

NEWSLETTER

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER BY SAWTI AND THE PHOENIX DAILY



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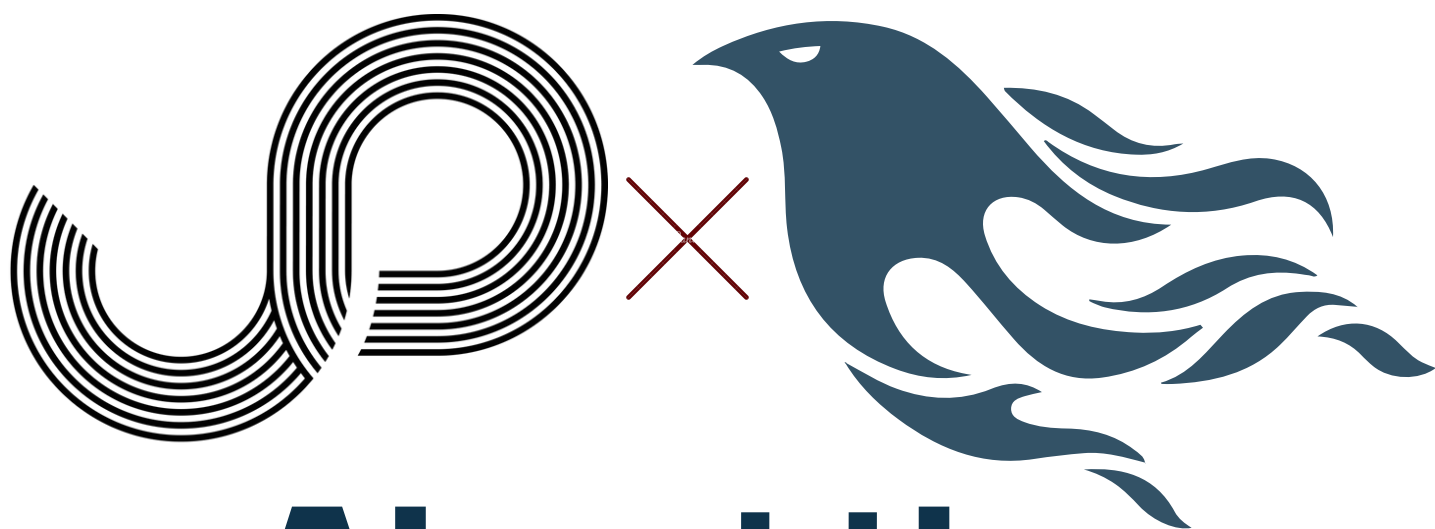
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About the Partnership

The Sawti x The Phoenix Daily partnership is a Lebanese co-authoring partnership aiming to publish content on Lebanese elections and pertinent national affairs, in order to cultivate an environment of intellect-driven, evidence-based, civic engagement through informed analysis.

The partnership aims to publish monthly articles in collaboration between The Phoenix Daily Staff Writers, and Sawti members, in the lead up to Lebanon's 2022 parliamentary elections. All articles will be published on the Sawti month-end newsletter & on The Phoenix Daily's online website.

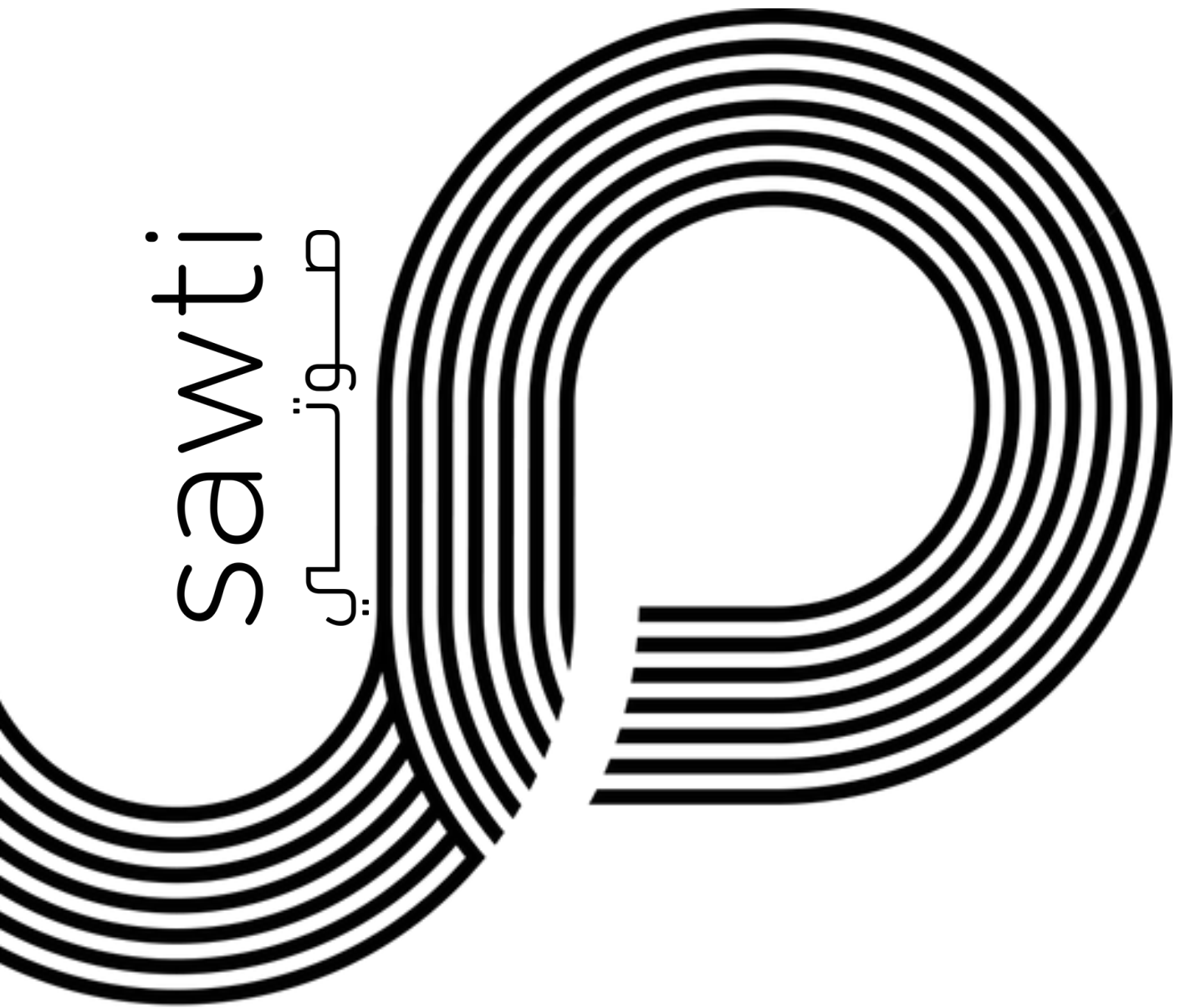


About us

We are a national Lebanese independent newspaper covering national & international affairs in Arabic, English, and French for a better and more intellectual Lebanon.

The Phoenix Daily is your place for the latest analyses, reports, news, and intellectual pieces on national and international affairs. Ranging from political and economic conversations, to historic and philosophical, The Phoenix Daily remains committed to fostering a more intellectual, aware, and every-learning Lebanese society.

Being independent, we are able to bring perspectives, opinions, and analysis from various viewpoints together for the purpose of creating complementary discussions for knowledge creation.



About us

Sawti is a global movement for Lebanese people all around the world to make their voices heard, rally for change and participate in the political process as active citizens.

Sawti's website, social media and global network will be a resource for accessing information on elections, parliament and alternative parties.

Sawti will also provide a platform to engage with alternative political parties, discuss the issues and connect with Lebanese communities around the world.

IS LEBANON A PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM? – SPOILER ALERT, IT'S REALLY NOT

OPINION ANALYSIS. STAFF WRITER AND CONTRIBUTOR
TALA KARKANAWI AND JONATHAN LAHDO

Lebanon, a country that was referred to as a golden state, and one of the few countries with democratic stability in the Middle East, is faced with economic, political, and social downfall. Lebanon used to be a model of what a stable democracy is in the Middle East, with plenty of different ethnicities and cultures, and a society that pledged to form a correct political representation through a power-sharing confessional structure and charter. It is essential for us to understand that Lebanon is surrounded with troubled countries in a region full of high political and economic tensions and instability.

In order to understand how the parliamentary system works in Lebanon, we have to understand what a parliamentary system is at first. A parliamentary system of a certain government means that the executive branch of the government has the support of the parliament in whatever decision is made. Usually this type of support is shown when a vote of confidence is given. It is important to note that a government in a parliamentary system should have an equal balance between the executive and the legislature.

A parliamentary system in Lebanon consists of a head of a government, and a head of state. A specific term is given for each role to govern and is later changed. The head of the government is usually the prime minister, and the head of state is usually the president of the country, or in multiple other cases, a constitutional monarchy. In addition, a separation of power consists within a parliamentary system to ensure a clear balance between the legislature and the executive.



Lebanon is considered a parliamentary system within its government, with a slight twist to its nature. Ever since the establishment of the Taif Agreement in 1989, the parliament and the parliament is divided in a way where all sect groups are supposedly satisfied. The sectarian distribution is also maintained in public offices.

Lebanon, by a customary and an unwritten law, has the parliament and the government divided between religions and sectarian groups. The president has to be a Maronite Christian, the prime minister a Sunni Muslim, and the speaker of the National Assembly a Shia Muslim. The president is elected by $\frac{2}{3}$'s of the national assembly, which is led by the head of the national Assembly who is currently Nabih Berri, for a term of 6 years, with an eligibility of serving consecutive terms.

The president, alongside the head of the national assembly, and the deputies of the parliament, allows the prime minister to formulate a cabinet, making sure that the sectarian divide is established within the regulations of the Taif Agreement.

The cabinet holds more power than the president, and in order for it to stay enact, a vote of confidence has to be voted from the national assembly. If a cabinet falls apart, it is because a vote of confidence of a 'No' took place, which rarely happens, or pressure from foreign powers, riots, and tensions, which can pressure the prime minister in dissolving the cabinet .

Now that we understand briefly how the parliament and the government takes place in Lebanon, where did we go wrong?

Within the books, the governmental system in Lebanon is following the regulations of a parliamentary system decently, that is if we want to disregard the sectarian division as well. However, this is unfortunately not the case. Lebanon is a failed state, consisting of a failed parliamentary system with no means of decency and responsibility. The country has witnessed an increase in the tensions between the divided people and divergence. In addition, extensive efforts have been occurring supposedly to prevent the system from being tainted by regional commotion and extremist groups. Unfortunately, Lebanon faced multiple political instability, conflicts, and issues relating to national security in the last decade that led to the situation we are in today, which includes, the governance crisis between the years of 2005-2008, postponing national elections plenty of times with the excuse of regional instability, and so much more.



Moreover, the public uprisings that occurred in 2015, and the results of the municipal elections in 2016, when plenty of the citizens voted for independent candidates, instead of the typical candidates who hold the public offices. The citizens have been portraying their discontent with the government for so long now, which shows the leader's failure in managing and leading the country.

Additionally, a crisis which we deem essential, is the presidential void between the years of 2014 until 2016. In a parliamentary system like Lebanon's, the constitution allows the parliament, which is the legislature, the sovereignty to elect a president, who is the head of state. Hence, making it the national assembly's job to elect a head of state for the republic, which is a process the parliament believes protects the balance of power in the country. The president plays the biggest role in the Maronite sect, which is part of the division Lebanon has in safeguarding a balanced sectarian division.

Article 49 of the Lebanese' constitution sets out the principles and the framework of how an election for the head of state goes. The article sets out the typical candidate for this position, and it is identical to the type of elections that occur in the parliamentary elections. Hence, allowing all citizens who are eligible for parliament, are also eligible for the presidency. However, knowing this is not usual and a typical parliamentary system, the national accord, and customary laws have placed a limitation on the right of being elected as a president, which prevents anyone who does not belong to the Maronite sect from being elected.

Having considered the function of the parliament within the larger framework of the Lebanese state, it is equally important to analyse the people's participation in order to accurately evaluate the effectiveness of Lebanon's parliamentary system; the people's participation comes, of course, in the form of voting in regularly held elections.

As is the case with other countries that have parliamentary systems, Lebanon is divided into a number of electoral districts that each contain a certain number of representatives that is theoretically proportional to the population size of that district. Specifically, Lebanon comprises 15 electoral districts and has 128 members of parliament that serve as representatives for their respective districts. According to the Taif agreement, these 128 members are split equally amongst Christians and Muslims, with further subdivisions by sect between those two groups.

All Lebanese citizens (except for non-retired military personnel, members of the security forces, and convicted felons) aged 21 or older are eligible to vote in parliamentary elections, which are supposed to take place every 4 years. In these elections, candidates run in groups on various lists that people in from their district vote for. Lebanon's electoral law has changed over the years, and in the most recent elections that took place in 2018, one of the most notable changes was the shift from a majoritarian system to a proportional system - what this meant was that while in previous elections the list that got the majority of votes would win all of the seats in that electoral district, it became possible for the seats to be proportionally allocated amongst lists that met the electoral threshold (also known as the minimum percentage of votes, referring to the number of votes in the district divided by the number of seats.)

Beyond the sectarian nature of the parliament, there are some key issues with Lebanon's voting processes that call into question the effectiveness of its parliamentary system.

Firstly, there is the issue of the 'preferential vote.' While each constituent in a district votes for one list that is made up of several candidates (the number of which must correspond to at least forty percent of the district's seats), they are also able to select a single candidate within that list to whom they want to give their preferential vote. Once the seat distribution amongst lists meeting the electoral threshold is complete, individual seat allocation is determined by the preferential votes and sectarian distribution within that particular district. Essentially, all the candidates are then ordered by how many preferential votes they received and seats are distributed to them on this basis, with religious quotas being filled first. What this means is that depending on the outcome of the distribution of the preferential votes and the religious make-up of the district, it is entirely possible for winners of the preferential vote on lists that meet the electoral threshold to not make it into parliament while a candidate with one preferential vote potentially could. Although these examples obviously represent the most extreme scenarios, it demonstrates the problematic nature of this system of voting.

Additionally, people vote based on their village/town of origin rather than their place of residence as is the case in most countries. This is an issue for many reasons, not least of which is that a member of parliament is running to serve their constituents' needs, which obviously does not apply to those that do not live in the constituency. This understandably leads to a disconnect between voters and the candidates they are voting for, and calls into question how people living in a place they are not from can express their opinion on who their representatives are. Furthermore, this system acts as a form of voter suppression, as it requires voters to return to their village/town of origin in order to vote which could potentially be very inconvenient to get to depending on where they actually reside.



Finally, one of the largest issues in Lebanon's parliamentary voting is the blatant gerrymandering that exists within the division of the country into electoral districts and the allocation of seats to the aforementioned districts. These lines have been drawn and redrawn many times to serve the sectarian interests of the traditional political establishment, who see fit to set the framework and boundaries of the electoral system to best suit their needs and alliances. The effect of the gerrymandering almost becomes such that the existing ruling class continue to sustain their rule essentially by allowing politicians to choose their voters rather than the other way around.

All of these causes have tangible links to the practical effects of corruption and nepotism that plague Lebanon's political system. From the sectarian nature of parliament and ineffective electoral law to the people, to deliberate efforts to further entrench existing power structures, it is evident that the parliamentary system in Lebanon has been exploited to serve the desires of politicians rather than the needs of the people. With the country facing one of the worst crises it has ever experienced and being ruled by the same self-serving political class, it is clear that serious reform is long overdue.

LEBANESE DIASPORA: ENGAGEMENT, AWARENESS, AND AN ELECTORAL IMPAIRMENT

OPINION POLICY ANALYSIS BY STAFF WRITER
TALA MAJZOUN

On May 6th, 2018, nearly half of the Lebanese voting population cast their ballots to elect a new parliament for the first time in nearly a decade. Previously, the parliament had voted twice to extend its term in 2013 and 2014, listing concerns about the maintenance of national stability in the absence of a president. While the parliament is able to postpone elections under exceptional circumstances, activists and politicians argued that the circumstances after two extensions do not allow yet another delay – especially considering the two-year presidential vacuum in Lebanon. Yet, after deferring the elections for nearly a decade, the Free Patriotic Movement, Hezbollah, and Amal political blocs questioned the legitimacy of the electoral law, arguing that a state-wide proportional representation system would lead to a more representative result. Consequently, Lebanese legislators ratified a new parliamentary law on June 16th, 2017, and tentatively scheduled polls for May 2018. While the new Lebanese electoral law introduces few significant reforms, it actively reinforces the divisions that spark sectarian strife. The highly anticipated elections were governed by a proportional representation law intended to steer the country away from the traditional majoritarian system. However, rather than a rise in voter turnout, only 49.7% of the Lebanese population cast their ballots – a fairly modest turnout and nearly a 4% decrease from the 2009 elections. Lebanon's parliamentary elections in 2018 also witnessed a total of 82,965 registered voters abroad, with no more than 46,799 Lebanese expatriates actually voting. Comparing these figures to roughly 4 – 13 million people of Lebanese descent worldwide, there exists a considerable political power within the Lebanese diaspora.

Looking Back: Clientelism, voter apathy, and attempts at rebranding overseas

Beyond its copious inadequacies, the new law was the first to allow Lebanese diaspora to vote from their countries of residency without having to travel to Lebanon, undoubtedly shifting the ways in which the diaspora will be engaging with the Lebanese government. Due to a number of historical controversies and political concerns, the true size of the Lebanese diasporic population remains fragmented and ambiguous, yet the political establishment has persistently utilized sectarian recruitment tactics overseas.



The demographic numbers of the Lebanese, whether abroad or not, has long had major implications which can proportionately affect the country's sectarian balance. Thus, figures have differed drastically depending on how the quantitative data is collected and assessed, and by whom. Nonetheless, De Bel-Air approximates that 885,000 eligible Lebanese voters reside overseas as of 2014. From the 885,000 migrants, 41% reside in the Gulf States; 23% in North America; 21% in Europe (including Norway and Switzerland); and 16% in other countries including Australia and Brazil. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that the ruling class in Lebanon is fully cognizant of the vast power that the diaspora vote holds.

Traditional political parties did not have to get too creative with their campaigning strategies beyond Lebanese grounds, as they continued to recycle the same old clientelist behaviors to garner diasporic votes. Shadi, 24, who lived in Europe at the time of the 2018 elections, said that a certain political party called him and asked if he would like to fly to Lebanon to vote for them: "They promised that they would handle all the travel costs, from A to Z. So, I agreed, since my parents are in Lebanon and they would be handling the expenses. I didn't really know who they were, since I never really lived in Lebanon before." Shadi adds that the political party offered him great monetary incentive to vote for their candidates, and he later realized that he wasn't the only one that they had done this with: "Back then, I didn't really care about anything – I saw an opportunity to travel to Lebanon for free and I took it. Then, when I traveled to Lebanon, I saw that I wasn't the exception – they had been taking advantage of people living under dire financial situations and bribing them for votes". With an estimate of 40% of voters subjected to vote buying, clientelism took many forms in 2018 – one of which was plane ticket buying as a campaigning strategy overseas.



Besides promises of fully funded vacations to Lebanon, the political parties' investments in the diasporic voter market also came in the form of mobile applications and advanced voting portals. The Lebanese Forces, the Free Patriotic Movement, and the Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party facilitated voter engagement through advanced infrastructures within their official websites. Notably, the Lebanese Forces developed a mobile phone application to provide information on how to register and vote and how to network with other Lebanese Forces supporters to gather donations. The Free Patriotic Movement sustains its online websites by providing consistent updates and news on voting procedures and investments. Plainly, the political parties' outreach to citizens residing in other countries paid off in some form of electoral advantage. The Minister of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants, Gebran Bassil, who is also the leader of The Free Patriotic Movement, encourages investment and tourism in Lebanon by making frequent references to Lebanese expatriates. Although it has yet to be ratified by the Cabinet decree, Gebran Bassil also stated that there will be six parliamentary seats assigned for the diaspora in the forthcoming 2022 parliamentary elections, thereby granting migrants the political opportunity to benefit from policies generated by the Lebanese government. While the electoral law is crucial in determining the results of elections, the electoral behavior has an equal say in the outcomes – if not more.

"We had lots of representatives from political parties, who guided voters to make sure they vote for the right list in the proper way. Independents did not have any sort of guidance to support their campaigns, they had very limited resources and very small space, so it was very hard to navigate if you weren't being very careful," says Kareem, 29, who was studying in London at the time. He tells The Phoenix Daily that the key reason why the political parties have been pushing for diasporic engagement is that most of the diaspora is Christian: *"Unfortunately, the diaspora is not just Lebanese people living abroad. It could be much of the Christian diaspora who three or four generations ago have left the country. They are the ones whose only memory of the country is Bachir Gemayel and all these other people."* Kareem explains that the passed-on Lebanese citizenship that comes with generations of sectarian baggage *"empowers many of the sectarian parties, whether or not they are in power at the moment"*. Nevertheless, Kareem argues that *"among the Lebanese immigrants who left the country recently or in the past decade, many of them, though not all, are definitely sick of the political parties which forced them out. So, if they are properly engaged in the voting process, they will probably vote for independents."*

While a big portion of the Lebanese diaspora remain hardcore supporters of political parties, the support obtained by independent lists in 2018 was significantly higher among the Lebanese diaspora than among the residents. The higher support for independent lists among the diaspora was present in all electoral districts, with 7.5% of emigrants voting for an independent list – the number being twice as high as that of resident voters (3.5%). The alliance between emerging anti-establishment political groups under the *"Kulluna Watani"* coalition found it much easier to attract funds from the diaspora. According to the study *"Fighting Against the Odds: Emerging Political Actors in the 2018 Lebanese Parliamentary Elections"* conducted by the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies, interviewees from Kulluna Watani explained that the crowdfunding potential of the diaspora could have been tapped into by properly investing in the existing foreign networks within emerging groups as well. Kulluna Watani lacked the time to maximize these efforts yet recognized that recruiting team members from the diaspora could have unlocked ample fundraising potential.

The 2018 parliamentary elections came after a long democratic void, but traditional political parties were quick to capitalize on the voter potential that the Lebanese diaspora harbors. They mainly targeted expatriates of loyalist decent and those with little to no political knowledge. Their resources allowed them to recycle clientelist behaviors, and to even rebrand themselves using advanced user-friendly technological infrastructures. While some people vote based on their sectarian beliefs or ideological convictions, many others support one party or candidate over another based on the services provided to constituents or the cash handed out on election day. Since the state institution has failed at implementing policies that make public goods available for everyone, citizens in Lebanon expect their MPs to provide targeted services such as jobs and other favors in return for their long-term support. This form of clientelism impedes democracy and development, creating an endless cycle of dependency on the traditional political parties, thus reinforcing voter apathy in the rest of the eligible voters around the world. When it came to elections, there appeared to be a distinct apathy among the Lebanese, arguably stemming from a resigned acceptance that whatever laws are implemented, the political balance is unlikely to change – 'plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose'. However, the series of events over the past year, notably the October 17 uprising and the tragic August 4th explosion, burgeoned a newly founded residential and diasporic awareness and connection to Lebanon, which holds the power to impact prospective parliamentary election results.

Looking forward: Awareness, mobilization, and an electoral vacuum

With the tentative parliamentary elections in 2022 comes the inevitable democratic upheaval suggesting a plausible delay in elections. Thoughts on the prospective electoral delay remain split, with oppositional movements maintaining varying perspectives on the legitimacy of the forthcoming parliamentary elections in Lebanon. While the 2022 elections might be indefinite, one thing is for sure – the Lebanese diaspora has grown much more involved and engaged in Lebanese politics. A lot of this blossoming engagement could be attributed to the shifting diasporic demographics and social media activism.

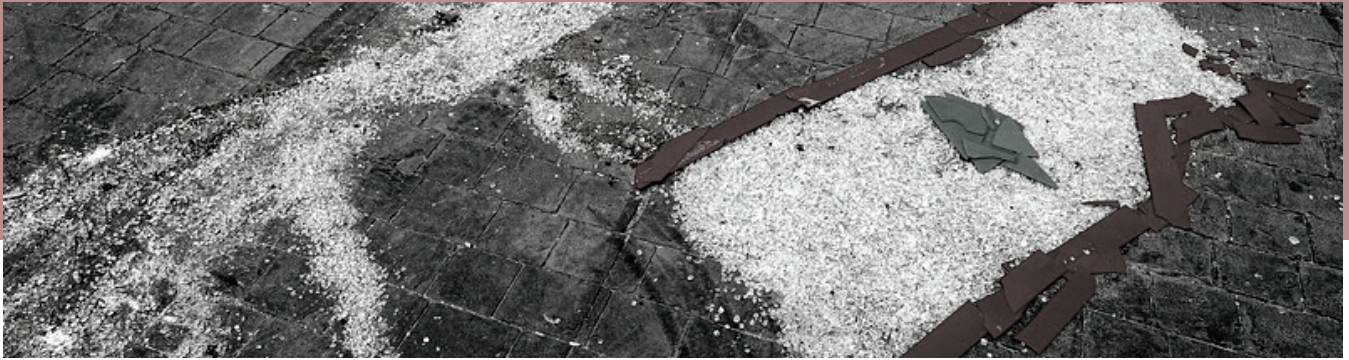
The diaspora's demographic structure has radically changed over the past year, with a handful recently becoming eligible to vote for the first time. Chloe Khattar, a researcher in Lebanese history and doctorate student at Cambridge University, clarifies: *"The diaspora is so young in terms of demographics and is mobilized in Lebanon especially from the thawra onwards, during the crisis, during the explosion."* She continues to explain the critical role the internet community has played in mobilizing expatriates around the world: *"I think the diaspora is aware of what is happening, it's aware through the emergence of social media, and especially thanks to the zoom culture that has surfaced since Covid. I think this helps in spreading their presence abroad".* Khattar reflects on the voter turnout from past elections, saying that the forthcoming elections are a lot more promising: *"If we increase this engagement, we will definitely have a better outcome. The diaspora is mainly a young diaspora, especially with the new wave of brain drain over the past month. Increasing their engagement will have a positive impact on the elections."* Her confidence in the new generation of migrants does not come out of the blue, with the diaspora stepping to the frontlines for monetary and medical aid after the August explosion.



"The diaspora managed to bring global attention to the economic crisis in Lebanon, even if it's nowhere near being resolved in 2021. I think the October revolution was also a moment when many humanitarian and non-profit organizations were created or invigorated, and they laid the groundwork for the major role they would eventually play in the aftermath of the August 4th blast," says Dima Nasser, a PhD student in Comparative Literature and Arabic studies at Brown University. *"I remember I ran a fever because of the intensity of being physically silent yet digitally so loud. I shared content left and right, about NGOs, food and supplies donations, open homes, survivors' stories. I remember I sent out impassioned emails to every philanthropic institution that I knew, begging for donations to help my people. Many responded positively. I begged my university community through rapid chain mail for donations to the Red Cross and a list of NGOs, and complete strangers I still hadn't met were kind enough to donate,"* she recalls. However, while she acknowledges the diaspora's key role in voting, Nasser is not too optimistic about the elections: *"The fact that the political class (the only one Lebanon has ever known) has manipulated the constitution in its favor shows that no matter the outcome of any election, the seat designations will only shift slightly but no member will be voted out."* She adds that the electoral law requires level-headed attorneys with a comprehensive understanding of Lebanon's legal history who are able to fight the legal battle, or else no amount of well-intended votes will lead anywhere.

With the electoral prospects not looking too high, some political parties have not yet begun investing in campaigns. *"Our party is not mobilizing for parliamentary elections. Our goal as opposition is not representation in a parliamentary façade. Our goal is to have a say in the de-facto transitional period that our society is witnessing as a result of state and economic collapse,"* says Ibrahim Halawi, member of Mouwatinoun wa Mouwatinat fi Dawla (MMFD). *"We also reject contributing to the reproduction of sectarian legitimacy through an election that sectarian leaders run, manage and predetermine, in return for token non-sectarian parliamentary seats for the opposition,"* he continued. According to Halawi, MMFD prioritizes showing responsibility to the society instead of gambling on symbolic parliamentary representation: *"The opposition has to advance its agenda for the transitional period, so that the transition does not conclude with a more dire political arrangement."* Where the diaspora is involved, Halawi explains to The Phoenix Daily the thin line between meaningful diasporic engagement and participation that might be counterproductive: *"If the Lebanese expatriates are eager to be represented in the parliament, then indeed it should mobilize itself with the opposition seeking such symbolic gains in a sectarian system that both the opposition and the diaspora know is not run through parliamentary politics,"* he says. *"However, if the Lebanese expatriates want to have a meaningful and historical role in this de-facto transitional period, then they should organize with, or support, the political opposition that is presenting a serious, sensible, and comprehensive plan for the transitional period".*





In contrast, other political opposition movements, like the National Bloc, place more faith in the parliamentary elections and have already started mobilizing in Lebanon and beyond. *"The only viable way for us to achieve political change is through parliamentary elections. We don't believe in violence or war for political reform."* says Mohamad Serhan, a field coordinator of the National Bloc. *"Our priority is to reach governmental positions through elections, since it is the only democratic way to elect officials who will help rebuild the country"* he adds. Serhan continued to explain their campaigning strategies, such as raising awareness on political alternatives and revitalizing civil engagement. He also flags out the responsibility that the Lebanese diaspora has in terms of campaigning, networking, and lobbying for oppositional movements in Lebanon. Yet, Serhan insists on the importance of cooperating with different electoral campaigns to reach a larger audience abroad: *"We plan to mobilize the diaspora not under 'national bloc', but rather we believe that all opposition movements should collaborate as much as possible to utilize the efforts existing outside Lebanon. In Lebanon, different parties might not get along, but on the international level, they should work together in order to unite a greater number of people".*

With that, the electoral forecasts for 2022 remain foggy, with the sectarian electoral law being subject to heavy scrutiny. The country has seen the largest disappearance of wealth per capita in modern history and continues to witness the end of subsidies and a drastic Lira downfall – questions about the performativity of parliamentary elections are bound to arise. The good news is that the Lebanese diaspora seems to be a lot more proactive and a lot less willing to compromise. Many people have already started joining and learning about oppositional political parties. Nonpartisan digital campaigns like "SAWTI" are already available to inform, engage, and mobilize Lebanese citizens everywhere. Whether or not the parliamentary elections are the solution, it is clear that the solution will be political: this means sharing posts and stories on social media; joining, organizing, and supporting alternative political groups and spreading awareness among expatriate networks and connections and raising funds.

The Lebanese diaspora has long been the guardian angel of the Lebanese economy throughout history, but today I argue that it will play a role in shaping that history. While clientelist behavior also dominated the electoral landscape beyond Lebanese grounds in 2018, any expatriate with a marginal understanding of the complete collapse in Lebanon knows that the real split is no longer between March 14 and March 8; it's between the people and the corrupt political establishment that stole their money. Voting is a democratic civic duty, but when your country has never known true democracy, you can only hope, act, and work towards achieving honest constitutional elections. The increased diasporic political mobilization paired with the emergence of accessible independent electoral platforms holds the power to impact the parliamentary elections outcomes – and that power must be harnessed. Until then, the Lebanese diaspora will continue to build a life elsewhere, while violently grappling the unresolved feelings towards their country.

READ MORE PUBLICATIONS



December 9th, 2020

BEYOND THE POSTERS – CULTURAL HEGEMONY OVER MOUSSA AL-SADR'S IMAGE

Opinion Analysis by **Francesco Pitzalis**, Staff Writer and **Saba Al-Sadr**, Contributor

Political posters are an immersive and pervasive hallmark of Lebanon's streets. Moussa Al-Sadr's image, for instance, has been strategically engineered as an instrument for the extension of cultural hegemony and artificial demarcation of geographical space. The tapestry of posters, in the absence of a unified historical blueprint, monopolises the collective memory of Lebanese Leaders. This memory is neither passive nor neutral and fails to historicize, introspect or analyse Lebanon's tumultuous history to any degree of acuity. Thus, Lebanon remains in a collective and pathological state of selective amnesia towards its past.

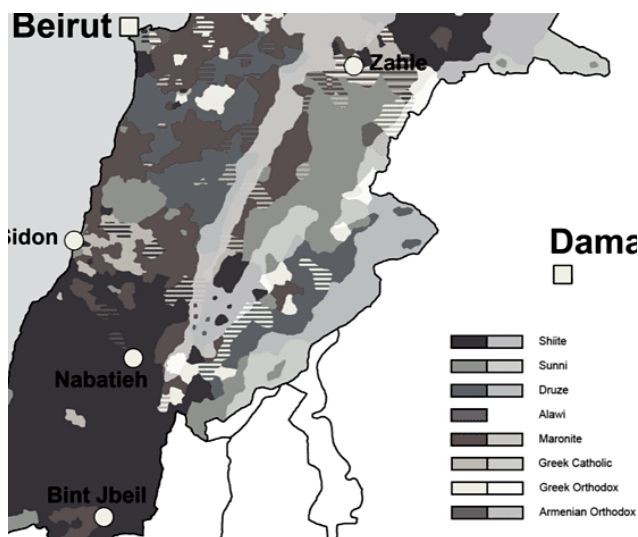


October 20th, 2020

PRO-THAWRA SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS: ARE THEY CONTRIBUTING TO THE EXTREMISM IN LEBANON'S POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT?

Opinion Analysis by **Stephanie El Khoury**, Contributor

In today's political climate and biased news outlets, social media in Lebanon has become one of the most important media platforms for individuals to get updates and information. There has been an apparent rise in self-proclaimed thawra-accounts and influencers since through them individuals are able to keep up with the latest news regarding the corrupt class in charge of our government as well as respond to calls for revolution. Pro-thawra social media accounts and influencers tend to misinterpret and undermine the relationship that political parties have with their followers. Through shaming followers, they are strengthening the bond that these people have with their political party.



September 12th, 2020

LEBANON: IS CONFESIONALISM THE REAL PROBLEM?

Opinion Analysis by **Zeina Dagher**, Staff Writer

The October 17th protests were a definite step in the right direction for the Lebanese people, who, for the first time in a long while, have united against the ever-ruling corrupt political class demanding the bare necessities of life. Up to this day, there hasn't been any official report bearing the voice of October 17th, uniting all or most the groups active within the movement, and ratified by the people. However, many voices, from both October 17th and the political parties in power, are demanding today Lebanon becoming a secular state, and giving up the confessionalist system. But is confessionalism the real problem in Lebanon? Is it what's obstructing the implementation of effective reforms?

WHAT TO LOOK FORWARD TO FROM SAWTI



WHAT TO LOOK FORWARD TO FROM THE PHOENIX DAILY



How can I join The Phoenix Daily team?

We are frequently looking for new authors, as well as other interested individuals, in our attempt to foster knowledge creation through interdisciplinary means in media and journalism. You may apply by sending through an application by email to thephoenixdaily@gmail.com with your CV along with any past publications, writings, or other document that will aid us in evaluating your application.

How can I join the SAWTI movement?

Are you passionate about creating change in Lebanon and want to encourage political engagement within your community?

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