As Lebanon’s closely contested elections approach, it is clear that the era of high-stakes, zero-sum politics is over. Elias Muhanna writes

In the weeks, Lebanon will hold its most anticipated parliamentary elections, putting to the test two opposing political coalitions that have spent the last two years wrangling over the country’s post-war political framework. The new elections will be the first since the start of the conflict in 2005, and the outcome will determine the political landscape of Lebanon for years to come.

The elections are set to take place on May 19 and 20, and the two main parties contesting the seats are the March 14 and March 8 blocs. The March 14 bloc, led by former Prime Minister Saad Hariri, includes the Christian Phalange Party, the Democratic Renewal Movement (PMR), and the Democraticerspective Bloc (DB). The March 8 bloc, led by the Islamic fundamentalist Movement (FPM), is primarily a mix of Sunni and Shia parties.

The campaign thus far has been marked by rhetoric and posturing, with both sides seeking to gain the upper hand in the polls. The March 14 bloc has been focusing on national security and foreign relations, while the March 8 bloc has been emphasizing economic issues and social welfare.

The outcome of the elections will be far less significant than the moratorium on political settlements that the post-election period will bring. Between the years 2005 and 2008, Lebanon was the portrait of a society in transformation. The civil war that raged from 1975 to 1990 had left Lebanon in ruins, and the country was in desperate need of political stability. The elections of 2005 marked a turning point in Lebanon’s history, as the country tried to move past the conflict and rebuild.

The new elections will be held in a country that has been rocked by political instability and economic crises. Lebanon is facing a debt crisis, and the country’s economy has been hit hard by the global financial crisis. The political landscape has been characterized by gridlock and corruption, with both sides vying for control of the government.

The candidates are expected to campaign on issues such as security, foreign relations, and economic policies. The March 14 bloc is likely to focus on its success in the Syrian conflict and its efforts to bring about a political settlement with Syria. The March 8 bloc is likely to emphasize its success in the economy and its efforts to combat corruption.

The outcome of the elections will be significant, but it will not bring about the political settlement that many in Lebanon have been waiting for. The political landscape in Lebanon is marked by deep divisions, and any political settlement will require compromise and negotiation. The elections will likely bring about a period of political uncertainty, but they will also bring about a period of political stability and economic growth.

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