

The Lebanese Cause Challenges, Risks, and Rescue Dynamics

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Introduction

Lebanon has lived in imminent danger throughout the ages, both before and after the formation of the State of Greater Lebanon (1920). It is very true that many sources of this danger were regional and international, but it is also correct to assert that many of these dangers were national, or more precisely internal. In all aspects of these two types of dangers, each with its own complexity, the fragility of patriotism and the weak sense of belonging were major factors in constraining the national wills seeking a strong state.

Binding national wills requires a conceptual deconstruction and practical understanding due to the multi-level confusion that surrounds them. This paper sheds light on the challenges posed to the current Lebanese Cause, encompassing not only the challenges themselves but also the associated risks and the dynamics of rescue. It departs from the historical narration or the detailed elaboration, focusing instead on a concentrated effort to comprehend the reality confronting the hijacked Lebanese State in its constitution, sovereignty and national security. Consequently, the Lebanese people find themselves held hostage in terms of their own human security. Within this context, the paper delves into an understanding of the problematic aspects of the Lebanese situation, aiming to rectify concepts and paths in order to realize the aspirations of the Lebanese people for the establishment of a free, independent, sovereign pluralist citizenship state where the living together reality prevails. It becomes evident, within this framework, that the state, in terms of its existence and function, mirrors the essence of citizenship with its moral, constitutional, sovereign, and administrative obligations. These two elements are crucial in any vision for Lebanon's return to the reality of its existence based on freedom, pluralism and coexistence. In this manner, Lebanon can be safeguarded through sustainable public policies and good governance, rooted in the constitution and nothing else. Its stability will ensure a state governed by the rule of law, respect for rights, and good governance.

All of the above illustrates the pressing challenges facing the Lebanese people and the Lebanese Cause, encompassing the identity, and civilizational form, as well as the Republic with its values of freedom and democracy, along with the peaceful and orderly transfer of power. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the specifics of this challenge and elucidate its components until one can envision the potential for liberation and the restoration of its pathways, regardless of their complexity.

1 - Lebanon and the Peril of its Identity and the State

Lebanon faces a grave danger to its national identity. For decades, the Lebanese identity has endured systematic destruction and organized crime. This systematic destruction primarily manifests itself in the complete exclusion of the common good from public affairs and political behaviors.

Secondly, it involves the substitution of national affiliations with transnational ones. Thirdly, it is based on prioritizing hybrid political alliances to consolidate positions of power at the expense of preserving the rights of the Lebanese people.

Fourthly, it is based on the consideration of ending the formula of coexistence, on the basis that it has failed over the past hundred years.

Fifthly, this threat encompasses an attack on the social contract founded on the rights of individuals and guarantees for the various spiritual groups that constitute it. This attack is manifested through assaults on values such as freedom, pluralism, justice, equality, human rights, accountability, and transparency.

Sixthly, it involves strategic maneuvers to implicate Lebanon in the direct and indirect resettlement of Palestinian and Syrian refugees due to the poor governance of these two critical crises.

Seventhly, it aims to displace Lebanon's native citizens, either through the absence of essential services in finance, economics, social welfare, education, and healthcare, or through the imposition of a lifestyle incongruent with their own.

Eighthly, it entails violations of the sovereignty of the Constitution and the rule of law, which undermine the protection of the rights of male and female citizens.

Lebanon's Constitutional Civic state is in danger. For decades, the Lebanese state has been subjected to systematic destruction and organized crime. The systematic destruction primarily stems from the refusal to implement the Constitution comprehensively.

Secondly, it involves transforming the Constitutional institutions into sites of influence for leaders who have seized control of their sects.

Thirdly, this threat includes the dismantling of Constitutional institutions and creating vacancies in key positions, hollowing out the essence of participatory governance, and distorting the meaning of "consensual democracy" and "pact". These terms have been turned into a disruptive veto system or an unconstitutional framework for dialogue auxiliary to institutions and those who occupy them.

Fourthly, the emergence and expansion of an armed militia with a non-Lebanese ideology and agenda, attacking the sovereignty of the State.

Fifthly, political assassinations are employed as a means of coercion, intimidation, and silencing free thinkers or those with differing opinions.

Sixthly, the generalization of corruption, contraband trade, tax evasion, border smuggling, money laundering, and the misappropriation of public funds further supports the entrenchment and polarization of influence, which contradicts the respect for the rights of the Lebanese people.

Seventhly, it involves intimidating the Lebanese judiciary and violating its independence, preventing the truth from emerging and justice prevailing in cases such as the Beirut Port bombing (**August 4, 2020**), all political assassinations, and corruption cases. Eighthly, it concerns the failure to implement United Nations Security Council Resolutions including resolutions No. **1559, 1680, 1701, 2650**, and all relevant decisions of the League of Arab States.

This has resulted in Lebanon being drawn into regional and international conflicts, contradicting its policy of neutrality, which is the foundation of its existence as a sovereign state. It has disrupted Lebanon's normal relations with its Arab siblings and friends in the international community. Thus, isolating Lebanon from its partnership with the free liberal world.

All of the above confirms the existential threat that Lebanon faces with its identity and state, jeopardizing regional and international peace and security. Therefore, there is an urgent need to address this threat while adhering to the implementation of the Taëf Accord, international resolutions by the United Nations and the United Nations Security Council, as well as resolutions issued by the League of Arab States.

It is as urgent as it is to approach the nature of this threat out of the need to modify the current balance of power. This urgency is also reflected in the necessity to rebalance the current distribution of power. This adjustment involves reestablishing the initiative to build a civil state founded on principles of freedom, sovereignty, fairness, and independent citizenship. Achieving this renewal requires a thorough understanding of the obstacles hindering this constructive process.

2 - Lebanon, Identity, and State Ethical Dilemma

It is impossible to form a national identity that parallels the framework of state institutions without connecting all of its female and male citizens, regardless of their unified or combined affiliations, through a moral contract that serves the common good. The common good is an inherent component of any social contract and the foundation of every constitutional structure. Given this equation, it becomes evident that Lebanon's first challenge regarding its identity and state lies in the erosion of its moral system.

This erosion has led to the absence of a shared value system and common interests among the Lebanese people. Consequently, it has paved the way for suspicious influences from various directions, disrupting public order contrary to what the Constitution mandates and the public interest necessitates.

While some or a vast majority may perceive the moral problem as a mere symptom of constitutional violations, sovereignty breaches, and widespread corruption, in reality, the deficiency in the moral system remains the root cause of these symptoms.

In any case, in addressing the defect in the moral system to reshape Lebanon's identity and state, there is an opinion that this is closely related to civic education. However, an in-depth reading of the failure experienced by civic education reveals its impact on the current situation in Lebanon.

To the same extent, this failure requires from us a second courageous recognition that the mercantilist, clientelist, privatized, and subservient mentality, with waves of improvisation, demagoguery, populism, intimidation, incitement, bullying, and assassination, is what must be addressed in a deep dialogue about what it means to be Lebanese citizens in a country that is proud of us, and a country that we are proud of. This requires a mature understanding of the constitutional problem we suffer from, based on the moral problem.

3 - Lebanon, Identity, and State The Constitutional Dilemma

Since the establishment of the State of Greater Lebanon (1920), the architect of this civilizational path, Patriarch Elias Howayek, emphasized that it was founded upon a “**National Bond**” and not a “**Sectarian Bond.**” Patriarch Howayek didn't confirm this vision in the face of the pluralism that brought the regions of Lebanon together and at the heart of religious diversity. Rather, he insisted on the uniqueness of the convergence of all the pre-Lebanese components unified at the time; emphasizing the character of the pluralistic cultural uniqueness within the model of living together. Claims that Lebanon's foundation is solely sectarian in nature are suspicious demagogues. Similarly, assertions that the experience of coexistence since 1920 guided by the constitution has failed, are influenced by imported ideologies. Lastly, claims that the participatory constitution gives birth to crises suggest a hybrid of contexts.

The inclusion of the **article 95 in the Lebanese Constitution** since 1926 simulates the need to transition to a citizenship-based state following the establishment of the participatory system. This commitment was

reaffirmed in the Constitution of the First Republic (**1943**) and the Constitution of the Second Republic (**1989**) through explicit structural reforms. These reforms aimed to establish the sovereignty of the Lebanese state by granting it exclusive control over armament and the use of force. This inclusion of Article **95** indicates without any ambiguity that the defect was not in the constitution, but in turning against it, especially since its provisions were intentionally not implemented.

In addition to article **95** of the Constitution, which calls for the "Formation of the National Commission for the abolition of Sectarianism," exists a comprehensive set of reforms. Among the most crucial reforms are the creation of a Senate that safeguards religious components, the election of a Parliament free from sectarian affiliations, the implementation of expanded administrative decentralization, and a clear commitment to the National Pact to distance Lebanon from distorted political alignments, regional and international conflicts, and to restrict armament to the military, security, and legal forces while enforcing the judiciary's independence. Was all of the above applied?

Consequently, it becomes clear that Lebanon, its identity and state, is suffering from the destruction of the Constitution and not a flaw in the constitution. This does not necessarily mean ignoring the gaps in the constitution; however, the demonization of the constitution by those who oppose it or seek new options is merely a superficial diagnosing of the nature of the peaceful battle against a system that specializes in organized crime against the Lebanese Republic. These factions are now united by a fatal objective alliance to test Lebanon's history, thereby threatening the Lebanese experience model.

4 - Lebanon, Identity, and State The Sovereignty Dilemma

The success of establishing a national identity and forming a state is jeopardized when external identities and states undermine sovereignty. Such involvement results in a duality or multiple entities asserting control over decisions related to peace and war, even extending to the impudent ability to arm and use force outside of the legitimate state institutions.

Isn't the issue here distinctly sovereignty? The truth is that overthrowing the Constitution has allowed the emergence of supra-state platforms. Some of these platforms may appear to be Lebanese but serve non-Lebanese agendas, while others, though non-Lebanese in origin, also promote non-Lebanese interests. The custodians of these platforms have collectively declared their desire for "the unity of squares" in a cross-border context. In this scenario, the militarized sectarian impasse, assuming a non-Lebanese role, poses a significant threat to the nation's integrity, making the existence of the state itself precarious.

Cross-border affiliations, coupled with organized groups operating both within and beyond Lebanon's borders, lie at the heart of the sovereignty problem that denounces the Lebanese legitimacy and its official institutions; to such an extent that Lebanon has found itself in a confrontational position with organizations such as the League of Arab States and the United Nations. It is worth noting that Lebanon is a founding member of these organizations, and its role significantly influences regional and international peace efforts. In this context, it is urgent to redefine the concept of national security for Lebanon and human security for the Lebanese people. This redefinition should encompass not only security and military aspects but also foreign policy with all vital sectors, especially the economic and financial sectors, as well as the social protection structure. Failure to do so may lead to the erosion of the remaining state structure.

5 - Lebanon, Identity, and State The Administrative Dilemma

The exploitation of state administrations to serve political interests and ideological agendas, often concealed within sectarian and religious contexts, has ended the state's function to regulate the social contract binding the Lebanese people. Simultaneously, it has destroyed the unique advantages that Lebanon once enjoyed.

While the public sector has been weakened and depleted, the private sector has been influenced, either through incentives or intimidation, by certain exploitative elements within civil society. The balance between the public sector, the private sector, and civil society was disrupted in this manner, further exacerbating the administrative challenge. This ongoing imbalance obstructs the formulation of effective public policies on one hand and undermines good governance on the other.

Fait accompli forces have managed to sever the connection between citizens and the concept of the state. Lebanese citizens, driven by a mindset of obtaining services or legal protection at any cost, inadvertently facilitated this mission. Moreover, cartels and organized networks have emerged, specializing in the construction of subsidiary administrative structures and manipulating legislative processes to suit the needs of their masters or even their cronies.

The administrative challenge poses an existential threat to both Lebanon's identity and the State itself, as it disrupts the fair mediation between political actions and the citizens' natural right to public service. It is imperative to engage in a thoughtful discussion about the nature of public policies that Lebanon should adopt, all while examining the elements of good governance and assessing the validity of these policies.

6 - Lebanon, Identity, and State The Political Dilemma

The equation "From Politics to Policies" was launched by the "**Civic Influence Hub**" (CIH)* in **2012** to highlight the divergence of political actions in Lebanon from their moral, constitutional, sovereign, and sound administrative principles. Politics, in essence, involves engagement in public affairs to serve the common good. Some may view this definition of politics as utopian, emotional, or divine, but the truth remains that politics holds no value unless it is directed towards ensuring the security, peace, and prosperity of societies by safeguarding the rights of individuals.

This involves expanding democracy as a peaceful and regular transfer of power, guided by governance programs prepared and adopted by political parties. The public plays a vital role in scrutinizing both the content and implementation of these programs, rooted in the principles of accountability and responsibility within the judiciary and similarly at the ballot boxes.

Lebanese politics, or perhaps more accurately, the politics of Lebanon's politicians, have violated the ethical principles of the common good. Trade-offs, deals, discretions, unpredictability, grey areas, opportunism, and disruptions have become prevalent, transforming the participatory system into a deadly **Vetocracy**. This unsettling expansion continued until **2019**, when the **October 17** movement emerged as a pivotal moment in reshaping the political landscape. Regardless of its success or deviation from its initial goals, what matters most is that Lebanon has since witnessed a new phase in political action. During this phase, efforts have been made to rectify concepts and seek a more righteous path.

7 - The Lebanese Cause (2023) Correcting Concepts and Paths

In recent months and years, the serious issues we have discussed have prompted discussions about the root causes of Lebanon's crisis. In Lebanon, as well as in the Arab world and the international community, there is a search for answers regarding whether this crisis results from flaws in the Lebanese constitution, deviations in the behavior of political leaders, or the crossing of transnational sectarian boundaries beyond national borders. Is it a consequence of this crossing, akin to the harm caused by political sectarianism, or does it solely stem from poor governance and the absence of sustainable public policies?

Three propositions are put forth to address these questions. The first proposal suggests the urgent need for a new founding conference to establish a new social contract among the Lebanese people. This would entail adjusting the balances that emerged after the Taëf Accord in **1989**.

The second proposition argues that the concept of "living together" has failed and, as a result, Lebanon should consider transitioning to a form of government resembling federalism or confederation.

The third proposition supports the idea of convening an international conference to discuss the Lebanese Cause. Internal dialogue among the Lebanese has proven ineffective, marred by opportunism, power struggles, intimidation, and coercion at all levels.

In fact, Lebanon is not experiencing a constitutional crisis. This confirmation does not exclude the fact that there are some gaps or ambiguities in the Lebanese Constitution that need to be addressed. This should not be misinterpreted as a call for amending or changing the constitution. Instead, the focus should be on implementing the Taëf Accord comprehensively, particularly Article **95**, which addresses the abolition of sectarianism, the establishment of the Senate, and the application of expanded administrative decentralization. This entails extending the sovereignty of the Lebanese state over its entire territory while restricting armament to legitimate state military and security forces.

The Lebanese people are unquestionably the victims of an organized crime that has disrupted the balance of power, potentially endangering Lebanon as "Country with a Message" and its stability if discussions about a new social contract were to begin.

Moreover, Lebanon is not facing a crisis of coexistence; the formula of coexistence and participatory governance is integral to Lebanon's "Country with a Message" identity. The Taëf Accord proposed structural reforms that, if implemented, could address all legitimate feelings of frustration and illegitimate power dominance, as well as those separatist tendencies that some openly declare.

The proposal for an international conference or adopting an international approach to the Lebanese Cause could contribute to restoring a balance of power and facilitate a national dialogue on specific issues. The work of international entities like the International Support Group for Lebanon (**2013**) or the International Quintet (**2022**) is crucial for reviving international support for Lebanon and achieving a Lebanese rescue agreement centered around three structural tracks.

A. Completing the implementation of the Taëf Accord

There is an urgent need to elect a rescue president and form a government whose first and immediate mission is to finalize the implementation of the reform provisions contained in the Taëf Accord. The successive authorities, previously under non-Lebanese tutelage and currently controlled by external forces with an iron fist, have deliberately obstructed its implementation since **1990**. At the forefront of these reforms is the execution of Article 95 of the Constitution, which calls for the elimination of political sectarianism, the establishment of a state based on citizenship, the creation of a Senate, and the introduction of comprehensive administrative decentralization.

It is essential to highlight that the deliberate decision not to implement these reform clauses has transformed Lebanon from a participatory system built on consensus into a system dominated by mutual vetoes. The failure to implement these reform provisions was not accidental; it is a result of practices that perpetuate this obstructive reality. It is imperative to put an end to these practices.

Completing the implementation of these reforms will provide assurance to the various Lebanese spiritual families, rationalize the governance of public affairs and the administration of the state, and guide Lebanon toward becoming a Citizenship-based State.

B. Implementing United Nations Resolutions

The active Lebanese authorities are committed to implementing decisions issued by the United Nations and the League of Arab States, particularly resolutions No. **1559, 1680, 1701 and 2650**. This commitment aims to restore Lebanon to international and Arab legitimacy while ensuring the return of military and security institutions to the constitutional framework, reaffirming the state's sovereignty over its entire territory and borders. This effort is crucial for ending the circulation of illegal arms, curbing illicit trade, and preventing evasion. Implementing United Nations resolutions strengthens border control, prevents interference in regional conflicts, supports the return to democratic governance, and consolidates the establishment of a rule of law and justice. Without these actions, restoring trust and revitalizing the economy are unattainable goals. Trust is the cornerstone of economic recovery and social justice.

C. Achieving Neutrality while Respecting Pluralism within Citizenship

Both regional and international powers recognize the importance of Lebanon being sovereign, pluralistic, and neutral and a country where the rule of law is upheld through citizenship. This approach promotes respect for human dignity and the common good through sound governance. In this way, Lebanon alone is capable of regaining trust.

Therefore, it is crucial to develop a balanced overall policy that ensures the safe return of Syrian refugees and seek a just solution for Palestinian refugees based on UN Resolution **194**. This resolution enshrines the right of return, preserving their dignity and national identity, while safeguarding Lebanon from existential and identity threats.

Neutrality and pluralism within the framework of citizenship foster enduring stability, enabling the Lebanese people to experience a system of good governance in a living together context. This model can serve as an example for effectively managing diversity across the Middle East and the Arab world, from Yemen and Syria to Iraq.

8 - The Lebanese Cause: Rescue Dynamics

Addressing the constitutional, sovereign, political, and administrative moral dilemma creates an opportunity for implementing structural, economic, and financial sectorial reforms in collaboration with Arab and International institutions. This move aims to put an end to the social tragedy stemming from complex crises.

Therefore, the realization of a comprehensive initiative similar to what we have mentioned can only be achieved by electing a President of the Republic who is committed to salvaging Lebanon, upholding sovereignty, and driving reform. Such leadership will play a crucial role in strengthening the Lebanese Constitution as we embark on the second centenary of the establishment of the State of Greater Lebanon.

History aligns with truth and justice. The national will to save Lebanon, which lies in the dynamics of sovereign reformist forces, vibrant civil society, and the diaspora, is based on the declaration of intentions and agreement on principles. However, there are still flaws in the effectiveness of coordinating efforts. Therefore, a top priority is launching a collaborative effort to form broad alliances based on a clear vision of the Lebanese Cause. This includes addressing existential threats, constitutional challenges, sovereignty issues, economic disparities, social concerns, administrative hurdles, and diplomatic complexities. It is essential to prevent these challenges from eroding Lebanon's cultural identity, grounded in its rich historical heritage.

The national momentum was slow to align with the dynamism of the diaspora, which has actively supported the Lebanese people's basic needs while engaging in coordinating platforms that work toward liberating Lebanon and restoring the Republic based on the values of freedom, pluralism, and justice. Central to all these efforts is the goal of building a citizenship-based state by upholding the constitution, relevant United Nations resolutions, and League of Arab States initiatives. This entails a commitment to keep Lebanon away from regional and international conflicts in preparation for declaring its neutrality. Consequently, it requires engaging in structural and sectorial reforms at all levels. The Lebanese diaspora has taken an interest in national affairs, not only through democratic electoral processes but also as a means of understanding the struggle over Lebanon's identity and its civilizational role on regional and global stages.

The Arab and international dynamics, while seemingly supportive of internal national and diaspora efforts, have yet to move beyond principled positions. Moreover, they are susceptible to undue influence, notably from French diplomacy. Consequently, there is a need for a systematic Lebanese initiative that converges the internal, diaspora, and international dimensions to define common values and interests. This should encompass Lebanon's essential ties with its Arab partners and its strategic partnership with the free world. The Holy See represents a moral compass in this diplomatic endeavor, and any attempt to diminish its role reflects a lack of appreciation for its significance and effectiveness.

The Fundamental Battle

In conclusion, it becomes evident that the central battle revolves around the future of the Lebanese Republic, its identity, its national security, and the well-being of its people in the coming century. In this context, the crisis presents an opportunity, and the diverse geographical landscape provides an ideal environment for coexistence, free from totalitarianism and fragmentation but driven by a shared objective alliance.






Claims that the path to rescue is blocked or that the process is trapped by interests and trade-offs are mere propaganda. Propaganda is destructive, and all reformist and transformative sovereign forces remain committed to an unyielding struggle. Lebanon, a country with a message, deserves no less. Progress is cumulative. This is the essence of our endeavor. May God protect Lebanon.

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