



## **Lebanon's Presidential Stalemate: Bridge to Co-existence or Chaos?**



It has been well over a year since Lebanon has had a President – the longest in Lebanese history. With no political consensus in sight, the perpetual deadlock in Parliament has effectively paralyzed the government and state institutions, and has polarized both Lebanon's political parties and its pluralistic society. Moreover, three years of spill-over from the Syrian crisis has embroiled the Lebanese armed forces – with its capricious 'ally'<sup>1</sup> Hezbollah – in an interminable fight against extremist groups, which risks unravelling Lebanon's fragile stability.

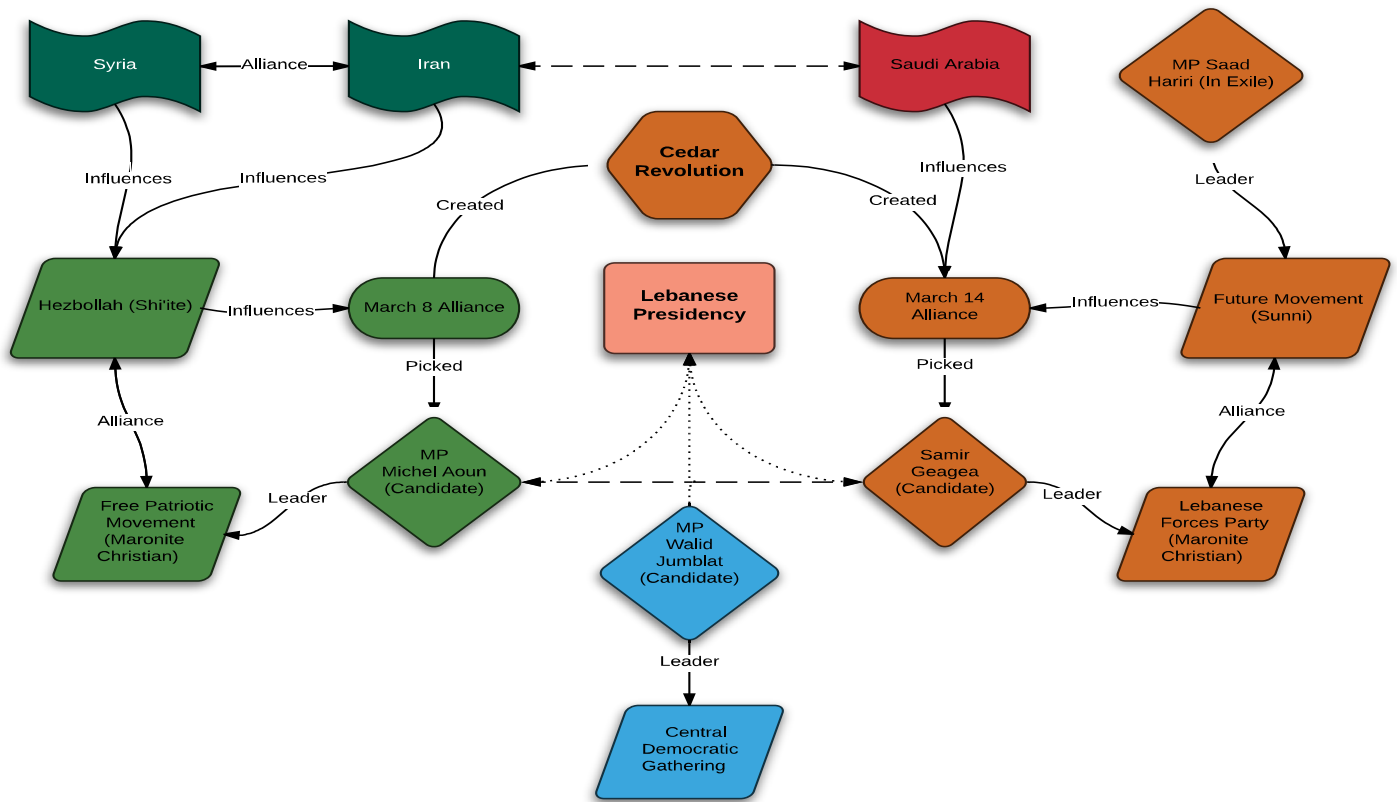
Lebanon's new volatility highlights an end to "Lebanese exceptionalism"<sup>2</sup> in a region full of authoritarian regimes. Indeed, Lebanon's ability to insulate itself from regional insecurity has been drastically weakened since 2011. This new chaos, however, evolves out of the context of its festering decades-long confessional crisis.

### **Lebanon's Political Inertia**

Lebanon's yearlong political crisis has been perpetuated by a political deadlock within Parliament, which has failed to convene after 25 consecutive attempts since President Michel Suleiman stepped down in May 2014.<sup>3</sup> In the absence of consensus, the boycotting of parliamentary sessions has prevented the quorum necessary for a vote.

According to Lebanon's constitutional power-sharing agreement, the president must be a Maronite Christian. The current standoff pits two Maronite Christian parties. One is the Free Patriotic Movement, led by former President MP Michel Aoun, 80, and the other is the Lebanese Forces Party, led by former war commander Samir Geagea, 62.

Two opposing political blocs are backing these candidates: behind Aoun is the "March 8 alliance", backed by the Shia Hezbollah party, the al-Assad regime in Syria and Iran, and behind Geagea is the "March 14 alliance", backed by the Sunni Future Movement, Saudi Arabia and the United States.

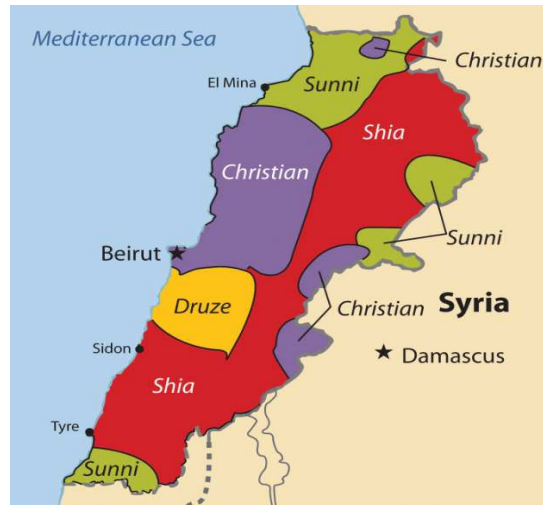


In the wake of the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri in February 2005, these camps organized mass demonstrations: the former on March 8 to support the Syrian regime and Hezbollah, and the latter on March 14<sup>th</sup> to oppose Damascus’ influence on Lebanese affairs and to call for the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon. The events that transpired set the stage for the Cedar Revolution.

The entrenched and conflicting positions of these camps have established new fault lines, which are intertwined with a regional rift between the West and its regional allies, on the one hand, and Syria and Iran on the other. In turn, this split has exacerbated political sectarianism within Lebanon and has continuously prevented the staging of elections due to bloc boycotting, ultimately highlighting another chapter of Lebanon’s bankrupt confessional system.

### A Breakdown of Lebanon’s Consociational Fragility

Lebanon’s consociational<sup>4</sup> fragility has been a subject of contention by both academics and policymakers alike. The general narrative juxtaposes two interwoven factors that contribute to Lebanon’s insecurity: (1) inherent problems with the confessional power-sharing model, and (2) the overriding role of foreign powers in Lebanese affairs.



### The development of Lebanon's confessional system

In the aftermath of the First World War and the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, France was given a mandate over Greater Lebanon. The creation of the Lebanese Republic in 1926, under French tutelage, saw the inauguration of a confessional model of politics, which was enshrined by the Constitution. In theory, this model was set in place to ensure a proportional and scrupulous representation of Lebanon's diverse communities under law. However, it was badly managed throughout the French mandate, which fuelled antagonism against the colonial power.

To that effect, the National Pact of 1943 between Christian (Maronite) and Muslim (Sunni) communities propelled Lebanon's liberation from the French Mandate. This power-sharing agreement perpetuated the principles of the confessional system. Specifically, it enforced a tripartite distribution of power between the executive and legislative branches along confessional lines: a Maronite Christian for President, a Sunni for Prime Minister and a Shia for the Speaker of the House. Representation in Parliament was allocated according to a set ratio of 6:5, in favour of the Christian community, with further subdivisions allocating parliamentary seats by individual confession.<sup>5</sup>

The power-sharing agreement indirectly enabled an entrenchment of sectarian politics, as local notables were able to consolidate their hold over the political apparatus.<sup>6</sup> Parliament was used as a platform for elites to 'secure' the list of candidates in office through intimidation and patronage. This created a veritable "private club", wherein elites promoted their protégés and strengthened their control over the legislative branch of government.<sup>7</sup>

In turn, the predetermined allocation of positions among sects undermined the effective functioning of state institutions. The underlying instability forced sectarian groups to assert their own social and security networks – even to the point of developing confessional militias.<sup>8</sup> Polarizing loyalties led to fractious insecurity in Lebanese society, as each group jockeyed for power in the Lebanese political landscape. This incited a consociational collapse in 1975, ushering in a bloody civil war that would ravage the country for 15 years.

The 1990 Taif Accord, which ended Lebanon's civil war, revived Lebanon's power-sharing system, albeit with a more representative formula that provided a 50-50 balance between the Christian and Muslim sects. The Agreement sought to abolish political sectarianism, calling for the creation of a national commission with the mandate to eliminate political confessionalism; but this did not have a clear plan or timetable for implementation.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the lack of an arbiter allowed the confessional system to remain as the *status quo*, ultimately becoming a structural barrier to political reform.

As a result, checks and balances accorded by the Taif Accord were implemented in an arbitrary and partial manner. Elites continued to apply policies along clientelist and sectarian lines, impeding political participation and discouraging political reform.<sup>10</sup> This logic of distribution undermined the envisaged reform process, obstructing it with “rigid political cleavages and competition”<sup>11</sup> over state institutions, ultimately perverting the spirit of change set out by the Taif Accord.

This practice manifested itself most expressly after the Syrian withdrawal in 2005, as political elites were free from Assad’s clout to engage in factional contests for power. Inter-ethnic divisions became more pronounced, and the ruling elites, who depended on “sectarian networks”, were less amenable to reform as they had little incentive to moderate their positions in the midst of a power vacuum.<sup>12</sup>

Confessional polarisation peaked during the 2006-2008 political crisis, when Shia ministers were compelled to resign from the Cabinet at the behest of the Shia Hezbollah and AMAL Movement, causing a rift in Parliament like never before. The crisis that ensued played itself out in bouts of violence in the streets, and political stonewalling within the government. The Qatari-negotiated Doha Agreement in 2008 managed to break the immediate impasse, but failed to address the underlying sources of contention. Ultimately, the political brinkmanship gave Hezbollah effective veto power over major government decisions.<sup>13</sup>

Since then, the unsettled distribution of power has aggravated fractious domestic politics further, causing multiple political deadlocks that have paralyzed the state. The current failure of state institutions to function effectively continues to exacerbate Lebanon’s instability, and on occasion has even led to the breakdown of local security.

### **Artificial Sovereignty: Lebanon as an Ideological Fault Line**

Lebanon has long been vulnerable to external shocks and has been a casualty of regional geopolitics. International actors have repeatedly interfered in Lebanese politics, ostensibly in the name of promoting peace and coexistence. In reality, however, they exploited Lebanon as a proxy in their pursuit of their interests in the region. Indeed, Lebanon’s nation-building project has often been dictated by the whims of external actors.

It is important to note that this vulnerability to outside influence was largely enabled by Lebanon’s confessional elites, who continuously seek the support of foreign powers to dominate over other domestic groups. As Kerr (2012) puts it succinctly: “[i]n times of crisis, Lebanon’s confessional leaders have eagerly harnessed their communities to competing foreign powers”.<sup>14</sup> This ‘customary’ aspect of Lebanese politics has made external influence a defining feature of the political landscape.

A first instance of Lebanon’s vulnerability to external pressures was the fall of the Western-backed monarchy in Iraq and the unification of Egypt and Syria as the United Arab Republic in 1958. Torn by the spread of pan-Arabist ideals, a conflict broke out between Christian pro-Western and more Arabist-leaning Muslim confessional factions in Lebanon. This prompted then President Camille Chamoun to seek American military intervention, which rapidly brought the conflict to an end. However, American interest in Lebanon had little to do with preserving Lebanese stability. Rather, the US saw involvement in Lebanon as a way to protect oil and political interests in the region after the fall of the pro-Western monarchy in Iraq. These events deepened the precedent for foreign interference in Lebanese affairs.<sup>15</sup>

The fallout from the 1967 Arab-Israeli war had huge consequences for the second Lebanese civil war. The activities of armed Palestinian groups in Lebanon, including the Palestinian Liberation Organization, had created both a military and political crisis, which was only resolved by the Egyptian-brokered Cairo Agreement in 1969. In principle, the Agreement reiterated the need for Lebanese sovereignty over its affairs, but a failure to implement the Agreement decisively, and a reluctance to disarm Palestinian armed groups permitted unimpeded Palestinian independence in its military affairs in Lebanon.<sup>16</sup>

In turn, the Palestinian presence had destabilized confessional dynamics in Lebanon - “in some very fundamental way unsettl[ing] Lebanon’s identity”.<sup>17</sup> It increased existing tensions among confessional groups and gradually eroded the communal foundations of the 1943 National Pact. Furthermore, the Palestinian bid for independent military power had also undermined the Lebanese military and opened the country up to Israeli and Syrian intervention. The ensuing fragility of the state to cope with contentious domestic issues produced conditions ripe for civil war, which broke out in Lebanon in 1975.

Consequentially, the Lebanese civil war was largely shaped by foreign intervention. On the one side, Lebanon became a proxy battleground for Syria and Israel’s bid to control the Levant. On the other side, Lebanon was a “launching pad” for the Palestinian and Iranian revolutionary movements<sup>18</sup>. These factors, coupled with the American military intervention in 1982, highlight a reality that Lebanon’s civil conflict was prolonged and aggravated by external influences in the region.

Ultimately, Syria’s political strategy at the end of the war – to build a nationalist-Islamic coalition encompassing most Lebanese Shia and Sunni factions with Iranian help – positioned Syrian pacification as a better alternative to Islamic radicalism. In the end, Saudi Arabia, France and the United States all acquiesced to the Syrian-brokered Taif agreement.<sup>19</sup>

Subsequently, the period known as *Pax Syriana* established a Syrian hegemony over Lebanese affairs. Syria’s influence in Lebanon had been institutionalized from 1991 to 2005, through the 1991 Treaty of Brotherhood and Cooperation, and the 1991 Defense and Security Agreement. These bilateral agreements enabled Syria to establish its influence on Lebanon’s security affairs, foreign policy and economy, as well as the configuration of established bodies and commissions set out by the Taif Agreement.<sup>20</sup>

Despite the withdrawal of Israeli troops in 2000 and the removal of Syrian troops in 2005, the status quo did not dramatically shift. According to Middle East Institute, the “civilian-military apparatus” remained unchanged, maintaining a status quo that enabled continued foreign intervention from Saudi Arabia, Syria, Iran and the United States.<sup>21</sup>

Domestic Lebanese actors were also unable to disrupt the “axis of resistance” that existed between Iran, Syria and Hezbollah. In effect, the government was unable to maintain a monopoly on national defence. Bolstered by illegal cross-border military support from Syria, Hezbollah was able to surpass the national army in military power.<sup>22</sup> This allowed it to engage Israel in a destructive war in the summer of 2006 without the Lebanese army, indirectly challenging the government’s authority and undermining Lebanese sovereignty.

In parallel, the conflict between the March 8 and March 14 alliances since 2005 was locking Lebanon in a regional political-ideological divide that entangled Lebanon’s domestic and foreign policy. Hezbollah’s increasing power in Lebanon, highlighted by its brief military takeover of Beirut in 2008, had alarmed the Gulf States. To counter this, they filled the void of Sunni leadership left by the death of Rafik Hariri by mobilizing radical militant Sunni factions against Hezbollah’s power.<sup>23</sup>

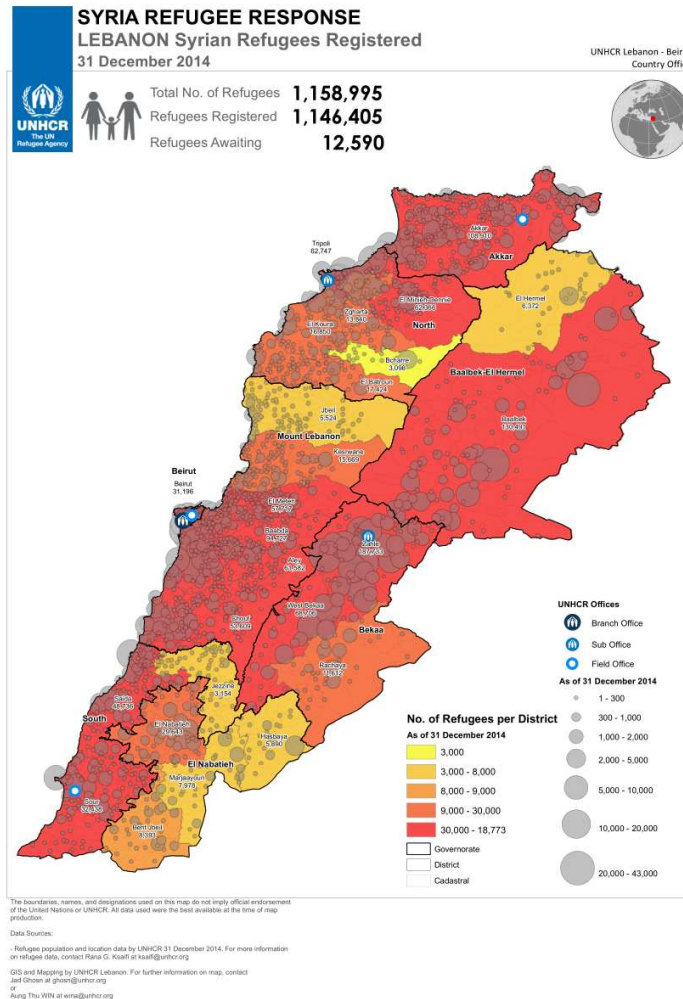
The Lebanese government’s inability to challenge Hezbollah’s activities and mediate between confessional groups made it increasingly vulnerable to external shocks. A key example of this vulnerability is the spill-over of the Syrian civil war into Lebanon.

## **The Effects of the Syrian Crisis on Lebanon’s Instability**

The eruption of the Syrian civil war has destabilized Lebanon further by the crossing of two groups over Lebanon and Syria’s porous border: refugees and fighters.

Syria’s refugee crisis has overwhelmed Lebanese institutions and inflamed sectarianism. Over 1.2 million refugees have poured into Lebanon, drastically altering the demographic layout of Lebanon’s 4 million

inhabitants. This has stretched Lebanese capacities beyond their limits, affecting rents and public service availability, as well as health and education infrastructure.<sup>24</sup> These conditions have inflamed sectarian violence in the most vulnerable areas.



The large and long-term presence of Syrian refugees in Lebanon has drastically increased inter-communal tensions. Most of the Syrian refugees are situated in Lebanese cities and villages situated along the border, where relations between Sunni and Shia are already tense. To that effect, some villages have turned into a “Syrian mini-society, in open confrontation with a Hezbollah-led ‘resistance’ counter-society”.<sup>25</sup>

This confrontation is much more pronounced in urban centers. Tripoli, for instance, hosts over 300,000 refugees and has faced ongoing sectarian violence between its Sunni and Shia communities, which are primarily divided between the Bab al-Tabbaneh and Jabal Mohsen neighbourhoods.<sup>26</sup> Extreme poverty, coupled with an absence of government support and unemployment, has created ripe conditions for extremism and sectarianism.

This instability has led to a crackdown on Syrian refugee communities by the Lebanese Armed Forces. Attacks on Lebanese forces have led to retaliatory attacks, with the imposition of blanket curfews, forced evictions and arbitrary arrests, often targeting refugee settlements.<sup>27</sup>

Though Lebanon holds a stance of non-intervention in the Syrian conflict, Hezbollah sent troops to fight alongside the al-Assad regime under the pretext of protecting Lebanon’s borders against extremists.<sup>28</sup>

Furthermore, Hezbollah has openly acknowledged that it has been fighting the Islamic State in Iraq, providing training and expertise to local militias, such as Asaib al-Haq and Kataib Hezbollah.<sup>29</sup>

This has led to an indirect spillover of fighting into Lebanon, affecting the Bekaa Valley and the Qalamoun region in the northeast Syria-Lebanon border. Hezbollah's cross-border campaign in Syria has created new enemies across the border, namely Sunni extremist groups who are taking the fight to Hezbollah in its own sphere of influence in Lebanon.<sup>30</sup> In turn, political opposition to Hezbollah's involvement in the Syrian conflict has further destabilized Lebanese politics.

Foreign powers' circumspect approach to Lebanon's political crisis is intricately tied to insecurity in Syria. According to the Institute for National Security Studies, foreign powers are waiting for the Syrian conflict to unfold in order to see what implications it will have for Lebanon's domestic issues.<sup>31</sup> In this regard, the Syrian conflict has indirectly prolonged Lebanon's current political impasse, as the bloc sponsors are taking a "wait-and-see" approach at the expense of Lebanese stability.

## Ending the Paralysis

The Lebanese presidential crisis is a symptom of the intrinsic shortcomings of the confessional system. Lebanon's history of power sharing highlights an unambiguous failure of the consociational model. Initially set up as an undertaking in peacebuilding, it has consistently fallen prey to self-interested elites, who, in an environment of mutual distrust, exploited the system to economically and politically favour their own confessional group. These polarizing loyalties came at the expense of the nation-building project, as factionalism continuously supersedes nationalism. In this regard, the confessional system has ironically aggravated the very problem it was tailored to mitigate.

This confessional tension has been enabled and manipulated by foreign powers; they have perpetually used Lebanon as a staging ground for their political and ideological confrontations. In turn, this contest has permeated Lebanese politics, facilitating the creation of the bloc-based political system that currently dominates Lebanon's political landscape.

As a result, the propagation of identity-based political divides has increasingly taken an existential tone, wherein "the other" is dehumanized through sectarian rhetoric.<sup>32</sup> In this regard, Lebanon's political blocs are internalizing the regional clash between Sunnis and Shias as a zero-sum game: any concessions from one side will inevitably lead to its defeat against the other.

While Lebanon's existing consociational model is entirely unsustainable, there does not seem to be any easy fix. A discernible solution lies within the Taif Agreement, with the creation of a national commission that would be legally bound to ensure the effective implementation of checks and balances with regards to confessional representation. On a systemic level, secularizing Lebanon's political structure would contribute to diminishing factional divides and clientilistic practices, thus thwarting the incentives that make up the confessional system. This necessitates mutual compromise in building a new social contract between the state and Lebanon's citizenry, which would break the bonds of sectarianism.

Alternatively, the Syrian crisis can be used as an opportunity for change. Thus far, fear of becoming embroiled in another sectarian war has kept Lebanese political stability afloat. However, recent developments are important to note. For one, Hezbollah's extended engagement in Syria has weakened it both militarily and politically, while the Lebanese Armed Forces are gaining popular support for its fight against extremism and terrorism. If the situation in Syria were to become suicidal for Hezbollah, it would inevitably fall back to its base of support and operations in Lebanon. Nevertheless, such an eventuality would leave both Hezbollah and the confessional balance deeply changed.

Secondly, the Syrian conflict has inevitably loosened the Syrian regime's grip on Lebanese affairs. Indeed, Lebanon has ceased to be the primary front for confrontations over the regional distribution of power –

currently replaced by fronts such as Yemen, Libya and elsewhere.<sup>33</sup> This provides a unique and rare opportunity for Lebanon's policymakers to break away from its past and re-imagine Lebanon's political future without foreign interference.

Notwithstanding, Lebanon's current situation is similar to the one that preceded its destructive civil war. The extensions to the Parliament's mandate until 2017 and the mandate of the commander of the army highlight the persistent malleability of the constitution in times of crisis.<sup>34</sup> Likewise, the resurgence of militia culture and the influx of Syrian refugees – evoking the same tensions after the earlier wave of Palestinian refugees – mirror the destabilizing conditions that exacerbated sectarian tensions in the 1970s.<sup>35</sup>

If the current domestic crises aren't sufficient to prompt Lebanese political players to take bold conciliatory steps, developments just to the east in Syria may tip the balance. Most pressingly, militant groups, namely the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham and the Al-Qaeda affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra, seek to expand their regional agenda into Lebanon and fuel sectarian divisions. Some strategists even believe that Islamic State wants to take Tripoli in Lebanon's Sunni north as its Mediterranean port.<sup>36</sup> Such an event would irreversibly plunge Lebanon, its army and militias, into a protracted and expanded Syrian conflict. Were this to occur, the petty political boycotts in Lebanon's parliament would quickly be eclipsed by far more lethal challenges to the country's viability and future.

Political players in Lebanon are cognizant of these conditions but fail to act, fearing for their own political survival, or a breakdown of its existing political order. Yet, it is this fear and paralysis that risks precipitating Lebanon's collapse into total dysfunction, or worse, extreme violence.

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<sup>1</sup> Hezbollah's military campaign against extremist groups in the Qalamoun area, including ISIS, has prompted an equal response from the Lebanese Armed Forces to retake full control of the region. This has created a "certain degree of coordination" against a common enemy. See Bacchi, Umberto. "Isis in Lebanon: Hezbollah and Lebanese Army pincer Islamic State Jihadists in Qalamoun Mountains," *International Business Times*. 9 June 2015. Accessed on July 19, 2015. <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/isis-lebanon-hezbollah-lebanese-army-pincer-islamic-state-jihadists-qalamoun-mountains-1505210>.

<sup>2</sup> Khouri, Rami. "The End of Lebanese Exceptionalism," *The Daily Star*. 12 April 2014. Accessed on July 13, 2015. <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/Opinion/Columnist/2014/Apr-12/253049-the-end-of-lebanese-exceptionalism.ashx>

<sup>3</sup> "Lebanese Parliament Fails Presidential Elections for 25th Time," *Armenpress.am*. 24 June 2015. Accessed on July 6, 2015. <http://armenpress.am/eng/news/810236/lebanese-parliament-fails-presidential-elections-for-25th-time.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Consociationalism is a stable democratic system in deeply divided societies that is based on power sharing between elites from different social groups (Source: *Encyclopedia Britannica*)

<sup>5</sup> Harb, Imad. "Lebanon's Confessionalism: Problems and Prospects," *United States Institute of Peace*. March 2006. Accessed on 9 July, 2015. <http://www.usip.org/publications/lebanons-confessionalism-problems-and-prospects>

<sup>6</sup> Clark, Janine A. Zahar, Marie-Joelle. "Critical Junctures and Missed Opportunities: The Case of Lebanon's Cedar Revolution," *Ethnopolitics*, vol. 14, no.1 (10 June, 2014), p.5.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Salamey, Imad. "Failing Consociationalism in Lebanon and Integrative Options," *International Journal of Peace Studies*, vol. 14, no. 2 (Autumn/Winter 2009), p. 84.

<sup>9</sup> Rosiny, Stephan. "Power Sharing in Syria: Lessons from Lebanon's Taif Experience," *Middle East Policy*, vol. 20, no. 3 (Fall 2013), p. 50.

<sup>10</sup> Cammett, Melani. Issar, Sukriti. "Bricks and Mortar, Clientelism, Sectarianism and the Logic of Welfare Allocation in Lebanon," *World Politics*, vol. 62, no.3 (July 2010).

<sup>11</sup> Karam, Karam. "The Taif Agreement: New Order, Old Framework," *Conciliation Resources* (2012), p.37. Accessed on 9 July, 2015. [http://www.c-r.org/sites/default/files/accord24\\_TheTaifAgreement.pdf](http://www.c-r.org/sites/default/files/accord24_TheTaifAgreement.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Geukjian, Ohannes. "Political Instability and Conflict after the Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon." *The Middle East Journal*, vol. 68, no. 4 (Autumn 2014), p. 523.

<sup>13</sup> Hazran, Yusri. "The Rise of Politicized Shi'ite Religiosity and the Territorial State in Iraq and Lebanon." *Middle East Institute*, vol. 64, no. 4 (Autumn 2010).

<sup>14</sup> Kerr, Michael. "Negative External Intervention and Peace in Lebanon." *Accord*, vol. 24 (2012). Accessed on 13 July, 2015. <http://www.c-r.org/accord-article/negative-external-intervention-and-peace-lebanon>

<sup>15</sup> Gendzier, Irene L. Notes From the Minefield: United States Intervention in Lebanon and the Middle East, 1945-1958. Columbia University Press, 1996.

<sup>16</sup> Kerr, *op.cit.*, 2012.

<sup>17</sup> El-Khazen, Farid. The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon, 1967-1976. Harvard University Press, 2000, p. 163.



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- <sup>18</sup> The Iranian revolutionary movement led to the creation of Hezbollah, which would play a major role in Lebanese politics thereafter.
- <sup>19</sup> Hinnebusch, Raymond. "Pax-Syriana? The Origins, Causes and Consequences of Syria's role in Lebanon," *Mediterranean Politics*, vol. 3, no. 1 (1998).
- <sup>20</sup> El-Husseini, Roya. *Pax Syriana: Elite Politics in Postwar Lebanon*. Syracuse University Press, 2012, p.17.
- <sup>21</sup> Geukjian, *op.cit.*, p. 528.
- <sup>22</sup> Van Efferink, Leonhardt. "How Hezbollah Affects Lebanon's Sovereignty." The Political Studies Association Graduate Network Conference. 2010. Accessed on 16 July, 2015. [http://www.academia.edu/724565/How\\_Hezbollah\\_affects\\_Lebanon\\_s\\_sovereignty](http://www.academia.edu/724565/How_Hezbollah_affects_Lebanon_s_sovereignty)
- <sup>23</sup> Bahout, Joseph. "Lebanon at the Brink: The Impact of the Syrian Civil War." *Crown Center for Middle East Studies*, vol. 76 (January 2014), p.5. Accessed on 16 July, 2015. <http://www.brandeis.edu/crown/publications/meb/MEB76.pdf>
- <sup>24</sup> Dahi, Omar. "The Refugee Crisis in Lebanon and Jordan: The Need for Economic Development Spending." *Forced Migration Review* (September 2014). Accessed on 16 July, 2015. <http://www.fmreview.org/syria/dahi>
- <sup>25</sup> Bahout, *op.cit.* p.3.
- <sup>26</sup> Kangarlou, Tara. "Syrian refugee influx leaves host countries vulnerable," *Al-Monitor* (26 June 2015). Accessed on 17 July, 2015. <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/06/lebanon-syria-refugees-camps-youth-host-country-economy.html>
- <sup>27</sup> "World Report 2015: Lebanon." Human Rights Watch. 2015. Accessed on 17 July, 2015. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2015/country-chapters/lebanon>
- <sup>28</sup> Khatib, Lina. "Regional Spillover: Lebanon and the Syrian Conflict." *Carnegie Middle East Center* (9 June 2014). Accessed on 17 July, 2015. <http://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=55829>
- <sup>29</sup> Samah, Nour. "Hezbollah is 'Stronger Than Ever'." *Foreign Policy* (1 June 2015). Accessed on 17 July 2015. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/06/01/hezbollah-is-stronger-than-ever-isis-syria/>
- <sup>30</sup> Byman, Daniel. Saab, Bilal Y. "Hezbollah Hesitates?" *Foreign Affairs* (21 June 2015). Accessed on 17 July, 2015. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/israel/2015-01-21/hezbollah-hesitates>
- <sup>31</sup> Einav, Omer. "The Presidential Crisis in Lebanon: Temporary Danger or Sign of Destructive Rift." *The Institute for National Security Studies*, vol. 562 (22 June 2014). Accessed on 17 July, 2015. <http://www.inss.org.il/index.aspx?id=4538&articleid=7099>
- <sup>32</sup> "The Sunni-Shia Divide," *Council on Foreign Relations*. 2014. Accessed on 15 July, 2015. <http://www.cfr.org/peace-conflict-and-human-rights/sunni-shia-divide/p33176#!/>
- <sup>33</sup> "Lebanon's Self-defeating Survival Strategies," *International Crisis Group, Middle East Report no. 160* (20 July 2015), p.i.
- <sup>34</sup> Metzker, Juliane. "Lebanese Christians Face Political Crisis," *Deutsche Welle* (19 July 2015). Accessed 19 July, 2015. <http://www.dw.com/en/lebanese-christians-face-political-crisis/a-18593947>
- <sup>35</sup> International Crisis Group, *op.cit.*, 2015.
- <sup>36</sup> Ghanem, Esperance, "IS fights for its window to the Mediterranean," *Almonitor* (3 July, 2015). Accessed 23 July, 2015. <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/contents/authors/esperance-ghanem.html#>, accessed July 23, 2015.