

Chapter 7

Lebanese Army History and Development of Democracy: Dilemma Between Democratic Rights and National Duty

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ABSTRACT

Unlike most countries, Lebanon lacks a unified national history reference book. Indeed, there is a controversy regarding the use of a unified Lebanese national history book in middle and high school. Many argue against including the Lebanese civil war in the Lebanese school curriculum; although, teaching the Lebanese civil war in school history books can result in many social, political, and economic benefits. Adverse effects are contrasted with consociationalizing effects resulting from the absence of a Lebanese school history book on Lebanese society and history. Regardless of what politicians say, Lebanese younger generations are ready to study the history of their national army and its effects on promoting stability and democracy despite surrounding turmoil.

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HISTORICAL DEBATE: CONFUSION OR CHAOS

Lebanon does not have a unified National history book. Since the end of the Lebanese Civil War with Al-Taef Accords, the Lebanese government is still divided over whether to integrate a unified National history book into middle and high schools or not. There has been an attempt to issue a unified history book. However, this book has not yet been integrated into most public schools for many reasons some of which are: political corruption, disagreement over sectarian representation in the Lebanese history, the notion that youth are not ready to study about their past and the fear of starting a new civil war. The origin of publishing a National Lebanese history book dilemma dates back to the French Mandate (1920-1943). According to Dr. Salibi (2007), during the 1920s, Greater Lebanon was created and divided between two major sects, Islam and its subsects and Christianity and its subsects. Every faction desired to teach a Lebanese history which glorifies it among others. Nevertheless, this division continues to contemporary days, relentlessly leading Lebanon to an inapplicable agreement regarding the conflict of having a National Lebanese history book. This conflict has intensified in the past 26 years. As various well-known social scientists, such as Dr. Kamal Slibi, Dr. Imad Salamy, and Craig Larkin have investigated what honestly occurred in the Lebanese history, it is still not enough to resolve the conflict.

Publishing a unified national Lebanese history book is a controversial topic. Some research has been conducted regarding this matter inside and outside Lebanon. In 2005, Craig Larkins, the communication officer with the government of Manitoba, Canada, conducted a research study on Lebanese youth to elaborate the impact of neglecting the use of a unified national Lebanese history book in public schools. Larkins carried out a qualitative research in his article 'Beyond the War? The Lebanese Post Memory Experience'. He accuses the Amnesty Law of causing the Lebanese post-war generation to stray away from the peacekeeping process. To demonstrate his argument, Larkin interviewed high school Lebanese students asking them open-ended questions regarding their opinion on civil war and Lebanese history. He further investigated the Lebanese history and its implications in the present through comparing and contrasting political and social events that took place before and after issuing the Amnesty Law. Eventually, Larkins notes that there should be an overarching Lebanese history book, to move past the shadows of the Lebanese history.

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