

# Head-to-Head with Corruption: The Lebanese Challenge\*

## Executive Summary

The corruption of the Lebanese political and bureaucratic system is nothing new. Since the early days of its independence, Lebanon has endured growing cases of corruption. Successive governments were unable – provided they were willing – to put an end to red tape practices whereby public servants would extort bribes from citizens in return for administrative services. These practices are illegal and constitute an abuse of public positions to secure private benefits.

Today anti-corruption efforts are timelier as the Lebanese state, suffering from a 100-billion-dollar debt, struggles to avoid total collapse. Lebanon's debt crisis is the result of corruption, embezzlement and misuse of public funds, unlawful appropriation of public property and revenues, and the illicit enrichment of leaders and civil servants. This shows the magnitude and scale of the problem. Not one state agency has been spared by corruption. It has in fact led to “the privatisation of public affairs” and the establishment of a “patrimonial state”; a state where the management of public funds and assets, national heritage, and public interests is dictated by private interests. This phenomenon per se, once it becomes universal, is an indicator of the state collapse and incapacity to manage the common good. It is an early sign of its obsolescence.

It is crucial to analyse this devastating phenomenon and better understand its origins and entrenchment in the Lebanese economic and political system. Corruption was nurtured by political sectarianism as mirrored in the design of the successive Lebanese cabinets and reproduced in sectarian elections. This sectarianism is a patronage system that has paved the way to public embezzlement policies and to the redistribution of captured funds. It has impacted the Lebanese state to the extent that the latter has become a “looted state” by sectarian groups. The most severe impact, symbolically speaking, is “the loss of state legitimacy”; a state considered to be corrupt, negligent, and showing little concern for protecting public interests or soundly managing its finances.

The resilience of corruption in Lebanon finds its deeper roots in regional history as much as from the trivialisation of corruptive habits in national life. Corruption is not an irreversible phenomenon. It is an attitude that is constructed, learnt, and reproduced. This attitude owes its resilience to the prevailing impunity and the lack of monitoring and awareness programmes among students and grassroots. If nothing is done to eradicate corruptive behaviour through appropriate civic education, it will continue to thrive.

\* This is the edited translation of an analysis originally prepared in French by Joseph Maïla, professor of geopolitics and director of the Mediation Programme at the Institute for Research and Education on Negotiation (IRENÉ) at the Higher School of Economic and Commercial Sciences (ESSEC), Paris.

## 2 | Head-to-Head with Corruption

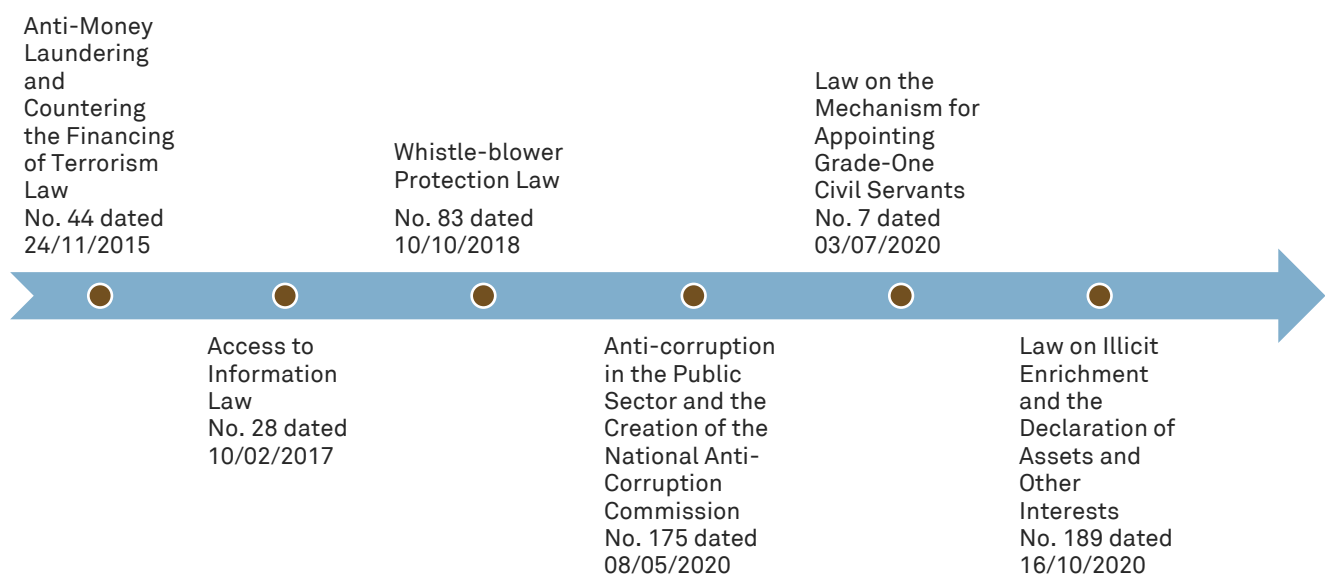
However, the demise of corruption requires a system that teaches civic values, care for common good and transparency in the accounts and practices of both the state and the private sector.

To this end, reform in Lebanon is a requirement on at least three levels.

With regards to political accountability, elections held on the grounds of a new electoral law and facilitating the transition to a non-sectarian and civil political system will loosen the sectarian grip over public institutions. This law should also allow citizens to vote in their constituency of residence rather than at the place of registration of their family's civil status. Lebanese citizens would be better enabled to claim and control the improvement of their living conditions in the places where they live and exercise their profession instead of perpetuating traditional allegiances to clan and family solidarity. This law would also reduce the voting age to 18 and ensure adequate female representation so that women, young people, and marginalised groups, can be integrated into the democratic process. A wider administrative decentralisation will allow citizens to participate in the development of their region and, ultimately, to better monitor and control public spending.

From a legal and administrative standpoint, it is vital to accelerate the appointment of members of the National Anti-Corruption Commission and to implement the National Anti-Corruption Strategy adopted on 12 May 2020. It is vital, as well, to enforce and strengthen the laws on illicit enrichment, and to enact a new law for awarding public contracts with better transparency, control, and unified regulations. For this to happen and to be enforced, the financial expertise within the Lebanese judiciary needs to be reinforced and judges should be trained to investigate corruption files; this is part of a long-awaited reform of the judiciary. The latter must use all the means offered by international law to track down the fraudulent evasion of illicitly constituted funds and recover stolen assets and ill-gotten gains.

In terms of civic culture, it is urgently needed to change mentalities and promote a culture of responsible citizenship to overcome the indifferent or nearly tolerant attitude towards corruption that prevails today. This will require awareness raising at schools and higher education institutions, and an extensive information and sensitisation campaign about the values of citizenship and the consequences of corrupt practices. It will be necessary to involve all civil society actors, in particular the youth and women associations, supporting them to lead the way for the emergence of a new civic engagement.



Lebanese Legislation on Combating Corruption Since 2015

## Introduction

Corruption in Lebanon governs all sectors of society. At the level of public administrations as in the latter's relations with citizens, prevails a somehow mutually agreed upon system intended to facilitate administrative procedures, secure participation in public tenders and the exoneration from taxes. This system stems more from fraud and venality than from the respect of laws and legal procedures. At the top of the pyramid, politico-financial groups are splitting the wins of fraudulent contracts to supposedly ensure the smooth running of public services. Commissions extracted from the manipulated awarding of public tenders to pre-determined bidders can lead to the illicit enrichment of political leaders and officials appointed to key ministerial or administrative decision-making positions. As a consequence, bit by bit, all public sectors, let alone economic and social practices, became plagued by corruption.

Corruption is a set of practices whereby public servants extort citizens in return for administrative services. It pre-supposes a willingness to circumvent the applicable laws or administrative regulations for the mutual benefit of stakeholders. It supposes a relationship between two parties, individuals, or groups, in which one party obtains advantages of whatever nature (heritage property, services, public contracts, tax exoneration or discounts etc.) in return for illegal retribution. This approach is the result of an abuse committed by a person entrusted with a public position of the jurisdiction and prerogatives arising from his/her position to secure private interests. Corruption therefore stems from an implicit quasi-alliance between parties working according to the "give and take" principle, or to the Latin formula of "do ut des" or "win-win" – used here in its pejorative meaning in reference to the privileges or administrative favours offered by the public servant in return for personal gain.<sup>1</sup> There are, of course, also more direct forms of corruption and illicit enrichment, such as the embezzlement of public funds by various means, the plundering of public resources and the forgery of public statements or accounts.

If corruption and the related influence peddling can be disaggregated, on a scale of means and size, between petty and grand corruption, one cannot settle with the simplistic approach to a criminal agreement between two parties that are wary of the resulting profit. Furthermore, when corruption becomes structural and widespread, it must be analysed and understood within the broader framework of its social context. Corruption

must therefore be linked to the type of state in which it operates, to the legislations of the latter and the state of their enforcement, to the economic system it operates in and to the political culture and traditions that make it possible.<sup>2</sup>

Corruption, in its various forms, is not a recent phenomenon in Lebanon. Going back to the Ottoman era, where the 19th century reform decrees, known as the "Tanzimat", mentioned the fight against corruption in the Empire, or even to the Governorate or Moutassarifate of Mount-Lebanon (1861–1915) where certain Governors of the Mountain, including Mouzaffar Pacha (1902–1907), offered administrative positions for money, the circumvention of the law and illicit enrichment never really ceased. The young independent Lebanese Republic fought crises in which corruption was not absent. The first President of the Republic, also a hero of independence, was forced to resign on 17 September 1952, during his second mandate, following suspicions of nepotism.<sup>3</sup> President Béchara El-Khoury was accused of abusing his position as head of State for personal interests or for the benefit of his family.<sup>4</sup> The bankruptcy of Intra Bank, the largest Lebanese bank, in 1966, whose founder and director was convicted of fraudulent bankruptcy, shook the Lebanese banking system and had regional repercussions.<sup>5</sup> Likewise, at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, the scandal surrounding the purchase of the Crotale missiles in which the Commander-in-Chief of the Army was involved gave rise to the 1972 Chamber of Deputies appeal for a thorough investigation carried out by the Lebanese judiciary on the grounds of "influence

1 It is also necessary to distinguish between passive and active corruption. The latter refers to the behaviour of the person requesting a benefit or a favour from the representative of public authority, while passive corruption refers to the behaviour of the representative of the authority who accepts the solicitation.

2 For this global approach, cf. the pioneer work of Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt, *Patrons, Clients and Friends: Interpersonal Relations and the Structure of Trust Society*, Cambridge University Press, 1984.

3 This mandate started in 1948, following contested legislative elections. The National Assembly resulting from these elections had amended Article 49 of the Constitution "on an exceptional basis" to allow the re-election of the outgoing President.

4 The constitutionalist Edmond Rabbath writes that the mandate of the first President of the Republic had been marked by "factionalism which could only lead to nepotism, favouritism and other deviations of the same kind. Interventionism is rife everywhere and even in the functioning of Judiciary. Corruption is widespread". Cf. *La formation historique du Liban politique et constitutionnel*, Publication de l'Université Libanaise, 1973, p. 532.

5 Founded in 1951, the Intra Bank at the time of its financial collapse had up to 17% of Lebanese deposits and had significant shares in the industry of transport (the Middle East Airlines, the national aviation company, the port), the Casino du Liban, and valuable real estate and industrial assets abroad.

peddling and illicit brokering”.<sup>6</sup> Apart from a reformist and relatively virtuous period during the tenure of President Fouad Chehab (1958–1964), corruption continued to thrive. After the Lebanese war in 1975 and with the beginning of a new era after the signing of the National Accord, known as the Taif Agreement (1989), corruption took new forms and greater dimensions.

## Sectarianism, Clientelism and Corruption

Corruption is mainly associated with the sectarian system which has prevailed in Lebanon since the proclamation of the state in 1920. The distribution of administrative positions and that of the most important political offices proportionately to the religious denominations, however stipulated on a transitional basis by Article 95 of the Constitution, filtered into political traditions. The constitutional reform introduced by the Taif Agreement had foreseen the end of sectarianism, particularly the unsectarian national representation and the establishment of a representative Senate reflecting the country’s “religious denominations”. This set of measures was stillborn, except in terms of deconfessionalising public service positions, apart from the so-called “first-category” or senior civil servants.

The interwoven sectarian and political systems eventually led to a quasi-monopoly of national and regional representation by the confessional groups and political parties. Constituencies or electoral districts, municipalities, parliamentary seats, and ministerial positions have been the privilege of the same political families since Lebanon’s inception. Parliamentary dynasties were established, based on a traditional power that they were able to renew through their proclaimed ability to defend their community against the dangers that lay in wait. A deeply rooted traditional power adjusting to the circumstances of the moment and shaping its legitimacy accordingly, largely explains, locally and nationally, this longevity. However, the services and favours expected by the voter, often in the form of financial incentives or food rewards, perpetuate the elected/voter relationship. The material motivation behind the voting behaviour therefore intertwines with the civic duty to vote. This way, local dignitaries and party leaders have, over time, for their benefit or that of their family, renewed and consolidated the “za’im/zilm” or “boss/client” relation which continues to weigh over the Lebanese national life. This patronage

relationship, inherited from the traditional system of rural feudalism and then extended to urban elites, served as a common leverage used to politically interfere in bureaucratic procedures and a means to influence decisions.<sup>7</sup>

In the last few decades there has been a constant increase in the number of deputies having exercised liberal professions or originating professionally from the business world. However, this change in political profiles did not constitute a break with the traditional way of functioning of the Chamber of Deputies, nor was it reflected, strictly speaking, in a modernisation of the role of parliament. The newcomers have in fact been integrated into the traditional sectarian representation: either through their appointment by the region’s dignitary who include them on their electoral list in return for their financial contribution to the campaign, or through an electoral campaign, led at their own expense to gain the seat reserved for their community. These reflections on the mode of reproduction of the sectarian system endorse state reliance on political figures whose sectarian legitimacy is reaffirmed at each election.

All the more, political leaders guarantee their permanent access to the state bureaucracy to plead the causes and demands of their clients and supporters, even more easily as they exert pressure to appoint officials who are devoted to them.<sup>8</sup> Remarkably though, these behaviours, akin to nepotism, prove that the parties and the militias stemming from the war have succeeded, with astonishing ease, in following the same patterns of political action and mediation between their constituents and government administration that were practiced by the traditional and quasi-feudal leaders whom they fought and replaced.<sup>9</sup>

With the end of the civil war in 1990, political clientelism regained momentum. The Taif Agreement enabled the “warlords”, included in the General Amnesty Law of 1991, to participate in the “post-war” cabinets as well as in the material reconstruction of a country

6 A contract for the purchase of Crotale anti-aircraft missiles had been signed by mutual agreement between Lebanon and the French Company for a sum of 66 million francs. This contract, which was terminated in 1972, had given rise to important commissions for the commander-in-chief of the Lebanese Army and other intermediaries. The Lebanese Court of Justice had, on 15 January 1974, sentenced the main actors of this case, including the commander-in-chief of the army, to prison and inflicted on them substantial fines.

7 Many political scientists specialising in Lebanon and the Middle East have emphasised the fact that political life revolves around this political couple. “In contemporary Lebanon, the za’im is an informal group leader whose followers support him on the basis of personal loyalty and personal rewards”, in James A. Bill et Carl Leiden, *Politics in the Middle East*, Little, Brown & Co., 1974, p. 88.

8 Arnold Hottinger rightly said about the za’im who became a deputy: “For the government he is necessary because ‘his’ people trust their za’im, which makes it possible to reach the people through him and to obtain commitments from the group via his person”. In “Zuama in Historical Perspective”, in Leonard Binder (ed.), *Politics in Lebanon*, John Wiley & Sons, 1966, p. 91.

9 The new leaders trained as part of the militias of the war built a za’ama based on family and traditional solidarity and ideologies of war. They were able to create, according to the formula of James A. Bill and Carl Leiden, “a pattern of family tenacity and ideological malleability”, op. cit., p. 89.

devastated by 15 years of conflict. Elevated to the rank of leaders, the “warlords” have also become entrepreneurs in a corrupt and uncontrolled economic atmosphere. They have also become the preeminent actors in a political life “that regained momentum” after the National Reconciliation Accord signed in Taif. From then on, a rather strange team set in, and continues to this day; entrepreneurs (mainly from the country’s capital) rebuilding the metropolis, and militias reforming the political system would join efforts to plunder the country’s wealth. A sectarian-political-economic oligarchic system, protected by the Syrian regime established in Lebanon until 2005 and backed by armed groups – some of which have retained and even increased their arsenal, such as the Hezbollah party – would impose a distribution of benefits and advantages within the post-war ruling class. Banking scandals, such as those of Bank Al-Madina<sup>10</sup> and the Lebanese Canadian Bank,<sup>11</sup> have underscored the entanglement of the Lebanese banking system and political authority with Syrian intelligence officials. This regime of organised political arrangement, benefits-sharing and misappropriated public funds has led the country to its bankruptcy. Corruption was its driving force. Within a few years, Lebanon switched from a corruption perpetrated by rent-seeking public servants or parliamentarians to a cartelised corruption carried out at the top of the state between the leaders of political groups who actively divide the state revenues among themselves.

While corruption may have been a cyclical phenomenon, this has no longer been the case since the ultra-liberal wave that accompanied the “reconstruction” strategy of Lebanon. From that point on, towards the mid-1990s, with the then unusually titanic contracts and the ruling cartel of ex-combatants and militias, things have changed. The state was taken hostage. A power-seeking militia culture sought to secure its interests and material benefits while running the country’s political balances. Corruption has since been intimately linked to the functioning of the state. It is not occasional but structurally functional since it is the mode of governance of the Lebanese political system. Lebanon is thus governed today by an “extractive oligarchy”, a leading group united in its sharing of the rent extorted from the

state. On this occasion, the corruptive system did not hesitate, using the de facto forces that exercise control over certain regions, more assuredly than the Lebanese Army or the Internal Security Forces, to resort to a subtle violence to protect its interests.

The period starting with the end of the war and the reconstruction of the country generalised the use of corruption and nurtured it even more depending on the ties of influence, kinship, and interest. Above all, it made Lebanon a “private state”, a “patrimonial state” (Max Weber) where a politico-militia class disposed of the country’s assets and resources. A culture of corruption and plunder has become the rule of the game and the Lebanese state seen as a mine to be exploited or a booty to be looted. The state, through the political class, will also have become a predator of the resources of its own citizens, as has become evident in the wake of the collapse of the Lebanese banking system.

The political and social protest that took shape in October 2019, the might of which amplified after the Beirut port blast of 4 August 2020, brought to its height the people’s admonition of the state’s ineptitude and culpable and criminal negligence in the management of the country.

## State Weaknesses and Corruption

The sectarian system is not the only causal factor of corruption: it must also be understood in line with the weakness of the Lebanese state, a feeble or fragile state in terms of authority and capacity to impose its decisions, to measure the societal environment which carries and feeds corruption. Under the sectarian regime, the state’s dependence vis-à-vis political or even religious groups that defend the interests and rights of communities is a sign of its fragility. The state has become more permeable to pressures and solicitations of all kinds to prioritise sectarian rights or at least of those who claim to represent them, while neglecting the defence of common good and general interest.

This diminished concern for public interest and its precedence over all other interests, therefore, makes it possible to understand how confessions split the here-called “zones of bureaucratic influence” in the state among themselves.<sup>12</sup> It is as if the parties which govern Lebanon had carved out “fiefdoms” in the state bureaucracy, as in feudal times. General directors and officials of allegiance identified with a particular leader or community party consider themselves the appointed managers of specific ministries or national funds for the return of the displaced, regional development, and reconstruction in Lebanon. This bureaucratic and political division opens the way to control the state’s sources of income and establishes, for the benefit of

10 The bankruptcy of Al-Madina bank in 2003 unmasks a prime political and financial scandal that has never been fully elucidated in which the head of the Syrian military intelligence in Lebanon, Rustom Ghazale, his brothers and Lebanese parties accused of money laundering and trafficking were involved. This scandal, according to the daily *L’Orient-Le Jour* on 27 April 2015, “embodies the widespread corruption of the politico-military apparatus at the time”.

11 Accused in February 2011 by the American authorities of money laundering in connection with drug trafficking between South America, West Africa and the Middle East as well as of financing Hezbollah, this bank, which is no longer operational, merged in September of the same year with a local bank. It paid a significant fine in return for the termination of the proceedings initiated against it by the US Treasury.

12 Michael C. Hudson, “Lebanon After Taif: Another Reform Opportunity Lost?”, *Arab Studies Quarterly* 21(1), 1999, pp. 27–40.

the ruling coalition, spaces of influence that support ambiguous administrative recruitment and the distribution of favours and advantages to supporters and sympathisers.<sup>13</sup> This trend has recently worsened with wrangling over the formation of governments, the appointment of ministers to posts that would be exclusively reserved for a particular community. The most significant ministries from the point of view of their budget, the services they could provide, the power they would concentrate or the international aid from which they would likely benefit, are thus the object of sordid bargaining and distribution. This political environment is opaque and favourable to all kinds of corruption. It is bureaucratic state clientelism.

The Central State is therefore a “shared state” in which sectarianism operates to distribute posts and dispense illicit favours and services for the benefit of clients that one seeks to attach. On the eve of the last legislative elections in May 2018 and in seemingly perfect inter-community agreement, nearly 15,000 public servants were appointed despite the freeze on appointments decided by the Council of Ministers.<sup>14</sup> This massive, illegal “entryism”, motivated by the purchase of electoral favours, has overburdened an already bloated civil service.

Another weakness that fuels corruption is that of the ineffectiveness of the rule of law. Managed as it is, divided among confessions, torn by internal conflicts of interest, the Lebanese state, in the absence of national unity, proves powerless to enforce the rights it is entitled to. Its weakness lies not in the absence of laws but in the absence of the will to enforce them. Its inability to fight corruption is matched by the impunity of the overwhelming majority of those who circumvent the law. The implementation of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy is still pending the formation of the National Anti-Corruption Commission. The reform of the judiciary remains on hold pending the nomination of judges capable of passing judgements that would sanction financial embezzlement, influence peddling, administrative corruption, illegal perception of fees for intermediation or brokerage services, false declarations or forged official documents.

13 This drift was predictable. It was enshrined in the Taif Agreement which, through the distribution of powers to which it proceeds, ends up transforming the various political institutions into their sectarian “fiefdoms”. “In 1989 in Taif, confessionalism dictated the remodelling of the institutions. Those institutions have become nothing more than pawns of a confessional structure. In Taif, the representatives of the communities carried out constitutional reforms as if they were lords redistributing their fiefs”. In *The Document of National Understanding: A Commentary*, Joseph Maïla, Centre for Lebanese Studies, Oxford, 1992, pp. 57–58.

14 Sunniva Rose, “15,000 government employees hired illegally: New government under strain from accusations over past hiring and financial management”, *The National*, 28 February 2019. Available at: <https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/mena/lebanese-mps-15-000-government-employees-hired-illegally-1.831701>.

Within the framework of the effective implementation of justice reform plans, the modernisation of the laws, the control by the Civil Service Board of the practices of public officials, the fight against absenteeism or the appointment to fictitious jobs or, finally, the simple implementation of the enforced legislation, things appear to be linked between the possibilities offered by the law and the hurdles to its application imposed by a ruling elite who fears for its interests and future.

The ineffectiveness of a state that cannot enforce its sovereignty and control its porous borders, open to smuggling and trafficking, aggravates the squandering of public money, which reinforces the idea of a “plundered”, “pillaged” state. For instance, more than 100 border crossing points through which contraband passes to Syria are widely known. Despite incessant calls, their closure by the armed or security forces has remained unfulfilled.<sup>15</sup>

Focusing on the administration to explain the causes of corruption, one cannot ignore that in the private sector, and in business relations, fraudulent practices are much the same as in public service. The impact cannot be diminished because private sector fraud often is done to the detriment of the state, which ends up deprived of due fiscal revenues.

Finally, when the state does not meet the most basic expectations of its citizens and does not provide them with the minimum daily services (namely water, electricity, waste management, health, purchasing power, stability of the national currency etc.), it is called into question for any minor failure. Ineffectiveness, negligence, and inefficiency become aggravating factors that feed corrupt behaviours and undermine the image, influence, and authority of the state. Citizens circumvent it, disregard it and act as if it no longer exists. If the state is neither visible nor palpable, if it no longer has control over its citizens, if it no longer inspires fear or respect, then anything is allowed, and corruption becomes the only way to achieve one’s ends and interests. Often used in common expressions: “there is no state” (*ma fi dawleh*) or “where is the state?” (*wayn al-dawleh?*), this observation and this questioning underscore the loss of confidence in political authority and justify, in the eyes of distraught citizens, the behaviours which tend to overrun the state, deceive it, or circumvent it by fraud and any other illicit means. The state, unable to avail itself of its services or its achievements, loses the confidence of its citizens and loses its *raison d’être*, and even more its legitimacy. It tends to become a “delegitimised state”.

15 Anne-Marie El-Hage, « La lutte contre la contrebande, entre poudre aux yeux et casse-tête », *L’Orient-Le Jour*, 29 May 2020. Available at: <https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/1219771/la-lutte-contre-la-contrebande-entre-poudre-aux-yeux-et-casse-tete.html>.

## Corruption and Political Culture

The impact of corruption and its consequences on governance in Lebanon leads to question its origins and depths. The analysis of corruption cannot be reduced to a typology of fraudulent practices or to a simple administrative drift. The roots of corruption run deeper. They are linked to a deeply entrenched political culture which has contributed to making it an accepted or, in any case, tolerated practice in the relations between the citizen and his state. The weakness of the state, its inability to provide legitimate service to its citizens, the disorganisation of administrative work, its slowness or bureaucratic complications make “petty” corruption a practical and agreed-upon shortcut which for example almost obligatorily accompanies an administrative formality. This practice is a fact of everyday life. Corrupt and corruptive behaviour becomes a trivialised fact, accepted, and understood by citizens who use it, without too much thought, such as an administrative accelerator.

Another ethically unacceptable phenomenon of corruption is the plundering of public property, particularly maritime property or national heritage. More particularly, and on a recurring basis, the fraudulent awarding of public contracts, the rigging of the terms for accessing calls to tenders, the custom-made commissioning of the latter to beneficiaries chosen in advance, have become a considerable source of illicit enrichment. However, while rumours circulate on the conditions of these auctions, they have not yet given rise to formal indictments. The impunity enjoyed by the beneficiaries of corrupt operations is deeply linked to this, fortunately less and less tolerated, trivialisation of illicit and fraudulent practices.

There is no Lebanese specificity of corruption as if it belongs to the intrinsic personality of the Lebanese people. Corrupt practices and behaviours associated with fraudulent operations are the result of social behaviours that are built and then, in the absence of legal proceedings and penal sanctions, reproduced. Corruption is therefore not an irreversible social phenomenon. Its resilience depends on the prevailing impunity and the absence of a strategy to warn of its danger to national solidarity, public morality, and the financial resources of the state. If nothing is done to eradicate corruptive behaviour through civic education at all ages, it will continue. The eradication of corruption will depend on the inculcation of civic values, interest in the common good and transparency in the accounts and practices of both the state and the private sector.

In sum, the repudiation of civic virtues and public morality that led to the proliferation of corrupt behaviours is the citizens’ response to the absence of an effective and efficient state. Countering corruption will therefore require the values of servant leadership, good citizenship, equality, and collective solidarity to prevail in order to reclaim the common good.

## Recommendations

The fight against corruption derives its methods and resources from several fields of activity. It is nevertheless obvious that in the absence of political will, the system of corruption which has become a system of State management and a tool for preserving the interests of the ruling class cannot be effectively overthrown.

The suggestions below outline some avenues for remedying the current situation.

At the legal and administrative levels:

- Use all means to implement the seven objectives of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy of 12 May 2020;
- Strengthen financial expertise within the Lebanese judiciary and push for the appointment of judges trained in the investigation of corruption cases, within the framework of an expected reform of the judicial system;
- Strengthen the role and the mechanisms made available to the Civil Service Board;
- Use all the means offered by international law to track the fraudulent evasion of illicitly constituted capital and the recovery of stolen funds and ill-gotten goods;
- Promote, in the fight against corruption in the private sector, the use of forensic audit to verify the compliance of companies with the principles and regulations of sound governance.

At the political level:

- Reform the political system by reviewing the electoral law, allowing young people over 18 to participate in the election of their representatives, ensuring female representation and enabling the transition to a national non-sectarian representation system;
- Put in place a broad administrative decentralisation allowing citizens to oversee the development of their region and to control public expenditure

At the level of political culture:

- Establish a strategy for promoting the values of civic citizenship in relation to the fight against corruption;
- Develop awareness-raising programmes for schools and higher education and sensitise people on the values of citizenship and the consequences of corruptive practices;
- Involve all civil society actors, in particular youth associations and women’s associations, supporting them to lead the way for the emergence of a new civic engagement in Lebanon.

## ABOUT DEMOCRACY REPORTING INTERNATIONAL

Democracy Reporting International (DRI) is a non-partisan, independent, not-for-profit organisation registered in Berlin, Germany. DRI promotes political participation of citizens, accountability of state bodies and the development of democratic institutions world-wide. DRI helps find local ways of promoting the universal right of citizens to participate in the political life of their country, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

<http://www.democracy-reporting.org>

Since 2016, DRI Lebanon has worked with civil society and government at local and national levels to reinforce effective governance of public services and advocate for reforming the decentralisation framework in line with transparent and accountable governance principles.

This publication was produced with the assistance of the German Federal Foreign Office within the framework of DRI's project "Supporting Decentralisation: Accountable, Inclusive and Effective Governance in Lebanon – Phase III". The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of its author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the German Federal Foreign Office or DRI.





Democracy Reporting International – Lebanon Office

Farhat Bldg., Palace of Justice Street

Beirut / Lebanon

T/ +961 (0)1 427 504/5

F/ +961 (0)1 427 504

[info.lebanon@democracy-reporting.org](mailto:info.lebanon@democracy-reporting.org)

[www.democracy-reporting.org/lebanon](http://www.democracy-reporting.org/lebanon)