Power-sharing in Lebanon: What are the views of Lebanese people on the practice of power-sharing within the Lebanese sectarian state system?

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How do Lebanese people view the functioning of power-sharing within the Lebanese sectarian state system?

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Introduction

May 5th, 2022 marks Lebanon's first parliamentary elections after the cabinet's resignation in 2020 as a response to the protests after the Beirut explosion (Karim & Mroue, 2022). The protests extended the October Revolution of 2019, which refers to a series of protests where Lebanese citizens advocated for basic socio-economic rights and the accountability, resignation and end of corruption of their government (Amnesty International, 2021). The protesters even demanded the dissimilation of Lebanon's sectarian state system that divides Lebanon's government among its eighteen official religious groups, of which twelve are Christian; four are Muslim; the remaining are the Jews and the Druze (Badaan et al, 2020). The sectarian state system involves power-sharing principles that are aimed at establishing peace and democracy in post-conflict states with deep divisions (Binningsbø, 2013; Nagle, & Clancy, 2019).

The protesters not only advocated against the sectarian state system because of its influence on religious divisions, but also because of their dissatisfaction with the state's socio-economic policies, including government corruption (Vértes et al, 2021). The October Revolution, for example, was in part triggered by the emerging liquidity crisis and the subsequent economic crisis and poverty in Lebanon (Rose, 2022). The economic dissatisfaction over the last decade has resulted the rise in cross-collaboration and demonstrations of civil society activists from various sects (Vértes et al, 2021). The influence of the anti-sectarian protesters is observable in the results of the 2022 elections, with an increase of more than 10 seats of non-sectarian politicians who aim to reform the sectarian state (Karim & Mroue, 2022).

More specifically, Lebanon's sectarian state system reflects components of a consociational democracy, which is a model of power-sharing that is designed to operate in deeply divided societies with tensions among cultural, religious, socio-economic or ethnic groups. Consociationalism involves power-sharing among political leaders that represent the societal groups with the aim of promoting political stability. The model is inspired by four West-European states – the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria and Switzerland. Lijphart (1977a) has appointed Lebanon as a relatively successful example of consociationalism in ''the Third World'', at least before the Civil War (1975-1990).

However, from a Western perspective and preference towards secularism, incorporating religion in governance could be regarded as a problematic (Göle, 2010). Lebanon's sectarian state system has also been critiqued for increasing the country's religious and political tensions, through political deadlock, corruption and mismanagement (Nicolaysen, 2008; Nagle & Clancy, 2019; Mazzucotelli, 2020, Vértes et al, 2021). The academic debate regarding the

Lebanese sectarian state system focusses on theoretical flaws of power-sharing approaches or how Lebanon's history proves dysfunctionality of the system. Absent in the literature is an overview of the experience and views of Lebanese people about their sectarian state system. The rise of protests in Lebanon and non-sectarian political representatives illustrate the importance of evaluating and documenting the views and experiencing of Lebanese citizens. Therefore, this thesis tackles the following question: *''What are the views of Lebanese people on the practice of power-sharing within the Lebanese sectarian state system?''*

This thesis contributes to the academic literature on consociationalism in Lebanon by illuminating how Lebanese people view its application in their state. This thesis provides valuable information for politicians, government officials and policy makers in Lebanon to incorporate these views in their policy plans. It is also relevant for international actors and non-governmental or civil society organisations active in Lebanon. While the current literature on Lebanon is mainly quantitative, this research provides valuable and in-depth information on the functioning of the sectarian state system through qualitative interview-data.

The first chapter of this thesis includes an historic overviews of Lebanon's power-sharing developments: the National Pact, the Civil War and the Taif agreement. The second chapter entails the Literature Review, which tackles the academic discussion regarding power-sharing approaches, including consociationalism. The Literature regarding Lebanon's sectarian state system and civil society will also be provided. The third chapter includes Lijphart's theoretical framework of consociationalism. Since the research approach to this thesis is explorative and inductive, no research expectations or hypotheses are formulated. The fourth chapter provides the methods of data collection and analysis, which includes twenty semi-structured interviews with Lebanese people living in Lebanon and abroad. The fifth chapter includes the analysis of the interviews with specific attention to the context and lived experiences of the interviewees.

The sixth and final chapter is the conclusion, where the main conclusions and implications of this research are summarised. This thesis results in three themes and related conclusions. With regard to the theme segmental cleavages, the interviewees expressed that Lebanon's society is divided among the sects. Regarding the second theme, democracy and proportional representation, the interviewees do not see these two concepts reflected by their government. Finally, regarding the theme sectarian loyalties, the interviewees generally expressed that the sectarian state system is abused by politicians to keep their power.

1. The National Pact, Civil War and Taif agreement

To exhibit the historical context of Lebanon's contemporary sectarian state system, this chapter details the origins of power-sharing in Lebanon. This includes the National Pact (1943) – the official basis of Lebanon's power-sharing system – the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) and the Taif agreement (1989) that ended the war.

In 1943, the National Pact ended the French mandate over Lebanon and Syria (Peach, 2017). The Pact formalised the pre-existing tradition of power-sharing by diving the three most powerful positions in government among the main religious groups. The National Pact assigned the President of Lebanon to be a Maronite Christian (Peach, 2017). The Prime Minister was to be a Sunni Muslim and the Speaker of Parliament a Shia Muslim. The executive authority of the presidency of Lebanon made this position de-facto the most powerful of the three (Malley, 2018). Finally, the pact declared that the Lebanese parliament should be served with a 6:5 ratio by Christians versus Muslims, including the Druze (Nagle, 2016). The Lebanese structure of power-sharing reflects various features of a consociational democracy, which will be further explained in the literature review of this thesis.

The 6:5 ratio reflects the 1932 census of a 50 percent Christian majority over 48 percent Muslims. However, in 1943, there was no Christian majority anymore and in 1948, 150.000 Palestinians – mostly Sunni Muslims – migrated to Lebanon (Mohti, 2010; Malley, 2018). While the Muslim population increased, the representation ratio remained unmodified. However, Mohti (2010) and Malley (2018) point out that this increased tensions among the segmental cleavages and was one of the factors that eventually led to the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990). While religious inequality was an important cause of the war, Malley (2018) stresses that the main causes were in fact socio-economic, reflecting poor leadership and government corruption. The state's sectarian leaders were supported economically, creating elite groups or financial oligarchs. This illustrates that the Civil War was not merely caused by tensions among religious groups but socio-economic inequalities played a major role. Nonetheless, it was contested as a sectarian conflict (Makdisi & Khatib, 2006).

In 1989, the Taif agreement was signed. This was a temporary peace agreement that involved a change in ratio of Christian and Muslim parliamentarians and public officials, which would become 5:5. The executive power of the Maronite President formally decreased while the power of the Shia Prime Minister increased (Malley, 2018; Nagle, 2016). Picard (2005) states that after signing the agreement, virtually no reconciliation efforts were made.

2. Literature Review

This chapter tackles the academic literature and discussion on power-sharing. This starts with description of the main features of power-sharing and the main approaches on power-sharing, which are the consociational and centripetal approach. Of these approaches, the dominant approach to power-sharing in diverse societies like Lebanon is the consociational approach, as formulated by Lijphart (1977a). This chapter involves the main critiques towards the consociational approach and the academic debate regarding the application of this approach in non-Western countries like Lebanon. Following this, various theoretical approaches that specifically evaluate Lebanon's sectarian state system will be outlined. To provide a preliminary overview of the political discourse of civil society activists and the rising dissatisfaction of Lebanese citizens, this chapter ends with literature on Lebanon's civil society.

2.1 Power-sharing agreements

In the academic literature, a widely used proposal to combat civil conflicts and to promote peace and stability is the establishment of power-sharing agreements and institutions that involve the cooperation of politicians that represent opposed societal groups (Bogaards, 2019a; Dixon, 2006; Lijphart, 1977a; Norris, 2008; Trzciński, 2021). Power-sharing has been applied in various non-Western countries: Kenya, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Burundi, Sierra Leone, Cambodia, Nepal, Bosnia, Iraq and Lebanon – and in West-European countries: Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, Switzerland and Northern-Ireland Binningsbø, 2013; Dixon, 2006; Lijphart, 1977a; Nagle, & Clancy, 2019). Among these countries, the main incentives to arrange power-sharing agreements is to promote democracy, peace and stability to combat the negative consequences of (civil) war, religious or ethnic conflicts (Binningsbø, 2013).

Despite the prevalence of power-sharing recommendations, various scholars have criticized power-sharing agreements for its inability to assure a long term commitment to peace, stability and democracy (Dixon, 2006; Nagle & Clancy, 2019; Spears, 2002). The reason that the literature on power-sharing provides such contradictory conclusions is that there is no consensus on its definition and aims or how to evaluate power-sharing. In general, power-sharing generally includes institutions that create a joint government (Binningsbø, 2013). In the academic literature on power-sharing, the works and ideas of Lijphart (1969, 1977a, 1977b, 1999) remain dominant (Binningsbø, 2013; Bogaards, 2019a; Nagle, & Clancy, 2019).

2.2 Consociationalism

Consociationalism refers to the practice of power-sharing and collaboration among political leaders that represent the members of segregated societal groups with tensions that derive from the divisions among these societal groups (Binningsbø, 2013; Bogaards, 2019a; Lijphart, 1977a). While this diversity divides many societies, only few states have set up institutions to promote this form of power-sharing, where parliaments are elected through lists that guarantee proportional representation of each social groups in divided societies (Bogaards, 2019a). The theoretical framework of consociational democracy was first developed by Lijphart (1977a). To evaluate the academic literature regarding consociational democracy, one first has to consider the main concepts and arguments on Lijphart's foundational framework.

In *Consociational Democracy in Plural Societies*, Lijphart (1977a) conceptualises *deeply divided societies* are plural societies with strong tension or conflict among segmental cleavages. These divisions mutually halt social and political cooperation among members of the segmental cleavages. In deeply divided societies, the main institutions – education, media, interest groups, non-profit organisations and political parties – are organised among these cleavages. *Political elites* are the political representatives of the segmental cleavages. Lijphart (1977a) proposes that *only* through elite cooperation, deeply divided societies may become stable democracies. Ultimately, Lijphart (1977a) proposes that through consociationalism, deeply divided societies like Lebanon may attain a stable democracy.

2.3 Non-Western Context

Lijphart's (1977a) theory is inspired by and embodied in four West-European states: the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria and Switzerland. Despite strong political tensions and divisions, these states managed to maintain political stability through power-sharing and the establishment of consociational practices and institutions. Lijphart (1977a) describes Nigeria, Malaysia, Cyprus and Lebanon – at least before the Civil War – as examples of consociational democracies beyond the West. Despite the temporal successes of these cases, various authors have questioned the appropriateness of consociationalism in non-Western states.

McCulloh (2013) argues that it is more challenging for non-Western, post-colonial states to establish consociational democracy than modern democratic West-European states with a long tradition of elite cooperation and early established democratic institutions. The

author argues that it is important to consider the ethnic and territorial tensions that exist in various non-Western countries, which differs from the classist or religious tensions in the European states that Lijphart (1977a) used as examples of consociationalism. Not only McCulloch, but also, Andeweg (2000), McCulloch (2014) and Piatonni (2001) address that with the Taif agreement, the allocation of influential positions remains based on cleavage identity or sectarian votes, along with socio-economic, educational or health care funds. Therefore, the authors argue that the Taif agreement actually increased cleavage tensions, policy paralysis, clientalism and conflicts about public goods.

In line with McCulloh (2013), Spears (2002) explains that many non-Western states have experienced conflict or civil war by the end of the colonial era. Achieving independence involved political turmoil and significant administrative transformations in these states (Spears, 2002). This means that the obstacles that non-Western, post-colonial states to promote peace and democracy vary greatly from the challenges of the four Western cases that inspired Lijphart's theory. Finally, Lemarchand (2007), argues that not the mechanisms of power-sharing, but the socio-political context determines whether consociationalism succeeds or fails. While there may be a tradition of elite cooperation in Lebanon, the socio-political context as a post-colonial state differs strongly from the European states that inspired Lijphart's theory.

2.4 Centripetalism

Within the academic literature on power-sharing, the most important counterpart of consociational democracy is the centripetal approach to democracy in deeply divided societies (Lijphart, 1977a; McCulloh 2013, 2014; Trzciński, 2021; Reilly, 2016). Centripetalism refers to a form of power-sharing among opposing parties that aims to create moderate and compromising policies in order to uncover common ground among opposing parties and to reinforce the centre of the political spectrum in deeply divided societies (Bogaards, 2019a; Reilly, 2016). While consociationalism aims to embody proportional representation of through political collaboration of opposing parties at the extremes of the political spectrum, centripetalism aims to establish representation through collective collaboration at the moderate centre of the political spectrum. Centripetalism establishes representation of various societal groups through converging parties, for example multi-ethnic parties, to promote accommodation among segregated groups (Reilly, 2016).

2.4.1 Typologies of Democracy

In *Typologies of democratic systems*, Lijphart (1968) identified four types of democratic regimes in plural societies: depoliticized, centripetal, centrifugal and consociational, as exemplified in table 1. A *plural society* consists of two or more cultural, linguistic, religious, ideological, socio-economic, racial or ethnic groups. Divisions among these groups result in *segmental cleavages*, whose members live their social lives separate from one another and are politically speaking opposed to one another. As illustrated in the democratic typologies by Lijphart (1968), the members of segmental cleavages at the mass level cross-cut one another in depoliticized and centripetal democracies. In consociational or centrifugal democracies, the members of segmental cleavages are segregated. Depoliticized and consociational democracies are characterised by elite cooperation while elite participation in centripetal and centrifugal democracies is competitive.

		POLITICAL CULTURE	
		Homogeneous	**Fragmented**
ELITE BEHAVIOUR	**Coalescent**	Depoliticised Democracy	Consociational Democracy
	Competitive	Centripetal Democracy	Centrifugal Democracy

Table 1. Typologies of democracies

In line with Bogaards (2019a), Trzciński (2021) disagrees with the traditional discussion that focusses on incorporating either centripetalism or consociationalism in deeply divided societies. Trzciński (2021) introduces *hybrid power-sharing* as an alternative approach that combines features of both centripetalism and consociationalism, which may be applicable in cases where neither consociationalism nor centralism provide the solutions to the divisions in deeply divided societies. While the author mentions Lebanon as an example of hybrid power-sharing, the author does not refer to specific characteristics of the sectarian state system.

Bogaards (2019a) argues that the distinction of centripetalism and consociationalism in the literature is flawed as the two systems have similarities and are applied simultaneously in various deeply divided societies, including Lebanon. The author states that the main difference

of these typologies is their voting system. In consociational democracies, elections are held with the use of proportional electoral lists. The argument is that proportional representation and power-sharing among the political elites may decrease or even stabilise the pre-existing divisions or tensions in deeply divided societies. In centripetal democracies, voting pools are applied that aim to depoliticise the tensions in a divided society with political representation that is not based on the representation of each segregated group. Cross-communal representation in centripetal democracies would decrease tensions in divided societies is that it would encourage politicians to adopt moderate discourse regarding the societal divisions (Bogaards, 2019a).

2.4.2 Electoral systems

Lijphart (1968) characterises centripetalism as an opposing approach of power-sharing to consociationalism. In his earlier work *Typologies of democratic systems,* Lijphart (1968) argues that the type of electoral system is crucial for the representation of the segmental cleavages through the political elites. The discussion on consociationalism versus centripetalism concerns the most appropriate electoral system in deeply divided societies. Gerring and Thacker (2008) describe three different approaches as to how the electoral system of consociational democracies may be designed. Lijphart's (1999) proposition is that that the consociational system should encompass electoral proportional representation in combination with a decentralised governmental system. However, Gerring and Thacker (2008), who follow the centripetal approach, argue that proportional electoral systems should be combined with a centralised electoral system, as this would lead to better performance. As proponent of a third approach, Norris (2008) proposes that power-sharing through decentralisation is crucial for a well-functioning consociational democracy in deeply divided societies.

2.4.3 Lebanon's electoral system: consociational and centripetal

Finally, Bogaards (2019a) explains that the cases that combine centripetal and consociational features in their electoral system differ from the West-European countries that inspired Lijphart's theory. These West-European countries applied an electoral system that entailed proportional representation. Non-Western cases of consociationalism provide a more diverse picture, with several systems that entail vote pooling. In Malaysia, plurality elections are applied in single districts. Burundi's system is mixed, as it aims to establish proportional representation through vote pooling. Fiji applies a centripetal electoral system with the

consociational feature of executive power-sharing. Lebanon applied the bloc vote until 2018. From 2018, Lebanon's system entails proportional representation with confessional quotas which constitutes of electoral districts that vary per election (Bogaards, 2019a).

Bogaards (2019a) explains that Lebanon's district system determines who is elected in which district and this determines who is elected. In the district, the minority group – for example a Maronite Christians – usually elects the politician that is of his own sect. For the minority group in a district, the options of politicians of the same sect are limited. Because the majority of the district – for example Sunni Muslims – entail more votes because of their size, it also means that the leader of one sect may be determined by votes of members of another sect. In this example, it could be that the Maronite politician is elected by Sunni Muslims, which would cause the Maronite Christians to complain that the sectarian state system lacks fair representation of their sect (Bogaards, 2019a).

2.4 Lebanon's sectarian state system

2.4.1 Theoretical approaches

In order to evaluate the Lebanese mode of power-sharing within the sectarian state system, it is important to uncover the academic literature regarding Lebanon. Di Mauro (2008), who has evaluated the literature on Lebanon's sectarian state system argues that Lijphart's (1977a) approach to consociational democracy is elitists and institutionalist since the model is based on the assumption that if elites do not rule, members of the segmental cleavages will do so themselves, which eventually results in civil war. To ensure the power-position of the elites, the power-sharing agreements require institutionalisation, as in the Lebanese electoral proportional system. Yet many features of Lebanon's consociationalism are informal: the National Pact and the Taif agreement are both informal agreements that were not fully institutionalised, but complemented by informal institutions. With this, Bogaards (2019b) argues that Lebanon's main challenge is the inflexibility of these informal agreements.

While Lijphart's approach is elitist and top-down, Wolff (2010) argues that it is important to consider that the tensions and divisions in societies that consociationalism should stabilise are highly contextual. In addition, Spears (2002) argues that the main threat to national unity and political stability may not be external, rather internal. Spears (2002) and McCulloh (2013) argue that a bottom-up approach is more suitable in cases when the number of segmental

cleavages is more than three to five or in the aftermath of ethnic or religious violence or civil war. In severe cases, a separation of states may be the only realistic outcome since the representatives of opposing segments can be regarded as enemies rather than political leaders.

Di Mauro (2008) describes two alternative approaches that are found in the academic literature regarding Lebanon: the developmental and international approach. Hudson (1976) follows the developmental approach, of which the proposition is that modernisation and social mobilisation are the main variables that determine the sustainability of Lebanon's sectarian state system. The international approach evaluates the influence of the international environment on Lebanon's domestic affairs, which increased significantly during Lebanon's post-civil-war period (Di Mauro, 2008; Aoun & Zahar, 2017; Malley, 2018). This approach focusses on the influence of: 1) global conflicts, 2) regional conflicts or 3) international allies on Lebanon's segmental cleavages. Seaver (2000) argues that Lebanon's geographical context enables the interference of foreign powers which affect its national politics significantly, especially after the Civil War.

2.4.2 Civil Society in Lebanon

An essential component of power-sharing is the active cooperation and contribution of citizens. Institutions of power-sharing communicate that inclusiveness is an essential aspect of democracy and political participation of citizens is promoted. This makes it relevant to evaluate the activities of Lebanon's civil society activists. It is important to note that consociationalism and centripetalism are institutional approaches to power-sharing (Di Mauro, 2008; Bogaards, 2019a). Power-sharing through civil society, however, is a 'bottom-up' approach with the aim of incorporating civil society in power-sharing activities is to extend democracy to all members of society, regardless of religion, ethnicity or other criteria that divide societies (Dixon, 1997).

Nagle (2016) has interviewed Lebanese politicians and civil society activists regarding the sectarian system. The civil society activists argue that the state system enables political deadlocks and corruption, which is what the activists aim to combat. The interviewed politicians, however, exhibit reluctance to cooperate towards meaningful reform of the system out of fear of political degradation. Vértes et al (2021) argue that the reluctance towards political reforms leads to reoccurring political deadlocks, policy paralysis and government corruption reflected in the affiliation of various politicians with private companies, which ultimately resulted in more civil society activism. In line with this, Stel (2020) argues that certain areas of

the Lebanese legislation are intentionally ambiguous so that the policy programs surrounding these areas eventually lead to deadlocks.

With respect to government corruption, Mazzucotelli (2020) argues that the government's affiliation with the Banking Sector caused the liquidity crisis that commenced in 2015. Vértes et al (2021) explain that before 2015, civil society organisations represented the interests of specific sects with little to know cross-confessional collaboration. This reflects the segmental cleavage structure of Lijphart's framework, which is characterised by minimal contact or collaboration among the segmental cleavages. However, the social and political movements that emerged since 2015 do not reflect this segmental cleavage structure. 2015, the year of the Lebanese liquidity and the garbage crisis and consequent protests, marks the shift of attention from segmental towards national interests.

According to Vértes et al (2021) the main cause of this shift was the increasing dissatisfaction and diminishing trust of citizens in the government. According to Lijphart (1977a), trust in the political elites is a requirement for the functioning consociational democracy, thus the lack of trust in Lebanon's government should be regarded as an obstacle. Baumann (2019) confirms the main contributor of economic dissatisfaction were attributed to the state's socio-economic policies. Baumann (2019) and Vértes et al (2021) state that economic inequality and dissatisfaction played an important factor in the manifestation of the October Revolution. This explains why the announcements of taxes on basic phone services fuelled the first protests of the revolution. The rise of protests were responded by increasing government attempts to control activists – sometimes even through the use of state-violence. ‘

Regarding the relationship of the state and civil society activists, one of the main challenge of civil society in Lebanon is to identify their position in relation to political parties. This portrays how Borgh and Terwindt (2014) identify Lebanon as a state with characteristics of a liberal democracy but also of an autocracy with highly ambiguous laws and institutions. In authoritarian regimes, for example, the boundaries for civic space society are usually obvious and clarified in the states' laws, while in Lebanon, these boundaries are unclear and ever-changing. In regimes with characteristics of both democracies and autocracies, civil and human rights are highly contested, especially when the interested of the vested elites are threatened (Borgh & Terwindt, 2014). While the formal rules, institutions and the constitution of such regimes appear to support democratic rights and freedoms, the informal and de jure rules and practices that are aimed at supressing the fundamental freedoms of citizens.

3. Theoretical Framework

This chapter provides a more detailed description Lijphart's theoretical framework. This chapter ends with which factors Lijphart's theory will be applied to this thesis in combination with the relevant approaches that were discussed in the Literature Review. The emphasis is placed on the theoretical framework of consociational democracy because Lijphart's ideas remain dominant in the academic debate about governing deeply divided societies, specifically in the debate regarding Lebanon. The developmental approach differs strongly from power-sharing theories and in particular, Lijphart's approach of intra-elite cooperation that it does not fall in the scope of this thesis to combine the consociational and the developmental approach. This thesis does not aim to evaluate the accuracy of the international approach since this is not the focus of the research question of this thesis. Because the data is derived from Lebanese citizens as opposed to experts or policy officials, this is not a suitable research method to evaluate the presence of international influences on the domestic policies of Lebanon.

3.1 Consociational democracy

Lijphart (1977a) describes the concept of *democracy* as vague and complex, with numerous definitions. Thus, Lijphart (1977a) defines democracy as a system in which governments should reflected democratic ideals to a reasonable degree. When describing democracy in his earlier work, Lijphart (1968) refers to the election processes. Here, Lijphart argues that political parties could possibly gain full authority over the elections, the relationship among the elected and electors is antagonistic, and the elites do not necessarily reflect the views of the electors. This makes it unclear to distinguish what characteristics actually constitute to as democracy according to Lijphart. The author did specify four characteristics of a *consociational democracy*: grand coalition of segments, proportionality, mutual veto and segmental autonomy (Lijphart, 1977a)

The first condition: *grand coalition of segments* refers to the representation of segmental cleavages by their political elites in a grand coalition to enforce power-sharing among the elites. The second requirement includes *proportional* political representation to the size of the segmental cleavages. This includes the proportional appointment of civil servants and distribution of government resources in order to prevent underrepresentation and power-imbalances among the segmental cleavages. The third requirement imposes a *mutual veto* in government as a means to protect the interests of minority groups and to promote the security

of all sects. The fourth requirement is *segmental autonomy* of the segmental cleavages to administer their own affairs in order to eliminate power-struggles and tensions among the cleavages. With these formal requirements in place, power-sharing among the political representatives of each segment should be ensured (Lijphart, 1977a).

Overall, the literature on Lebanon's sectarian state system contains a discussion and evaluation regarding the consequences of applying consociationalism in Lebanon through the National Pact and Taif Agreement as well as the differences with centripetalism. The authors that have applied Lijphart's framework of consociationalism in Lebanon did evaluate the presence of these formal requirements, but the various favourable conditions that Lijphart described are less discussed. One exception is the work of Hudson (1976) who evaluated the presence of consociationalism in Lebanon through the developmental approach. Therefore, this thesis will tackle less discussed but highly relevant favourable conditions of consociationalism.

3.2 Favourable Conditions

Lijphart (1977a) argues for several favourable conditions for the establishment of consociationalism. These include: (1) a small *country size*; (2) a common *external threat*; (3) the formation and *structure of segmental cleavages*; (4) the *territorial location* of *sects;* proportional representation of each segmental cleavage through (5) a *balanced multi-party system* with an (6) *equal distribution of power* and (7) a *tradition of elite accommodation* or cooperation of political representatives of each sect; (8) *overarching loyalties* towards the national state and (9) the *lack of economic inequalities*. It would fall out of the scope of this thesis to evaluate each condition in detail, thus emphasis is placed on the favourable conditions relevant to this thesis. The third, fourth, fifth, sixth and eight conditions are considered relevant to this thesis are because these conditions are suitable to be evaluated through interview data.

The third condition is the *structure of segmental cleavages*, which includes an equal balance of size and influence of each segment as well as the ideal number of three to five segmental cleavages in a society. Lijphart (1977a) states that a stable majority of one segmental cleavage or a majority of two segmental cleavages would result in power struggles rather than power-sharing. On the other hand, the representation more than five segmental cleavages would complicate cooperation and negotiation processes. Finally, the segmental cleavages should be closely related to the particular political parties that represent each cleavage (Lijphart, 1977a).

Related to this is the fourth condition of separation and segmental cleavages, which should be isolated or *territorial separation* from one another. A federal composition and territorial isolation would limit the inter-segmental contact of members of the cleavages and thereby limit the possibility of escalation of violence or conflict among the segmental cleavages.

The fifth and sixth conditions are the presence of proportional representation of each segmental cleavage through a *balanced multi-party system* with an *equal distribution of power*. Segmental representation by few parties would decrease the challenges that two-party systems typically experience: political deadlock or polarisation. Instead, cooperation among a small number of political parties with an equal distribution of power enhances the feasibility of the elites to cooperate while representing the interests of the segmental cleavages (Lijphart, 1977a). The seventh condition includes *overarching loyalties* of citizens to the state. This refers to a shared loyalty or identity towards the national state, at least by the political representatives of the segmental cleavages.

3.3 Conceptualisation of themes

In this thesis, the following features of Lijphart's theory will be incorporated in the interview themes of the analysis. The first theme – segmental cleavages – includes a combination of the third and the fourth conditions: the structure and territorial separation of segmental cleavages. The second theme – proportional democracy– combines the fifth and sixth conditions, a balanced multi-party system with an equal distribution of power that together form proportional representation. This theme tackles whether the people view Lebanon as a (consociational) democracy in which their views and interests are represented by their politicians. Related to this is the voting system and its aspects that relate to centripetalism, as illustrated by Bogaards (2019a), for example vote pooling based on district. The third theme: sectarian loyalties applies to the eighth condition of overarching loyalties and attitudes towards Lebanon's sectarian state system. This includes the views of the interviewees on the Taif agreement, which is the foundation of the sectarian state system.

4. Methodology

This chapter portrays the methodological approach of my thesis, which is interpretative. This thesis entails a qualitative, inductive, explorative case study. This chapter starts with the research focus and the selection of interviewees. Then, a description of the method of analysis will be provided, which is discourse analysis. Since the data will be gathered through semi-structured, open-ended interviews, this chapter also includes an assessment of the interview questions and the role of the interviewer.

4.1 Research Focus

This research focusses on the views of Lebanese people regarding the sectarian state system. Lebanese people are defined as: people who identify as Lebanese, either living in Lebanon or abroad. The number of Lebanese living in Lebanon is circa 6.8 million (The World Bank, n.d.b). The main groups of migrants in Lebanon are 1 million Syrians and 450.000 Palestinians (Beaujouan & Rasheed, 2020). This research focusses on people who identify as Lebanese, thus migrants or refugees were not consulted in Lebanon that grew up elsewhere. Relevant to the context in which this thesis is that the interviews were executed before and after the 2022 parliamentary elections. Thus, the interviews have taken place in a context of a pandemic, a severe economic crisis and political turmoil (The World Bank, n.d.-a).

4.2 Data Collection Methods

To reach Lebanese people, the snowball method was applied. The first advantage of the snowball method is that it avoids the issues associated with sampling methods that use categorisations of people or groups (Browne, 2005). In addition, when the interview topic is sensitive, one of the main challenges of the researcher is the sampling of the study or interview group (Faugier & Sargeant, 1997). To overcome this, the second advantage of applying the snowball method starting with the researcher's social network is that people may be more open to participate in an interview regarding their personal political views (Browne, 2005). The main disadvantage of this method is that network-dependency may result in a less representative group of participants (Heckathorn, 2011). Therefore, Lebanese people were also contacted via various social media platforms: Facebook, Instagram and Reddit. Disadvantages of this were a

low response rate and less willingness from the people to share personal information. Ultimately, twenty interviews have been conducted, of which nineteen via MS teams and two at the Leiden University building in The Hague. The interviews were conducted in English, with some additional words expressed in Arab, French or Dutch.

4.3 Interpretative approach

In contrast to the positivistic approach where research findings should provide an exact reflection of the social-political world, the interpretivist perspective holds that the world consists of various intersubjective social realities that are interpreted and sometimes influenced by the researcher. Interpretative research theorises through uncovering the meaning of the individual's intersubjective experiences within specific historical and cultural contexts. Concepts are experience-near and reflect the individuals' local knowledge and lived experiences. Contrastingly, the aim of interpretative interview research is to uncover differences in how the interviewed individuals have experienced and give meaning to the event in question. Variation in answers is expected and considered significant because it illuminates what is meaningful to the interviewee (Schwartz & Yanow, 2013). This entails an iterative process of generating local knowledge and meaning of the individual's social world, which cannot be formulated a priori (Schwartz & Yanow, 2013). Therefore, no hypotheses are formulated. Instead, the data-generation and analysis are continuous and intertwined, which requires flexible, hermeneutic and circular a research design.

The interviews of this thesis were semi-structured interviews, with the main themes and interview questions determined in advance and their sequence flexible as new questions may arise based on the interviewees answers (Adams, 2015). This allows room for the researcher to gain insight into the respondent's world (Heldens & Reysoo, 2005). The themes of the interviews of this thesis are divided among the main aspects of consociationalism within the sectarian state system. The interview questions are attached in appendix 1. Appendix 2 includes an elaborate description on the incorporation of Lijphart's framework in the main themes of the interview questions follows in appendix 2. The interview themes will also be reflected in the analysis of this research.

4.5 Discourse Analysis

A discourse analysis will be performed to analyse the interview data. Discourse analysis evaluates spoken and written language with attention to specific words or metaphors or the grammar or structure of sentences (Hodges et al, 2008). When analysing spoken word, in speeches or interviews, non-verbal cues like sighs, facial expressions and body language are considered. Inherently, language usage is a social practice shaped by shared language and social expectations (Taylor, 2013). Therefore, discourse analysis involves not only the speaker or writer, but also the recipient of the discourse, including the overlap in their communication. Moreover, discourse analysis focusses on the indications or implications of the rhetoric (Potter, 1996; Taylor, 2013). In this thesis, discourse analysis is applied to uncover the contextual meaning behind the language usages of the interviewees. The analysis focusses on: the context of the discourse; non-verbal cues and body language; and on my role as interviewer and recipient of discourse. While there are many academic papers that explain the aim and usefulness of discourse analysis, there are no explicit guidelines as to how to perform a discourse analysis. Therefore, this thesis follows the steps that Harding (2015) provides to perform a discourse analysis on interview data.

Harding (2015) notes that it is an iterative and creative process, therefore any strict guidelines are not applicable to discourse analysis. These steps should therefore be regarded as flexible, adaptable guidelines for conducting discourse analysis. The first step is to review the interviews and re-read the transcripts, yet I aim to make notes during the interviews with regard to the main themes and expressed emotions. This means I will be noting phrases that portray the interviewees' expression of dissatisfaction or trust towards the sectarian state system. After reviewing the interviews, discourse that expresses an opinion regarding the main themes shall be underlined. Then, by use of these themes, the third step is to identify the discourse that is used to construct each theme. The final and fourth step is to identify the commonalities in the discourse use related to the construction of each specific theme (Harding, 2015).

4.6 Role of researcher

Because interpretative research is relational, the researcher needs to consider their role in their contact with the individuals that are observed or interviewed. ‘’Within a research

setting, power is relational, and the power of the researcher, the researched individuals, and the types of research relationships they may develop can vary considerably.'' (Schwartz & Yanow, 2013, p.60). This makes it relevant to evaluate the features about the identity and status of the interviewees – not only to evaluate the relational power dynamics, but also to gain insights in the context and social world in which the interviewee lives. To do so, appendix 3 provides information about me as interviewer and about the interviewees. Finally, when performing discourse analysis, the researcher relies on his subjective observations to evaluate whether certain information is relevant. Because the transcript of the interviews are confidential, this means that the data in the analysis should be supported by various quotes.

5. Analysis

In this chapter, a discourse analysis will be performed on the interview data. First, the data will be described among the themes that relate to Lijphart's framework of consociational democracy: 1) segmental cleavages; 2) democracy and proportional representation; 3) sectarian loyalties. The main similarities and differences among the interviewees' answers will be highlighted. Following this, the data will connected to the conceptualisation of Lijphart's theory review and, possibly, relevant authors that were discussed in the Literature Review. Finally, to evaluate whether and which contextual factors may have played a role in their views, the main differences among the discourse in the answers of the interviewees will be reviewed in light of their contextual background information.

5.1 Segmental cleavages

The theme *segmental cleavages* covers how the interviewees describe the relationships among Lebanese people from different sectarian or religious backgrounds and supporters of different political parties. This includes descriptions of their own sect, religion or political preferences as well as of other sects, religions and political parties that they do not support. Relevant to this is the prevalence and openness of political discussions among supporters of different parties. The answers that the interviewees provided are summarised in table 2.

Answer A: ‘’There is good contact among people from different religious sects. However, it is difficult and to me it is unappealing for supporters of different political parties to discuss politics.’’	**Answer B**: ‘’While there is some contact among people from different sects, there are obstacles to establishing relationships among them. It is also difficult, if not impossible, for supporters of different political parties to discuss politics.’’	**Answer C**: ‘’The contact among people from different religious sects is limited, with obstacles to establish relationships with people from other sects. It seems impossible for supporters of different political parties to discuss politics.’’
Anonymous #8: ‘’Other religions? I didn't have any problem. And it's about, you know, you are a student. You don't get into controversial issues. You don't go into some conflict points ... we cannot go to that end conversation. ... It's about university, studying. We don't get into political, you know, we like we talk about the society, what's going on, what is the latest news about the in Lebanon? That's it. ...But we cannot like just talk like: I saw your party is doing like this, my party is doing like this. We don't get into those issues.’’	**Anonymous #17**: ‘’So we coexist. In general, we are able to exist a bit more. However, when it comes to these discussions, things get a bit tense...’’ ‘’... When I was in university I dated a Shia and I'm a Sunni. So my mother and my grandma would come and tell me: she's not permanent, right? ...telling me that we don't see you marrying outside of the Lebanese Sunni...’’ ‘’...I mean, religion and politics go together. So if you are Sunni and you're going to follow one of the traditional parties, it is The Future Movement, for example. If you are a Christian, it is either the Lebanese Forces or the Free Patriotic movement. If you're Shia, it’s Hezbollah or Amal, so. It's very seldom for you to find that a Sunni is with Hezbollah. ...this would never happen. ...people go back to their roots, especially when sensitive topics come up like elections.’’ Anonymous #12: ‘’In Lebanon, you can use religion and politics interchangeably and that should not be the case because it are two entirely different concepts.’’	**Anonymous #10**: I didn't have like a lot of encounters with Muslims.’’ ‘’It's the Muslims in my mind... Not in general, of course, there are great people, but it's just Hezbollah and these guys. That's the problem.’’ ‘’You just put all the Muslims in inside this picture and that's how more or less I see them. You know, I don't mind them, it's just about the whole picture of what Hezbollah and everyone else are doing to the country.’’ ‘’They (Hezbollah) are Shia Muslims so I just interconnect Muslim to Hezbollah. That's why I don't have many encounters (with Muslims).’’ Anonymous #19: ‘’These rebellious people that started talking about change and stuff. Actually, they are exactly the same as the (sectarian) leaders... the first thing that they want to do is to exclude the other person, the people that are from a party.’’ ‘’When you want to make a change... you cannot exclude anybody because there are millions of people that are supporters of a certain party or religious group. ...you have to be open towards the others and try to find out what the problem is and discuss them and try to find solutions for them. There is in Lebanon the mentality that anybody thinks: I am right and the rest is wrong.’’

Table 2. Segmental cleavages

5.1.1 Sectarian divisions and cross-collaboration

The statements provided in table 2 illustrate that while there are different answers on the cohesion among different religious groups, the interviewees generally expressed that there is a lot of prejudice in the Lebanese society and political discussions are not constructive.

According to the interviewees, practice power-sharing on the elite level has resulted in stronger divisions and prejudices among people from different sects on the societal level. Furthermore, the interviewees described separate media channels for members of each sect, territorial segregation and separate school for the sects. The descriptions of sectarian divisions do reflect Lijphart's (1977a) description of segmental cleavages in deeply divided societies, including the territorial and institutional separation among segmental cleavages.

Nevertheless, the interviewees did emphasized that there is a rise in cross-collaboration among people from different sects since the October 2019 Revolution. This this confirms the observations of Vértes et al (2019). However, according to Lijphart (1968; 1977a) a consociational democracy is characterised by the lack of collaboration among members of the different segmental cleavages. In other words, the cross-collaboration that the interviewees referred to is a phenomenon that one would not expect to occur in a consociational democracy, as Lijphart (1968; 1977a) designed it.

The main differences in the data were the descriptions of relationships among people from different religions. The interviewees who answered A) responded positively to this question, while the interviewees who answered B) described it as co-existence and the interviewees who answered C) described the relationships among religious people as negative or even non-existent. With regard to the openness of political discussion, the interviewees who answered B) and C) in particular emphasized that the political divisions correlates with religious divisions. Finally, two third of the interviewees who provided answer C) referred to media framing as influential to their views on people from different religious sects. Since the interview questions did not focus on framing in media, no conclusions can be made regarding these statements. However, it may be interesting for future research to evaluate how media framing influences the views of Lebanese people regarding the different sects.

5.1.2 Contextual factors

In their answers, the Lebanese people emphasized the geographical location in which they grew up was a significant determinant to the amount of contact they would experience with people from other sects. This includes regional and educational segregation. Half of interviewees that answered A) or B) grew up with people from different sectarian backgrounds. The other half of these interviewees grew up in areas with people belonging to the same sect and went to segregated schools. The interviewees who answered C) grew up in segregated areas with little to no contact with people from other religious sects. The geographical location and hence the amount of contact with people from different religious sects might have influenced the relationship among people from different sects and supporters of political parties. It is difficult to conclude whether education levels influence the way in which the Lebanese people view people from different sects. Finally, the interviewees expressed that generational differences might be influential to way in which people from different sectarian backgrounds view and treat one another. Especially young interviewees expressed their distance to the older generation that experienced the Civil War, by describing them as less tolerant and more segregated then their own generation. Finally, 4 out of 5 interviewees under the age of 30 expressed that they were either involved in or supported the anti-sectarian revolution movement in Lebanon.

5.2 Democracy and proportional representation

The theme *democracy and proportional representation* covers how the interviewees view the concept of democracy and whether democracy is reflected in the Lebanese sectarian state system. Related to this the political satisfaction and representation as described by the interviewees. Table 3 illustrates that while there are different views on whether the concept of democracy is realistic or not, the encompassing answer was that it is a desirable government system. The quotes provided in table 3 include the reasoning behind the views of interviewees with regard to the lack of democracy and proportional representation in Lebanon.

Answer A: Democracy is a desirable ideal. While Lebanon may have some characteristics of a democracy, it is not democratic. I am dissatisfied with the mode of politics and the state of democracy in Lebanon. There are a few politicians that represent my sect who I do support. For Lebanon to become a democracy, politicians should be honest and put the interest of the country first.	**Answer B**: Democracy is a desirable ideal. Lebanon may appear a democracy on paper but it is not democratic. I am against the principle of voting based on sect: since it enables corrupt politics. I am dissatisfied with the state of democracy and the self-interested politicians in Lebanon. To expect Lebanon to transition to democracy easily is unrealistic.	**Answer C**: While democracy is a desirable ideal in theory, but it is not fully realistic: neither in Lebanon, nor elsewhere. There are states that come close to democracy. I am dissatisfied with the lack of democracy, the unrepresentative voting system and the corrupt politicians in Lebanon. It is not realistic to expect Lebanon to be a democracy at this point, yet we should aim to become more democratic.
Anonymous #10 I would prefer if, like they (sectarian parties) all just disappear. Like I said, the Lebanese Forces are just here because Hezbollah is... Israel wants to invade just because... Hezbollah is there. So if they were all not here, we could be independent and we would live normally.'' ''In my opinion, we shouldn't think about religion, and as a whole, the person which wants to do good for the country, that's the guy that should be elected. So if it is not a five to five (proportional representation), if it's like all Muslims or all Christians, I don't mind if it's just for the sake of the country as a whole.'' ''I'm pretty sure I'm not going to vote for any Muslims, for Hezbollah or Amal'' ''Even though, like I'm pretty sure I want to vote independent, the political views of the Lebanese Forces are like the most good for me, I guess.''	**Anonymous #15**: ''I personally think we need to move beyond the sectarian system. So if we do really want to have a democracy... ...something like civil personal status law. What it means is ...as a citizen, my rights and obligation in a state are not attached to my religion or sectarian rights.'' ''But in reality, this (the sectarian state system) is not democracy, and I genuinely, genuinely believe that we need to move beyond the sectarian system, we cannot continue. Representation, cannot be based on sect. The electoral law is very flawed and I'm very against it.' **Anonymous #6**: ''It's a nice concept, but here we say we have democracy. But we only honestly do not have democracy.'' ''If we want change, we need first, we need a bureaucracy. First, we need a new generation who's really good inside, who want to change this generation, who should control everything in Lebanon for few years, and then we can go back to democracy. Because we have a lot of corruption, we have a lot of people are born with corruption. It's here in Lebanon. It's a one man show.''	**Anonymous #2**: ''All those side rules and exceptions lead to the same thing, which is a gerrymandered pre-agreed election outcome. It's crazy...in certain areas someone gets five votes and gets elected into Parliament. Because of those exception rules and in other areas you can have 18,000 votes, but the favourite vote would still go to another candidate due to his sectarian identity. So it is predetermined.'' **Anonymous #14**: ''Democracy is also idealistic. It's very theoretical. I don't think any country has really succeeded in... ...Maybe it is a Western idea that is imposed on the whole world, but... What's the alternative? ... I would argue it (Lebanon) is not (democratic) in any way. ... I think it (the sectarian state) is quite unrepresentative because not everyone has a religion.'' ''Things that represent my views on how it should be governed, that's when democracy is in place ...then I can vote on that basis. But right now all that exists is on the basis of tribalism. (If) I'm a Christian, I'm going to vote for the Christian party because they will provide me with jobs, otherwise, I won't get benefits as a Christian.''

Table 3. Democracy and proportional representation

5.2.1 Representation, voting system and corruption

Table 3 illustrates that while there are slight differences in the statements regarding democracy, the encompassing answer was that it is a desirable government system. However, according to the interviewees, Lebanon does not reflect democracy or actual representation of the Lebanese population. To varying degrees, the interviewees who answered A, B, and C also expressed their dissatisfaction with their political leaders. These answers contrast Lijphart's (1977a) proposition that consociational power-sharing through proportional representation would eliminate discrimination. The answers suggest that the sects are represented by the elites, however this representation is not considered fair or proportional with regard to A the members of each sect and B and C citizens who identify as non-religious and non-sectarian.

With regard to political satisfaction, the interviewees that belong to each category complained about the self-interest of political leaders. The interviewees that belong to category C complained about the lack of politicians that are selected based on merit. These interviewees critiqued the practice of politicians that rule by heredity, network or through military achievements during the Civil War. Half of the interviewees that belong to category B and C described the politicians as warlords. These interviewees also used referred to the politicians as corrupt, billionaires, or rich and self-interested businessmen. The interviewees of category A, who did not used the term corruption did describe most of the politicians in Lebanon as dishonest, untrustworthy, liars or self-interested.

Related to this were complaints about Lebanon's voting system. Three out of four interviewees indicated that either the elections or the politicians are corrupt, as they explained that politicians would give money or provide social security to in exchange for their votes. These interviewees indicated that the people in Lebanon are kept poor so that politicians can buy their votes, which means that the elections are not free nor fair. This reflects the presence of clientalism as discussed by Andeweg (2000), McCulloch (2014) and Piatonni (2001). Among the interviewees that answered A) and B) four interviewees with an academic background in law, raised concerns about the Lebanese judicial system. According to this interviewees, this reflects the description of Lebanon by Borgh and Terwindt (2014) as a state with characteristics of a democracy and autocracy with ambiguous laws and institutions.

Related to this were complaints about Lebanon's voting system. A concern that was shared by the people who answered A, B and C were complaints about the fact that the

electoral system is divided on districts. This means that when Lebanese citizens have moved to a new area, it is still required of them to drive long distances to the area where their father is registered to vote. Since this requires time, money and recourses, 1 out of 3 interviewees within all the categories has critiqued this district system to be undemocratic as it limits the opportunity of poorer and less mobile citizens to vote. Especially the interviewees who did not identify as religious were strongly opposed to the voting system. Since the voting system is based on sectarian districts, the interviewees that answered B and C complained that it does not provide them a ‘’free choice’’ in government elections. This reflects what Bogaards (2019a) wrote about the district voting system, including its complications with regard to the proportional representation of the Lebanese citizens.

5.2.2 Contextual factors

With regard to proportional representation, the differences in the answers seem to correlate with whether the interviewees identified as religious or not. Those who identified as religious answered A, but also half of the interviewees answered B were religious. These interviewees expressed the importance of representation of their religion while those who identify as non-religious and non-sectarian – who answered C – emphasized that there is a lack of representation of non-sectarian people. This means that religion seems to play a role in the way in which the interviewees feel represented by the sectarian politicians. Overall, the interviewees that answered B and C were younger than the interviewees who answered A. This implies that the age of the interviewees may also be of influence their views on democracy and political representation. Finally, the interviewees that answered C included five individuals with an academic background related to political science and identified as non-sectarian. However, it is difficult to evaluate whether their academic background influenced their views since the study programmes and universities differed.

5.3 Sectarian Loyalties

This theme tackles the presence of overarching loyalties and attitudes towards Lebanon’s sectarian state system. This theme includes the views of the interviewees on the Taif agreement, which is summarised in table 3.

Answer A: I do not support the sectarian state system. However, this (sectarian state) system cannot just be abolished or changed easily. The foundation of today's sectarian state system, the Taif agreement was necessary to end the war. It was designed as a temporary peace agreement, however it (Taif) is abused by those in power to remain influential in the sectarian state system. It does not provide a fair representation of religion and thereby the tensions among people from different sects have increased, sometimes even with mini-wars as a result. Therefore, I think the solutions lie in arrangements and improvements within the sectarian state system, for example of an improved representation of religion.	**Answer B**: I do not support the sectarian state system. While this system cannot be abolished easily, we should move to a secular state. The Taif agreement was necessary to end the war and it may seem like a good agreement on paper, but it is very problematic. Religion is included politics, which I am opposed to. Not only does Taif fail to provide a fair representation of religion, it excludes people that are non-religious. In addition, no reconciliation efforts were made after the Taif agreement was signed. The sectarian state system has increased the tensions among people of different sects, sometimes even resulting in mini-wars. The Taif agreement and the sectarian state system are abused by those in power to remain influential. While may be difficult to abolish or change this system, the aim should be to establish a secular government.
Anonymous #3: ''The Taif agreement. I told you he took from Christians a lot of authority, general security. The president used to be Maronite Christian, now it's Shia OK, the president of Lebanon, has to get the several authorities now has nothing the the authority, the hand of Prime Minister, which is Muslim Sunni'' **''**No, I'm not agree with this (sectarian state system). No, no, this (the sectarian state system) is the ... the fraud. No, no, I don't agree with this. This is again against the logic against the demography (Muslims-Christian representation) are changing the demography of the country.'' ''I don't like The Lebanese Forces because I don't like the leader. Because during the war he (Samir Geagea) wasn't a good person. He did many things and I lost friends because of this (civil) war... That's why I don't like him or anyone who think by letting the young fight, taking arms? I don't like! I like the peaceful ones.'' ''I like my president now. Michel Aoun. ...Because I know deeply he's well educated. He loves his country and he's the defending his country. All the people are against him, even in my home, my husband. Against.... He was to be a soldier and he doesn't have blood on his hands. He didn't kill anyone.... You have to read about him, he wants to build a better country and go and give the Christian more power to change.''	**Anonymous #16**: ''So when we look at it (the Taif agreement) right now, and we criticize it, we need to criticize 60 years of history in the making. And that's when we, if you want to undo it, actually, it's going to take a long, long process.'' ''I am very much against any traditional party, be it as it may the ones that are Sunni or not, because I'm part of a Sunni community. All of them to me are not my go to at all, never will be.'' **Anonymous #18**: ''They (the Lebanese politicians) are warlords. They are not highly educated in general. They know business. They want money from it.'' ''He (Najib Mikati) is one of the wealthiest Middle East, even worldwide. He has a lot of money invested communication banks. Again, he uses Lebanon for his own interest'' ''He (Michel Aoun) is only, he is obsessed of being the President of Lebanon and that's it.'' **Anonymous #19**: ''This is how they trick you into making groups. Nobody is thinking about Jesus Christ when he's like defending the Christian rights, I mean, that's not the point (laughs). The point is, the powers of Lebanon. They want to keep these powers. And they use their sectarian things to just generate the public behind them. And they would use something else...''

Table 4. Sectarian loyalties

5.3.1 Secular or sectarian

To varying degrees, the Lebanese interviewees expressed that they did not support the sectarian state system and were unsatisfied with the Taif agreement. There were slight differences, for example those who answered A were more careful in stating that it should be abolished. While the interviewees among answer B remained sceptical as to how the system could be changed, the interviewees that answered C strongly argued for the abolishment of the sectarian state system. Finally, one third of the the interviewees who answered B and C argued that the lack of reconciliation efforts made the Taif agreement problematic. To some extent, Lijphart's (1977a) description of overarching loyalties were reflected by sectarian interviewees in A, who did defend their own leader. However, the overall lack of support towards the sectarian state system and the sectarian politicians contrasts the assumption of Lijphart that the segmental cleavages would portray overarching loyalties to the political elites and the government.

5.3.2 Contextual factors

Whether interviewees identified as religious or non-religious strongly influenced their views on how opposed they were to the sectarian state system. Those who identified as religious, for example the Christians, did express concerns for their representation in government, while those who identified as non-religious or secular where more concerned with their civil rights and the establishment of a secular government. This means that the contextual factor religion could be of influence of the different views on the sectarian state system and the Taif agreement. The religious interviewees that fall under category A emphasised that the Taif agreement was problematic because they felt that their religion was underrepresented. The secular interviewees emphasised the fact that the Taif agreement has created a system based on religion, which they were against.

Finally, generation seems to play a role in the way interviewees reflected upon the Taif agreement and the sectarian state system as a whole. Those who experienced the Civil War were less negative about the Taif agreement. These are the people who also experienced the end of the war with the Taif agreement. The younger people, however, who did not experience the Civil War mainly expressed their amazement on the fact that the Taif agreement was signed 30 years ago as a temporary agreement or they expressed that the

leaders who were in important positions back then are still influential today. Also, the young generation expressed that Lebanon is not a peaceful country today, and some even stated that there is still violence, political turmoil and ‘’mini-wars’’. For them, the Taif agreement is a means for the politicians to remain in power. These interviewees stated that the fear of a new war that the older generation still has today is an important factor of why the Taif agreement is still in place.

6. Conclusion

With regard to the theme segmental cleavages, the interviewees expressed that Lebanon’s society is divided by sects where religious divisions correlate with political divisions. Regarding the second theme, democracy and proportional representation, the interviewees expressed that Lebanon is not a democratic state. Sectarian as well as non-sectarian interviewees expressed that they did not feel that the proportional representation through the voting system resulted in actual representation of the Lebanese citizens. Finally, regarding the theme sectarian loyalties, the interviewees generally expressed that the sectarian state system is abused by politicians to keep their power.

With the use of twenty semi-structured interviews, this thesis has resulted in a considerable amount of data, which was categorised among the three themes of the analysis. The benefit of providing few themes is that it provides structure and results in coherent conclusions. The disadvantage is that the themes do not capture every detail that was provided in the data, which means that the analysis provides a less thorough reflection of the gathered data. Related to this, a discourse analysis may be subjective to research bias. Therefore, it is recommended that the data is discussed or evaluated by more than one research. The data of this thesis were discussed with the thesis supervisor to minimise the research bias.

Through the application of discourse analysis, notable variations among the interviewees’ answers were highlighted. These variations may be related to their contextual background. With regard to the theme segmental cleavages, the interviewees expressed that generational differences might influence the way in which people from different sectarian backgrounds view and treat one another. In their answers, the Lebanese people emphasized the geographical location in which they grew up was a significant determinant to the amount of contact they

would experience with people from other sects. With regard to the theme democracy and proportional representation, the differences in the answers seem to correlate with whether the interviewees identified as religious or not. With regard to the theme sectarian loyalties, whether interviewees identified as religious or non-religious strongly influenced their views on how opposed they were to the sectarian state system. Finally, generation seems to play a role in the way interviewees reflected upon the Taif agreement and the sectarian state system as a whole. Other factors that may influence the views of Lebanese citizens did not appear to be influential to the views of the Lebanese interviewees of this thesis. This does not mean that these factors do not influence the views of Lebanese people, however this research does not indicate a connection among these factors and the views of the Lebanese interviewees.

Finally, it might be interesting for future research to specifically evaluate proposed solutions to the issues that the sectarian state system in Lebanon is facing. This could be conducted by considering the main findings of this research in combination with the existing literature on alternative governing systems that may tackle the ongoing corruption and political issues related to the Lebanese sectarian state system. Alternatively, the findings of this research could be supplemented with interview based research with politicians, experts or activists might provide valuable information regarding the sectarian state system.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1. Interview Questions

Before the interview

- Check: consent form, anonymity, permission for recording.

Introduction:

- Who am I?
- What is this interview and research about?

Interview Questions

- Would you like to introduce yourself?
  - Work, age, education, current residency and country of origin, religious group
  - (For how long) have you lived in Lebanon?
  - What are the reasons that you live in Lebanon / abroad?

- Are you interested in politics in Lebanon? Why or why not?
  - Are you mainly interested in local, national even international topics that affect Lebanon? Any topics that you find important, like climate change or social justice?
  - Through which news platforms do you inform yourself about developments in Lebanon?

Expectations of government/politics

- In general, what are your thoughts of the political parties in Lebanon?
- Would you mind to be asked about your personal political preferences?
  - Do you support any political group, and if so, why if not, why?
  - Are there any politicians you admire or dislike? Why?
- How would you describe the cohesion or tension among the people from various Lebanese parties? Or the parties representatives or members?
- Could you argue what qualities you think the political leaders should have?

- How do you see this reflected in the current political leaders?

For example:

- *Could you argue what qualities you think the President should have?*
  - *How do you see this reflected in the current President Michel Aoun?*
- *Could you argue what qualities you think the Prime Minister should have?*
  - *How do you see this reflected in the current Prime Minister Najib Mikati?*
- *Could you argue what qualities you think the Speaker of Parliament should have?*
  - *How do you see this reflected in the current Speaker of Parliament Nabih Berri*

Religion

- Could you tell me (more) about your religious background?
  - How would you describe your (family's) religious community?
- How would you describe other religious communities?
- Would you say there is cohesion and tolerance among the religious groups in Lebanon?
  - Could you explain?

When Lebanon gained its independence of France, the National Pact was the first official model of the sectarian system today. The National Pact divided power among Maronite Christians and (Sunni and Shia) Muslims (and other religions) with, for example, a 6:5 representation ratio in Parliament.

Later in history, when the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) ended with the Taif agreement, a few important changes to the Pact were made. For example, the 6:5 ratio of Christians and Muslims in parliament became 5:5.

- What do you think about the Taif agreement and the representation of religion?
- Do you think this representation is fair, equal, promotes stability or tension?
- Can you tell me about how the Civil War resulted in this Taif agreement?
- Do you think Taif's resulting sectarian system promotes peace and stability in Lebanon?
- Would you say there is cohesion and tolerance among the religious groups in Lebanon?
- Could you explain?

During the Civil War there was serious influence of neighbouring states Syria, Israël, Iran, Saudi Arabia, but in Lebanon there has also been influence from foreign states like the U.S.A. and France.

- How do you see the influence of neighbouring states and foreign states on the politics and government of Lebanon?
    - More specifically, how do you regard this international influence on the sectarian system of Lebanon?

Democracy quite a broad concept. It is most commonly seen as a government by the people, in which the people are represented by their government. Political scientist Arend Lijphart has made a model of democracy that for countries that are very diverse – it is called consociational democracy. This is a form of democracy where the diverse group a represented by politicians that represent each different group. Consociational democracy should promote cooperation among the political elites in a country. The goal of this form of democracy is to promote stability in an otherwise divided country.

- Would you say this concept of democracy is reflected in Lebanon?
    - *How do you see this concept of democracy? Do you believe in this idea?*
- What factors do you think are important in for a well-functioning democracy?
- Do you think this applies to Lebanon and why?

- Would you say that the **Beirut explosion** has influenced your views on the Lebanese government, politicians, the sectarian system etc. in any way? Could you explain?

Religion

- How does the sectarian state system influence cohesion or tension among religious groups?
- Do you think that your (family's) religious community is well-represented in the sectarian state system?
- Do you feel that certain religious sects have an advantage of power over other sects in the sectarian state system?

- Do you feel that the sectarian system provides good representation and protection against discrimination for minority groups?

- On what factors do you think Lebanese stability depends?
    - What keeps the country together?
    - How do you see the influence of the sectarian state system on the stability of Lebanon?
    - Are there any improvements that you would suggest to the Lebanese sectarian state system?

- Could you describe your ideal Lebanon?
    - In terms of politics, economy, society...

Ending questions:

- Would you stay in / move to Lebanon in the future?
    - What factors determine your choice?

Appendix 2. Interview Themes

The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured, meaning that while the sequence of the interview questions may variate in the performed interviews. Some detailed questions may be asked specifically to an interviewee based on the answers provided, which differs per interviewee. In this process, the interviewer has to assure that all relevant information with regarding to the relevant subjects of the interviews is provided. The interviews aim to uncover whether and how Lebanese people experience live in a society that is divided by religion.

To do so, I will ask the respondents about their personal religious beliefs and their views on the religious sects and political parties in Lebanon. Then, I will ask questions regarding their opinion on the sectarian system in Lebanon, including the politicians that are represented in this system. Further, I have formulated questions regarding the ideal state system that Lebanese see for their government. The interviews also tackle political developments in Lebanon and the political preferences of the interviewees. During the interviews, I will inform the respondents about the National Pact, the Civil War and the Taif agreement.

Furthermore, I will explain the main aspects of the theory of consociational democracy and I provide a definition of democracy as: ‘’government by the people’’. This is to not confuse the interviewees with jargon, nor to derive strongly from Lijphart’s divergent references to democracy. The interviews will also tackle Lebanon’s election process. Questions will be asked about their opinion regarding the Taif agreement and thereby the primary aspects of the sectarian system in Lebanon. The interviewees will be asked about their views on democracy, whether it is ideal or not, and in how far it is, or should be, reflected in Lebanon. Finally, the interviewees will be asked to evaluate the consociational and sectarian state system that exists in Lebanon. In relation to this, I ask what their ideal state system would look like what is required for the Lebanese state to become a well-functioning democracy. With regard to socio-economic inequalities, I have not formulated this as a theme beforehand. Rather, my aim is to evaluate how the interviewees their living conditions and Lebanon’s economic situation when asked about their political satisfaction or their ideal Lebanon.

Appendix 3. Information about the researcher

Information about me that interviewees got to know are: my age (twenty three years old), my gender (woman), my studies (University Master in Political Science), my city and country of residence (Leiden, the Netherlands) my nationality (Dutch with Portuguese origin). This information could have affected the interview data. Social norms may guide male interviewees to communicate politely with me as a woman. In an effort to avoid impolite wordings, their answers might be framed in a more politically correct manner. This begs the question: would my identity features have affected the answers of the interviewees and would a different (i.e. older, non-Western, non-female) interviewer attain similar interview data.

Appendix 4. Information about the interviewees

Interviewee	Age	Sex	Born and raised in Lebanon, until...	Birthplace	Current residence, since...	Sect	Education	Religious	Political preference
Anonymous #1	32	M	Yes	Klayaa, South	Lebanon	Maronite Christian	University	Maronite Christian	Christian: The Lebanese Forces & non-sectarian ****
Anonymous #2	30	M	Yes	Triopli, North Governorate and Jounieh, Keserwan	Lebanon	Christian mother Muslim father	University	Non-religious	Non-Sectarian
Anonymous **#3**	60	F	Yes	Marjeyoun district in Nabatieh	Lebanon	Orthodox Christian	University	Christian	Christian Free Patriotic Movement ****
Anonymous #4	19	M	Yes	South Governorate	Lebanon	Shia Muslim	Finished secondary school	Shia Muslim	Hezbollah ****
Anonymous #5	30	M	Yes	Beirut	Lebanon	Shia Muslim	University	Shia Muslim	Non-sectarian
Anonymous #6	29	F	Yes	Beirut	Lebanon	Christian	University	Christian	Non- sectarian
Anonymous #7	27	F	No*	Beirut (ain el remmeneh) – Christian side	Lebanon	Orthodox Christian	University student	Orthodox Christian	Christian**** but against sectarian system
Anonymous #8	34	M	Yes	Beirut (Ras Beirut Hamra)	Turkey, 2014	Sunni Muslim	University	Non-religious	Non-sectarian ****
Anonymous #9	24	M	Yes, until 2006**	Beirut	Zambia, 2021,	Shia	University student	Non-religious	Non-sectarian
Anonymous #10	23	M	Yes until 2020	Beirut (Christian area)	Belgium, 2020	Christian	University student	Christian	Christian ****
Anonymous #11	34	M	Yes, until 2021	Beirut, Ain el Remmeneh (Christian are)	France, 2021	Maronite Catholic Christian	University student	Non-religious	Non-sectarian
Anonymous #12	24	M	Yes until 2018	Beirut (mixed area)	France, 2018	muslim family	University student	Non-religious	Non-sectarian
Anonymous #13	24	M	No	Sydney, Australia	Australia	Maronite Catholic Christian	University student	Maronite Christian	Non-sectarian
Anonymous #14	29	F	Yes until 2017	Beirut	Netherlands, 2017	Maronite Christian	University	Non-religious	Non-sectarian
Anonymous #15	27	F /Q***	Yes until 2013	Beirut, Moussaytbé.	Netherlands, 2016	Muslim shia	University	Non-religious	Non-sectarian
Anonymous #16	25	M	Yes until 2018	Beirut (Sunni, cosmopolitan area)	Netherlands, 2019	Sunni Muslim	University student	Non-religious	Non-sectarian
Anonymous #17	25	M	Yes until 2020	Beirut	Netherlands, 2020	Sunni Muslim	University	Non-religious	Non-sectarian
Anonymous #18	40	M	Yes until 2001	Jbel (mixed)	Netherlands, 2001	Sushi Muslim	University	Non-religious	Non-sectarian
Anonymous #19	55	M	Yes until 1989	South governorate	Netherlands, 1989	Christian	University	Maronite Christian	Not pro-sectarian Christian****
Jessica Elias #20	30	F	Yes until 2014 (to UK)	Mount Lebanon district	Netherlands, 2015	Orthodox Maronite Christian	University lecturer	Non-religious,	Non-sectarian

Table 5. Information about the interviewees.

*Anonymous #7: born in Dubai (1995). Moved to Lebanon: 1996-2005. Then, 2005-2012 in Dubai and 2012-2022 in Lebanon.

** Anonymous #9 born in Lebanon, where he lived until 2006. 2006-20202: in Germany.

*** Anonymous #15 also identifies as queer.

**** Anonymous #1, 7, 8, 19 preferred a non-sectarian Lebanon, while expressing strong support towards parties that represent their sect.