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**Authoritarianism And Necropolitics In  
Lebanon:  
How Corrupt Elites Destroyed Their  
Treasured Democracy**

By

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# **Authoritarianism and Necropolitics In Lebanon: How Corrupt Elites Destroyed Their Treasured Democracy**

**Francisco S. Barroso Cortés and Joseph A. Kéchichian**

**L**ebanon was once a promising country, inhabited by creative, clever, and charismatic individuals who were also hard working. In 2020, as any reading of the headlines will confirm, security conditions were poor and socio-economic situations precarious. Notwithstanding severe consequences associated with the SARS-CoV-2 (Corona virus pandemic that evolved into the COVID 19 respiratory disease), many Lebanese, especially recent university graduates, sought emigration opportunities to escape hopelessness. Professionals who first migrated during the 1975-1990 civil war and who returned in the post-2005 era confident that happier days would ensue, packed their bags once again, unable to withstand the corruption that permeated throughout society as most citizens and residents suffered alike. Physicians with advanced degrees from leading Western medical schools, and who earned relatively high salaries, saw their remunerations dwindle as the Lebanese Pound lost over 80 percent of its value in less than a year. Civil engineers who boasted remarkable accomplishments in burgeoning construction businesses witnessed a near collapse of this lucrative market too. African and Southwest Asian houseworkers, the lowest paid individuals in a somewhat racist and biased country, were hard hit as their meagre incomes hit the bottom.

Whatever savings ordinary folks deposited in local banks for rainy days in a country that provided little or no social security coverage at retirement, withered at the proverbial wine as the Pound exchange rate to the US Dollar neared 9,000 in mid-2020. Once the crown jewel of the Lebanese economy, the banking system was no more, or in such an emasculated shape, that decades of attention would probably be required to restore trust. In short, both in the aftermath of the 17 October 2019 uprisings and, more importantly, the 4 August 2020 explosions at the Beirut harbour that devastated parts of the capital, Lebanon entered into a truly unstable period that build on decades of insecurity.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Maria Zakhour, "Lebanon Is Witnessing A Staggering Increase In Emigration After The Beirut Blast," *the 961.com*, 29 August 2020, at <https://www.the961.com/increased-emigration-beirut-blast/>. See also Baria Alamuddin, "The emigration brain drain – Lebanon's looming new catastrophe," *Arab News*, 6 September 2020, at <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1730241>; Khairallah Khairallah, "Collapse of the banking system could mean the end of Lebanon," *The Arab Weekly*, 19 April 2020, p. 6; Lin Noueihed and Dana Khraiche, "Lebanon's Economic Collapse Is Gathering Pace," *Bloomberg News*, 6 July 2020, at <https://www.bnnbloomberg.ca/lebanon-s-economic-collapse-is-gathering-pace-1.1461429>; and Mona Alami, "Lebanon's inflation reaches new highs as increasing chaos reigns over exchange market," *Al Arabiya English*, 1 July 2020, at



As frustrated citizens demonstrated and demanded genuine political and economic reforms, political elites spewed stale promises that proved to be futile as they—albeit with a significant percentage of corrupted Lebanese providing legitimizing cover—failed to govern with transparency. Even worse, the country’s laissez-faire preferences, which once transformed Beirut into the “Paris of the Middle East,” gave way to acute authoritarianism, both of the legal as well as the illegal varieties. Traditionally reserved internal security forces became militarized while the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), ostensibly mandated to defend the land, played local police and seldom shied away from using force against unarmed civilians. The Hizballah militia, which refused to disarm in the aftermath of the 1989 Ta’if Accords that suspended the last civil war, became a state within a state.<sup>2</sup> By 2020, the pro-Iranian “Party of God” dictated all security conditions to the government.

What were once successful features of the “Land of Milk and Honey”—relative freedoms, a laissez-faire economy, and undeclared neutrality in regional conflicts—disappeared. Lebanon joined the ranks of failed states as an entire population sacrificed intrinsic values. Tragically, neighbouring countries prevailed in dictating alien political agendas, while nascent authoritarian elites galvanized intimidated supporters, most of whom clutched at reform straws waiting for salvation.

How did Lebanon reach these lows and embark on authoritarianism that, truth be told, was truly alien to its culture? Were local elites engaged in Necropolitics—sophisticated socio-political mechanisms that commanded who may live and how some must die—to dictate whose rights would be protected and whose would not? What happened to the country’s legendary and jovial social contracts that tolerated dissent within the consociational democracy that lingered for a century? Why were the vast majority of the Lebanese—both Christians as well as Muslims—prepared to abdicate their responsibilities and accept to live under a system of government that few recognized and even fewer embraced? Was there a way out?

### **Democratization on its Deathbed**

Although truncated and held hostage to age-old sectarian norms, the Lebanese co-existed as best as possible, fought each other in civil wars when necessary, submitted to two foreign

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<https://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2020/07/01/Lebanon-s-inflation-reaches-new-highs-as-increasing-chaos-reigns-over-exchange-market>.

<sup>2</sup> The state-within-the-state categorization encompassed many aspects. For an examination of its role within the banking system, for example, see Clifford D. May, “Lebanon may be broken beyond repair,” *The Washington Times*, 26 August 2020, at <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2020/aug/25/lebanon-may-be-broken-beyond-repair/>. See also James Rickards, *Crisis in Lebanon: Anatomy of a Financial Collapse*, August 2020, Washington, DC: Foundation for Defense of Democracies Press, at <https://www.fdd.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/fdd-monograph-crisis-in-lebanon.pdf>.

occupations after neighbours targeted them to promote non-Lebanese interests, and otherwise survived numerous calamities including the assassination of leading thinkers, journalists and politicians. Most Lebanese believed they were lucky to live in a country that tolerated dissent and allowed relative freedoms in a region that lacked both.

Their luck run out in 2018 after the establishment opted to transform temporary gains into permanent ones, empowered corrupt political parties to conduct parliamentary elections under a law that favoured their authors and truly redefined gerrymandering; and otherwise focused on how to tame an increasingly broken population.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, and though devastating, the explosions that shook Beirut on 4 August 2020 have not only fuelled the anger of the post-October 2019 protest movements, they also squandered the scant confidence that the Lebanese displayed towards authorities in general and the heralded Hassan Diab technocratic government (that was ushered in on 21 January 2020) in particular.

Under normal circumstances, the promises made by the Diab Government could well have served as a turning point to eliminate or at least tame the old political order precisely to avoid human and material disasters. Indeed, Lebanon stood at a crossroads in late 2020, because of its endemic and largely acknowledged corruption practices that generated peculiar ethics without anticipated responsibility. It was under the Diab regime that the Lebanese Pound was devalued and lost over 80 per cent of its value and, starting in early 2020, Beirut recorded dramatic price increases in the cost of basic necessities that reached unprecedented levels.<sup>4</sup>

History will document that it was during the Michel Aoun Presidency that the US Dollar peg to the local currency vaporized into thin air. Instead of dollars flooding banks on account of an estimated US\$8 billion in annual remittances wired by expatriate Lebanese toiling around the world, there actually was a shortage of dollars in the market, which bankrupted small and medium-sized entrepreneurs. Notwithstanding adulation of the Aoun Presidency made by puerile sycophants, the Lebanese experienced acute social inequalities, rising unemployment, skyrocketing poverty, and rampant sectarianism that further polarized the country's 18 religious communities.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Nadim El Kak, "A Path for Political Change in Lebanon? Lessons and Narratives from the 2018 Elections," *Arab Reform Initiative*, 25 July 2019, at <https://www.arab-reform.net/publication/a-path-for-political-change-in-lebanon-lessons-and-narratives-from-the-2018-elections/>.

<sup>4</sup> "Factbox: Lebanon's spiralling economic crisis," *Reuters*, 21 October 2020, at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-lebanon-crisis-factbox-idUSKBN2761M1>.

<sup>5</sup> Tom Perry and Laila Bassam, "As Lebanon's Crisis Deepens, Politicians Trade Blame," *Reuters*, 29 April 2020, at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-lebanon-crisis-analysis-idUSKBN22B2IU>.

As the threat of another civil war or another war between Hizballah and Israel loomed over the horizon, many panicked, and some emigrated.<sup>6</sup> Remarkably, the political class remained stuck in its old and obsolete power mechanisms, which no longer fit reality, though few if any, acknowledged the need for reforms. What preoccupied elites were business benefits, control of oil and gas resources after Lebanon discovered significant offshore holdings and, not a negligible point, intra-elite accords to preserve carefully concocted privileges. To their credit, and irrespective of their religious affiliations, ruling elites sealed existing relationships to strike at any and all opposition movements that, truth be told, lacked political cohesion and a modicum of efficiency.<sup>7</sup>

While demonstrators raised the hopes of frustrated citizens, few appreciated the chokehold of Hizballah over state institutions, as the militia allowed external interferences in Lebanese affairs to increase. What further exacerbated the already effervescent political scene, included the inaction of a supposedly technocratic and independent government headed by Prime Minister Diab, as well as the lack of structural reforms at the political and economic levels. These were demanded by the international community to turn on the aid tap, though fear of the unknown, putative inefficiencies, required but non-forthcoming reforms, and a complete lack of transparency led the country to the brink of collapse. It was thus fair to ask why local elites were engaged on a suicidal course that, for lack of a better term, threatened the existing social contract that tolerated dissent and protected relative freedoms within the consociational democratic system in place? Did citizens and representatives alike wish to end the Second Republic and replace it with a new political order?

To better answer these two basic questions that will feed into our search for growing authoritarianism, and because Lebanon was now in a period of transition into the unknown that tested the resilience of the Lebanese people, it was critical to briefly assess how the Hassan Diab government responded to the 2019 uprisings. In fact, Prime Minister Diab insisted that he presided over a technocratic executive, which many wanted to believe was the case, and that he intended to address the country's woes although hope quickly translated into despair. Supposedly staffed by independent figures, Diab's ministers were selected for their party affiliations, often hand-picked by powerful officials like President Michel Aoun (and his son-in-law, former Minister of Foreign Affairs Gebran Bassil), Speaker Nabih Berri (and his Hizballah allies), and Walid Jumblatt, the scion of a key Druze family that enjoyed its "kingmaking" role.

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<sup>6</sup> Abby Sewell, "Overlapping crises in Lebanon fuel a new migration to Cyprus," *The New Humanitarian*, 21 September 2020, at <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2020/09/21/Lebanon-Cyprus-Beirut-security-economy-migration>.

<sup>7</sup> Mark Farha, *Lebanon: The Rise and Fall of a Secular State under Siege*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2019, especially Chapter 2 on the "Prototypes of Secularism in Lebanon," pp. 34-143.

The British-educated Diab hand-picked Sunni ministers who allegedly were important figures in specific fields of specialization, though none of his 24 ministers, including six women, were true experts. Regrettably, each cabinet officer was beholden or indirectly worked for the old political guard, which belied the putative response of the Diab government to an increasingly agitated populace that demanded serious attention to the country's lingering socio-economic problems. An example was the unfortunate case of Nassif Hitti, Minister of Foreign Affairs from 21 January 2020 to 3 August 2020, who was a diplomat, academic, and university professor before assuming his post. For years Hitti was entrusted the entrance examination preparations for the Lebanese diplomatic corps, though he owed that sensitive post to Gebran Bassil, when the latter filled the foreign ministry portfolio. In other words, Hitti was indebted to Bassil for that appointment, though Diab presented him as a technocrat who was not affiliated with the Free Patriotic Movement. The effort was a nice try but lacked credibility and, ironically, Hitti submitted his resignation from the Diab Cabinet on 3 August 2020, after repeated interferences in how he conducted his official duties. Amazingly, Hitti stated that the country risked becoming a "failed state," something that few uttered in public even if the vast majority of the population understood his observations.<sup>8</sup>

### **Consociational Democratic System Under Threat**

The reforms necessary to get Lebanon out of the rampant crises catalysed by the 17 October 2020 uprisings, were left only in borage water, supposedly due to forces operating in the shadows against the work of the Diab Government. Interestingly, the old political class found itself in a situation where its status and traditional privileges were threatened, something that was new and that shocked the establishment. Such a perceived threat, it was reasoned by the state's eminence grise, elucidated a play of forces and counterforces against the work of the government that was paralyzed beyond repair, which finally ended with the resignation of the prime minister on 10 August 2020.<sup>9</sup>

What this resignation revealed was an acknowledgment that Lebanon could not simultaneously be a consociational system as well as a democracy—which had been the basis of the political order since the 1989 Ta'if agreement that suspended the 1975-1990 civil war. Indeed, and after a century-long experimentation, consociational democracy stood as an obsolete system. It was critical to note that the state was carefully and systematically co-opted by elites, whose participants did their best to undermine any attempt of democratization, any inklings to introduce reforms, and anything else that could jeopardize their traditional privileges. As a matter of fact, what the Lebanese witnessed was an increase

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<sup>8</sup> "Lebanese Foreign Minister Nassif Hitti resigns" *The Daily Star* (Lebanon), 3 August 2020, <https://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2020/Aug-03/509766-lebanese-foreign-minister-nassif-hitti-resigns.ashx>.

<sup>9</sup> "PM Hariri resigns as Lebanon crisis turns violent," *Reuters*, 29 October 2019, at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-lebanon-protests/prime-minister-hariri-resigns-as-lebanon-crisis-turns-violent-idUSKBN1X81EO>.

of the sectarian narrative, which proved that stability supposedly provided by the power-sharing mechanism could no longer be sustained.<sup>10</sup>

On the contrary, political elites successfully configured an economic-political system designed to avoid the construction of a transparent political entity as well as a common Lebanese identity, for fear of losing their traditional roles and privileges. For many, failure to comply with some of the most important precepts of the Ta'if agreements, which called for the gradual abolition of political confessionalism and the creation of a Senate to serve as an intercommunity chamber of representation, illustrated elite goals. Most perceived the mechanism of shared power as a transitory step towards a more liberal democracy that, in the case of Lebanon, was prevented on account of the mutual distrust that flourished among various confessional communities. Any attempt at reforms and legal or political changes were instinctively recognized as threats to the existing neo-patrimonial system, where public resources were part of the game of struggles, negotiations, and concessions between all sides.<sup>11</sup>

Importantly, a few realized that a corporate consociational system was fragile and could easily lead to authoritarianism, as Lebanon's consociational system evolved into an ethnocracy where "citizens who do not identify with one of the ethnic segments—the 'Others'—are the jure and/or de facto marginalized and discriminated against in the exercise of their political rights and beyond."<sup>12</sup>

What emerged was a system of government administrated by a plurality of peoples that ruled together, but not as one, with the Lebanese government exhibiting an exceptional paradigm of ethnocracies—as the state apparatus was deliberately guarded by several ethnic groups to further their interests, power and resources. Over the decades, and for nearly a century, political and religious cartels shaped successive executive branch authorities, which perfectly fit with the idea of government management based on the proportional representation of the main confessional communities. Problems arose when the different sects competed within the grand coalitions in what has come to be known as ethnurgy, "a highly efficient means of aggregating political interests, provided that the retention or acquisition of power, prestige or

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<sup>10</sup> Joseph Bahout, *The Unraveling of Lebanon's Taif Agreement: Limits of Sect-Based Power Sharing*, Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 16 May 2016, at <https://carnegieendowment.org/2016/05/16/unraveling-of-lebanon-s-taif-agreement-limits-of-sect-based-power-sharing-pub-63571>.

<sup>11</sup> Zaid M. Belgagi, "Lebanon's leaders are to blame for the worsening crisis," *Arab News*, 24 July 2020, at <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1709446>.

<sup>12</sup> Nenad Stojanović, "Democracy, ethnocracy and consociational democracy," *International Political Science Review* 41:1, January 2020, pp. 30-43 [the quotation is on page 33].



material advantage can be linked to ethnic group membership.”<sup>13</sup> In other words, what ethnurgy amounted to was a conscious fabrication and politicization of ethnic identity, as Lebanese political elites seldom hesitated to promote sectarian narratives based on memory and trauma. Community elites often used collective memory and collective trauma as strategies for the political mobilization of their constituents that, ultimately, meant that ethnurgy, memory and trauma were factors that undermined the national power-sharing socio-political mechanisms that the country presumably needed to better serve citizens.<sup>14</sup>

Instead, what emerged from such a system was a hodgepodge of intra-community loyalties that generated subjective politicization that, in turn, hindered the creation of a common national identity. Moreover, the subordination of the national project for the sake of a sophisticated consolidation of communitocracy highlighted various dilemmas, including the ways that leading community leaders perceived democratization and why such a quest was not a basic objective for most. In reality, the consociational system served as a kind of opportunistic game where each sectarian leader sought, on the one hand, to achieve a clear leadership role within his respective community and, on the other, aimed to obtain the greatest possible quota of resources for his constituency. Any end of political confessionalism, which was rejected by Lebanese ethnocracies, meant a loss of the intra-sectarian negotiation platforms that, in turn, endangered existing hegemonies of said confessional communities. In addition, the consociational system protected principal decision-makers, since horizontal communications between different elites were far more important than vertical communications between elites and their co-religionists.<sup>15</sup>

An equally important argument that explained why Lebanese elites have stopped seeking democratization as a priority objective rested precisely on the characteristics of the consociational system itself, which Beirut struggled with from the very beginning. In fact, it appeared that Lebanon avoided a full consociational system, preferring a doctored arrangement, which one writer labelled a “semi-consociational system.”<sup>16</sup> To be sure, the semi-consociational structure still incorporated clear proportionality and segmental autonomy

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<sup>13</sup> Theodor Hanf, “Ethnurgy: On the analytical use and abuse of ‘ethnic identity’,” in Keebet Von Benda Beckmann, Verkuyten Maykel, eds., *Nationalism, Ethnicity and Cultural Identity in Europe*, Utrecht: Utrecht University, 1995, pp. 40-51 [the quotation is on page 45].

<sup>14</sup> Eduardo Wassim Aboultaif & Paul Tabar, “National versus Communal Memory in Lebanon,” *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 25:1, April 2019, pp. 97-114. For a look at how young Lebanese absorbed the lessons of the civil war, see Craig Larkin, “Beyond the War? The Lebanese Postmemory Experience,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 42:4, November 2010, pp. 615-635.

<sup>15</sup> George Tsebelis, “Elite Interaction and Constitution Building in Consociational Democracies,” *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 2:1, January 1990, pp. 5–29.

<sup>16</sup> Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977, pp. 30-44, 148.

requirements, although without a grand coalition and veto powers. Moreover, the ordered technique was characterized by the “concentration of executive powers in the presidential or prime ministerial office, the presence of a communal hegemon in the system with the ability to subordinate other groups, and finally communal control of the armed forces,” all of which existed in Lebanon.<sup>17</sup> Interestingly, this was what happened with the alleged technocratic Diab government that lasted less than eight months (21 January 2020 to 10 August 2020) and, despite the optimism that permeated at the time, the halo of hope endured but a few days because elites rejected genuine democratization as loudly demanded by thousands (perhaps over a million) of Lebanese who demonstrated on and after 17 October 2019.<sup>18</sup> Protecting one’s turf was critical and nothing, absolutely nothing, would be allowed to threaten that social contract.

As the ties that existed between the newly-appointed technocratic ministers and main political-religious elites withered at the proverbial vine, and out of a total of 24 members in the cabinet, nine were beholden to the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) (one of which was the FPM-allied Tashnag Party appointee), four were indebted to Hizballah/Amal parties, two were obligated to the Druze Lebanese Democratic Party, two were grateful to the Marada Movement and three supposed experts were in the debt of the “independent” prime minister (four individuals held two posts each).

What this new political experiment was supposed to accomplish was to show efficacy while satisfying opposition movements anxious to distance themselves from more liberal elements, even if revolutionary forces that mobilized after October 2019 did not see much of a difference between these elites. Instead, what the Diab government offered was an experiment cooked up by the establishment to meet its own needs, as well as guarantee the permanence of the current status quo. Comically, the technocratic government began to carry out its functions with empty promises and with a lot of wishful thinking that immediately went up in smoke, even if the premier displayed immense confidence in his abilities to deliver, at one time claiming that his cabinet accomplished 97 per cent of its proposed goals.<sup>19</sup> The problem did not reside solely in the fact that members of the cabinet had to answer to political patrons, but that it left out half of the political forces that made up the Lebanese political-confessional mosaic.

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<sup>17</sup> Eduardo W. Aboultaif, “Revisiting the semi-consociational model: Democratic failure in pre-war Lebanon and post-invasion Iraq,” *International Political Science Review* 41:1, January 2020, pp. 108-123 [the quotation is on page 109].

<sup>18</sup> Aya Majzoub, “Lebanon’s Protests are Far from Over,” *Human Rights Watch*, 27 April 2020, at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/27/lebanons-protests-are-far-over>.

<sup>19</sup> Timour Azhari, “Analysis: Diab was meant to fail. He did it well,” *Al Jazeera*, 12 August 2020, at <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/8/12/analysis-diab-was-meant-to-fail-he-did-it-well>.

In fact, and despite the proportionality and segmental autonomy criteria that were respected (10 Muslims and 10 Christians), groups like the Lebanese Forces, Phalange Party, Progressive Socialist Party, and Future Movement did not participate in the Diab Government. Consequently, the cabinet was little more than a prop for the March 8 alliance, a coalition of political parties formed in 2005 and that were united by their pro-Syrian stance as well as their opposition to the March 14 alliance, the date of the Cedar Revolution that saw light after the assassination of then Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri. Not surprisingly, the Diab Government did not include a single anti-Syrian March 14 representative, which did not surprise the most emblematic figures of the old guard, including President Michel Aoun and the Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, Nabih Berri.

In the event, the technocratic government failed to respect the ceremonial grand coalition without veto powers, presumably because the main religious confessions were all represented even when half of the political forces that represented these confessional communities were absent. In the case of leading Christian communities, for example, a monopoly of sorts became fodder in the hands of the FPM as the president's son-in-law, Gebran Bassil, enjoyed near complete control of most of the cabinet. Likewise, the Druze community was polarized as the Progressive Socialist Party led by Walid Jumblatt did not participate, although his main rival, Talal Arslan, and the latter's Liberal Democratic Party, did.

Thus, what emerged was a hegemonic bloc that squandered the idea of shared power as elites sought to avoid the creation of domineering blocs in the fragmented society. The president of the republic, nominally the highest-ranking Christian (Maronite) community leader, was tremendously strengthened, which was reflected in part in the Christian community itself as the FPM enjoyed a majority of Christian parliamentarians that were elected in 2018 under a sophisticated and painstakingly gerrymandered electoral law that ensured such a majority. Inasmuch as this near monopoly strengthened the existence of a semi-confessional system, the FPM alliance with Hizballah translated into an advantage exercised over the Lebanese Army, even if everyone pretended otherwise. Goaded by Michel Aoun and his acolytes, a kind of synchronization developed between the Lebanese Army and the narrative used by Hizballah along the Free Patriotic Movement, which became visible during the last few months as the LAF and Internal Security Forces empowered the elite's authoritarian preferences by using excessively harsh measures against unarmed civilians demonstrating to express their views.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Daniel A. Medina and Kareem Chehayeb, "As the Lebanon Uprising Hits 100-day Mark, Protesters Allege Torture by Security Forces," *The Intercept*, 25 January 2020, at <https://theintercept.com/2020/01/25/lebanon-protests-torture/>. For the latest performances, see "Lebanon: Military and security forces attack unarmed protesters following explosions – new testimony," *Amnesty International*, 11 August 2020, at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/08/lebanon-military-and-security-forces-attack-unarmed-protesters-following-explosions-new-testimony/>; and "al-Dawlah al-Qatilah Man

Physical assaults on demonstrators, the use of tear gas and rubber bullets in certain instances, the use of live ammunition, coupled with arbitrary arrests and incommunicado detentions, and the trial of civilians in military courts, were but a few of the massive abuses of power in the name of law and order. Tragically, security forces engaged in irresponsible behaviour month after month and demonstration after demonstration, which resulted in a near complete loss of confidence in the security establishment. While the LAF was held in high esteem before October 2019, the stellar record that was earned after the Nahr al-Barid confrontations and, more recently, the army's valiant confrontations with extremists, withered away.<sup>21</sup> A coup de grace was inflicted on the martial institution on 21 May 2020, when LAF Commander General Joseph Aoun asked his troops to confront the successive violations committed by Israel for violating Lebanese sovereignty. The problem did not lie in this eminently just request but rather that it used Hizballah's "people-army-resistance" tryptic, which has been rejected by at least half of the Lebanese and that a former LAF commander and head-of-state, General Michel Sulaiman, had declared null and void in May 2014, to make his point.<sup>22</sup> With this declaration, Joseph Aoun sealed his support for corrupt political elites, perhaps thinking about his future political career, presumably because four presidents first served as LAF commanders.<sup>23</sup> It was unclear whether Joseph Aoun aspired to the presidency of the republic though that possibility could not be ruled out.

Consequently, the semi-confessional system continued to allow traditional elites to manipulate state institutions, and perpetuated political clientelism camouflaged under a false democratic scheme that concealed corporate consociationalism. What mattered to Lebanese elites was their monopoly over political feudalism where the main actors inherited political positions and ensured that they passed them along to their heirs. Such political clientelism allocated very low priorities to the consolidation of the national sphere, and hardly addressed various required political, legal, and economic reforms, including economic development, measures to fight corruption, steps to practice public accountability, commitments to uphold

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Yuhassibuhah" [Who Will Hold Accountable the Murdering State?], *Al-Nahar*, 14 August 2020, at <https://newspaper.annahar.com/article/الدولة-فان-لتمن-ي-حاسد-بها-1256986/>

<sup>21</sup> Élizabeth Picard, "Lebanon in search of sovereignty: Post 2005 security dilemmas," in Are Knudsen and Michael Kerr, eds., *Lebanon: After the Cedar Revolution*, London: Hurst, 2012, pp. 83-104, at <https://www.cmi.no/publications/file/4594-lebanon-after-the-cedar-revolution.pdf>.

<sup>22</sup> Joseph A. Kéchichian, "Can Lebanon Be Saved? Only if Citizens Reinvent Their Society and Avoid a New Civil War," Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies, 2020, at <https://www.kferis.com/en/view/post/290>, [the quotation is on page 3 of the "Commentary"].

<sup>23</sup> Kéchichian, *Ibid.*, p. 4. Lebanon's four presidents who served as LAF Commanders were: Fouad Shihab [Chehab], 1952-1958; Emile Lahoud, 1998-2007; Michel Suleiman, 2008-2014; and Michel Aoun, 2016-current.



the rule of law, all of which could unleash the population's full potential capabilities that, tragically, were simply ignored.<sup>24</sup>

### Hezbollah and Necropolitics

Parallel to elite manipulation of state institutions, which augmented authoritarianism in Lebanon over the years but especially after 2019, Hizballah eroded democratization further to serve Iranian interests that also witnessed a spike in its repressive behaviour. Although a Lebanese group, the so-called "Party of God" (a name that was sacrilegious to devout believers) boasted of its ties to the Islamic Republic of Iran, affirming that body and soul belonged to the mullahs in Tehran.<sup>25</sup> Hassan Nasrallah, the Hizballah Secretary-General, openly bragged about his ties with Iran and regularly pledged his allegiance to the *wilayit al-faqih* (jurisconsult of God), which stood as a contradiction to the man-made Lebanese constitution that was first promulgated in 1926 and updated both in 1943 as well as 1989. Remarkably, the Lebanese constitution was an exceptionally well-written document divided into 102 articles, with Article 24 focusing on the distribution of offices on the basis of confessionalism—without specifying how these posts were to be allocated, although with Christian-Muslim parity.

It was critical to note that Article 24 was amended on four separate occasions (Constitutional Law of 17 October 1927; order 129 of 18 March 1943; constitutional law of 21 January 1947; and the constitutional law of 21 September 1990) and read as follows:

The Chamber of Deputies shall be composed of elected members; their number and the method of their election shall be determined by the electoral laws in effect. Until such time as the Chamber enacts new electoral laws on a non-confessional basis, the distribution of seats shall be according to the following principles:

- a. Equal representation between Christians and Muslims.
- b. Proportional representation among the confessional groups within each of the two religious communities.
- c. Proportional representation among geographic regions.

Exceptionally, and for one time only, the seats that are currently vacant, as well as the new seats that have been established by law, shall be filled by appointment, all at once, and by a two thirds majority of the Government of National Unity. This is to establish equality between Christians and Muslims as stipulated in the Document of National Accord. The electoral laws shall specify the details regarding the implementation of this clause.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Imad Salamey, "Failing Consociationalism in Lebanon and Integrative Options," *International Journal of Peace Studies* 14:2, Autumn/Winter 2009, pp. 83-105 [the quotation is on page 84].

<sup>25</sup> Augustus Richard Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014.

<sup>26</sup> The Lebanese Constitution is available at

While the last amendment to the constitution occurred in the aftermath of the 1989 Ta'if agreements, wily politicians honoured the letter of the law but conveniently skirted around its spirit by introducing sophisticated elections laws (each was held under different schemes to satisfy party needs) that introduced gerrymandered constituencies and empowered ethnocracies.<sup>27</sup> The Muslim-Christian equality was duly maintained at 64 seats each within the 128-member parliament but the Free Patriotic Movement, Amal, and Hizballah entered into bizarre alliances that ensured their successes. Allies and foes mixed votes in certain constituencies and competed in others, not only to score victories, but to deny civil society candidates from gaining any seats that would weaken the establishment's strongholds on parliament. When results were posted in 2018, a single civil society candidate was elected out of 128. Remarkably, the FPM/Hizballah alliance grew exponentially that, truth be told, amounted to Necropolitics par excellence.

To be sure, the post of president was still held by a Maronite (Catholic) Christian, the Speakership of Parliament by a Shi'ah Muslim, and the prime ministership by a Sunni Muslim. Yet, and as a sign of how dominant Hizballah became in Lebanon 1982, the Shi'ah organization coaxed its co-religionists in the other predominant Shi'ah Party, Amal, to impose a Shi'ah candidate to fill the post of minister of finance. Until 2014, all cabinet posts had alternated between communities, a normal occurrence in a democratizing society. Unabashedly, and starting with the January 2019 Hariri cabinet, the post was "reserved" to a Shi'ah minister. Hizballah insisted that after the January 2020 Diab Government, the ministry of finance would heretofore be automatically allocated to the Shi'ah community even if this was unconstitutional.

In September 2020, Amal and Hizballah sources told a leading local daily: "Not in a hundred years will they take the finance ministry from us. Just as we won't accept them to annul us and let them name our ministers," which shocked the establishment but came as no surprise because of the militia's ascendancy in internal affairs.<sup>28</sup> Clearly, this episode delayed the formation of the next government after Hassan Diab resigned, as both Dr. Mustafa Adib and Sa'ad Hariri confronted the dominance of the militia over the Lebanese socio-political scene. Hizballah not only determined what kind of political outcome the country would usher-in, but

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<https://www.lp.gov.lb/backoffice/uploads/files/Lebanese%20%20Constitution-%20En.pdf>.

<sup>27</sup> For two recent studies, see *Assessment of the Lebanese Electoral Framework ahead of the 6 May Elections*, Berlin: Democracy Reporting International, 30 April 2018, at <https://democracy-reporting.org/assessment-of-the-lebanese-electoral-framework-ahead-of-the-general-elections-on-6-may-2018/>; *Assessment of the Electoral Framework: The Election Law of 2000 and the Draft Law by the Boutros Commission*, Berlin and Beirut: Democracy Reporting International and the Lebanese Association for Free Elections, April 2008.

<sup>28</sup> "Report: 'Never in a Hundred Years' Would Shiite Duo Relinquish Finance Portfolio," *Naharnet* [Al-Nahar Daily], 22 September 2020, at <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/275155>.

it even placed conditions on the kind of economic aid the country could receive after the 4 August 2020 harbour explosions. It further allowed itself the luxury of playing Russian roulette with the maritime border negotiations that started between Lebanon and Israel on 28 October 2020, in a sort of balance of deterrence that could lead the country to another war.

The dispute was political but also included sinister military threats since the Hizballah challenge was backed by the militia's vast arsenal that was not under the control of the Lebanese State. As the South African political scientist Achille Mbembé described it, "(t)o exercise sovereignty is to exercise control over mortality and to define life as the deployment and manifestation of power," two notions of Necropolitics that applied to Hizballah to the letter.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, Hizballah's activities starting in 1982 after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon amply illustrated how the Iranian-sponsored militia practiced its crafts, as the following episodes highlight. In a 1985 manifesto issued at the height of the civil war, Hizballah listed its objectives as the expulsion of "the Americans, the French and their allies" from Beirut, to submit the Christian Phalange Party to justice "for the crimes they have perpetrated against Muslims and Christians," allegedly to allow "all the sons of our people" to choose the form of government they want while calling on them to "pick the option of Islamic government."

Of course, Hizballah opposed the Israeli Defence Forces and the South Lebanon Army between 1985 and 2000; participated in the 2005 assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri and dozens of March 14 leaders between 2005 and 2008; embarked on the 2006 war with Israel that devastated Southern Lebanon, including the southern suburbs of the capital city; deployed its fighters in the ongoing wars in Syria and Yemen; conducted numerous terrorist activities in Bahrain and Kuwait; organized proxy battles in Iraq that were duly fought on behalf of Iran; kept the Lebanese parliament hostage from 2006 and 2008 by denying members the right to convene; insisted on a veto power over the 2008 government as it obtained 11 of 30 cabinet seats for itself and docile allies; imposed on this new cabinet a unanimously approved draft policy statement that recognized Hizballah's existence as an armed organization that guaranteed its right to "liberate or recover occupied lands" including the Shib'ah farms and Kfar Shuba Hills; hammered the "people, army, and resistance" (al-Sha'ib, al-Jaysh wal Muqawamah) triptych on the political establishment that a majority of Lebanese rejected; fabricated theories that it fought in Syria against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and, presumably, prevented terrorists from invading Lebanon; and continued to insist that its accords with the largest Christian parliamentary group, the Free Patriotic Movement, legitimized its activities after the alliance secured 70 out of 128 seats in the 2018 elections.<sup>30</sup> These were near perfect illustrations of how militia leaders conceived sovereignty

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<sup>29</sup> Achille Mbembé, "Necropolitics", *Public Culture* 15:1, Winter 2003, pp. 11-40.

<sup>30</sup> Andrew Exum, *Hizballah at War: A Military Assessment*, Washington, DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2006. See also United States Senate, Hearing 111-700, *Assessing the Strength of Hezbollah*, Hearing before the Subcommittee on Near Eastern and South and Central Asian Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Relations, 8 June 2010, Washington, DC.: Committee on Foreign Relations, 62-141, 2010; and Imad K. Harb, "Hezbollah Cannot Solve Lebanon's Worsening

as an act in which their authority determined who could live and who must die, who could rule and who must submit, all to “reconfigure the relations among resistance, sacrifice, and terror,” as Mbembé stated so eloquently.<sup>31</sup>

In the aftermath of the Arab Spring, another kind of dark “Necropolitics” governance emerged, where authorities decided which lives mattered and which were disposable. This phenomenon elucidated what happened next, after various local actors reacted to the supposed rise of the positive and efficient neutrality proposal presented by the Maronite Patriarch. In early July 2020, Cardinal Mar Bisharah Butros al-Ra‘i criticized the Lebanese executive amidst serious national crises, and stressed the refusal of the Lebanese to let “a majority play with the constitution, the national pact and the law, or with the country’s model of civilization.” He denounced the fact that the same people “isolate him from brotherly and friendly nations and peoples and lead him from abundance to famine;” called on President Michel Aoun to “break the blockade of free national decision,” and demanded the international community to help “restore Lebanon’s independence and unity.”<sup>32</sup> His words have been interpreted as a criticism of the excessive influence in the country of Hezbollah and its Iranian patrons. What the patriarch wanted was positive neutrality, a sort of moral correction from Hezbollah, whose participation in the Syrian war was interpreted as a violation of its own ideological foundations. Of course, Hezbollah championed Arab Resistance against the Israeli invader on the basis of the oppressor versus oppressed dyad, but the Maronite cleric’s priority was Lebanon, not any other country.<sup>33</sup>

Naturally, Hezbollah was not interested in such neutrality, if for no other reasons than its basic ideological *raison d’être*, which could not betray its initial romantic feature, the dyadic “oppressors” (*mustakbirin*) versus “oppressed” (*mustaz‘afin*) theory. From its very foundation, Hezbollah based its political ideology around both concepts, which were and remained exclusivist discourses that classified people according to this Qur’anic dichotomy.<sup>34</sup>

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Conditions,” Washington DC.: Arab Center, 10 June 2020, at [http://arabcenterdc.org/policy\\_analyses/hezbollah-cannot-solve-lebanons-worsening-conditions/](http://arabcenterdc.org/policy_analyses/hezbollah-cannot-solve-lebanons-worsening-conditions/).

<sup>31</sup> Mbembé, *op cit.*, p. 39.

<sup>32</sup> Paula Astih, “Rai’s Call for Lebanon’s Neutrality Strains Relations with Hezbollah,” *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, 26 July 2020 at <https://english.aawsat.com/home/article/2411976/rai-s-call-lebanon-s-neutrality-strains-relations-hezbollah>.

<sup>33</sup> Hussain Abdul-Hussain, “In Lebanon, Maronite patriarch confronts Hezbollah: Bechara al-Rai seeks to restore Lebanon’s policy of regional neutrality and thus sever Hezbollah’s stranglehold on a nation in turmoil,” *Asia Times*, 26 August 2020, at <https://asiatimes.com/2020/08/in-lebanon-maronite-patriarch-confronts-hezbollah/>.

<sup>34</sup> Joseph Alagha, *Hezbollah’s Documents: From the 1985 Open Letter to the 2009 Manifesto*, Amsterdam: Pallas Publication, 2011, p. 16.



Another example of this Qur'anic separation is the classification between Hizballah (Party of God) and *Hizb al-Shaytan* (Party of the Devil), which is often used to refer to putative foes. Given such interpretations, the title of the "Open Letter" was quite enlightening, since it clearly stated: "The text of Hezbollah's open letter addressed to the oppressed in Lebanon and the World, 16 February of 1985." Importantly, this text pointed out who were the enemies and the friends of this militia, as *resistance* against humiliation stood out, perhaps justified opposition. For proponents, to intervene wherever it was necessary regardless of the religious, nationality and other factors, was a divine duty.

Moreover, and because resisters perceived how enemies targeted them, the ways of cooperating with the oppressed of the world arose notably. For instance, in Section 8 of the Open Letter entitled "Our Friends," Hizballah pointed out:

...Regarding our friends, they are all the world's oppressed; anyone who fights our enemies and is careful not to offend us... whoever they might be: individuals, political parties, or organizations... Our friends are all oppressed people of the world regardless of colour, race or religion...<sup>35</sup>

In the "Manifesto 2009," Hizballah paid more attention to the concept of "hegemony" and seemed to have tested its concept during its "victory" against Israel in the 2006 war. The promotion of its putative victory illustrated that resistance could be successful elsewhere, which militia leaders, and indirectly Iran, wished to promote as a new paradigm for opposition forces everywhere. Therefore, the very idea of humiliation was erased from the vocabularies of Hizballah ideologues, since the key point was the call for mobilization against the "War on Terror," initiated by the United States of America against Iran and its acolytes. Hizballah stressed that its "motto: 'Unity of the Oppressed' shall remain as one of the pillars of political thought..."<sup>36</sup> which was experimented in the Syrian war even it did not cope well with this ideological orientation in that hapless country.

Perhaps, this sacrifice of the ideological factor for more pragmatic policies led to underscore the connection between Necropolitics and ethnurgy. As a matter of fact, the former became the main pillar of this formulation as the level of the latter increased. Indeed, this process of the politicization of cultural identities, which was defined by Professor Theodor Hanf as "the process of politicization of groups that combines economic, political, and cultural approaches for mobilization in communities defined by ethnic markers," applied to the Hizballah

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<sup>35</sup> "Open Letter to the oppressed," *Al Ahad*, 22 February 1985, Section 8 entitled "Our Friends."

<sup>36</sup> "The New Manifesto," 30 November 2009, Chapter 2 –Lebanon; Section 7-Lebanon and International Relations, p. 10, at: <http://www.lebanonrenaissance.org/assets/Uploads/15-The-New-Hezbollah-Manifesto-Nov09.pdf>.

model.<sup>37</sup> Thus, political mobilization based on ethnic factors became an essential factor to overcome alienation, both real and perceived.

While Arab populations were, in both cases, considered to be oppressed, most have been fighting for freedom, including in Lebanon that enjoyed relative liberties. To be sure, the final goal was political emancipation, a concept that connected quite well with the idea of the unity of the oppressed against the oppressors, but the Lebanese were not accustomed to either Necropolitics nor authoritarianism. Moreover, and taking into account the definition of security proposed by Ken Booth—who considered security as “the absence of threats”—linkages were quite evident, which further highlighted rising tensions within Lebanon even before the 17 October 2019 uprisings. According to Booth, “(e)manicipation is the freeing of people (as individuals and groups) from those physical and human constraints which stop them from carrying out what the world freely chooses to do. War and the threat of war is one of those constraints, together with poverty, poor education, political oppression and so on,” all of which surfaced in 2019 and, even more forcefully, after the 4 August 2020 explosions at the Beirut harbour that destroyed large sections of the capital city.<sup>38</sup>

### Democratization Woes

As anticipated in the introduction above, many Lebanese wondered what happened to their social contracts, even if a large majority finally understood how fresh internal political arrangements—that maintained a balance of power among all ethnic communities—altered the realities, while many others lost their illusions about the country’s democratizing features. Still others questioned whether the lack of legal and political reforms, which were necessary to pull Lebanon out of its quagmires, aggravated, perhaps even eroded, democratization levels that inevitably increased authoritarianism. Though shocked patriots expressed their anxieties before 2019, many more believed that Lebanon was affected by what has come to be called the “third wave of autocratization,” defined as “substantial de-facto decline of core institutional requirements for electoral democracy.”<sup>39</sup> For the Lebanese, the erosion of democratic factors was akin to backsliding, which was defined as “state-led debilitation or elimination of any of the political institutions that sustain an existing democracy,” something that hit elites hard after 17 October 2020.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Theodor Hanf, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-47.

<sup>38</sup> Ken Booth, “Security and Emancipation,” *Review of International Studies* 17:4, October 1991, pp. 313-326 [the quotation is on page 319].

<sup>39</sup> Anna Lührmann and Staffan I. Lindberg, “A third wave of autocratization is here: what is new about it?” *Democratization* 26: 7, March 2019, pp. 1095-1113.

<sup>40</sup> Nancy Bermeo, “On Democratic Backsliding,” *Journal of Democracy* 27:1, January 2016, pp. 5–19.

Democratization, which must refer to the process of developing democratic institutions and practices along with the all too vital sustainability of these institutions, faced incredible challenges in Lebanon.<sup>41</sup> It may thus be fair to ask whether a focus on explaining differences between the democratization process in a consociational democracy and liberal democracy would elucidate some of the challenges that Beirut confronted over the course of the past century. Could one ascertain that the democratization process may be successful when specific domestic factors played against said democratization process?

In other words, was the *wilayit el-faqih* governance system that guided the actions and attitudes of the Shi'ah-dominated Hizballah formation, compatible with democratization? Since the guardianship of the jurist consult sought to prioritize the authority of clergyman over elected as well as appointed civilian figures, even over the "State" itself, what were its likely consequences in the consociational democracy Lebanon presumably practiced? Truth be told, democratization could no longer succeed in a country like Lebanon when what was being imposed was nothing short of a theocratization process where the doctrine of *wilayit el-faqih* justified clerical guardianship of the state. Moreover, it was not possible to follow such jurisdiction when it was precisely based on the denial of popular sovereignty, which considered citizens to be mere subjects. Indeed, it was not possible to speak of democratization when what Hizballah sought to establish was an Islamic State where subjects had no roles to play in governance, or were denied the rights to exercise inherent capacities to invest legitimacy in a ruler, or to divest from it.<sup>42</sup> According to Abbas Milani, "(e)ven Shari'a would become a pliant tool in the hands of the *Faqih*, as the new concept of the absolute rule of the *faqih* (*Wilayat-el motlagheh faqih*) meant that even principles of the faith, as well as the rules of shari'a, could be suspended by the supreme leader if he should deem it 'expedient'."<sup>43</sup> These principles could not possibly advance democratization in any shape, way, or form that, regrettably, a majority of Lebanese understood all too well.

Hizballah thus confronted, and was called upon, to deal with the significant inconsistency between its theocratic obligations and its commitments to coexist in a democratizing society, or at least one in which a significant percentage of the population aspired for such goals, and that promoted the rule of law in a truncated but still lingering consociational democratic system. This was why any attempts to hamper political and legal reforms in Lebanon were translated *ipso facto* into increased tensions. Simply stated, there were too many differences

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<sup>41</sup> Julie Mostov, "Democratization," in Michael T. Gibbons, ed., *The Encyclopaedia of Political Thought*, New York: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2015, at <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118474396.wbept0256>.

<sup>42</sup> Abbas Milani, "Iran's Paradoxical Regime," in Larry Diamond, Marc F. Plattner and Christopher Walker, eds., *Authoritarianism goes Global: The Challenge to Democracy*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016, pp 57-66 [the quotation is on page 58].

<sup>43</sup> Milani, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

between democratization and the active desire to practice Necropolitics. Equally important were those inherent contradictions that existed between democratization and Hizballah's triptych, "People, Army, Resistance," which spilled over to the Free Patriotic Movement and even the Commander of the Lebanese Armed Forces that, without exaggeration, were shocking. In fact, the triptych overlooked an essential element of democratization, namely the "State," not to mention its vital democratizing institutions without which Lebanon would resemble any other dictatorship and, far more important, not resemble what it was supposed to be: a sovereign republic. How was it possible to speak of a democratization process when the level of institutional building and state-building, essential to materialize this democratization process, were simply excluded?

The weakness of the state, the absence of a strong Lebanese army, as well as the fragmented Lebanese national identity, all served as key factors that facilitated active interferences by certain non-state groups such as Hizballah. Regrettably, the militia continued to display its own narrow transnational agendas, which increased sectarian conflict dynamics as well as the eruption of periodic ideological tensions. As a result, the triptych placed the Lebanese on a collision course with each other. It also created wedges amongst political parties, including the Arab Democratic Party, Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party, Armenian Revolutionary Federation, Future Movement, Lebanese Forces, Marada, National Bloc Party, Phalange Party, Progressive Socialist Party and, ultimately, between citizens and the establishment that coerced all security entities. In doing so, the triptych placed national goals aside, though it served compromised and corrupt officials.<sup>44</sup> In this sense, the final results of the 2018 legislative elections indicated that the variable "Resistance" seemed to have gained a greater share of relative power since the Hizballah-Amal-FPM coalition controlled 70 out of 128 seats in parliament, a clear majority.

Under normal circumstances, majority rule fulfilled one of the principal clauses of democratization but not when its holders practiced "Necropolitics," since the coexistence of multiple projects and visions for Lebanon highlighted intrinsic shortcomings, even failures, within the consolidation of liberal democracy. To better understand the plurality of visions that different communities envisioned for Lebanon was to finally elucidate the responsibilities displayed by all contested selections of national role conceptions (NRCs). The latter were "the policymakers' own definitions of the general kinds of decisions, commitments, rules and actions suitable to their state, and of the functions, if any, that their state should perform incessantly in the international system or in subordinate regional systems. It was their 'image' of the appropriate orientations or functions of their state toward, or within, the external environment," which prevailed.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Naharnet, "Geagea Calls for 'Army-People-State Equation'," *Naharnet*, 20 August 2017, at <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/234365-geagea-calls-for-army-people-state-equation>.

<sup>45</sup> Kalevi J. Holsti, "National Role Conceptions in the Study of Foreign Policy," *International Studies Quarterly* 14:3, September 1970, pp. 233-309 [the quotation is on pages 245-246].



### **Authoritarianism and Necropolitics**

How Lebanese elites envisioned national unity, prosperity and, presumably, a desire to retain existing social contracts that ensured relative freedoms revealed intrinsic dilemmas. For Hizballah and its backers, Lebanon was a key chip in the resistance movement against global and regional imperialism. Opposition to the latter thus justified Necropolitics though doing so in a democratizing society created acute differences given that a very large segment of the multi-ethnic and multi-confessional society did not share such goals in such ongoing struggles. Ironically, Hizballah leaders recognized their shortcomings, which was why they insisted on an alliance with the largely Christian Free Patriotic Movement. Yet, by accepting Hizballah's narrow and alien conditions to Lebanese society, which were akin to diktats in local and regional affairs, the FPM conceded that the Lebanese could no longer co-exist in a democratizing society, presumably because that goal stood as a blatant contradiction to Necropolitics. Other elites rejected authoritarianism and insisted on the quest for liberty as the ultimate goal that, in 2020, underscored what Lebanon was: a hopelessly divided country.

## About the Authors



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Dr. Barroso is the author of several peer reviewed papers and chapters in books on the geopolitics of Lebanon and the Middle East. His latest contributions include, “Lebanon Confronts Partition Fears: Has Consociationalism benefitted minorities?,” *Contemporary Review of the Middle East*, (2018) (co-authored); “The Contribution of “Critical Geopolitics in the Understanding of the Lebanese Sociopolitical Labyrinth,” *European Scientific Journal*, (2014); and “El Ejército libanés ante el reto de la consolidación,” *IEEE.ES—Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos*, (2018, in Spanish).

Dr. Barroso is fluent in Spanish and English and has working knowledge of French as well as Arabic. Francisco is now Associate Professor and Head of the Department of Political and Administrative Sciences of the School of Law and Political Sciences at the Université du Saint-Esprit Kaslik (USEK) in Lebanon.



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Dr. Kéchichian received his doctorate in Foreign Affairs from the University of Virginia in 1985, where he also taught (1986-1988), and assumed the assistant deanship in international studies (1988-1989). In the summer of 1989, he was a Hoover Fellow at Stanford University (under the U.S. State Department Title VIII Program). Between 1990 and 1996, he labored at the Santa Monica-based RAND Corporation as an Associate Political Scientist and was a lecturer at the University of California in Los Angeles. Between 1998 and 2001, he was a fellow at UCLA's Gustav E. von Grunebaum Center for Near Eastern Studies, where he held a Smith Richardson Foundation grant (1998-1999) to compose *Succession in Saudi Arabia*, (New York: Palgrave (2001) and Beirut and London: Dar Al Saqi, 2002, 2003 [2<sup>nd</sup> ed] (for the Arabic translation)].

Dr. Kéchichian published *Political Participation and Stability in the Sultanate of Oman*, Dubai: Gulf Research Center, 2005, *Oman and the World: The Emergence of an Independent Foreign Policy*, Santa Monica: RAND (1995), and edited *A Century in Thirty Years: Shaykh Zayed and the United Arab Emirates*, Washington, D.C.: The Middle East Policy Council (2000), as well as *Iran, Iraq, and the Arab Gulf States*, New York: Palgrave (2001). In 2003, he co-authored (with R. Hrair Dekmejian) *The Just Prince: A Manual of Leadership* (London: Saqi Books), which includes a full translation of the *Sulwan al-Muta'by* Muhammad Ibn Zafar al-Siqilli.

In 2008, two new volumes were published: *Power and Succession in Arab Monarchies*, [Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, and Beirut: Riyad al-Rayyes Books, 2012—in 2 volumes for the Arabic translation], and *Faysal: Saudi Arabia's King for All Seasons* [Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida and Beirut: Dar al-'Arabiyyah lil-Mawsu'at, 2012]. Dr. Kéchichian authored *Legal and Political Reforms in Sa'udi Arabia*, [London: Routledge, 2012, and Beirut: Riyad al-Rayyes Books, 2015 for the Arabic translation], and completed a companion volume to *Faysal* titled *'Iffat Al Thunayan: An Arabian Queen* (Brighton, Chicago, Toronto: Sussex Academic Press, 2015).

The Middle East Institute in Washington, D.C. welcomed Kéchichian as a non-resident fellow in 2009-2010 and hosted him once again in 2012-2013 to work on a new Smith Richardson Foundation funded project on the Gulf Cooperation Council, which resulted in a new book titled *From Alliance to Union: Challenges Facing Gulf Cooperation Council States in the Twenty-First Century*, Brighton, Chicago, Toronto: Sussex Academic Press (2016). Sussex published *The Attempt to Uproot Sunni-Arab Influence: A Geo-Strategic Analysis of the Western, Israeli and Iranian Quest for Domination*, which includes a translation of *Istihdaf Ahl al-Sunna [Targeting Sunnis]*, by Nabil Khalifé (2017). His latest book is *Saudi Arabia in 2030: The Emergence of a New Leadership*, Seoul, Korea: Asan Institute for Policy Studies, August 2019. Two forthcoming volumes will include *The Nationalist Al Sa'ud Advisor: Yusuf Yassin of Sa'udi Arabia and Sacred Duty and Realistic Strategies: Sa'udi Policies Towards Migrants and Refugees* (with Fahad Alsharif).

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Dr. Kéchichian is a frequent participant in conferences throughout the world and delivers frequent lectures to leading think-tanks and political institutions. He is also a regular interviewee on radio and television programs and is a frequent guest on *Al Jazeera English* as well as various *BBC* programs. The National Public Radio affiliate in Chicago, USA, *WBEZ*, airs his commentaries on a regular basis too. Dr. Kéchichian is fluent in Arabic, Armenian, English, French, Italian, Turkish, and is very slowly but surely learning some Persian and a little Korean.

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