BRIEFING PAPER

HEZBOLLAH AND THE SHIITE COMMUNITY:

FROM POLITICAL CONFESSIONALIZATION TO CONFESSIONAL SPECIALIZATION

Ziad Majed

Lebanese political researcher
Instructor of Middle Eastern Studies, American University of Paris

November 2010

THE ASPEN INSTITUTE

LEBANON RENAISSANCE FOUNDATION

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Aspen Institute and the Lebanon Renaissance Foundation for the opportunity to publish this paper in the spirit of generating a thoughtful debate on the issues addressed. Both organizations provided invaluable input during the editing process, which honored the principle of academic integrity by allowing me to express my own personal views.

Content

Introduction

This paper analyzes the evolution of the Shiite political elites within the Lebanese confessional and consociational political system.[1] It also explores the circumstances that gave rise to Hezbollah and established it as the most popular and powerful force in the Shiite community.

The paper explains recent political developments in Lebanon, particularly the mounting Sunni-Shiite tensions, and offers recommendations to address the ongoing Lebanese political crisis. These recommendations have been formulated in relation to the domestic Lebanese and Middle Eastern regional political contexts.[2]

Annexes on major events in Lebanon, confessional figures as per the 2009 electoral lists, and Hezbollah's new political platform may be found at the end of the paper.

[1] Consociationalism is a model of government, developed as a "prescription" for plural and divided societies, giving primacy in political representation to collectivities rather than individual citizens. It aims at guaranteeing the participation of all groups or communities in state institutions, and it is often referred to as a power-sharing model, although it is only one form of power-sharing (other models include non-consociational federations and confederations). Arendt Lijphart, who first discussed consociationalism in academic terms, identifies two primary attributes (grand coalition and segmental autonomy) and two secondary characteristics (proportionality and minority veto) for consociational democracies. Lebanon has adopted consociationalism through its constitution and through many aspects of its institutional functioning. Evaluation of the success or failure of the system is another matter.

[2] This paper does not address rumors on the possible indictment of Hezbollah members by the prosecutor in the Special Tribunal for Lebanon investigating the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, though they may need to be addressed at a later stage if these rumors are confirmed.

I. On the evolution of the Shiite political elites between Lebanon's independence in 1943 and the end of its Civil war in 1990

Among Lebanese communities' elites, the Shiite elites have arguably experienced the most radical transformation over the last few decades.

Descendents of political-feudal families formerly represented Shiite citizens of the Bekaa and the South (or the "peripheries", as the two regions and the North are called, considering that Beirut and Mount Lebanon constitute the center of the country). These Shiite representatives were less influential in the national political decision-making process, less connected to services and public administration, and had less competitive political positions than their Maronite and Sunni counterparts. Their residential areas received few development projects, and their location in rural environments reduced their influence on emerging economic sectors at the time, such as banking, commerce, tourism and other services. For a long period, the Shiites therefore seemed to be on the sidelines of political life and on the margins of the Lebanese economic center.[3] As Sayyed Moussa Sadr[4] later put it, they were the "deprived."

However, the Shiites' proximity to Israel, their witness of the military deployment of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) starting at the end of the 1960s among their villages, the migration of many to Beirut for economic reasons,[5] and the educational advancement of many of their children drew part of the Shiite community close to the Lebanese political left.[6] The left supported the PLO and called for reforming the Lebanese system. Its political positions diverged from the positions of the Shiite "traditional" political families,[7] which continued to enjoy the support of other parts of the community.

Moussa Sadr emerged in the 1960s as a political leader within the Shiite community of Lebanon. His activism that began in the mid 1960s and continued throughout the 1970s shaped the political dynamics of the Shiite community, as he attempted to weaken traditional families on one hand and compete with the emerging left on the other. His insistence on enmity with Israel, his invitation to combat it, and his simultaneous criticism of the Palestinian practices and methods characterized his political ideology, as did his rhetoric on the Shiite rights in Lebanon and on defending the "deprived" in general. Sadr's Shiite political movement eventually became known as the Amal movement.

Following the eruption of the Lebanese civil war in 1975,[8] and the subsequent Syrian intervention in Lebanon in 1976, the Amal movement began to play a new role.[9] To impose Damascus' order in Lebanon, Syrian troops had to weaken the Palestinian-leftist coalition and control it. After a series of clashes between the Syrians and Palestinian-leftist coalition in Beirut and Mount Lebanon, the Syrians had to rely on Amal to keep the pressure on the coalition. This was especially the case in the South where Syrian military action was restricted.[10] Thereafter, the Syrians worked on restructuring the Shiite community's interior affairs, and the disappearance of Moussa Sadr in 1978 accelerated this work. Syrian interference strengthened Amal's position within Lebanon, and the group often clashed with the Palestinians and their Lebanese leftist allies.

A. The expanding role of the Amal Movement

Following the Israeli invasion in 1982 and the withdrawal of Palestinian fighters and Syrian forces from the capital, this restructuring of the Shiite community paved the way for a new episode in the civil war.[11] In fact, the Amal movement led the uprising of February 6, 1984

3 We refer here to the majority of Shiites, who consider themselves both politically and confessionally (by birth) Shiite in a country where the system in place is confessional and consociational.

4 Moussa Sadr is the founder of both the Higher Islamic Shiite Council that institutionalized the Shiite community in 1967 and the Amal movement in mid-1970s. He disappeared while on a visit to Libya in 1978, and his followers accuse Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi of kidnapping him.

5 This migration started when economic development in Beirut accelerated following the Nakba of Palestine and the shift of many of Haifa's economic activities to the Lebanese capital. In fact, thousands of Lebanese from the south used to work in Haifa prior to 1947, and had to move to Beirut after the Nakba of 1948.

6 Close to 40 percent of the members of the Communist Party in the early 1970s were Shiites. At the time, the Communist Party was probably the third party in the country in terms of membership, after the Christian right-wing Kataeb party and the Druze-based Progressive Socialist Party.

7 These families include Assaad, Khalil, Zein, and Osseiran in the South and Hamadeh in the Bekaa, despite the rivalry between them.

8 The war erupted between two camps: 1- The "National Movement" led by Kamal Joumblat that included the Lebanese leftist parties – Progressive Socialist party, the Communist party, and the Communist Action Organization, in addition to some Muslim forces, namely, the Sunni Nasserist Mourabitoun, and to the Nationalist Syrian Social party, and 2- The rightist Christian parties joining forces later under the banner of the "Lebanese Front," which gathered Phalangist and Liberal parties, Organization group, Guardians of the Cedars, and the Maronite Order. While the first camp enjoyed the support of the PLO, the second received Lebanese army's support (before a split divides the army itself). Divergent views over political reforms of the Lebanese system and over the military activism of the PLO in Lebanon were major reasons behind the conflict. Different states in the Middle East (mainly Israel, Syria, Iraq and Libya) sent weapon to the different belligerents feeding thus the military operations.

9 Moussa Sadr was among rare Muslim leaders to welcome Syrian intervention, as his relations with Assad's regime were good.

10 According to U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, the Israelis set limits for the Syrian deployment and tolerated it as long as it remained to the north of the Awwali River.

11 The 1982 invasion was the second Israeli massive attack on Lebanon. The first happened in 1978 and led to the establishment of an Israeli occupied security zone. Ninety percent of the inhabitants of that zone (which constitutes 49 percent of the area of southern Lebanon), of whom the overwhelming majority was Shiite, moved as displaced to other areas, especially to the southern suburbs of Beirut. The 1978 invasion was followed by UN resolution 425 calling for the withdrawal of the Israeli troops and the deployment of UN forces (UN Interim Force in Lebanon) to monitor the situation and help Lebanon restore its sovereignty. Lebanon and the UN had to wait until May 2000 to see the resolution respected.

that prevented Lebanese armed forces loyal to the new president Amine Gemayel from entering West Beirut and its southern suburb. Partition consequently prevailed, and West Beirut was controlled by militias led by Amal and the Druze Progressive Socialist Party. These circumstances resulted in regular confrontations between the different militias.

The volatile situation during this period was exacerbated by the increasing number of foreigners kidnapped, as well as by the fierce combat between Amal and young Palestinian fighters in the camps (especially around Beirut) who had survived the Israeli invasion and the Sabra and Shatila massacres. These violent clashes were viewed as a renewed war between Assad's Syria and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). The carnage caused by these clashes and those between Amal and the Mourabitoun, and later between Amal and the Communist-Druze Socialist alliance, led to the return of Assad's army to Beirut in February 1987 following a "request" from Lebanese Muslim leaders.

B. The foundation of Hezbollah

In February 1979, Imam Khomeini seized power in Iran following the revolution. This event was directly followed by the war between Iran and Iraq. The war assumed a Sunni-versus-Shiite character, but it did not directly affect the relations between communities in Lebanon. This was due to the constant evolution in the political landscape over the course of the Lebanese wars, which in turn spurred changes in alliances between groups.[12] Another factor was the establishment of a close coalition between the Syrian and Iranian regimes. This partnership stemmed from the clash between the Syrian and Iraqi ruling Baath parties, as well as from Tehran's need for an Arab ally to counteract the Persian-Arab characterization of the Iran-Iraq conflict that Baghdad was trying to promote.

Nevertheless, the Iranian Revolution had an impact in Lebanon. In 1982, Iranian efforts intensified to support the creation of an Islamic revolutionary party in the country. The initial membership of this new Islamic party was drawn from a split in the Amal movement, and this new group was consolidated by sheikhs close to the Iraqi Da'awa Party in Najaf. The new Islamic party's membership numbers were further increased by the inclusion of young men and women from the South and the Bekaa that were on a quest for a new political identity. Later, news spread of the involvement of this new Islamic group in the kidnapping of Western hostages and of the intensive military training members of this group were receiving in the Bekaa valley.

Hezbollah ("the party") was officially born in 1983, and established in its early years the slogan of the Islamic Revolution in Lebanon. It also spoke openly of building an Islamic state within Lebanon. However, the party did not change the rules of the game or threaten the "Lebanese formula" since it was believed that its project was difficult to achieve within the context of Lebanese society. In addition, the fact that Hezbollah focused its efforts on consolidating and expanding its presence among the Shiite community and fighting the Israeli occupation in South Lebanon tamed the Sunni and Christian reactions to its rhetoric.[13]

The party continued to expand during the late eighties. Through the use of violence and persecution, the party succeeded in expelling all of the leftist groups that participated in the resistance against Israeli occupation from its areas of control. The Amal movement had assisted Hezbollah in these efforts, but found itself later in direct confrontation with the party in the South and Beirut's suburbs. The competition between the two Shiite factions manifested itself through violent fights and assassinations from 1987 to 1991. The Syrian-Iranian alliance seemed, at that time, incapable of imposing a less costly solution to dividing the Shiite power and leadership between the two groups. It also seemed that a Syrian-Iranian agreement on the management of the Lebanese Shiite dossier was provoking the fights. An accord was finally reached between Hezbollah and Amal in 1991. At this point, the two parties inaugurated a new phase in their relationship and more broadly in the organization of Shiite political leadership in Lebanon. The Amal movement was offered Shiite representation in the government, and Hezbollah the monopoly of resistance against the Israelis in South Lebanon.

C. The new Shiite elite at the end of the Lebanese civil war

It can be inferred that the Shiite role in the Lebanese civil war emerged as an important factor in the phase following the Israeli invasion, after the PLO left Beirut militarily and politically. This emergence was accompanied by a strong Syrian comeback to most areas of Lebanon. The exceptions to Syrian presence included the areas occupied by Israel in the

12 For instance, in the late 1980s, Iraq supported the Christian Lebanese Forces militias and General Michel Aoun's cabinet opposed to Damascus and at war with its Muslim allies.

13 Ahmad Baydoun, Loubnan: Achya' Assuna wa Asnan Ashi'a: Jadid fi Rasm Al-Jabha (Beirut: Lebanese Center for Policy Studies, 2007).

South, and the Christian-controlled areas where the Lebanese Army and the Lebanese Forces militia were deployed. Essentially, the Shiite leadership assumed the role of an internal pillar to ensure Syrian control over the areas that the Palestinians left in 1982. Its role was also more military and geostrategic and less political: the political system remained essentially Maronite-Sunni after the end of the war in 1990 and following the Taef Accord.[14]

Hence, the Shiite elite by the end of the war completely differed from that at the beginning of the war. Traditional families who survived this change came under the wings of the new political leadership. This new Shiite political leadership derived its legitimacy from war, from the collective desire of a new generation of Lebanese Shiites to make up for the marginalization of their community, and from its relations with the Syrian regime.[15] Further shaping this new political dynamic in the Shiite community was Iranian support for one rising faction, Hezbollah, in its fight against the Israelis in the occupied territories and the organization of its networks. Hezbollah's rise will be discussed later in this paper.

[14] In addition to suggesting reforms to the political system, the September 1989 accord that officially ended the civil war in Lebanon and introduced amendments to the constitution reallocated some of the Maronite president prerogatives to the Government headed by the Sunni prime minister. It also reconfirmed the 1943 National Pact between the president and the prime minister (and what they represented confessionally) by stating the Arabness of Lebanon and its independence as a sovereign nation.

[15] In this way, activists of this generation differed from those who took the left as their political identity, as the latter were concerned with the horizons of change and secularism, while the former were concerned with improving the Shiite position inside the confessional state and not overcoming it or changing its structure.

II. Shiites in postwar Lebanon (under Syrian hegemony): 1990–2005

Following the end of war, the Shiites made administrative gains in the Lebanese government and assumed more significant positions inside the political power circles. They occupied public posts in Parliament and within its police, which had developed into a small army. Among other institutions, the Shiites took up positions in the State Security Service (Amn Addawleh), the Sureté Générale (Al-Amn al-'Aam), the Council for South Lebanon, the National Social Security Fund, the Lebanese University, and the ministries of Information, Health, and Energy. They obtained compensations for displacement, and for damages resulting from Israeli attacks on the South in 1993 and 1996. The Shiite community also benefited from new roads (even if badly built) and public schools, some of which remained almost empty in the South due to the resettlement of the population in Beirut and its suburbs. In addition, sanitary facilities were granted to the Shiite districts, but were either never put in place or did not function well.[16]

The presence of Shiites in these government positions, taking into account the importance of recruitment and clientelism in the balance of political leadership in Lebanon, did not however counteract the lack of Shiite influence on matters related to the economy or foreign relations. The Shiites were unable to compete with Prime Minister Rafic Hariri, the Sunni leader, in his authority over these issues. All the Shiite leadership could do was threaten to obstruct the Prime Minister's activities if he or his successive governments hesitated in allocating funds to public projects and institutions that they "controlled." Among the obstructive tools that the Speaker of Parliament, Amal leader Nabih Berri, possessed were his participation in the Troika (along with the president of the Republic and the prime minister)[17] and its bargaining schemes, as well as his authority to discard draft-laws that did not please him.

Nevertheless, Shiites who started their rise militarily in alliance with the Syrians tried to impose politically throughout the Syrian era a certain "political Shiism" (al-chi'iyyah as-siyasiyyah) resembling other existing political confessionalisms.[18] Satisfying the demands of this Shiite leadership through the channels of executive authority was possible in times of postwar reconstruction and financial expansion. This approach was also simple, as it involved signs that could be intuitively understood by patrons of other confessions, who knew the ways of blackmail and compromises. One major factor, however, complicated the situation and changed this déjà vu path of political Shiism toward its Lebanese counterparts. This factor was the intrusion of Hezbollah and its supporters in the domestic scene, despite a long-time commitment to external military resistance. Hezbollah's intrusion in domestic politics began slowly after the liberation of South Lebanon in 2000, and then accelerated with the extension of President Lahoud's tenure in 2004 and Prime Minister Hariri's assassination in 2005.

16 The high level of corruption in the cited ministries and administrations is frequently mentioned by analysts and observers in Lebanon. Few scientific reports and papers, however, have been published on the issue.

17 The Troika is an unconstitutional (though representative) body where the Maronite president, the Shiite speaker, and the Sunni prime minister might negotiate and find compromises if their views diverge over political or administrative questions.

18 Political Maronitism and later Political Sunnism were terms used to qualify political behavior in dealing with power.

III. On the political evolution of Hezbollah

The long period of Israeli occupation of Southern Lebanon led to the monopoly by one Shiite organization, Hezbollah, of the mission of resistance and liberation. This monopoly was solidified through the bloody conflicts that took place during the second half of the 1980s and lasted until the early aftermath of the Taef Accord.

In the two years following the end of the civil war, Hezbollah displayed a strong rejection of the Taef Accord. However, the party backtracked after it obtained guarantees that it would be the only group to maintain its weapons. The end of the confrontation with Amal, and the Syrian-Iranian agreement on the Lebanese Shiite dossier, led to changes in Hezbollah's leadership. The first secretary general, Sheikh Soubhi Toufayli, was replaced by Sayyed Abbas Moussawi. A few months later, in February 1992, an Israeli helicopter assassinated Moussawi and his family. Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah became Secretary General.

In the first postwar elections in September 1992, Hezbollah replaced the slogan of the "Islamic Revolution" with that of "Islamic Resistance." Damascus forced Hezbollah and Amal to reconcile and to join forces in the elections. Hezbollah accepted the offer, seeing Parliament as a political forum for its armed resistance and as a vehicle to monitor the government.

The party, however, never demonstrated interest in participating in the executive body, and never felt concerned with state institutions and services. This is because Hezbollah was not just busy with fighting Israel. It was also building the "State of Hezbollah," as referred to in a book published in 1998.[19] This "state" was comprised of a network of different institutions that provided a wide range of services to the Shiite constituency. The network included schools, hospitals, and dispensaries; consumer, housing, and construction cooperatives; sports and cultural clubs; and youth, women, and scouting groups. This network of sports and activities was of course in addition to the structures of the party itself, including the military, political, security, and media branches.

The party also developed mosques and Hussayniyyah,[20] which welcomed figures of the sociopolitical or cultural-ideological fields close to the party or associated with it. Through this broad-based network, Hezbollah established itself over the years as the first "services provider" for the Lebanese Shiite community, after the Lebanese government. The primary source of funding for these projects was Iran. Other sources of funding also exist, such as donations, religious "khoms,"[21] and different businesses of party supporters in Lebanon and abroad.[22]

This novel approach of establishing large networks of services on the Shiite side was not a novelty on the Lebanese level. The network of Catholic schools in Lebanon, for example, is more extensive and much older than the Shiite Hezbollah network. The Hariri Foundation offered more tuition fees for Lebanese students than did Hezbollah. However, neither the Catholic network nor the Hariri Foundation combined politics, ideology, and military force to pursue power or to defend a political status, especially after the end of the war, as Hezbollah did.[23] This difference between Hezbollah and other groups in Lebanon made the party's socio-economic network exceptional in the Lebanese confessional equation as of 1990 and throughout the Syrian era.

In addition, Hezbollah spread new religious practices in various Lebanese Shiite regions. Members of Hezbollah were influenced by concepts and habits of Iranian origin that were not familiar before the 1980s, or were practiced in very restrained circles. These influences resulted in a new image of the Shiite confession that was reflected in the way of commemorating Ashoura,[24] the modification of the Hussayniyyah councils' contents, and the creation of many celebrations related to Imam Ali's family.[25] The religious concept introduced by these new influences that has had the greatest impact on the collective imagery and narrative of politics was the expectation that the Imam Mehdi will soon return or reappear, and will end all injustices.[26] Many schools managed by Hezbollah and its scouts were named after Imam Mehdi; it was said that the

19 Waddah Charara, Dawlat Hezbillah (The State of Hezbollah), Dar Annahar, Beirut, 1998.

20 The Houssayniyya is a socioreligious space used by Shiites for meetings and for commemoration ceremonies following funerals.

21 Practicing Shiites should pay one-fifth of their gains to the religious establishment. Hezbollah benefits from those paying to religious authorities affiliated to it.

22 It is believed that many Lebanese businesses in the diaspora support the party's institutions.

23 Baydoun, 2007.

24 Achoura is the tenth day of the month of Muharram, commemorating the death of Imam Hussain Bin Ali, the grandson of Prophet Mohammad who was killed with his family in Karbala (in today's Iraq) by the Umayyad army.

25 Ali is the prophet's cousin. Shiites (meaning in Arabic partisans of Ali) believe he was supposed to succeed the prophet in leading Muslims.

26 Al-Imam Al-Mehdi al-mountazhar is the 12th Infallible Imam of the Shiites. It is believed his return will bring peace and justice to earth.

believers should prepare the world for his return through their actions, and that Hezbollah's movement is an effort toward this aim.[27]

This new orientation affected many aspects of Lebanese Shiites' daily life. It also had an effect on the Lebanese confessional system. In fact, the mission of religion or confession within this sectarian system was limited to defining the borders between communities - whether the borders of solidarity or those of diversity - and to unite its members under its wings. Religion has never been directly related to political actions, choices, objectives, or the vision of the governmental system; Hezbollah's use of religious concepts and slogans for political mobilization contradicted the Lebanese confessional tradition.[28] It violated the principle of equal rights for all Lebanese and represented an attempt to classify them in categories according to their religious beliefs. Naturally, the link between this new reality and the armed organization having a republic of confessional identity as a reference deepened the sectarian fears. But the fears were diluted in May 2000 when Hezbollah celebrated the Israeli withdrawal from South Lebanon. The party was considered a "liberator" by the majority of the Shiites, and probably the majority of the Lebanese. Its popularity went far beyond Lebanese frontiers to the rest of the Arab world. Arabs outside of Lebanon viewed the liberation of Southern Lebanon as the first military achievement in the conflict with Israel, pushing it to abandon occupied territories. The Shiism of Hezbollah became a minor detail in the eyes of its non-Shiite supporters, and the party took that into consideration in its official discourse and media propaganda.[29]

27 In the absence of the Mehdi and until his return, it is in Hezbollah's belief the Waliyy al-Faqih "replaces" him as a leader of the Muslims (Waliyy al-Faqih or the Supreme leader being today the Supreme Guide of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ali Khamene'i).

28 Baydoun, 2007.

29 For example, the Al-Manar TV broadcasting service to the Arab world adopted the common Muslim (Sunni) call for prayer, although it kept the Shiite call on its national channel.

IV. Hezbollah, the assassination of Prime Minister Hariri, and the end of the Syrian era

Tensions between Hezbollah and the majority of Lebanese political and confessional blocs emerged in 2004; more precisely, after the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1559[30] in September and the extension of the mandate of President Emile Lahoud by the Lebanese pro-Syrian parliament in September of that year. Tensions were exacerbated and brought out into the open by the assassination of Prime Minister Rafic Hariri in February 2005.

At the time, Hariri was accused of participating in drafting UNSCR 1559 and preparing to join the Christian and Druze opposition to Syrian hegemony. This accusation stemmed from his internal position as a strong Sunni leader attempting indirectly to support the opposition, as well as his international relationships. After Hariri's assassination, Hezbollah's secretary-general explained why his party did not participate in the Prime Minister's funeral by stating that he had felt Sunni-Shiite "tensions" in the "atmosphere." The secretary-general, who insisted on portraying good relations with the deceased, said that he was surprised by that "tension" and "atmosphere." Those among the Lebanese who had recently discovered or had been surprised by those "tensions" were not few. In fact, in the days following the funeral, the Hariri Sunnis - the sweeping majority of the Sunni confession - revolted along with the Christians and Druzes. These groups called for the end of the Syrian hegemony and the dismissal of its Lebanese allies from positions in security institutions. On March 8, 2005, Hezbollah, the Amal movement, and other pro-Damascus forces demonstrated in support of the Syrian regime. On March 14, the Hariri Sunnis joined with their Christian and Druze allies, in addition to tens of thousands of citizens and independent groups demonstrated against the Syrians, their allies, and their policies in Lebanon.

The only way to avoid a Shiite-Sunni conflict in the face of such upheaval was for both parties to remain independent from regional influence and for all parties to reach a formula to establish an independent state, the foundation of which had started to loom on the horizon. This, unfortunately, was not what happened.

Hezbollah was forced to call for a significant representation in the state and new authorities to replace Syrian support, which had previously taken care of the strategic interests of the party. This call for political authority should have replaced the party's military status and led to its integration into the constitutional institutions, including the government. But again, this is not what happened, despite the party's nomination of two ministers (for the first time since its foundation) to the national coalition government that emerged from the first post-Syrian parliamentary elections in May and June 2005.

Hezbollah appeared too weak to disarm without losing its stature in the country and abroad. It seemed the party did not envision a better role for itself beyond "military resistance," thus maintaining the southern frontiers of Lebanon open to the eventuality of conflicts and wars by proxy involving Israel, Syria, Iran and the United States.[31]

The intricacy of the Sunni-Shiite predicament in Lebanon emanates from the following: from the quest to manage the country's strategic affairs after the Syrian withdrawal; from the emerging disputes over the fate of Hezbollah's weapons and the country's regional alliances; from the phenomenon referred to as "the specialized confessions" (Shiite for the resistance, Sunni for the reconstruction, and Maronite for sovereignty)[32], and from the divergence of views over the roles of the international investigation looking into the assassination of PM Hariri and the official demand for a Special Tribunal for Lebanon. These conditions caused tensions to rise in 2006 and 2007, leading to Hezbollah's withdrawal from the government and its adoption of the slogan "the weapons to protect the resistant weapons." The party used its weapons in May 2008 against the government and imposed its conditions for returning its ministers to the cabinet.

In conclusion, one can say that Hezbollah's political and military behavior not only threatens the governing tradition in Lebanon, but also makes it extremely difficult to protect Lebanon from the effects of regional conflicts.[33]

30 UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1559 calls for the withdrawal of foreign (Syrian) troops from Lebanon, respect of the constitution, and the dismantling of militias (disarming Hezbollah).

31 The 33 days of war in 2006 was an illustration of this dramatic equation. The war left 1500 Lebanese killed (more than 1100 of whom are civilians) and 160 Israelis killed (40 of whom are civilians).

32 These specializations confiscated the State authorities and missions, and created political and confessional tensions. The reconstruction of Beirut after the war (through the Sunni PM Hariri projects), the liberation of South Lebanon in 2000 (through the Shiite Hezbollah), and the end of the Syrian hegemony in 2005 (after years of Maronites' calls for sovereignty) seemed confessional achievements that failed to create a national identity or a national project. In a 2006 paper published in the cultural supplement of the daily Annahar, I called this failure "watan al-injazat annakissa," or "the nation of the missed achievements/opportunities." The same concept was explored and further developed in the 2009 UNDP report, "Towards a Citizen's State in Lebanon."

33 The political platform that Hezbollah published in late 2009 demonstrated that the party's decision in 1992 to participate in elections (after a rejection of the principle of parliamentary elections and of Lebanese constitutional institutions between 1983 and 1991) became a strategic decision after 2005. Participation thereafter expanded beyond elected bodies (municipal councils and Parliament) to include government and public administrations. This came with a tacit acceptance of the Lebanese constitution, the political system, and consociational democracy based on confessional representation. (See Annex 3 for more information.) However, adopting arguments in the literature on the "resistance" and its arms, with the struggle against Israeli and US regional hegemony, weakens recognition of the Lebanese political system and constitution as the party can develop its own "resistance strategies" (including foreign alliances and military confrontations) independent of the state institutions.

V. The new face of Lebanon?

The Shiite-Sunni confrontation that is shaping the current crisis and dividing the country (attracting the divided Christians to its poles) cannot promise the stability of political balance to any confession according to the current state. If on the Shiite side there is little challenge to Hezbollah, for many reasons (including its arms) the major impact will be absorbed by the Sunni ranks. The Sunnis of Lebanon may anticipate drastic consequences resulting in a long-lasting crisis that perpetuates Lebanon's tenuous security situation. The Sunni civil leadership today—namely the Hariri leadership—appears able to retain authority if the conflict stays political. However, there are other Sunni groups that remain marginal and secretive; they opt for weapons over civil engagement, and militant Sunni Islam may constitute their first identity. Observers[34] of these various Lebanese groups emphasize the obstacles and ramifications in their orientations and the competition among them.

Some Lebanese groups support the Syrian regime and others do not. Some oppose the Hariri leadership, and others find it necessary to align with it in the current conflict. Some groups, except for their unanimity on a doctrinal hatred toward the Shiites, display a kind of attraction towards Hezbollah. Yet another group considers Hezbollah an Iranian Trojan Horse, with a mission to facilitate Iran's dominance of large Islamic causes. Consequently, it is not easy to predict how these groups will change alliances or forge new ones, for any reason (whether Lebanese or not Lebanese).[35] However, it is possible that some groups would unify against the Shiite armed force and establish themselves an armed force for the Lebanese Sunnis. This situation would be more likely if the current crisis aggravates and weakens the state's military institution, or if a regional confrontation involving Iran and Saudi Arabia occurs.

Lebanon is therefore in a new phase dominated by a Muslim-Muslim fracture. Consociationalism in such a phase is extremely difficult, if not impossible. Its obligatory "respect" is more in terms of imposing veto rights (or "blocking thirds," as it is called in the government) than in finding common ground. In fact, the issue of the veto has been at the center of all disputes for the past four years. It reveals the consociational need to avoid imposing options that might detonate clashes, but it also reveals the difficulty of maintaining consociationalism as a guiding philosophy when vertical divisions are so deep and when external pressures keep them politicized. If weapons and their use are added to this equation, one can then wonder whether consociational democracy will be able to survive. What has kept this system alive in Lebanon is more the fear of its collapse and the resulting effect on civil peace than genuine respect for its conditions.

34 For example, French researcher Bernard Rougier, Lebanese journalist Hazem Al-Amin among others, wrote on many occasions on this complex Sunni Islamist map.

35 Baydoun, 2007.

VI. The Lebanese system crisis (beyond Hezbollah)

In moments of crisis in Lebanon, the Lebanese consociational political system seems to feed the hegemonic inclinations of sectarian representation. Indeed, the more the majority of masses in a given religious community are convinced of the need to conglomerate to defend acquired rights and search for "lost rights" or for a broader participation in power, the more they harbor the hegemonic tendencies of emerging elites seeking to control representation (and their own community) under the pretext of improving their negotiation or conflict stances. This results not only in the exclusion of former elites from the domestic decision-making process, but also in the accommodation of these former elites with the emerging leadership. This accommodation includes displaying allegiance to the new leadership, as well as accepting its political conditions.

With every major crisis, both exclusion and accommodation become the logical principles underlying relations between the emerging and outgoing elites within communities. This was particularly the case with the Shiite and Maronite elites, who witnessed the emergence of warring forces within their ranks during the civil war. The Sunni community later experienced this principle with the Hariri phenomenon in the post-Taef reconstruction period. For the first time in contemporary Lebanon, one Sunni figure became the leader in the three coastal cities (Beirut, Tripoli and Saida) as well as in rural, predominantly Sunni areas in the North and the Bekaa.

Thus, confessions in Lebanon evolve as blocs that are related to the political representation of elites in the system and the constitutional and service-oriented institutions. This deduction is also linked to intra- and intercommunity relations. In this respect, one can state that since the early 1970s, the course of political representation of confessions/communities in Lebanon started to focus on one rising force that felt targeted or was searching for a "mobilizing identity" based on sectarian loyalty. It started with Bachir Gemayel within the Christian community, particularly the Maronites, and continued with Michel Aoun. This was the case as well within the Shiite community with Moussa Sadr, the Amal movement, and then Hezbollah. The same holds true, albeit in a different manner and much later, within the Sunni community with Rafic Hariri and then with his heir Saad. This situation was further exacerbated within the Druze community after influence and leadership became concentrated in the Jumblatt family. The rivalry between the Jumblatt and Yazbaki clans had receded around the time the civil war broke out (and especially during the "mountain war" in 1983).

In addition to belligerence and the ensuing liquidation of foes within the community before moving to clashes with other communities, a single force's hegemony or attempted hegemony within its own community took the shape of rampant clientelism and service-oriented measures. These features were employed to expand one's base of voters or loyal supporters, and defend them (and their shares). It also took the shape of mobilization based on sectarian loyalty as a show of support for the elites calling for securing greater shares for their communities. This structure is clearly related to the consociational requirement of agreement on the proportions of participation in power.

The hegemonic pattern was also fed by institutions, political discourse, and a control-imposing culture. This pattern unfolded in Lebanon according to Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci's description of the hegemony process that results from the rhetoric, values and practices of a given class. In the case of Lebanon, the "class" could be a confessional group or authority. These institutions, rhetoric, and culture are represented by a network of bodies, relations, and prevailing ideas within a single community. They include religious institutions that hegemony-seekers strive to control or at least maintain a close relationship with, as these institutions provide them with moral cover and symbolic dimensions. Religious institutions also organize an important aspect of social relations in a country where all civil status laws go through sectarian institutions and religious courts. Moreover, they provide educational services and scouting, leisure, health, and consumption-related associations, all of which build ties with children and adolescents and pave the way for attracting them in subsequent years.

On the level of language, terminology, and political rhetoric, all emerging forces seek hegemony over their religious communities' media outlets, starting with bulletins and newspapers before moving to radio and television stations, propaganda movies, and Web sites. All these media outlets create a joint language and awareness, come up with potential scenarios for events, and draw a certain picture of the "enemy," which helps to consolidate the hegemonic culture and expand the clout of the sectarian force seeking or exercising hegemony.

Due to the indelible memories and demarcation lines leftover from the war, the division along sectarian lines in several Lebanese regions facilitated political and cultural hegemony within the various religious communities. Similarities became obvious due to geographical proximity and to coexistence within the same sectarian framework where customs and traditions are alike and where the same slogans are repeatedly

used. The culture of the dominant confessional party can be seen through statues, martyrs' photos, religious slogans, names of restaurants and shops, and other signs of belonging or supporting a given group. These manifestations also define boundaries between regions and those of the forces controlling them.

One can assert that in Hezbollah's case, all these issues acquired an unprecedented dimension in political and confessional societal circles in Lebanon. The party was able to transcend all the barriers and limits that impeded other sectarian forces before it in terms of institutionalization, ideology, rhetoric, mobilization ability, financial capacities, foreign relations, weapons and media, and the power emanating from it. Consequently, the concept of hegemony seems to genuinely prevail, at least when it comes to its role in shaping political stances, forming political blocs, and feelings of belonging and safety. As such, this concept consolidates major divisions as the sole division among citizens, which can be represented within state institutions and on all levels of power and administration.

VII. Some conclusions based on the recent years' crisis

It is difficult to analyze the years following the second Lebanese independence (referring to the Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon) in April 2005 and the intermediate crises, without noting the major change that occurred in Lebanese political society. This change, which had been initiated years beforehand, can be likened to a triangle where each side has its manifestations and significations.

First, vertical divisions became deeply entrenched in the Lebanese society and exacerbated polarization within each religious community in an unprecedented way in Lebanon's history. This has nothing to do with the fact that the two major political alliances that emerged after the Syrian withdrawal, the March 8 and March 14 coalitions encompassed various political and confessional forces. In fact, Shiite and Sunni polarization, the first through Hezbollah (and the Amal movement) and the second through the Future Movement within the respective religious communities, reached an exceptional level. The Christians were also divided between the Free Patriotic Movement on one side and the Lebanese Forces and the Kataeb on the other, and each supported one of the Muslim poles. This division came to amend the philosophy underlying the National Pact of 1943 as one based between Muslims and Christians. The Muslim division was projected onto the Christians, driving some to call for a tripartite (Sunni, Shiite, Christian) distribution of power in the system in place of the current equal (Muslim, Christian) distribution of power.

Second, the relation between foreign and local parties was consolidated, and Lebanon became totally exposed to the conflicts of the Middle East. Unlike the war period, military organizations were not the means or tool used for that purpose; rather, this role was undertaken by whole sectarian blocs through the hegemonic forces in them. This allowed regional conflicts to threaten peace in Lebanon and pitted religious communities against each other. The most noticeable development in this context is, of course, the Iranian factor.

Third, the Lebanese scene witnessed the emergence of a force characterized by an unprecedented excess of strength on the organizational, institutional, sectarian, military, and political levels - namely Hezbollah. The party's power is enhanced by its exceptional mobilization capacity within the Shiite community, which helps it to draw in the majority of Shiites from all regions, social classes, and educational levels.[36] The excess strength of the "Party of God" has various ramifications. Its strength actually allows the party to undermine consociational democracy (without openly rejecting it) through various means:

1. Its foreign relations, mainly its close ties to Iran on the financial, armament, and ideological levels and its close relationship with Syria on the strategic level.

2. War and peace decisions and the use of weapons against Israel. These weapons are deployed along Lebanon's southern border, which is extremely dangerous as a result of the regional wars by proxy that are played out in Lebanon.

3. The use of weapons domestically to bring down the government or alter an electoral balance of forces that does not give the party the upper hand. This was the case in May 2008, and it resulted in toppling the government and imposing a greater share for Hezbollah and its allies in the new cabinet regardless of the parliamentary election results.[37]

4. Financial expenditure and the establishment of its own state-like institutions within the Lebanese state. These differ from other mini-states established by some communities during the war with regard to their ideological dimension and their total control over the religious field and places of worship where ideological mobilization goes hand in hand with social rites.

It is important to mention here that a large portion of the Lebanese population sees Hezbollah's weapons as the major source of threat to the country's stability because the party has already used them internally (in clashes with its foes), and because the decision to use them against Israel is not made by the Lebanese state. Those who defend the weapons consider them a dissuasive force against Israel and see them as a strong tool to be used to block the final settlement of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. Reaching a compromise, or at least common grounds, on the weapons issue has proven impossible after several attempts in the last five years.

Solutions seem to be regional, related to (1) a US-Iranian accord that would deal with Iran's regional role and nuclear ambitions, in exchange for Iran calling (among other things such as involvement in Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine) on Hezbollah to agree with the Lebanese State on delivering weapons to the Lebanese army; and (2) serious progress in

[36] However, the most prominent Shiite intellectuals and the most present in the fields of literature, scientific research, publications, and cultural institutions in Lebanon are opposed to the party and seek to refute its stances, rhetoric and practices.

[37] Without seizing power, because of fears of large-scale confessional confrontations and because of the party's unwillingness to directly rule the country.

the peace process on the Palestinian track; bringing Syria on board at a later stage, and putting an end to the Israeli occupation of the Shebaa farms. Knowing that these two scenarios are unlikely to happen (at least in the near future), it is not possible to reach an agreement on the weapons issue. Hezbollah rejects any dialogue leading to its disarmament, and its foes do not have any power capable of forcing it to disarm.

What could be done is to keep the weapons issue on the "National Dialogue table", to keep the public debate over it alive and at the same time to suggest a long-term solution based on the idea of delivering the weapons to the Lebanese Armed Forces. This again would be possible only if there are regional "deals" or positive developments. Until similar scenarios become possible, international pressures should focus on (1) Israel, to block any plan it has to attack Lebanon under the pretext of attacking Hezbollah, and (2) Hezbollah and its regional allies (Iran and Syria) to forbid any use of the party's weapons.

As for the Palestinian question in Lebanon, it is obvious that most Lebanese (especially Christians and Shiites) fear the consequences of their naturalization in the country. This would deeply affect confessional/demographic balances, given that more than 80 percent of the 400,000 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are Sunnis. However, the argument that Hezbollah's arms are a guarantee against this naturalization does not stand. It is used by some Christian leaders[38] to justify their alliance with Hezbollah, pretending that the party would force the international community to prioritize Lebanon in its plans for the region and would give the country bargaining power when it comes to the refugees, since the party is opposed to their settlement. This is unrealistic, as Hezbollah's priorities for the arms have never included a bargain over the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. The party might even consider such an equation a betrayal of its commitment to fight for the Palestinian cause and for Palestinian (and Lebanese) dignity. The "deportation of Palestinian refugees" from Lebanon is not a condition that can be negotiated with the "international community" in exchange for "the resistance's arms and struggle."

All of the above underscores the fact that Hezbollah can weaken consociationalism and the prevailing formulas of power if it wants to. The party may either settle things in its favor or cause foreign interventions if regional confrontations worsen given its close ties to key players in those confrontations. But the party has refrained from doing so thus far. It prefers to use some aspects of consociationalism to justify its calls for its right in the blocking third (i.e., the veto right) in the government, allowing it to reject any decision that doesn't suit its interests.

Due to these recent developments, consociational democracy in Lebanon is declining. This situation in turn facilitates foreign intervention in all aspects of Lebanese decision-making, resulting in either additional tension or appeasement.

It deprives institutions (especially those of the government) of the decision-making prerogative given to them by the constitution, and instead grants this power to the leaders of major confessional forces (with different foreign alliances). These leaders appoint their representatives in the government and then turn to them when it comes to making decisions, settling voting orientations, undertaking security and diplomatic appointments, and all administrative operations pertaining to state sovereignty. This structure leads to the emergence of a new concept in practicing power and decision-making based on "poles"; that is, a "club of leaders" that settle major and minor issues. Most of them are outside the framework of constitutional institutions or hold positions in these institutions. However, no principle of separation of powers prevents them from extending their clout to all institutions.

We realize that consociational democracy in Lebanon is unable to bring about the institutionalization of cooperation even in times of political concord. Cooperation thus remains confined to communitarian circles that lie outside of state institutions, which play a primary role in weakening the state's authority and sovereignty. Furthermore, consociational democracy is unable to measure disputes or have recourse to constitutional mechanisms to settle differences in points of view. These factors, as well as the issue of foreign interventions and an excessive armed power in the hands of one Lebanese party, serve to prove that the consociational experience in Lebanon has been rather agonizing. Indeed, the system's clinical death is not unlikely if the regional situation explodes and if Lebanon is used as a stage to settle scores.

Facing such a situation, what can be done to create some stability, which would change the setting of the political debate and open the floor for new agendas and actors? The answer may be to introduce some reforms that allow for limited changes (with regard to the electoral law, administrative decentralization, and nationality laws) and for neutralizing some elements of local tension pending regional foreign solutions that impact positively on Lebanon and prevent its moving to a stage in which clashes are played out directly or by proxy.

38 Especially Christian leader General Michel Aoun.

VIII. Ideas on reforms

One could conclude that crises in Lebanon have been recurrent, and their resolutions have never offered perspectives that could have developed the system and allowed it to avoid troubles or to absorb shocks. At the same time, one could also conclude from experiences and from the political balance of power, as well as from the attachment of strong actors to confessionalism and to their understanding of consociationalism[39] for different reasons (related mainly to their shares in power and to their veto right), that radical reforms may be unrealistic today. Consequently, presenting a few areas of relatively "realistic" reforms that would permit the political system and its consociationalism to evolve with fewer crises, or at least with more manageable crises, becomes a priority. This priority must not circumvent the possibility of further reforms in later stages; on the contrary, it must secure the possibility for such reforms to happen.

This section explores reform areas that may have an impact on political life and constitutional institutions. These reforms are motivated by the need to (1) calm confessional fears from demographic changes, (2) weaken monopolies in the representation of confessions/communities to avoid continuous vertical clashes in the society, (3) weaken confessionalism itself, and (4) support local socio-economic development in Lebanese regions to counter the impact of clientelism in the political sphere and to allow local initiatives to develop.

What makes these reforms realistic is the fact that the status quo has failed terribly. Most political and confessional elites, even if they are enjoying power and wealth, cannot digest tensions and deal with clashes that they might not be able to control if escalation occurs.[40] In addition, if the regional situation imposes certain conditions on Lebanon, their dramatic impacts cannot be alleviated through the current rules of the game.

The suggested reforms are: drafting a new nationality law, designing a new electoral system, working on administrative decentralization law in Lebanon, and creating a civil code.[41]

A. The nationality law

Drafting a new nationality law should allow Lebanese immigrants who meet specific requirements (born on the Lebanese soil or from parents born in Lebanon, or having lived in Lebanon for a specified number of years, or having a permanent residence in Lebanon), to apply.[42] Those who submitted application files and were approved by decrees in the 1990s should also be reviewed to check the compliance of the decisions taken with the legislation enforced when the decrees were issued. Furthermore, the absence of scientific official figures on the demography in Lebanon for about three-quarters of a century should be put to an end:[43] a legal census should be carried out. Likewise, this law should recognize the right of Lebanese women married to non-Lebanese individuals to confer their nationality to their husbands and children, applying the principle of gender equality in the rights of citizenship.

39 Political platforms of the March 14 general secretariat, the Future movement, Hezbollah, the Free Patriotic Movement emphasize directly or indirectly on the consociational nature of Lebanese politics. Even when they mention the "abolition of sectarianism," they speak of consociation, power sharing, and guarantees given to all Lebanese. Here are some extracts from their documents related to consociationalism:
- Our objective is "To consolidate our independence through ensuring the national unity which is a condition for independence. This requires overcoming the sectarian battles which bloodied our country for more than half a century, and to move, on the basis of the Taef Agreement, to build a civil, modern state based on separating the rights of the citizens which is the duty of the state to ensure without any discrimination, and the guarantees which should be ensured by the state regarding the existence of the sects and their presence with freedom" – March 14th secretariat (consisting mainly of the Christian figures of the ex-Qornet Chehwan gathering with an active participation of the Lebanese Forces).
- "The document of National Accord, as defined in Taef Accord, constitutes the safety net preserving civil peace in Lebanon. It includes several political reforms that redistributed political prerogatives within the state, defined Lebanon as Arab in identity and allegiance, determined parliamentary democracy as the basis of government, and established the primacy of liberties and free market." – The Future Movement.
- "Until the Lebanese could reach through their national dialogue this historic and sensitive achievement, which is the abolishment of political sectarianism, and since the political system in Lebanon is based on sectarian foundations, the consensual democracy will remain the fundamental basis for governance in Lebanon, because it is the actual embodiment of the spirit of the constitution and the essence of the Charter of the co-existence." – Hezbollah.
- "Its abidance by the Lebanese Constitution as a charter of governance in Lebanon, in its practice, interpretation, and ratification." – The Free Patriotic Movement.

40 Hezbollah could again be an exception here, owing to its strength and to its regional agenda and alliances. Nevertheless, the party prefers preserving its political roles with stable conditions favorable to these roles, and not in a tense atmosphere with continuous internal (and confessional) clashes.

41 One can definitely add many other important reform proposals, either dealing with human rights, women's rights, Palestinian refugees and foreign workers' social and civil rights, vulnerable groups' rights, or defending political and cultural freedoms, or even developing new socio-economic and financial policies. However, such proposals are already subject for different civil society campaigns, and they are independent from political agendas directly related to the topic of this paper.

42 This measure would probably offer Christians some guarantees that demographic imbalance existing in Lebanon today could be partly contained and its decisive impact "alleviated."

43 The last official census in Lebanon took place in 1932 under the French mandate. Authorities have avoided the organization of any census since the quotas of participation in institutions might be affected by each census. In 1932, Maronites constituted 28.7 percent of the population, Sunnis 22.4 percent, Shiites 19.6 percent, Greek Orthodox 9.7 percent, Druze 6.7 percent, Catholics 5.9 percent, Christian minorities 5.7 percent, and other minorities 1.3 percent. One can read today through the electoral lists that give figures of all those Lebanese who are 21 years and above. In 2009, 77 years after the last official census, Sunnis constituted 27.16 percent of the voters (citizens who are 21 years and above), Shiites 26.32 percent, Maronites 21.93 percent, Greek Orthodox 7.62 percent, and Druze 5.73 percent. Full details are available in Annex Two.

B. Electoral law reform

The electoral law defines popular representation in a parliament whose election usually reflects Lebanese political diversity, secures democratic competition, and safeguards the rotation of power. The electoral law is no doubt the starting point for political reform in Lebanon. Lebanon has long suffered from electoral gerrymandering combined with a simple majority representation system. This has led to the rise of a political elite (some with low popular representation) that has monopolized the affairs of the country's sectarian groups and demography. Therefore, it is time to adopt proportional representation in order to restore balance to the political life, so that different groups would be represented in proportion to their popular support. It is also high time to lower the voting age from age 21 to 18 and pass laws that would organize the role of media in elections, limit electoral spending, and give Lebanese in the Diaspora who still hold their nationality documents the right to vote at embassies and consulates.

The current right of resorting to the Constitutional Council should be maintained. In addition, a law should be formulated to establish a Senate, per the Taef Accord. Discussing the emancipation of Parliament from its sectarian anomaly and the establishment of a Senate, where sectarian groups will be represented and where state resolutions will be made, should be a priority for reformists.

C. Decentralization and administrative reforms

Administrative reform must be a main pillar in state building in order to give the process of political reform immunity, reinforce citizenship and the practice of public administration, and launch local development. Administrative reform starts with the approval of the law of administrative decentralization that gives birth to district councils and reinforces the role of municipalities as it secures their independence. Reform should also include the public administration in order to enhance its efficiency.

It is worth mentioning the political and social importance of municipalities in Lebanon. In addition to the fact that municipal elections are independent of any sectarian quota or division, municipal activity is considered the primary political activity of citizens in public administration, looking into choices and decision-making. It is also the starting point for local development and contributes to job creation, which diminishes the clientelism that most political elites use as means to enlarge their popular support. It can also decrease migration to urban centers. Such migration creates social and demographic pressures as well as sectarian alignments that hold members of the same sectarian group together and obstruct interaction. The law of municipal elections should give citizens the choice of their preference of election, whether they opt to do so at places of residence (where they live, pay taxes, and benefit from public facilities) or at their villages of origin. [44]

District councils come as the second link in the chain of decentralization as they complement the role of municipalities at the level of local development. Through these councils, regional cooperation is possible as well as coordination with civil society organizations and research and education centers where projects are proposed, facilities are developed, and cooperation between the different municipalities of each district is reinforced.

At the public administration level, any reform thoughts should stress the importance of the Civil Service Council, Central Inspection Bureau, and Audit Bureau. The performance of civil servants at these organizations should be improved. Recruitment policies, job descriptions, and aptitude tests should be used to limit random and clientelist recruitment in public employment. Reform should deal with the surplus in civil servants at public

44 The results in some Sunni and Shiite districts in the 2010 municipal elections surprised many observers. In Sunni districts, lists sponsored by Prime Minister Hariri failed to achieve the same performance as in the 2009 parliamentary elections, and in Shiite districts Hezbollah's sponsored lists obtained much less support than in the 2009 elections. Based on the surprise and the false assumptions that developed, it was considered that Hariri and Hezbollah both lost popularity in their respective constituencies.
However, three crucial elements must be considered to understand the results: (1) The Hariri mobilization in many Sunni districts lost momentum following the victory in the 2009 parliamentary elections. The mobilization at the time mainly consisted of the necessity of "beating the Syrians and Hezbollah" on the national level. Such mobilization is not possible on the municipal (village) level, where the micro-sociology takes over national politics, and in any case Hariri's reconciliation with Damascus and his formation of a government with Hezbollah's participation made previous slogans obsolete in the eyes of many of his supporters. This allowed for independent or anti-Hariri Sunnis to win some seats in some villages in the Beqaa and the North. (2) In many municipal elections, loyalties to family and clan ties come before political considerations. Hence, Hezbollah cannot control lists and electoral alliances as it can in parliamentary elections, and it avoids clashing with families and clans in villages over municipal matters as long as these families and clans are not opposed to it politically. This explains how many "independent" lists in southern and Bekaa'i villages were formed, and how many of them, with the support of the families they represented, won against lists that Hezbollah members supported. (3) Many of the candidates who defeated Hezbollah's candidates in different places are not necessarily political opponents to the party. In fact, some of them would have accepted to run on the party's lists if they were offered to do so. Others are close to the Amal movement, the party's ally. They formed their own lists, as they were not offered seats on Hezbollah-Amal lists, and they did not want to respect their parties' agreements. Only a few won based on clear anti-Hezbollah stances.
Finally, one should never forget that in the electoral law adopted in Lebanon (simple majority vote), it is extremely difficult for politically independent candidates or for oppositions within each large community to win. Only with a proportional electoral system, all groups can be represented according to the percentage of the votes they won.

administrations by reorganizing these administrations according to need and to a decentralized criterion that helps to reinforce the administration's branches in the different Lebanese regions and facilitate the flow of administrative affairs for citizens. These reforms will not happen without the abrogation of sectarian quotas at the civil service level and the separation of political intervention from the affairs of the public administration. This reform analysis and its implementation require political pressure as well as parliamentary, media, and popular surveillance that should accompany its different stages and should support and protect the transparency of its path.[45]

D. Civil law for personal statuses

An optional civil personal status law that would give all citizens, regardless of religion, the freedom to organize their lives and marital status independently from religious/confessional authorities would provide a pathway towards enlarging the secular circles in the country. This enlargement would create a space of citizenship where divisions are not necessarily primordial or vertical. This issue is of crucial importance in Lebanon.[46]

45 To protect these and other reforms, and to establish the supremacy of the rule of law, any sincere platform should lay the basis for an independent judiciary through legislation that will protect it from political intervention and secure the election of higher judicial authorities by judges only. Such steps shall give the judicial authority the ability, in line with its specialty, to hold accountable anyone who violates the law, regardless of position. Arrests should be carried out exclusively under the mandate of the judicial authority and according to issued warrants.

46 Even if secularism seems unrealistic today, it remains one of the most important perspectives for any set of long term reforms.

IX. On U.S./International approaches to Lebanon and Hezbollah

In the midst of the complexities and ongoing conflicts in the Middle East, it is difficult to suggest a series of measures to address a challenge that is simultaneously Lebanese, regional, religious, and military, and where large networks of both support and animosity exist. Nevertheless, actions can be taken to help contain tensions in Lebanon until broader issues are settled peacefully in the region:

1. Supporting the Lebanese State through—
A- Supporting reform projects and monitoring their execution. Many projects are currently being developed; but it is their execution that is more important. These projects try to improve the performance of public institutions by introducing reforms to the political and economic fields. Such projects could strengthen state institutions and build confidence in them among Lebanese citizens.
B- Supporting the Lebanese Armed Forces, which should be strong enough to maintain security in the country and provide all citizens protection and stability. With time, these forces could weaken tendencies among Lebanese individuals and groups to seek protection through local militias or foreign support.
C- Pressuring Israel to end its occupation of the Shebaa farms and the Ghajar village (which are considered occupied territories under UN resolutions 242 and 425). These areas can be put under UN control until Lebanon and Syria agree on their border demarcations.
D- Supporting the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) mission and pressuring Israel to stop its violations of Lebanese territories, water, and airspace, in addition to pressuring Syria to stop smuggling arms into Lebanon.

2. Supporting Lebanese civil society organizations active in the fields of civic education, culture, media, and electoral reforms and monitoring, and making this support public and transparent to avoid any accusations of "hidden agendas" and blackmail.

3. Dealing with Hezbollah through state institutions (in which it is currently represented), as long as the party rejects violence and demonstrates a commitment to the Lebanese political process. This means that if the party takes violent measures against its Lebanese foes or if it uses armed force to destabilize any Lebanese constitutional institution, any relation with it should be halted.

While it is true that Hezbollah is not similar to other parties, it is also true that in terms of popular legitimacy it represents the majority of one of the largest (if not the largest) Lebanese communities. Labeling it would mean to the majority of its supporters that they are labeled as well, which would bring them closer to the party instead of pushing them away from it. Experiences of previous years have proven this tendency — the electoral performance of the party evolved between the 1992, 1996, 2000, 2005, and 2009 parliamentary elections, gaining more Shiite support each time.

In that sense, the issue goes beyond ***"Engagement with"*** or ***"Boycott of"*** the party, since Hezbollah is — as has been said — a complex phenomenon: it is an ideological party that was shaped by intra-Shiite and intra-Lebanese social and political dynamics; it engaged in Lebanese confessional politics and was able to gain popularity in its constituency. Its rise has led to further dependence of the community on the party for representation and services. Parallel to this local evolution is the important regional dimension and the party's roles in alliances and axes, which is beyond the scope of this paper. But in order to move forward in the Lebanese political process, the local element of the party and its entanglement with the Lebanese Shiite community cannot be ignored.

In any case, Europe and the United States maintain regular contact with the Hezbollah-allied Speaker of the Parliament and the head of the Shiite Amal movement, Nabih Berri. It is possible to extend these contacts and have them - exclusively through the state institutions[47] - with Hezbollah. The party currently has two government ministers, 12 members of parliament, and almost 100 elected municipal council presidents. Many international agencies are involved with ministerial, parliamentary, and municipal projects that include the active participation of Hezbollah representatives. Contacts through state institutions and administrations, and through elected bodies, would be proof of the will to encourage the party to remain engaged in civil politics and elections. Such contact would also weaken disingenuous arguments that the party should keep its weapons; otherwise it will be attacked and its members arrested as "terrorists."

That being said, all efforts to calm the situation in Lebanon and demobilize different confessional blocs will fail in the event of a new war between Israel and Hezbollah or between Israel and Iran (with or without U.S. support). An attack on Iran would potentially lead to a renewed war on the southern borders of Lebanon, which makes the Iranian issue a serious Lebanese concern. A new war would take on a regional dimension and could result in total chaos in Lebanon, further weakening the central state.

Finally, peace initiatives in the Middle East, based on respect for UN resolutions and leading to the creation of a viable and independent Palestinian state, remain the key to stability in the entire region.

47 Some analysts can argue here that Hezbollah is managing its mini-state independently from the Lebanese State, and hence, dealing with the party directly is the relevant realistic approach. This argument holds some truth in its first part, but falls in the trap in the second part of further consecrating the "reality" instead of contributing to changing it and to recognizing the Lebanese State as the only "legitimate actor."

Annex One
Chronology of major events in or related to Lebanon (since 1920)

1920 Declaration of Greater Lebanon by French General Gouraud.
1926 Drafting of the Lebanese Constitution.
1943 Independence of Lebanon: Maronite President Bechara Khoury and Sunni Prime Minister Riad Solh agree on the National Pact to organize the political set up of the new State based on the concept of consociationalism.
1948 Creation of Israel, First Arab Israeli war in which the Lebanese army participates.
A hundred thousand Palestinian refugees flee to Lebanon.
1949 Ceasefire between Lebanon and Israel.
1956 Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalizes the Suez Canal. Israel, Britain and France attack Egypt. The Middle East is divided between pro-Nasser and pro-Western camps.
1958 Civil war in Lebanon over conflicting foreign policy agendas (support for pro-U.S. Baghdad Pact vs. support for a United Arab Republic of Nasser's Egypt and Syria). A compromise was reached following American and Egyptian mediations.
1967 Third Arab Israeli War. The Palestinian Fateh and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) emerge as independent forces following the Arab defeat. Lebanese borders with Israel are used by the Fedayeen in their guerilla tactics.
1969 Clashes between the Lebanese Army and the Palestinian fighters around refugee camps in Lebanon.
Cairo Agreement between the PLO and the Lebanese State to set rules for the Palestinian military operations through South Lebanon borders.
1970 Black September: Jordanian army clashes with Palestinian fighters in Amman, and hundreds of fighters leave Jordan for Lebanon.
1973 Fourth Arab-Israeli war, the last war in terms of State actors on the Arab side.
A new clash between the Lebanese army and the Palestinian fighters and a political crisis paralyses the constitutional institutions in Lebanon.
1975 Lebanese civil war erupts.
1976 Syrian army intervenes in Lebanon.
1978 First Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the establishment of a security zone in occupied south Lebanon.
1982 Second Israeli invasion and the departure of Palestinian fighters after the siege of Beirut.
1983 New phase in the Lebanese war is inaugurated with more "regionalized" Conflict.
Hezbollah is founded.
1988 Lebanese parliament unable to secure the required quorum to elect a new president.
Two de facto governments are acting in the country in an unprecedented situation.
1989 General Michel Aoun, commander of the Lebanese army and head of the military cabinet, declares a "liberation war" against the Syrian army.
Arab mediation leads to the Taef Accord approved by the Lebanese parliament.
The constitution is amended to introduce reforms to the political system.
Elias Hrawi elected president of the Lebanese Republic following the assassination of President René Mouawad.
1990 Syrian army ends General Aoun's rebellion and controls the entirety of Lebanese territories (except for the Israeli occupied zone).
1992 First parliamentary elections in postwar Lebanon, boycotted by the majority of Christian forces and politicians.
Israel assassinates Hezbollah's Secretary General Abbas Moussawi.
Rafic Hariri becomes Prime Minister of Lebanon.
1995 Hrawi's presidency extended after a constitutional amendment.
1996 Second postwar parliamentary elections.
1998 Bachar Assad is in charge of the "Lebanese dossier" in Damascus. Lebanese Army commander Emile Lahoud is elected president of Lebanon after the constitution was amended.
Rafic Hariri leaves his post as prime minister.
2000 Israel withdraws from South Lebanon, ending 22 years of occupation.
Israeli-Syrian negotiations and Israeli-Palestinian negotiations fail to reach accords.
Hafez Assad dies; his son Bachar is elected president after a constitutional amendment.
Third postwar elections in Lebanon: Hariri and allies clinch a large victory, and Hariri returns to his post as prime minister.
2001 Formation of two opposition fronts calling for the withdrawal of Syrian forces from Lebanon in accordance with the Taef Accord: The Qornet Chahwan gathering of Christian political forces and personalities and the Minbar Dimocrati gathering of representatives of leftist, Druze, and Christian groups.
2004 United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1559 calls for presidential elections in Lebanon, withdrawal of foreign military forces, and dismantling of militias in the country.
Emile Lahoud's mandate is extended after a constitutional amendment amid opposition by most of Lebanese political actors and despite UNSCR 1559.
Rafic Hariri leaves his post as prime minister.
MP Marwan Hamade, close to Rafic Hariri and opposition leader Walid Joumblat, escapes an assassination attempt.
2005 Rafic Hariri is assassinated. His funeral is followed by an open sit-in and demonstrations in downtown Beirut, requesting Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon and the resignation of the pro-Syrian Lebanese government.
8 March: Hezbollah and allies demonstrate in Beirut in support of Syrian regime.

14 March: One million Lebanese demonstrate in Beirut demanding Syrian withdrawal.
International investigation in the assassination is approved by the UN Security Council and a fact-finding mission is sent to Lebanon, followed by an international investigation commission.
A series of assassinations hit Lebanese intellectuals, journalists, and politicians opposed to the Syrian regime.
2006 Israel attacks Lebanon following Hezbollah's capture of Israeli soldiers. Thirty-three days of war, causing heavy damages in infrastructure and killing hundreds of Lebanese civilians.
UN Resolution 1701 calls for a cease fire and deployment of United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon troops to control Lebanese borders and forbid Israeli incursions as well as arms smuggling to Hezbollah.
The Lebanese army is deployed for the first time since 1969 in the south, close to the borders with Israel.
Hezbollah and allies quit the Lebanese Government, which is left with no Shiite members. A severe political crisis erupts, and institutions are paralyzed.
2007 End of Lahoud's prolonged presidential mandate. Parliament unable to elect a new president.
2008 Hezbollah invades Beirut militarily and attacks Druze villages in Mount Lebanon.
Doha Accords call to end the crisis, forbid any violence, form an interim unity government, and elect the Army commander as president.
Army commander Michel Sleiman is elected president after the constitution is amended.
2009 Parliamentary elections hold. March 14 alliance wins majority of seats.
Saad Hariri (Rafic's son) is appointed prime minister, and a new unity government is formed guaranteeing veto right to opposition (Hezbollah and allies).
Hezbollah issues its political platform.
2010 Hariri and Syrian president reconcile following a Saudi initiative, but political tensions in Lebanon continue to threaten the fragile situation.

Annex Two
Confessional distribution of posts in Lebanon and voters in 2009 by confession

President of the Republic: Christian Maronite
Speaker of the Parliament: Muslim Shiite
Prime Minister: Muslim Sunni

Parliament: 128 Seats – 64 Christians (34 Maronite, 14 Greek Orthodox, 8 Greek Catholic, 5 Armenian Orthodox, 1 Armenian Catholic, 1 Minority, and 1 Evangelical) and 64 Muslims (27 Sunni, 27 Shiite, 8 Druze, and 2 Alawites).

Government: A 50:50 ratio should always be respected (constitution).

Key posts in administration: A 50:50 ratio should always be respected (tradition).

2009 Electoral Demography by Confession

These lists reflect the numbers of Lebanese who completed 21 years by confession. Since the last official census in Lebanon happened in 1932, these lists are the only indicators on the demographic evolution in the country.

Total number of voters according to the 2009 lists: 3,142,099[48]

Sunni:	853,611
Shiite:	827,169
Maronite:	689,344
Greek Orthodox:	239,469
Druze:	180,197
Greek Catholic:	152,392
Armenian Orthodox:	87,928
Alawite:	27,585
Armenian Catholic:	20,385
Protestant:	17,500
Assyrian Orthodox:	14,439
Assyrian Catholic:	12,202
Latin:	9,811
Israeli (i.e., Jewish):	5,579
Chaldean:	3,128
Syriac:	1,461

48 These are the official Ministry of the Interior figures.

Annex Three
Hezbollah's new political platform[49]

Hezbollah's new political document aims to define the political vision of the party and includes its visions, stances, and aspirations. "This political document also comes as a result of the responsibility of sacrifice that we have experienced."

"At an exceptional time filled with transformations, it is no longer possible to address these changes without noting the special position our resistance has reached. We will address these transformations through two paths: the first is the Resistance one that resorts to the military and political victories as well as the expansion of the Resistance while the second focuses on the path of the US-Israeli mastery and hegemony which is witnessing military defeats that showed a failure in administering the developments."

"What strengthens the international hegemony system crisis are the actual collapses in the financial markets and the entry of the US economy in a situation of failure. Therefore, it's possible to say that we are amid historical transformations that signal the retreat of the US role as a predominant power and the demise of the Zionist entity."

"The resistance movements are at the heart of international transformations and emerge as a strategic factor after performing a central role in producing those transformations in our region." The Resistance in Lebanon was the first to fight occupation and perceived since the beginning that it will reach victory at the end. "Through its long path and its depicted victories, the Resistance's project has grown from a liberation power to a balance and confrontation one to a defense and deterrence one in addition to its political and internal role as an influencing basis in building the just and capable state. The Resistance in Lebanon has evolved from a Lebanese national value to an Arab and Islamic value and has become today an international value that's taught all over the world."

"Hezbollah does not underestimate the size of current challenges and threats or the severity of the confrontation path. However, Hezbollah has now clearer choices and more trust in its people. In this context, Hezbollah defines the main headlines that constitutes a political and intellectual framework of its vision and stances towards the challenges."

CHAPTER ONE – DOMINATION AND HEGEMONY
"Following the World War II, the United States became the center of polarity in the world, taking advantage of accomplishments on several levels of knowledge, including education, science and technology that are supported by an economic system that only views the world as markets that have to abide by the American own view. The most dangerous thing in their hegemony is that they consider that they own the world and therefore, the Western expanding strategy turned to be an international one without limits."

"Globalization has reached its most dangerous aspect when it turned to a military one led by those following the Western plan of domination and was reflected in the Middle East in Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine and Lebanon. This plot found its peak with the neoconservative grip under the administration of George Bush since their project found its way to execution after he was sworn in. It was neither weird nor surprised that what the neoconservative platform focused on the most was rebuilding US capabilities what reflected a strategic vision of US national security through building military strategies not only as a force of deterrence but also as a force of action and intervention. Following the September 11 attacks, the Bush administration found that the opportunity was appropriate to exercise the largest possible influence under the slogan of universal war against terrorism. It has performed many attempts that were considered as successful in the beginning based on militarizing relationships with other countries and on having monopoly over decision-making by taking strategic decisions and rapidly ending war in Afghanistan to have the maximum amount of time for the next step, which is taking over Iraq and the foundation for launching the New Middle East project. Furthermore, the Bush administration sought to establish a conformity between terrorism and Resistance to remove the latter's legitimacy and therefore justify wars against its movements, seeking to remove the fundamental right of the nations of defending their right to live with dignity and national sovereignty."

"The Bush administration gave itself an absolute right to launch destroying wars that don't differentiate between human beings, given that the cost of the US terrorism wars has cost the humanity until now millions of people as well as global destruction. In brief, the Bush administration has transformed the United States into a danger that threatens the whole world."

"Terrorism has turned to be an American pretext for hegemony through many tools such as pursuit, arbitrary detention, unjust trials witnessed in Guantanamo as well as through direct meddling in the sovereignty of other countries and states in addition to impose sanctions against complete nations. The US terror is the root of all terror in the world."

"The failure and decline of the US strategy does not mean it will easily stop interfering, but will make an effort to protect its strategic interests. Indeed, if the whole world was suffering from the American hegemony, the Arab and Islamic nations seem to suffer even more for many considerations related to history, geographic site, civilization and culture. The Arab and Islamic world has always been subject to endless wild and savage wars. However, its most dangerous steps was reached with the creation of the Zionist entity. The central goal of the American hegemony resides in dominating the nations politically, economically, culturally and through all aspects. To achieve this goal, Washington

49 Published in November 2009 on Al-Manar site: http://www.almanar.com.lb, and left unedited as it originally appeared.

resorted to different general policies and work strategies including providing the Zionist entity with stability guarantees, create sedition and divisions in the region especially sectarian ones."

"The American arrogance has left no choice to our nation and people but the choice of resistance, at least for a better life, and for a humanitarian future, a future governed by relations of brotherhood, solidarity and diversity at the same time in a world of peace and harmony."

CHAPTER TWO – LEBANON
CHAPTER TWO, SECTION ONE – THE HOMELAND
"Lebanon is our homeland and the homeland of our fathers, ancestors. It's also the homeland of our children, grandchildren, and the coming generations. It is the country to which we have given our most precious sacrifices for its sovereignty and pride, dignity and liberation."

"We want Lebanon for all Lebanese alike, and we want it unified. We reject any kind of segregation or federalism, whether explicit or disguised. We want Lebanon to be sovereign, free, independent, strong and capable. We want it also to be strong, active, and present in the geopolitics of the region. We want it also to be a key contributor in making the present and the future."

"To conclude, it should be mentioned that one of the most important conditions for the establishment of a home of this type is having a fair state, a state which is capable and strong, as well as a political system that truly represents the will of the people and their aspirations for justice, freedom and security, stability and well-being and dignity. This is what all the Lebanese people want and work to achieve and we are a part of them."

CHAPTER TWO, SECTION TWO – THE RESISTANCE
"Israel represents an eternal threat to Lebanon—the State and the entity—and a real danger to the country in terms of its historical ambitions in land and water especially that Lebanon is considered to be a model of coexistence in a unique formula that contradicts with the idea of the racist state which expresses itself in the Zionist entity. Furthermore, Lebanon's presence at the borders of occupied Palestine obliged it to bear national and pan-Arab responsibilities."

"The Israeli threat to this country began since the laying of the Zionist entity in the land of Palestine, an entity that did not hesitate to disclose its ambitions to occupy some parts of Lebanon and to seize its wealth, particularly its water. Therefore, it sought to achieve these ambitions gradually. This entity started its aggression on Lebanon since 1948 from the border to the depth of the country, from the Hula massacre in 1949 to the aggression on the Beirut International Airport in 1968, including long years of attacks on border areas, their land, population and wealth, as a prelude to seize direct land through repeated invasions, leading to the March 1978 invasion and the occupation of the border area, making its people subject to its authority at all levels, as a prelude to subdue the whole country in the invasion of 1982."

"All of this was taking place with a full support of the United States and ignorance until the level of complicity of the so-called international community and its institutions amid a suspicious Arab official silence and an absence of the Lebanese authority at the time leaving the land and people subject to the Israeli occupation without assuming its responsibilities and national duties."

"Under this great national tragedy, Lebanese who are loyal to their homeland didn't have the choice but to use their right and proceed from their national duty and moral and religious in the defense of their land. Thus, their choice was: the launch of an armed popular resistance to confront the Zionist danger and permanent aggression."

"In such difficult circumstances, the process of restoring the nation through armed resistance started, paving the way for liberating the land and the political decision from the hands of the Israeli occupation as a prelude to the restoration of the State and the building of its constitutional institutions. The Resistance has crowned all these dimensions together through achieving the Liberation in 2000 and the historic victory in July 2006, presenting to the whole world a true experience in defending the homeland, an experience that turned into a school from which nations and states benefit to defend their territory, protect their independent and maintain their sovereignty."

"This national achievement was made real thanks to the support of a loyal nation and a national army, thus frustrating the enemy's goals and causing him a historic defeat, allowing the Resistance to celebrate alongside its fighters and martyrs as well as all of Lebanon through its nation and army the great victory that paved the way for a new phase in the region entitled pivotal role and function of the resistance to deter the enemy and ensure the protection of the country's independence, sovereignty and defend its people and completing the liberation of the rest of the occupied territory."

"The Resistance role is a national necessity as long as the Israeli threats and ambitions continue. Therefore, and in the absence of strategic balance between the state and the enemy, the Israeli threat obliges Lebanon to endorse a defensive strategy that depends on a popular resistance participating in defending the country and an army that preserves the security of the country, in a complementarity process that proved to be successful through the previous phase."
"This formula, developed from within the defensive strategy, constitutes an umbrella of protection for Lebanon, especially

after the failure of other speculations on the umbrellas, whether international or Arab, or negotiating with the enemy. The adoption of the Resistance path in Lebanon achieved its role in liberating the land, restoring the State institutions and the protecting the sovereignty. Afterwards, Lebanese are concerned with safeguarding and maintaining this format because the Israeli danger threatens Lebanon in all its components, what requires the widest Lebanese participation in assuming responsibilities of defense."

"Finally, the success of the Resistance experience in fighting the enemy and the failure of all plots and schemes to delete resistance movements or besieging them or even disarming them annexed to the continuation of the Israeli threat in Lebanon obliges the Resistance to do its best to strengthen its abilities and consolidate its strengths to assume its national responsibilities and liberate what remains under the Israeli occupation in the Shebaa farms and Kfarshouba Drills and the Lebanese town of Ghajar as well as liberating the detainees and missing people and martyrs' bodies."

CHAPTER TWO, SECTION THREE –
STATE AND POLITICAL SYSTEM
"The main problem in the Lebanese political system, which prevents its reform, development and constant updating is political sectarianism," the Hezbollah manifesto clearly states. "The fact that the Lebanese political system was established on a sectarian basis constitutes in itself a strong constraint to the achievement of true democracy where an elected majority can govern and an elected minority can oppose, opening the door for a proper circulation of power between the loyalty and the opposition or the various political coalitions. Thus, abolishing sectarianism is a basic condition for the implementation of the majority-minority rule."
"Yet, and until the Lebanese could reach through their national dialogue this historic and sensitive achievement, which is the abolishment of political sectarianism, and since the political system in Lebanon is based on sectarian foundations, the consensual democracy will remain the fundamental basis for governance in Lebanon, because it is the actual embodiment of the spirit of the constitution and the essence of the Charter of the co-existence."

"From here, any approach to the national issues according to the equation of the majority and minority awaits the achievement of the historic and social conditions for the exercise of effective democracy in which the citizen becomes a value in itself. Meanwhile, the Lebanese will to live together in dignity and equal rights and duties requires a constructive cooperation in order to consolidate the principle of true partnership, which constitutes the most appropriate formula to protect the full diversity and stability after an era of instability caused by the different policies based on the tendency towards monopoly, cancellation and exclusion."
"The consensual democracy constitutes an appropriate political formula to guarantee true partnership and contributes in opening the doors for everyone to enter the phase of building the reassuring state."

"Our vision for the State that we should build together in Lebanon is represented in the State that preserves public freedoms, the State that is keen on national unity, the State that protects its land, people, and sovereignty, the State that has a national, strong and prepared army, the State that is structured under the base of modern, effective and cooperative institutions, the State that is committed to the application of laws on all its citizens without differentiation, the State that guarantees a correct and right parliamentary representation based on a modern election law that allows the voters of choosing their representative away from pressures, the State that depends on qualified people regardless of their religious beliefs and that defines mechanisms to fight corruption in administration, the State that enjoys an independent and non-politicized Justice authority, the State that establishes its economy mainly according to the producing sectors and works on consolidating them especially the agriculture and industry ones, the State that applies the principle of balanced development between all regions, the State that cares for its people and works to provide them with appropriate services, that State that takes care of the youth generation and help young people to develop their energies and talents, the State that works to consolidate the role of women at all levels, the State that care for education and work to strengthen the official schools and university alongside applying the principle of obligatory teaching, the State that adopts a decentralized system, the State that works hard to stop emigration and the State that guards its people all over the world and protects them and benefits from their positions to serve the national causes."

"The establishment of a state based on these specifications and requirements is a goal to us just like it's the goal of every honest and sincere Lebanese. In Hezbollah, we will exert all possible efforts, in cooperation with the popular and political forces, to achieve this noble national goal."

CHAPTER TWO, SECTION FOUR – LEBANESE-PALESTINIAN TIES
"One of the tragic consequences of the emergence of the Zionist entity on the land of Palestine and the displacement of its inhabitants is the problem of Palestinian refugees who moved to Lebanon to live temporarily in its land as guests to their fellow Lebanese until returning to their homes from where they were expelled."

"The original and direct reason of the sufferance of Lebanese and Palestinians was actually the Israeli occupation of Palestine and all the resulting tragedies and calamities in the region. Moreover, the suffering of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon was not limited to the pain of forced migration but also to the Israeli massacres and atrocities in addition to what happened in the Nabatiyeh camp that has been fully destroyed. Palestinian refugees are also deprived of

all civilian and social rights since the Lebanese governments didn't assume their responsibilities towards them."

"The Lebanese authorities are nowadays called to assume their responsibilities and therefore build the Lebanese-Palestinian relations under right, solid and legal bases that respect the justice, rights and mutual interests' balances to both nations. It is imperative that the Lebanese-Palestinian relationship remains governed by the whims and moods, as well as political calculations and internal interactions and international interventions."

"We believe that succeeding in this mission requires a Lebanese-Palestinian direct dialogue, a permission for Palestinians in Lebanon to agree on a unified reference that represents them, providing Palestinian refugees with their social and civilian rights, committing to the Right of Return and reject settlement."

CHAPTER TWO, SECTION FIVE – LEBANON AND ARAB TIES
"Lebanon is committed to the just and fair Arab causes, at the top of which comes the Palestinian cause as well as the conflict with the Israeli enemy. Even more, there is a definite need for concerted efforts to overcome the conflicts that run through the Arab ranks."

"The contradiction of strategies and the difference of alliances, despite their seriousness and intensity, doesn't justify the policies of targeting or engaging in external projects, based on the deepening discord and inciting sectarianism, leading to the exhaustion of the nation and therefore serving the Zionist enemy in the implementation of the purposes of America."
"The Resistance choice constitutes once again a central need and an objective factor in strengthening the Arab stance and weakening the enemy. In this context, Syria has recorded a distinctive attitude and supported the resistance movements in the region, and stood beside us in the most difficult circumstances, and sought to unify Arab efforts to secure the interests of the region and challenges."

"Hence, we emphasize the need to adhere to the distinguished relations between Lebanon and Syria as a political and security and economic need, dictated by the two countries and two peoples and the imperatives of geopolitics and the requirements for Lebanese stability and common challenges. We also call for an end to all the negative sentiment that have marred bilateral ties in the past few years and urge these relations to return to their normal status as soon as possible."

CHAPTER TWO, SECTION SIX –
LEBANON AND ISLAMIC RELATIONS
"The Arab and Islamic world is facing challenges that shouldn't be undermined. Indeed, the sectarian fabricated conflicts, especially between Sunnis and Shiites, are threatening the cohesiveness of our societies. Therefore, and instead of being a source of wealth, the sectarian diversities seem to be exploited as factors of division and incitement. The situation resulting from this bad use seems to be the result of the intersection of Western deliberate policies, the US in particular."

"Hezbollah emphasizes the necessity to cooperate will Islamic states at different levels to gain strength in confronting hegemony schemes. Such cooperation also serves in facing the cultural invasion of the community and media, and encourages the Islamic states to take advantage of its resources in the exchange of the different benefits between these countries."

"In this context, Hezbollah considers Iran as a central state in the Muslim world, since it is the State that dropped through its revolution the Shah's regime and its American-Israeli projects, and it's also the state that supported the resistance movements in our region, and stood with courage and determination at the side of the Arab and Islamic causes and especially the Palestinian one."

CHAPTER TWO, SECTION SEVEN –
LEBANON AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
"Hezbollah considers that the unilateral hegemony in the world overthrows the international balance and stability as well as the international peace and security. The unlimited US support for Israeli and its cover for the Israeli occupation of Arab lands annexed to the American domination of international institutions and the American meddling in various states' affairs and adoption of the principle of circulating wars puts the American administration in the position of the aggressor and holds it responsible in producing chaos in the international political system."

"The American administration's unlimited support to Israel ... places the American administration in the position of the enemy of our nation and our peoples."

CHAPTER THREE –
PALESTINE AND COMPROMISE NEGOTIATIONS
"The history of the Arab-Israeli conflict proves that armed struggle and military resistance is the best way of ending the occupation. The method of negotiations has proven that the Zionist entity becomes more boastful and more belligerent, and that it has no intention of reaching an accord. The resistance has managed to achieve a huge victory over the Zionist entity, provide the homeland with protection, and liberation of the remainder of its land. This function is a lasting necessity before Israel's expansionist threats and ambitions as well as the lack of a strong government in Lebanon. The ongoing Israeli threat forces the resistance to continue to boost its capacity ... in order to fulfill its role in liberating occupied territory."

"We categorically reject any compromise with Israel or recognizing its legitimacy," his eminence concluded. "This position is definitive, even if everyone recognizes Israel."


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