



Lebanon's National Security

The Crossroads of National Choices

Between the Collapse of the State

and the Requirements of Ending the New Occupation!

By
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Introduction

The concept of “**National Security**” remains one of the most problematic and widely used concepts in Lebanese political and media discourse. It is often employed as a cover to justify divisive policies or as a weapon through which accusations are directed at others for allegedly undermining it. Yet the reality overlooked by this prevailing discourse is that National Security in Lebanon suffers from a severe existential crisis that precedes any external threat. Since the country's independence, it has failed to become established as a unifying concept capable of rising above sectarian divisions and external loyalties. Instead, it has remained hostage to fragile compromises and the interests of communal leaders, falling far short of the level of a coherent state system. Over the past quarter-century and more, three major crises have erupted across the Arab and regional environment. The first is foreign occupation, practiced extensively by several states, foremost among them the United States and Israel. The second is the security authoritarianism of military and security regimes that not only oppressed their own peoples but also expanded their influence over neighboring societies, as occurred in Lebanon, Iraq, Libya, Yemen, and Syria. The third is religious fundamentalism, which emerged and grew within the region's societies and sought, in all its forms, to shape the future through the revival of historical models of states, kingdoms, and authorities from the past, thereby destroying both the present and the future. Three projects embody these dynamics:

- a. The Israeli project of restoring the Kingdom of Solomon and David and rebuilding the Temple, promoted by biblical Zionist fundamentalism, along with the settlement of the West Bank of the Jordan River in Palestine under the designation of “**Judea and Samaria**.” Although the State of Israel was originally established under the leadership of secular and socialist political movements that justified their acquisition of Palestine through biblical claims, contemporary Israel is increasingly moving toward more religious, nationalist, extremist, and aggressive currents.
- b. The Iranian project, represented by a system established in the name of Twelver Shiite Islam, governed by a religious clerical establishment under the authority of the Supreme Leader, whose legitimacy and rulings derive from sacred texts beyond popular accountability, and which presents itself as a reference and leader for the peoples of the region beyond Iran's borders.
- c. The project of restoring the State of the Prophet Muhammad in Medina and reviving the Islamic Caliphate, advocated by Salafi movements and currents of Sunni political Islam.

These three crises do not operate in isolation from one another. Rather, they interact in cumulative, contradictory, and complementary ways, creating an escalating and increasingly brutal cycle of violence. **The decisive question at the heart of this storm is: What role can Lebanon play?** Today, this reality is compounded by the declared American-Israeli war against Iran and by the war in Lebanon that erupted as an extension of the “**Al-Aqsa Flood**” operation in Gaza and the subsequent support front opened from Lebanon. For the past three years, Lebanon has been transformed into a battlefield in which Hezbollah has waged war, at times under the banner of “**Supporting Gaza**” and at other times

in retaliation for the assassination of Iran's Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei. For all these reasons, the need has become urgent not merely to redefine the concept of National Security, but to rebuild it from the ground up.

I have argued in the past, and continue to argue, for two foundational necessities. The first is the redefinition of National Security in the Arab context so as to free it from the historical misconceptions that have reduced it, in the public imagination, to an exclusively intelligence and security matter, rather than a comprehensive strategic political vision. The second, which is specific to Lebanon, is the “**nationalization**” of this concept: determining the authority that defines Lebanese National Security and identifying the community whose security is to be protected. Today, after all that has occurred, I find it necessary to expand the discussion by examining specific dilemmas related to Hezbollah's increasingly problematic role within Lebanon, alongside Western campaigns aimed at confronting Iranian influence in the region, while also exploring possible paths toward ending the new Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon. Amid this catastrophe and its immense complexities, a rare positive historical opportunity may be emerging. Its indicators include the failure of the Iranian project in Lebanon, the exposure of the reality of Hezbollah's “**Resistance**” as a cover for the doctrine of Wilayat al-Faqih, the beginning of a genuine border demarcation process with Syria following the fall of the Assad regime, and the willingness of the international community to help Lebanon escape its sectarian quagmire. Accordingly, this paper seeks to examine whether the construction of a genuine National Security framework in Lebanon is possible, to identify the conditions required for its realization, and to highlight the obstacles and challenges facing Lebanon's National Security and stability.

I. The Missing Definition in the Foundations of Lebanese National Security

National Security is, first and foremost, a matter of the state. This simple statement reveals one of the most fundamental realities of the Lebanese condition. The core problem lies in the absence of a clear national consensus regarding the nature of the Lebanese state, the meaning of its sovereignty, the proper functioning of its constitutional institutions, and its ability to perform its essential functions. Four levels of boundaries must be established as the foundation of any conception of National Security.

1. Political Interference in the Judicia From Maps to Effective Sovereignty

Following two years of a fragile truce that succeeded the **2024** Gaza Support War, a conflict that witnessed the assassination of Hassan Nasrallah and a limited Israeli incursion into southern Lebanon, Lebanon once again descended into a cycle of violence on **2 March 2026**. According to this narrative, the immediate trigger was tragic. In the aftermath of the joint American-Israeli military strike against Iran, which targeted leaders of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and Iran's Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, Hezbollah launched, on the morning of **2 March**, a barrage of rockets and drones toward the Upper Galilee and the Ramat David Air Base. The objective was not the liberation of the Shebaa Farms, nor

even the support of Gaza. Rather, it was presented as a **"War of Retaliation for Khamenei."** To claim that this war was fought in defense of Lebanon is, according to this interpretation, a mockery of reason. The decision was allegedly taken in Tehran and implemented with the blood of the people of southern Lebanon and the Bekaa, while its objectives were purely Iranian. The open war continued from **2 March** until late **May 2026**. Israel responded with a level of firepower unseen since the **July 2006** War. Air strikes immediately targeted Beirut's southern suburbs, the Bekaa Valley, and southern Lebanon. The headquarters of Al-Manar television, Hezbollah communications centers, and missile depots were struck. Israeli ground forces then advanced deep into southern Lebanon, reaching the Litani River line. Israel announced that it had gained control over **"Strategic Areas"** in border villages including Khiam, Kfar Kila, Yaroun, and Bint Jbeil. Meanwhile, the Lebanese Ministry of Public Health reported approximately three thousand fatalities, tens of thousands of wounded, and the displacement of more than one million people. A particularly alarming aspect of the conflict was the renewed Israeli violation of internationally recognized Lebanese territory. According to this account, Israel once again occupied more than **68** towns and villages south of the Litani River after establishing what it termed a depopulated **"Yellow Line"** security zone. This was accompanied by ongoing efforts to displace civilian populations in villages extending south of the Zahrani River, continued occupation of parts of the Shebaa Farms and the Kfar Shouba Hills, and persistent surveillance and military operations over multiple Lebanese regions. At the same time, the position of the Lebanese state was notable. The state, which had previously hidden behind the formula of **"the Army, the People, and the Resistance,"** adopted a different stance this time, telling Hezbollah explicitly: **"This is your war alone. Do not drag us into it."**

2. Toward Reciprocal and Balanced Security Arrangements with Israel

After **46** days of war, and under American pressure, a ceasefire agreement was signed in Washington on **16 April 2026**. The ceasefire, sponsored by U.S. President Donald Trump, included several unprecedented provisions:

- a. A Complete Ceasefire: A ten-day ceasefire entered into force on **16 April**, renewable by mutual agreement. It was subsequently extended for three weeks and later for an additional forty-five days.
- b. Lebanon's Commitment to Prevent Hezbollah Attacks: For the first time, Lebanon, not Hezbollah, committed itself to taking **"Practical Measures"** to prevent future attacks against Israel from Lebanese territory. This effectively meant that the Lebanese state assumed official responsibility for controlling Hezbollah's weapons.

- c. Gradual Israeli Withdrawal: Israel agreed to a gradual withdrawal from the territories occupied during the war in exchange for Hezbollah's withdrawal north of the Litani River.
- d. Direct Negotiations Between Lebanon and Israel: The agreement provided for direct negotiations between Lebanon and Israel under American sponsorship in order to transform the ceasefire into permanent security arrangements. This agreement may represent a rare opportunity. Lebanon, represented by President Joseph Aoun and Prime Minister Nawaf Salam, expressed its willingness to return to the negotiating table. Salam stated that: **"There is a glimmer of hope in Lebanon that must be invested in to achieve solutions despite the difficulty of the current phase"**. For the first time, the Lebanese state no longer appeared reluctant to describe negotiations with Israel as a legitimate instrument for ending occupation and resolving disputes under American sponsorship. If the ceasefire is successfully implemented, if the Lebanese Army deploys throughout the South, and if all rocket launches are prevented, Hezbollah will face one of two choices: Either it becomes solely a political party, or it openly challenges the authority of the state through civil disobedience, a possibility recently alluded to by Sheikh Naim Qassem. The United States, France, Germany, Saudi Arabia, and several European countries have announced their readiness to provide the Lebanese Armed Forces and Internal Security Forces with equipment and training to enable them to control the borders. This would allow Lebanon to possess a strong military institution capable of protecting the country.

3. Are Balanced Security Arrangements Possible?

Lebanon cannot stand idly by while an Israeli army occupies its south. Therefore, it must seek reciprocal security arrangements that include:

- a. A Comprehensive Ceasefire: A complete cessation of hostilities, including an end to Israeli violations of Lebanese sovereignty by air, land, and sea, in exchange for a complete halt to any Hezbollah military activity south of the Litani River.
- b. Full Israeli Withdrawal: A complete Israeli withdrawal from the **"Yellow Line"** or buffer zone it established, along with the return of the residents of border villages to their homes following reconstruction.
- c. Revitalizing the **1949** General Armistice Agreement: Reactivating and updating the **1949** General Armistice Agreement to include provisions concerning shared water resources, as well as oil and gas resources.

- d. Enhanced International Monitoring: The deployment of reinforced international forces alongside **UNIFIL** to monitor the border and prevent violations by either side.

It is clear that such arrangements do not necessarily imply full normalization, nor do they require recognition of Israel before a just solution to the Palestinian issue is reached. Rather, they imply a sustainable ceasefire, the reconstruction of southern Lebanon, and the preservation of what remains of the Lebanese economy. The issue is not limited to Israeli violations of Lebanon's borders. Reality points to areas of overlap and the need for border demarcation with Syria as well, in order to halt Syrian encroachments on Lebanese territory and territorial waters, particularly in the Shebaa Farms, Rashaya, Tfail, Aarsal, the Eastern Mountain Range, Hermel, Wadi Khaled, and the southern section of the Nahr al-Kabir River in northern Lebanon. For many years, this issue was considered a political taboo in official Lebanese discourse. Raising it today exposes the illusion of Lebanese sovereignty in the face of decades of Syrian intervention.

Amid these destructive events, a rare positive development occurred. In **February 2026**, only weeks before the outbreak of war, Lebanon and Syria signed a border demarcation agreement under Saudi sponsorship in Jeddah. Lebanese Defense Minister Michel Menassa met his Syrian counterpart Murhaf Abu Qasra in the presence of Saudi Defense Minister Prince Khalid bin Salman. The agreement included:

- a. Legal and Technical Committees: The establishment of legal and technical committees tasked with preparing precise maps of the land and maritime boundaries between the two countries, which extend for approximately **330** kilometers.
- b. Security and Military Coordination: The activation of security and military coordination mechanisms to confront border challenges, including the smuggling of weapons, narcotics, and persons.
- c. Resolution of Outstanding Issues: Addressing unresolved matters such as ownership in the Shebaa area, the Nahr al-Kabir River, and the sharing of Orontes River waters. Although these issues remain unresolved, "**Shared Water Resources**" were formally included among the topics to be examined by the joint technical committees.

4. Geopolitical Boundaries

These are the boundaries governing relations with both immediate and distant neighbors. Such relationships are not defined solely by maps; their nature depends on strategic choices. Will the relationship be characterized by conflict and war, by an unstable truce, or by peace and good neighborliness? What kind of economic and human exchange will exist? Will trade be open and free, or will domestic production be protected by customs barriers? Will there be security cooperation, or strict sovereign separation? The absence of a clear definition of Lebanon's relationship with both **"Israel the Enemy"** and **"Syria the Sister State"** creates a geopolitical vacuum filled by foreign agendas and militias rather than independent Lebanese decision-making. Geopolitical factors possess interconnected and dynamic influences. Throughout Lebanese history, Arab, regional, and international geopolitical currents have played a decisive role in shaping Lebanese events. The **1958** uprising against President Camille Chamoun and the landing of U.S. Marines in Damour reflected the confrontation between Arab nationalism led by Nasserism and the Baghdad Pact, which at the time included the Hashemite monarchy in Iraq, the Shah's Iran, Turkey, and Pakistan. Similarly, the defeat of Chehabism in Lebanon in **1970** at the hands of the Maronite Triple Alliance and the election of Suleiman Frangieh as President reflected the broader defeat of progressive Arab nationalist regimes in the June **1967** War. The outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War in **1975** was also linked to the closure of Arab military fronts against Israel following the October **1973** War and the concentration of military operations against Israel in southern Lebanon. The reality that must be acknowledged is that Lebanon's transformation into a battlefield for regional confrontations was neither a Palestinian choice nor the choice of any single Lebanese party. Rather, it resulted from geopolitical engineering that turned Lebanon into an arena of conflict serving diverse agendas.

For more than half a century, Lebanon has served as a reflection of geopolitical transformations in the Middle East, both influencing and being influenced by them. Its media served the region. Its universities educated the region. Its publishing houses and books shaped the intellectual life of the Arab world. Its cultural and intellectual leadership extended across the region. Its markets served as a gateway through which Arabs accessed global trends in fashion and modern lifestyles. However, during the era of Hafez al-Assad and Suleiman Frangieh, and later with the rise of Khomeini, Lebanon's role changed dramatically. It was transformed from a regional center of finance, services, culture, thought, modernity, diversity, freedom, and urban civilization into a frontline outpost that falsely claimed to defend Palestine while functioning as a spearhead of an axis of resistance with two centers: One center represented by the most repressive forms of security authoritarianism in Damascus, and another represented by the most extreme forms of religious fundamentalist arrogance in Tehran.

From this perspective, the **"Support Front"** opened by Hezbollah against Israel in support of Gaza did not serve any higher Lebanese national interest. It was, and remains, an open-ended war without a political horizon, one that destroys southern Lebanon and its towns,

displaces its inhabitants, and brings devastation. The decision to open this front was not taken by the Lebanese Council of Ministers and was not even seriously debated among Lebanese political forces. Rather, according to this view, it was taken in Tehran. In short, Lebanon is paying the price of an Iranian-American-Israeli conflict that is not fundamentally its own. Hezbollah is portrayed as an Iranian spearhead a force of pressure against Israel on behalf of Iran. Every rocket launched from southern Lebanon is therefore viewed as an Iranian message. This transforms Lebanon from a sovereign state into little more than a launch platform and defensive shield for Iran.

5. Boundaries of Vital Economic Zones

This dimension includes territorial waters and the rights associated with shared rivers. Two major water-related disputes emerge in this context. The first concerns Syria and Lebanon's share of the waters of the Orontes River, which originates in Lebanon and is fed by rainfall and snowmelt from Mount Makmel before flowing into Syrian territory. Syria has prevented Lebanon from fully benefiting from its surface waters and underground reservoirs by restricting the drilling of wells within its geological basin and by obstructing the construction of a dam that could generate electricity, create a natural lake with tourism potential, provide irrigation water, and support freshwater fish farming. The second dispute concerns Israel and the waters of the Hasbani and Wazzani Rivers. The absence of a fair water-sharing agreement, consistent with international legal principles, constitutes a striking example of Lebanon's inability to negotiate effectively. The **"Special Relationship"** that existed between the former Syrian regime and its allies in Lebanon hindered serious efforts to claim Lebanon's water rights. At the same time, the continuing conflict with Israel has prevented any fair negotiation regarding transboundary rivers. The Nahr al-Kabir al-Janoubi forms the natural border between Lebanon and Syria in the north. Syrian encroachments on Lebanese agricultural lands in the area continue, accompanied by smuggling and unauthorized crossings of goods and people. The second issue with Israel concerns the sharing of the waters of the Hasbani and Wazzani Rivers and the rainfall that feeds the slopes of Mount Hermon in the Shebaa region. The Hasbani and Wazzani Rivers, which are major tributaries of the Jordan River, constitute a vital water source for both southern Lebanon and Israel. Israel has long used its position of occupation to divert water from these rivers. The **1949** General Armistice Agreement between Lebanon and Israel did not settle the issue of water allocation fairly. Lebanon relies on the principle of **"Historical Water Rights,"** while Israel occupies and utilizes water sources in the Shebaa Farms area. Every summer, tensions are renewed over the pumping of water from the Wazzani River, with Israel threatening military responses. During past decades, Lebanese authorities were effectively compelled to allow the waters of the Hasbani River to flow unused, while limiting themselves to the installation of a pump that transported part of the Wazzani waters to southern Lebanese villages before eventually ceasing operations. The future of the Hasbani and Wazzani Rivers remains unresolved until a peace agreement or permanent armistice with Israel establishes a framework governing the utilization of these water resources.

As for the Shebaa Farms, from a legal perspective they are Lebanese territory occupied by Israel in **1967**, after Syrian forces had previously taken control of them from Lebanon. However, the Syrian regime created an ambiguity that Israel exploited to justify its continued presence there. Demarcating the border in this area with Syria would place Israel in a difficult position and deprive it of its justification for remaining there. The issue of water resources with Israel constitutes one of the principal files in the negotiations that have begun between Lebanon and Israel. The exploitation of Lebanon's remaining natural resources—particularly oil and gas in the Mediterranean Sea, represents another major challenge. Lebanon, which delayed the demarcation of its maritime boundaries for decades, found itself facing existential disputes involving Israel and Cyprus. According to this interpretation, Lebanon became the victim of an Iranian-Israeli arrangement reached in Qatar under American sponsorship. Through its influence over Lebanon via Hezbollah and then President General Michel Aoun, Iran allegedly compelled Lebanon to abandon **Maritime Line 29** and accept **Maritime Line 23**. According to this account, the arrangement granted Israel full control over the Karish gas field, in addition to a share of the Qana field located within Lebanese territorial waters. It is further argued that Iran obtained political and economic gains from the arrangement, including increased oil exports and benefits connected to developments in Iraq's political landscape.

Many believed that the maritime boundary agreement signed with Israel in October **2022** would transform Lebanon into a gas-producing state in exchange for relinquishing its claim to Karish. However, according to this view, the failure of the Lebanese authorities to manage these files effectively prevented Lebanon from benefiting either from Karish or from the projected Qana field. Ironically, Hezbollah, which had threatened war to "**Liberate Karish,**" ultimately accepted the agreement under Iranian pressure. At the same time, Syrian claims concerning maritime boundaries north of Lebanon remain an unresolved source of tension between the two countries. This makes the management of Lebanon's oil and gas resources a highly sensitive issue and illustrates once again the inability to establish clear strategic boundaries for Lebanese National Security.

6. Beyond Borders: Defining Foreign Policy

The League of Arab States was established on **22 March 1945** by seven countries, including Lebanon. The United Nations was founded on **24 October 1945** with fifty-one member states, and Lebanon participated as a founding member in drafting and signing its Charter. Lebanon was represented by the distinguished diplomat and thinker Charles Malik, who later played a pivotal role in drafting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in **1948**. Despite this active historical role, Lebanon has consistently pursued a cautious foreign policy since independence, avoiding involvement in Arab disputes when Arab states disagreed and adhering to solidarity when they reached consensus. As a result, Lebanese foreign policy has never clearly defined its friends and adversaries, nor has it succeeded in building or joining sustainable political and military alliances. It has remained incapable of prioritizing threats and preparing the means necessary to confront them. Although these elements could collectively

constitute a comprehensive strategic framework, they have remained subjects of profound disagreement at the Lebanese level. This internal division has prevented the formation of a coherent national consensus capable of responding to changing regional realities. Lebanon therefore continues to suffer from a chronic condition: the hollowing out of the domestic sphere and increasing dependence on external actors.

II. The Crisis of Identity: “Living Together” or Sectarian Security?

The core of the Lebanese dilemma becomes evident through the stark contradiction between the prevailing official discourse and the actual behavior of the country's sectarian communities. Official rhetoric celebrates “**Living Together**” and “**Lebanon's Unique Message**”, yet the conduct of the various communities on the ground creates profound ambiguity regarding the meaning of National Security. In stable states, National Security constitutes a unified framework that transcends the interests of both government and opposition. In Lebanon, however, National Security often amounts to little more than a negotiated compromise among the interests of sectarian leaders and their regional and international patrons. The most accurate description of the problem lies in the concept of “**Sectarian Security**”. The security of the sectarian community, the political group linked to external sponsors, takes precedence over the security of citizens as members of a single nation. Each sectarian group, or more precisely each sectarian party leader, defines National Security according to the interests of regional allies. What is commonly called “**Living Together**” therefore becomes little more than a temporary arrangement among competing projects rather than a genuine national vision capable of resolving conflict. Its content changes whenever regional balances of power shift. Lebanese political history offers numerous examples of the failure of such arrangements. Beginning with the experience of President Fouad Chehab, passing through the Cairo Agreement, which legalized Palestinian armed activity outside the authority of the state, and continuing with the Taëf Accord, which established a new internal balance under Arab sponsorship and Syrian tutelage, successive formulas failed to create a sustainable national consensus. That balance collapsed with the assassination of Prime Minister Rafik Hariri and the Cedar Revolution of **2005**, only to be followed by the **2006** war, itself a regional conflict fought on Lebanese territory. Likewise, the Baabda Declaration, which sought to dissociate Lebanon from regional conflicts and the Syrian war, failed after Hezbollah intervened militarily in Syria in support of the Assad regime. Nor was the Lebanese state able to spare the country from either the “**Gaza Support War**” or the subsequent “**War of Retaliation for Khamenei**”. This long history of failures demonstrates that Lebanon's problem is not the absence of a strategic line. Rather, it is the absence of a cohesive national interior capable of implementing one.

III. Internal Hollowing and External Dependency: The Impact of Weak Constitutional Legitimacy on National Security

Since independence, Lebanon's internal structure has steadily hollowed out. The Lebanese state is no longer merely weak; it increasingly resembles an empty shell whose substance has been transferred to external actors. This hollowing affects politics, the economy, the media, culture, and even values themselves. It extends to state institutions, public administrations, and security agencies, enabling the emergence of influential parallel entities that operate outside constitutional and legal frameworks. What may be catastrophic under normal circumstances becomes fatal amid a major regional transformation characterized by the dismantling and reconstruction of Middle Eastern balances and by the rise of religious extremism and sectarian fragmentation.

IV. Lebanon as a "Message" or an "Arena"?

The selective manner in which many Lebanese address these dilemmas is fundamentally flawed. Lebanon cannot be part of any regional system that practices occupation, defends authoritarianism, or embraces religious fundamentalism. This is not merely an ideological preference; it concerns the very meaning of Lebanon as a homeland of freedom, pluralism, and modernity. The idea of **"Lebanon the Message"** does not imply moral superiority or missionary ambitions. Rather, Lebanon's message lies in embodying freedom, diversity, and modernity through its own existence and example. Lebanon should not become a trench, a battlefield, a spearhead, or an arena through which others wage their conflicts. Its role should be one of active neutrality, not passive isolation, but neither participation in wars fought on behalf of others, even when their causes may appear just. This formula seeks to draw a fine line between negative neutrality and suicidal involvement. It calls for Lebanon to function as a state with a distinctive social system rather than as an instrument in larger regional projects.

Yet the question remains: is such a transformation possible under the current political order?

V. From the Sectarian Quota State to the Civil State

The answer is **"No"**. As long as sectarian party leaders continue to dominate political life, and as long as the source of their power lies in their relationships with regional powers, the construction of a genuine Lebanese National Security framework will remain impossible. Their essential function is to dismantle Lebanon's geopolitical boundaries and import the influence of their external sponsors. They serve as gateways for external intervention rather than guardians of the national interest.

For this reason, any serious National Security doctrine requires two parallel tracks: The first is external, the requirements of which have already been outlined. The second is internal and depends upon one fundamental condition: transforming the political system itself. The alternative is clear: **The**

Construction of a Civil State. This is neither an innovation nor a radical departure. It is the spirit of the **Taëf Accord** itself, which incorporated the principle of the civil state. However, arbitrary and selective implementation distorted this principle and prevented its realization. The requirements of such a transformation are practical and immediate:

- a. **Liberating Public Space:** The state's public sphere must be freed from sectarian domination. This includes the judiciary, the army, security services, public finances, public administration, education, and healthcare.
- b. **Reforming the Security Sector:** Military and security institutions must be restructured by removing politicians from appointments and promotions, shielding them from political conflicts, and ensuring that the legitimate use of force remains exclusively in the hands of the state.
- c. **Judicial Independence:** The judiciary and oversight bodies must be guaranteed genuine independence, while combating corruption becomes an integral component of National Security.
- d. **Citizenship-Based Public Services:** Healthcare, education, employment opportunities, and social protection must be transformed into citizenship rights rather than benefits granted in exchange for political loyalty and dependency.
- e. **Electoral Reform:** An electoral law must be adopted that allows modern civil forces to participate meaningfully rather than restricting representation to sectarian leaders.

Conclusion

Prospects for Lebanese National Security Between Delay and Breakdown

The conclusion that emerges from this analysis is stark. Lebanon continues to suffer from the same chronic illnesses despite all that has occurred. There can be no genuine National Security in Lebanon without liberating the concept itself from the grip of sectarian communities and their regional patrons, and without moving beyond sectarian political quotas toward a civil state founded on citizenship and the rule of law.

The central conclusion of this paper is that National Security in Lebanon is not primarily a technical problem requiring more weapons or military agreements. It is fundamentally a crisis of identity and governance. Its resolution depends on the ability of Lebanese citizens to construct a strong and cohesive national framework capable of controlling borders, defining geopolitical relations, and formulating foreign policy independently of external tutelage. It also depends on transforming the discourse of "**Living Together**" from a mechanism for managing conflict into a genuine project of common citizenship in which all are equal before the law. Above all, it depends on the emergence of a

national political class that places the security of the country and its citizens above every sectarian loyalty and external allegiance.

Lebanon has delayed state-building for too long. While it remains trapped in its internal crises, the region around it is changing dramatically. The time has come for Lebanese citizens to recognize that their true security begins at home: with reclaiming national decision-making, restoring the state from the grip of sectarian party leaders, and rebuilding institutions on the basis of citizenship. If the current situation persists, "**National Security**" will remain an empty slogan, and Lebanon will continue to serve as a hostage to regional crises whose costs it can no longer bear.

Authors' Short Bio

Dr. Hares Sleiman

A Lebanese academic, political analyst, environmental researcher, and public affairs commentator. Born in Bednayel in the Bekaa region of Lebanon, he holds a PhD in the Physics and Chemistry of Polymers from the University of Pierre and Marie Curie (Paris VI), France. He is a retired professor from the Faculty of Science at the Lebanese University, where he dedicated decades to teaching, scientific research, and academic development.

Throughout his academic career, **Dr. Sleiman** specialized in environmental sciences, with a particular focus on water and air pollution, as well as in industrial chemistry, notably in the fields of polymers, polyurethane materials, nano-composites, and their physical and chemical properties. His research has contributed to advancing scientific knowledge in environmental monitoring and the development of innovative materials and technologies.

Alongside his academic achievements, **Dr. Sleiman** has maintained a long-standing commitment to public affairs and political activism. His political engagement began in the **1970s** through the student movement at the Lebanese University and later extended to active participation in the resistance against the Israeli occupation in South Lebanon. He was also among the early and outspoken opponents of Syrian military and political tutelage over Lebanon. During that period, he and members of his family were subjected to repeated persecution, arrests, and harassment by Syrian intelligence services. He survived several assassination attempts throughout his political career.

In the early **1980s**, convinced of the futility of the Lebanese civil war and the devastating consequences it inflicted on the country and its people, **Dr. Sleiman** worked with a number of prominent Lebanese figures to launch a series of youth-oriented dialogues and conferences entitled "**The Expectations of the Youth.**" These initiatives sought to promote a culture of peace, democracy, freedom of expression, pluralism, and constructive dialogue among younger generations.

Dr. Sleiman subsequently joined the **Movement of Democratic Renewal**, where he served as a member of its leadership and board structures. He also acted as an advisor to the late Minister Nassib Lahoud, contributing to political and reform-oriented initiatives aimed at strengthening democratic governance in Lebanon.

A respected political analyst, writer, and expert on Lebanese, Arab, and regional affairs, **Dr. Sleiman** regularly contributes to intellectual and political forums and publishes articles in various Lebanese and Arab media outlets. He has remained actively engaged in public life and was among the participants in the Lebanese protest movement that began on **17 October 2019**, continuing his longstanding advocacy for sovereignty, democracy, reform, and accountable governance.

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