

The Oppressive, The Marginalized and The Missing Third *

Stats&#

Military equipment

9 weapons suppliers for the military (importers of weapons and military equipment) had their licenses renewed in 2004. Out of those, four have facilities in the Metn, while one facility each is located in Beirut, Keserwan, Baabda, Aley and Tripoli.

Disbanding Lebanese militias

LBP 7 billion (\$4.6 million) was granted to the Ministry of Defense in 1991 to cover the expenditures for rehabilitating 6,000 soldiers that were militia members.

Judicial expenses

LBP 280 million (\$186,000) in funds were approved by the Council of Ministers as payment of expenses for judicial committees in the lawsuit between LibanCell and the Lebanese government. Decree No. 13577 was issued on 20 October 2004 to transfer the funds to the budget of the Ministry of Telecommunications, but the authorities disregarded the order. Another decree was issued (No. 13615) on 20 October 2004 to transfer the same amount. When the issue was taken care of, Decree No. 13615 was annulled.

Gasoline support

LBP 40 billion (\$26.5 million) was the cost of gasoline (at a price of LBP 12,000 for 20 liters) from 20 November to the end of December 2004.

One can safely argue that the Lebanese society, in the aftermath of the civil war, is heading toward a two-society segmentation: the oppressive “elite”, comprised mainly of warlords, merchants and bankers; and the marginalized, representing over 95% of the population.

Laws are made and broken for the sole purpose of serving the first category, while the second category is left with unemployment, emigration, poverty and crime. The majority of those are destined (every decade or so) for chaos and sectarian and tribal feuds. Recent “Ii” polls show that the Lebanese are split around sectarian lines on issues such as UN Resolution 1559, support for President Lahoud and support for Prime Ministers Hariri and Karami. In addition, the poll seems to indicate that allegiances are forgotten as quick as they are made. Respondents’ answers (most of the time) vary, not according to age, gender, education, or income, but rather to which sect they were born into.

The Lebanese tend to forget that the second and largest group (the marginalized) is made up of all the sects and has a common destiny:

- More than 350,000 immigrants in 12 years, from all sects.
- \$10,000 is each individual’s share of the public debt, regardless of sect.
- More than 250,000 are unemployed, from all sects.
- 20,000 university graduates and citizens, from all sects, are looking for jobs each year.
- 500 million tranquilizer pills are consumed annually, by all sects.
- 400 homicides took place in 2003, from among all sects.
- LBP 177 billion was the deficit of the NSSF Sickness, Maternity and Family Compensation Funds in 2004, funds that all of the Lebanese (from all sects) benefit from.


The oppressive “elite” from all sects share the following spoils:

- 3.5 million m² of illegal coastal property.
- 4.5 million tons of fuel that is imported exclusively by a cartel setup, in violation of existing laws.
- \$28 billion in interest on the public debt over the last 12 years (attributed to few hundred individuals).
- \$20 billion in bank deposits that are owned by 0.5% of depositors.
- \$200 million only paid in corporate taxes.
- \$1.6 billion spent on people who were not displaced or displaced who did not return.

One can further argue that both groups often intersect and sometimes certain mobility is allowed or gained. The oppressive “elite” often plays the role of the marginalized, in its attempt to explain its failure to administer the country. On the other hand, the marginalized can also become aggressive and oppressive by infringing on public property or refusing to pay water and electric bills to a state it feels it does not belong to.

One can also argue that the hypothesis is not complete without a third missing segment that is neither oppressive, nor marginalized. This is made up of independent individuals that come from all sections of society. Should they continue to fail to work together, they will eventually dissolve into one or the other category. It is high time for the Missing Third to unite.

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*An Nahar newspaper published this piece on 3 August 2002. “Ii Monthly” chose to re-publish it after updating the figures, which have only grown worse since. 

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