support of Iran in 1985, that Israel gave up the security zone and left Lebanon. The confessional distribution of key posts at the top political level continued, but the Taif agreement from 1989, that ended the war, gave more power to the parliament, which was increased in size, as well as to the president and prime minister. The same agreement also required the militias to give up their weapons, but Hizbollah continues to control a strong militia that is able to outweigh the strength of the Lebanese army.

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[5] Retrieved from https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/lebanon

From the end of the civil war in 1990 and up to 2005 sectarian conflicts continued to mark the political situation but was contained before erupting into militancy threatening initiation of a new civil war. Distressing remembering of the civil war and a deep-rooted resistance among the Lebanese people against conflicts that eventually could trigger one new war boiled sectarianism down. From time to time conflicts between the charismatic Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri who was leader of the Sunni Muslims and Hizbollah and the other Shia Muslim group Amal came close to sectarianism but then it was immediately contained and buried. Rafiq Hariri who was the most influential leader after the civil war always emphasised a nationalistic rhetoric and promoted Lebanon as a nation: The reconstruction of Lebanon was in his narrative a project for the Lebanese people. Still, one of the most dominant conflicts up to 2005 was the relation with Syria: Hizbollah and Amal was and still are strong supporters of Syria and the al-Assad regime while Hariri and the Christian parties were critical and increasingly wanted lesser Syrian influence or complete independence from Syria. This conflict between Hariri and Syria is seen by many as the cause of his assassination by Syrian intelligence and/or Hizbollah.

"Lebanon First"

Ironically, the withdrawal of Syrian military forces in Spring 2005 after diplomatic interventions from France and USA leading to a UN Security Council Resolution 1559 in September 2004 ordering Syria out of Lebanon sparked sectarianism in Lebanon. The events of 2005, that changed the structure of the political landscape, were triggered by the assassination of Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri, a flamboyant businessman with enormous assets earned in Saudi Arabia. He came to power as prime minister for the first time in 1992 by launching an ambitious plan to rebuild the country after the civil war, including its infrastructure and the downtown area in the capital, Beirut. Although Hariri's relations with Syria were bad, Syria continued to be involved in and to control significant aspects of Lebanese politics after the civil war. However, Hariri's murder mobilized Lebanese people to go in the streets demanding reforms and the withdrawal of Syrian forces. The international community reacted by insisting on the UN Security Resolution being implemented. Together with withdrawal of Syrian forces from Lebanese territory it demanded the disarming of Hizbollah. Hizbollah reacted by organizing a large demonstration on March 8 in support of Syria and rejecting the resolution, and on March 14, a month after Hariri's death, hundreds of thousands of Lebanese rallied in central Beirut under the slogan "Freedom, Sovereignty, Independence". While Syria finally pulled its troops out, Hizbollah was not disarmed. The outcome of the event was the formation of two main blocs in Lebanese politics named after the days of the demonstrations: the March 8 bloc, comprised of Hizbollah, Amal, and the Free Patriotic Movement, a Maronite Christian group headed by the present president Michel Aoun; and the March 14th bloc, headed by the Sunni Muslim Saad al-Hariri, son of the murdered prime minister, leader of the Future Movement, and supported by the Lebanese Forces (LF) and the Druze Progressive Socialist Party.

Up to 2005 the Sunni Muslim community was divided between many blocs: Some, especially in the North in Tripoli was under the patronage of Syria which almost occupied parts of the area as well as the border area. The Sunni Muslims did not as such tally up behind the al-Assad regime but subscribed to a more pan-arabic and pan-islamic discourse. In the big demonstrations on March 14 they now rallied behind Saad al-Hariri under the slogan "Lebanon First". The consequence was a united Sunni Muslim bloc behind Saad al-Hariri and an increasing confrontation with Hizbollah. Assasinations of Sunni Muslim leaders continued in the following years and Hariri reacted by building up his own security force. He did not build a militia because he did

acknowledge it would never be strong enough to counter Hizbollah but a security network for his own and his network's protection. In this effort he included Sunni Muslim Islamic leaders and groups widely seen as extremists, facilitated their routes into Lebanese politics by pardoning some who were in prison, by canalising money to the groups especially in the North, and by placing a number of people known for their rather extreme ideology on the payroll (Middle East Report, 2010).

Manipulating Sunni Jihadi Networks

A ramification of the events in 2005 was thus a building up of Sunni Muslim networks and groups creating space for small but extremist salafi-jihadi groups in Lebanon and a much more sectarian based rivalry between the Sunnis and the Shias with the Druze and the Christian lining up behind them. Syria continued trying to have influence in Lebanon by sending support to the alawites (the Shia sect that forms the base for the Syrian al-Assad regime) in Northern Lebanon as well as returning jihadists from Iraq to infiltrate salafi-jihadi groups in the refugee camp Nahr al-Barad outside Tripoli. Tensions rose both between these groups and nationally between the Sunni Muslim government and Hizbollah. It culminated when Hizbollah in May 2008 in a military operation took over the Sunni Muslim dominated areas in West Beirut and de facto placed Saad al-Hariri in house arrest in his own residence in Hamra in Beirut. It was a clear power demonstration by Hizbollah that showed its militia was stronger than the Lebanese army and that it had no intension whatsoever to give in its weapons as demanded by the Sunnis. It also showed that the division of controlled space in Beirut was vulnerable and could be changed if Hizbollah would wish to do that. An agreement was reached in Doha in Qatar and a unity government was formed. The Sunni Muslim bloc acknowledged they could not beat, nor control Hizbollah or rule without the consent of Hizbollah. Instead Hizbollah coopted the army and increased its political influence in the government.

The Syrian facilitated infiltration of jihadist in the Nahr al-Bared camp had in 2007 the year before the confrontation with Hizbollah led to tragic and brutal classes between jihadi groups and the Lebanese army where more than 400 civilians were killed and the camp being totally destroyed. Some of the jihadists escaped to the South where they hided themselves in the Ain al-Hilweh Palestinian camp in Saida. This camp is the biggest Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon and has been known for housing some of the more radical Islamic groups in the North West quarter of the camp. Former jihad fighters from Iraq have infiltrated these groups and violence in the camp is flaming up on a regularly basis: latest in the spring of 2017[6]. The Lebanese army and Hizbollah are keen to avoid a repetition of the tragic events in Nahr al-Barad, which presumably would be the outcome if Lebanese security forces invade the camp. Instead they guard the entrance to the camp and leave the containment of the jihadi groups to the Palestinians own security forces (Rougier, 2007; 2015). Hence, security cooperation became the name of the game.

A New Consensus on National Security

While the sectarian confrontations between Sunni and Shia blocs in Lebanon were triggered by the events in 2005, the two main blocs in Lebanon have after the conflicts in 2008 been keen on working together in containing them. Since then the two blocs have coordinated on security matters. In the North an agreement between the alawites and the Sunni Muslim groups has been reached and the area is heavily policed by

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[6] http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/trend-lines/21854/why-authorities-can-t-impose-order-in-lebanon-s-largest-palestinian-refugee-camp

Lebanese security forces resulting in a significantly decrease in violence and an increase in dissatisfaction among the citizens because of increasing social problems (Lebanon Support, 2016). In the Bekaa Valley and the border areas Hizbollah and the Lebanese Army and Military Intelligence cooperate in keeping jihadist both from Al-Qaeda (AQ) and Islamic State (IS) out, in the South Hizbollah and Amal are in control and in Saida they are working together with the Lebanese Army in containing violence from Ain al-Hilweh.

The outcome of the 2008 crisis thus is a close cooperation in the Lebanese government and state apparatus on security. All leaders in the two dominating blocs in Lebanese national policy seem to have reached a consensus that the only way to avoiding a devastating conflict with the risk of a new civil war is to work closely together on controlling militant opposition including AQ and IS. If the state or the government is threatened, the leaders of the dominant parties from both blocs will get together and cooperate to counter the threat. Of course this counts for violent extremism, political violence, and external threats, e.g. from AQ or IS jihadists but is also extended to political opposition from outside the parties forming the government such as the grass root movement Beirut Midanati which became rather popular in the municipality elections in May 2016 on a program to fight corruption and arguing for a green development of Beirut and the You Stink movement which organized the big demonstrations during the garbage crisis in 2015 in demanding better management from the government. As they both posed a political threat to the government, Hizbollah, Amal, the Christian parties, the Future Movement got together and with the use of both legal and non-legal measures succeeded in keeping the grassroots out of politics[7].

You Stink and Beirut is My City

In a normative perspective consociational democracy should fulfill two goals: democracy where all groups and constituencies have a political representation in the executive and legislative powers of the state and stability containing sectarianism. In Lebanon, the reality is stability concerning security threats and a paralyzed political system that instead of binding the constituencies together in a cohesive national culture marked by political plurality it promotes clientelism, corruption[8], huge inequality between very rich elites and a poor majority with more than 25% living in poverty, an absent state when it comes to development and public services leading to water shortages, daily crash in electricity supply, a dysfunctional justice system, a bad regulated work market, and big discrepancies between the public and the private health and education sector.

After the Arab Spring in 2011, which tragically lead to the Syrian civil war and refugee crisis involving Lebanon in both aspects, politics in Lebanon turned into the eternal repetition of the same, namely almost absolute impotence concerning the democratic process: Due to disagreement about passing an electoral law, parliamentarian elections, that due to the constitution should have taken place in 2013, have been postponed for two terms. When the president left office in 2014 it should take three years before the elites in the government agreed on appointing the leader of the Free Patriotic Movement Michel Aoun as new president in October 2016. In three years the post of president was void and for the fourth year now Lebanon does not have a legal elected parliament. Since then all political negotiations have been focused on drafting a new electoral law making it possible to have the postponed parliamentary elections in 2017. These negotiations daily make the headlines in Lebanese media reporting that not only the politicians but also religious leaders constantly intervene in order to

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[7] Based on personal interviews during field study in Beirut, spring 2017.
[8] In Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index 2016 Lebanon is ranked 136 out of 176 states concerning corruption, https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2016

secure benefits for their confessional constituencies in the electoral process[9].

This situation of course also has an effect on the development of Beirut as a city. As already described, Beirut is divided between areas dominated by the different confessions and political parties. This compartmentalization of the space of the city from street level to areas marked by flags, graffiti, banners and also visible in how locals dress and behave was developing during the civil war but did not stop with the end of the war. On the contrary, especially after the events in 2005 it has continued to a degree that some researchers write about "Confessionalization of Beirut"[10]. As it is different from the process during the civil war, this re-confessionalization of Beirut takes place under the surface of the cosmopolitan varnish and even if it might not always be noticeable for the visitor this confessionalized distribution of city space clearly has an impact on how the local constituencies in Beirut handles and are able to manage the challenges posted by an impotent political system, including how they relates to the elites. As such development of the different parts of the city is not only determined by parameters such as rich and poor but also by relations between the elites and the constituencies. Thus, the dysfunctional consociational political system has decisive influence on the development of the city and how this development is very different from part to another of Beirut.

During the summer of 2015, big demonstrations took place in the downtown area. More than 100,000 demonstrators went on to the streets protesting against a corrupt government and municipality. A small group of young people was behind the movement, they accidentally but effect full called "You Stink". As is known for organizing the demonstrations during the Arab Spring in Cairo in 2011, social media, in particular Facebook played a big role in organizing the protests. An early posting by the young leaders repeatedly used the slogan "You Stink" with a clear reference to the government that had left Beirut flooded by stinky garbage. The slogan was having an overwhelming resonance among the citizens in Beirut that it immediately became the name of the movement[11]. Senior researcher from Carnegie Middle East Center in Beirut Maha Yahya (2017) summarizes the background,

> The crisis had erupted by mid-July when the Ministry of Environment closed Na'meh Landfill, south of Beirut, without having first identified a replacement site, leading to the suspension of garbage collection in Beirut and Mount Lebanon. This was taking place as the contract with Sukleen, the company in charge of garbage collection in those areas, was nearing its end and was about to be renewed. The stalemate that ensued as a result of this interelite dispute, along with the failure of the Ministry of Environment to identify an ecofriendly solution, sparked a nationwide crisis and discussion of the links between mismanagement of vital services and Lebanon's crippling corruption. Protests cascaded across the country, culminating in a mass demonstration on August 29 in Beirut's city center that attracted people from across sectarian, regional, and social lines.

"You Stink" movement was not only a protest against the government's mismanagement of garbage and infrastructure but also a revolt against the political system's praxis of treating individuals as being members of a sect instead as a citizens of the state. From the start it was important for the young leaders not to be linked to some of the parties or religious groups but the government that was seriously threatened during the crisis succeeded in infiltrating the demonstrations and constructing a narrative that the movement was influenced by extremist—which of course was not the case. In that way and with the use of force, including unfounded arrests and detentions, surveillance and other kinds of police state methods, the elite system succeeded in splitting the

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[9] For a more in-depths analyses see Fakhoury (2016).
[10] Arabisk ref.
[11] Personal interview with one of the founder's of "You Stink", Assad Thebien, Beirut, April 2017.

movement while at the same time finding preliminary solutions for the garbage problem, including the reopening of the Na'meh Landfill that in the first place was closed due to ecological reasons. "You Stink" and the garbage crisis show that there in Beirut is a vast opposition against the way the power sharing rule in Lebanon has developed. It also shows that the elite more cares about securing their own political and economic interest than the well being of the citizens of Beirut including a green and ecological sustaining development of the city.

For everybody including the young leaders, the overwhelming support "You Stink" met from all corners of Beirut and the entire Lebanon came as a surprise but it demonstrated a vast and widespread discontent among the citizens with the sectarian political system in Lebanon. Inspired by this experience a group of Beirut citizens formed a new movement to engage in the municipality elections in Spring 2016, which in Beirut took place in May. The group consisted of professors, journalists, artists, and activists from all corners of the cultural layers in Beirut. The group called themselves "Beirut Madinati", which means "Beirut—my city" and like "You Stink" the founders were very keen avoiding being linked to the established parties in Lebanese politics. Beirut Madinati did not focus its critique on the government or the political system as such but on the corrupt and malfunctioning of the municipality, arguing for sustainable development of the city. Due to the professional backgrounds of the members they were able to provide new solutions on how to develop Beirut not only on handling of garbage but also on all aspects of the city. The group also opposed the list (Laehat al-Bayareta) the mayor of Beirut had formed with the backing of Saad al-Hariri, the leader of the Future Movement, and one of the strong men in Lebanese politics since the murder of his father in 2015. Municipality elections in Lebanon used to be negotiated by the elites before taking place with the result that the outcome is settled before the voters actually have casted their votes. In Beirut in May 2016 the elites lined up behind a list controlled by Hariribut it was seriously threatened by Beirut Madinati that ended up getting more than 30% of the casted votes. This was of course a defeat as the election system is based on "winner takes it all", but it was also a victory because the elites were forced to counts in all their forces including the national parties, paying off voters, and cheating with the ballots, in order to keep Beirut Madinati from winning the elections[12]. Hence, Beirut Madinati demonstrated a general will among the citizens in Beirut to have the sectarian regime replaced by a democratic system that would secure a sustainable development of Beirut and in the broader perspective Lebanon as such. Now, Beirut Madinati is working on a campaign in the Parliamentarian elections that might take place in 2017[13].

Survival of the Fittest

The power sharing political elite system survived the challenges from the "You Stink" and Beirut Madinati. Thus the malfunctioned system continues leaving it up to the citizens of Beirut dealing with the daily challenges a society haunted by mismanaged public services, increasing unemployment and inflation, decreasing income as the tourists, especially the rich from the Gulf, stays away, and more than a million refugees are exposed to. For most people, the private initiative is the solution: If you have room to spare, you rent it out to the refugees; if you have a job to be done, you give it to one of the unregistered Syrians who are

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[12] These are accusations made by Beirut Madinati and others while the winners talk about a fair election. Though, in a country with a corruption index like Lebanon election fraud seems unavoidable.

[13] Personal interview with Jad Chaaban, associate professor at AUB and founder of Beirut Madinati, Beirut, April 2017. For more on Beirut Madinati see Thanassis Cambanis (2016); Maha Yahya (2017); http://beirutmadinati.com/?lang=en; Joseph Winters (2016).

cheaper than a Lebanese or a Palestinian; if you have problems with the paper work, you know who to pay to have it settled without too much interference from the authorities. This is common day praxis and everybody knows how to get on without too much harassment from the absent state system. But it is also a nest for corruption and the famous Arab wasta system, which means you always need to know the right person in order to have your things done and avoid the law enforcement. If you have something to offer, you get it along, and the more you have, the better you survive the system[14].

It is also a greenhouse for criminality. The war economy in Syria has flooded Lebanon with drugs, and not only many of the unemployed, the youngsters, but also corrupt leaders of the communities have turned to drugs building up mafia networks exposing young men to the fogs of dope leaving them without a future. But it is not only drugs that are traded in the streets of Beirut, in the slums or in the camps, there are also hand weapons, mostly used by criminals, and girls, especially from Syria, some are sold to the rich as brides, some from the age of 10 year are offered as prostitutes. These problems are growing in Beirut.

Not everyone is a loser in Beirut. It is estimated that for every Euro or Dollar the international donors pour into this waste land the elites cash approximately 40% into their own pockets meaning they actually are earning money on the refugee crisis[15]. Had it not been for the many aid money provided by e.g. UN and EU the situation for the refugees would have been many times worse. But at the same time the international society helps the refugees in Lebanon sustain a malfunctioned and corrupt elite that is getting richer and using the income to secure their power. In the international community, the elites, like the Prime Minister Saad al-Hariri in Brussels in May 2017, promote the narrative that Lebanon is in danger of collapsing if the international donors do not increase its funding and at the same time selling the story about Beirut being this pluralistic, liberal, and cosmopolitan city that gives space to everybody. There is some truth in these two narratives as the elite probably would be in danger if they were left without the international funding and forced to use their own money to handle the social problems in Lebanon, and Beirut is when it comes to the western visitors, the rich from the Gulf, its own middle and upper class liberal, a pluralistic and cosmopolitan city. However, the danger to the elite does not stem from the refugee crisis and the cosmopolitan life styles are not extended to the Palestinians and the Syrian refugees: Both groups are increasingly seen by the elites as well as Lebanese citizens as the source of all problems in Lebanon. For many years the Palestinian people were the scapegoat; today this role has been taken over by the Syrians including those who used to work in Lebanon before the crisis but now the Lebanese are constructed as refugees.

Conclusion

After 2005 and the withdrawal of the Syrian troops and especially after the crisis in 2008 the consociational democracy in Lebanon has developed to become a dysfunctional contradiction between an elite ruled security state versus an unregulated society that is left on its own handling all kinds of problems including the refugee crisis. Even if the Lebanese government points to terrorism, the spillover from the Syrian war, and the refugees crisis as the biggest threats to the Lebanese state a closer analysis points to the increasing divide between state and society which leads to a rise of a social crisis that involves all layers in the Lebanese society

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[14] See also "Setting the agenda: Sectarianism and consociational democracy". An Interview with Bassel Salloukh, Lebanese Center for Ploicy Studies (LCPS), June 12, 2017.
[15] The figure 40% is an estimate here quoted from diplomatic sources in Beirut who wants anonymity. Transparency Index (see footnote 8) place Lebanon as most corrupt country in the Arab Middle East.

except the elite. Much of the discontent with this situation among Lebanese citizens and to a certain degree also the Palestinians is today directed against the Syrians who are portrayed as the roots of all evil in Lebanon. But the problems stem from the structure of the political system and are older than the refugee crisis. It is an open question how long time the Lebanese society accept the narrative of the Syrians as the root of the problems turning a blind eye to the paradoxes of the elite system: The mass mobilization behind first "You Stink" and then Beirut Madinati indicates a political awareness in Beirut that holds the government and political system responsible for the huge problems and at the same time acknowledges that political reforms leading to a better economic distribution of Lebanese resources and power sharing not only for the elites but for the Lebanese society as such is the only way ahead and the best bulwark against a breakdown of the state.

For the international society and donor community this situation does not mean stopping human aid to the refugees and a halt in investments in building the Lebanese state but continuing doing this conditioned in clear and robust demands to the Lebanese government of reforming itself to become a government not only for the elites but also for the Lebanese people.

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