

Lebanon's Election of Michel Aoun- its 13th President, ally of Hezbollah



Michel Aoun, Lebanon's 13th President, Leader of Free Patriotic Movement

Source: AP

The election of retired Gen. Michel Aoun of the Free Patriotic Movement in alliance with Hezbollah after two years without a Christian Maronite President in the complex confessional political system may mark the completion of the Mediterranean 'anchor' of Iran's long sought "Shi'ite crescent" running from the Persian Gulf via Iraq and Syria to Lebanon. SEE: "Enigmatic Lebanon", our [review](#) of Mordechai Nisan's "Politics and War in Lebanon: Unraveling the Enigma," in the September 2015, *New English Review*. That is the prospective outcome of the more than 45 ballots that eventuate in Gen. Aoun's election yesterday as head of the Free Patriot Movement and alliance partner with Hezbollah. His election marked Aoun's ascension to the Presidency in the fractious confessional political system in Lebanon, whose south is dominated by Hezbollah with more than 130,000 rockets and missiles aimed at its neighbor, the Jewish nation of Israel. Hezbollah, Iran's proxy has also sacrificed thousands of its fighters in the cause of defending Bashir Assad's Syria.

Assad's intelligence has been alleged to have been behind the assassination of Rafia Hariri, Sunni billionaire Middle East construction magnate and Premier of Lebanon, backed by Saudi Arabia, in 2005. His son Sad, is the new Prime Minister designate in Beirut in Lebanon's new government with Gen. Aoun as President.

Shoshana Bryen in an *American Thinker* article, "[Lebanon's Government, and Iran's Victory](#)" on the election of a Maronite Christian President in Lebanon after a two year stalemate commented:

After 45 rounds of balloting beginning after the election of 2014, the Lebanese Parliament has chosen retired Maronite General Michel Aoun as president. An enemy of Syria during the Lebanese civil war, in 2005, he made peace with Assad in Damascus and then forged an alliance with Hezbollah at home. His ascension to the post – over Maronite Suleiman Franjieh, favored by Saudi Arabia – puts a point on Iran's influence in Lebanon, and Iran cheered. Ali Akbar Velayati, Ayatollah Khamenei's top foreign policy adviser, said, "The election of Michel Aoun as president shows new support for the Islamic resistance [against Israel]."

Perhaps, but it was at least as much a cheer for nailing down the eastern end of the long sought Shiite Crescent and enhancing Iran's reach across the region.

Mordechai Nisan^[1], whom we interviewed about Lebanon's confessional system politics in a September 2015, *New English Review* article, "[An Israeli Defender of Threatened Minorities in the Muslim Middle East](#)," sent us his views on the election of Gen. Aoun:

The election of Michel Aoun as President of Lebanon validates the conventional distribution of confessional power and offices in government, while confirming the

vitality of inter-religious cooperation. Christians, Sunnis, and Shiites voted for him in the parliamentary election. The Maronite presidency, at least at the symbolic level resonating history and uniqueness, has not been challenged by the Muslim majority despite the

diminution of the Christian component of the population whose primary element is, indeed, the Maronite community. A venal "minority syndrome," crushing the weak and vulnerable, never stunted Christian dignity in Lebanon.

That said, the political alliance between Michel Aoun and Hassan Nasrallah since 2006 reeks with opportunism and disingenuousness; it also reflects Aoun's unmitigated ambition to collaborate with Hezbollah in order to seize the office of President. His election therefore highlights the hegemonic role arrogated by the Shi'ite community and

its Iranian patron, and foreshadows ill for the ability of Lebanon to affirm its effective political independence from those promoting Islamic extremism and Iranian imperialism.

The Middle East is a volatile arena of duplicity and relentless manipulation. The unfinished war in Syria, and that in Iraq reaching a pivotal point, affect and will continue to hinder domestic Lebanese affairs; for Iran's insurgent intervention thunders across the region, and deep into Lebanon.

Nonetheless, don't underrate Lebanon. We cannot discount that Lebanon's mystique and resilience, bound ineluctably to its Christian past and destiny, can and may prove stronger than the deep malaise attending recent decades in its modern history.

The byzantine maze of Lebanese and Mid-eastern

politics, in which Aoun is well-versed, is not foreign territory to this ancient people.

[\[1\]](#) Mordechai Nisan, retired Hebrew University lecturer in Middle East Studies, authored two books on Lebanon: *The Conscience of Lebanon: A Political Biography of Etienne Sakr (Abu-Arz)*, and *Politics and War in Lebanon: Unraveling the Enigma*.