

reinforces its position as a key player in the region, contributing to broader regional stability. The ongoing energy crisis in Syria, a consequence of the earlier prolonged war, presents a significant challenge for the ruling group. In light of reduced access to Iranian oil and persistent domestic divisions, the future of Syria's energy supply will de-

pend on Damascus's ability to manage internal conflicts, build partnerships with regional and international actors, and redefine Syria's position within the changing geopolitical framework of the Middle East. One potential pathway involves fostering a closer relationship with Saudi Arabia as a key energy supplier. While this part-

nership may enhance Riyadh's influence in Syria's economic landscape, it is essential to consider the implications for Syria's autonomy and the potential for increased dependence on Saudi Arabia's regional strategies. Conversely, if Damascus can successfully engage with other capitals, such as Ankara or Doha, it may create new alliances that could

transform the balance of power in the Levant. In the long run, the reconstruction of Syria's energy infrastructure and the pursuit of relative self-sufficiency are vital objectives. However, achieving these goals necessitates a foundation of political stability, a reduction in internal tensions, and the alleviation of international sanc-

tions. Ultimately, the ability of Damascus to devise a unified and coherent strategy — one that harmonizes regional relations while effectively mobilizing domestic resources — will be crucial. The future of Syria, not only in the energy sector but across various domains, hinges on the astute management of these interconnected challenges.

A stable Lebanon serves as a stronger ally for Iran, region



By Mohammad Ali Sobhani
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OPINION

Lebanon possesses unique characteristics among the countries in the region, and the governance of this country is largely shaped by the various social groups and sects within it. When these forces reach a consensus and come together as a united front, they gain the initiative to achieve their desired outcomes and resolve their issues.

For many years, disputes have arisen among Lebanon's diverse sects, particularly intensifying after the involvement in Syria and the subsequent support for the people of Gaza following the Hamas resistance group's attack on Israel on October 7, 2023. The disagreements among the groups were so pronounced that they hindered any unified stance in Parliament regarding the election of a president. Consequently, Lebanon has been without a president for an extended period due to these conflicts. At that time, Iran maintained a tenuous relationship with the government and certain Lebanese factions, while it enjoyed a more extensive connection with the Hezbollah resistance group and the Shia community in Lebanon due to shared religious ties. This overall situation complicated the possibility of electing a president.

Following the escalation of conflicts with the Israeli regime and the fall of Bashar al-Assad's government in Syria, new conditions needed to emerge in Lebanon, which began with the implementation of [UN Security Council] Resolution 1701 [that was intended to resolve the 2006 Lebanon War], continued with a cease-fire, and ultimately led to the election of a new president. The current circumstances suggest that a genuine opportunity for unity has finally arisen for the Lebanese, allowing them to come together. This marks a preliminary step into a new phase, enabling the Lebanese to find their footing, unite, and pursue their objectives. Maintaining the existing cease-fire is one of Lebanon's most critical goals today. If this cease-fire collapses, the entire situation will unravel, leading to new conflicts and potentially jeopardizing the unity among the Lebanese once again.

Second priority

Given that Syria geographically surrounds Lebanon, aside from the southern region under the oversight of UN forces, establishing a proper relationship with this neighbor will be the second priority.

Previously, Syria only had a good relationship with Hezbollah, while other groups faced challenges in their dealings with Syria. However, this is no longer the case, as a government opposing and distinct from Bashar al-Assad's government has come to power. Given the realities of the borders, Lebanon is compelled to establish relations with Syria to facilitate the movement of its sects and utilize the capacities of

both nations. This marks the second priority of a newly formed unity among the government, Parliament, and all groups to elect a president.

The groundwork for rebuilding Lebanon's relations with Syria is reportedly being laid. It appears that the group in power in Syria may be able to help restore this relationship through various segments of Lebanese society. Hezbollah can influence the broader Lebanese community's relationship by maintaining its position within the government and various Lebanese institutions. Moreover, if relations with Syria improve, it could also affect the dynamics between Iran and Syria.

Iran's role in unity

Throughout the past years, Iran has significantly impacted the situation when the Lebanese felt that Iran was assisting all Lebanese in establishing peace, stability, and security in Lebanon. For instance, during Mohammad Khatami's presidency (1997-2005), such an atmosphere prevailed in Lebanon. Many believed that the idea of dialogue among civilizations seemed tailored for Lebanon, allowing them to leverage this concept for internal unity. One of the initial outcomes of this unity was the expulsion of Israel from southern Lebanon, which would not have been possible without a cohesive Lebanese front.

At certain points, while Hezbollah was engaged in warfare in the south against the Israeli regime, it did not enjoy the backing of the entire Lebanese populace. However, there were times when all segments of society, from the citizenry to the prime minister, president, and various sectarian parties, rallied behind the resistance. The foundation of this support rests on the unity that is being legally established, gradually bringing people closer together and fostering the understanding that the resistance, like other sectors, can play a positive role in Lebanon. Every country should act based on the will of its entire populace, rather than just a segment. This perspective highlights the emergence of new conditions and opportunities, allowing for the sidelining of internal disputes in Lebanon while also addressing the calculations of occupying forces.

'Lebanon for all Lebanese'

Lebanese have chosen the path of unity in light of the current circumstances, which is preferable to the previous



Lebanese lawmakers gather to elect a new president at the parliament building in downtown Beirut, Lebanon, on January 9, 2025. **HUSSEIN MALLA/AP**

route that led to the martyrdom of Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah, the terrorist agenda of the Pagars, and the deaths of commanders—an enormous loss.

Lebanon is most powerful when united, and this strength can enhance its internal and external successes. Only through this unity can they stand firm against external aggression. The rehabilitation of Hezbollah, alongside the government, will also be more effective in the context of unity. It is essential to view Lebanon as a state-nation that should uphold the motto, "Lebanon is for all Lebanese."

Tensions devastate the entire region, and reducing these tensions in Lebanon through unity and the establishment of a strong, united Lebanon is vital for the entire area, especially in light of the threat posed by Israeli aggression. Whenever the Lebanese unite, they stand firm against this aggression; con-

versely, when internal disputes intensify, they lose the initiative.

Wisdom-based election

Another crucial point is that the election of the president of this country is based on collective wisdom. Joseph Aoun was unable to secure a majority in the first round of voting, but in the second round, thanks to behind-the-scenes consultations and discussions, he was able to win, which is promising. This indicates that nothing was imposed on anyone, and everything was based on consensus. These behind-the-scenes discussions have satisfied all relevant parties, resulting in solid support for the new president. This is a positive sign, suggesting that the president will have a national backing.

Ultimately, France, through the Maronites, Iran through Hezbollah, Saudi Arabia through the Sunni community, and the sig-

nificant role of the United States must collaborate in the initial stages to ensure that tensions are alleviated and this unity is successful. They could even gather to discuss this matter, potentially serving as a model for reducing tensions in the region. Concerning the coherent positioning of the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it is important to note that at times, non-diplomatic and even problematic perspectives have dominated foreign policy. There is now an urgent need for diplomatic perspectives in relations with neighboring countries, to organize foreign relations based on the state-nation system, prioritizing governments.

Iran requires a cohesive foreign policy grounded in legal responsibilities to engage more effectively and robustly with issues than in the past, utilizing all its legal capacities to fulfill its duties.



A man walks next to an installation with the flags of Iran, Hezbollah and Lebanon, in Tehran, Iran, on October 18, 2024. **REUTERS**



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