

President Michel Suleiman's first year in office

International College "A Tradition of Excellence"

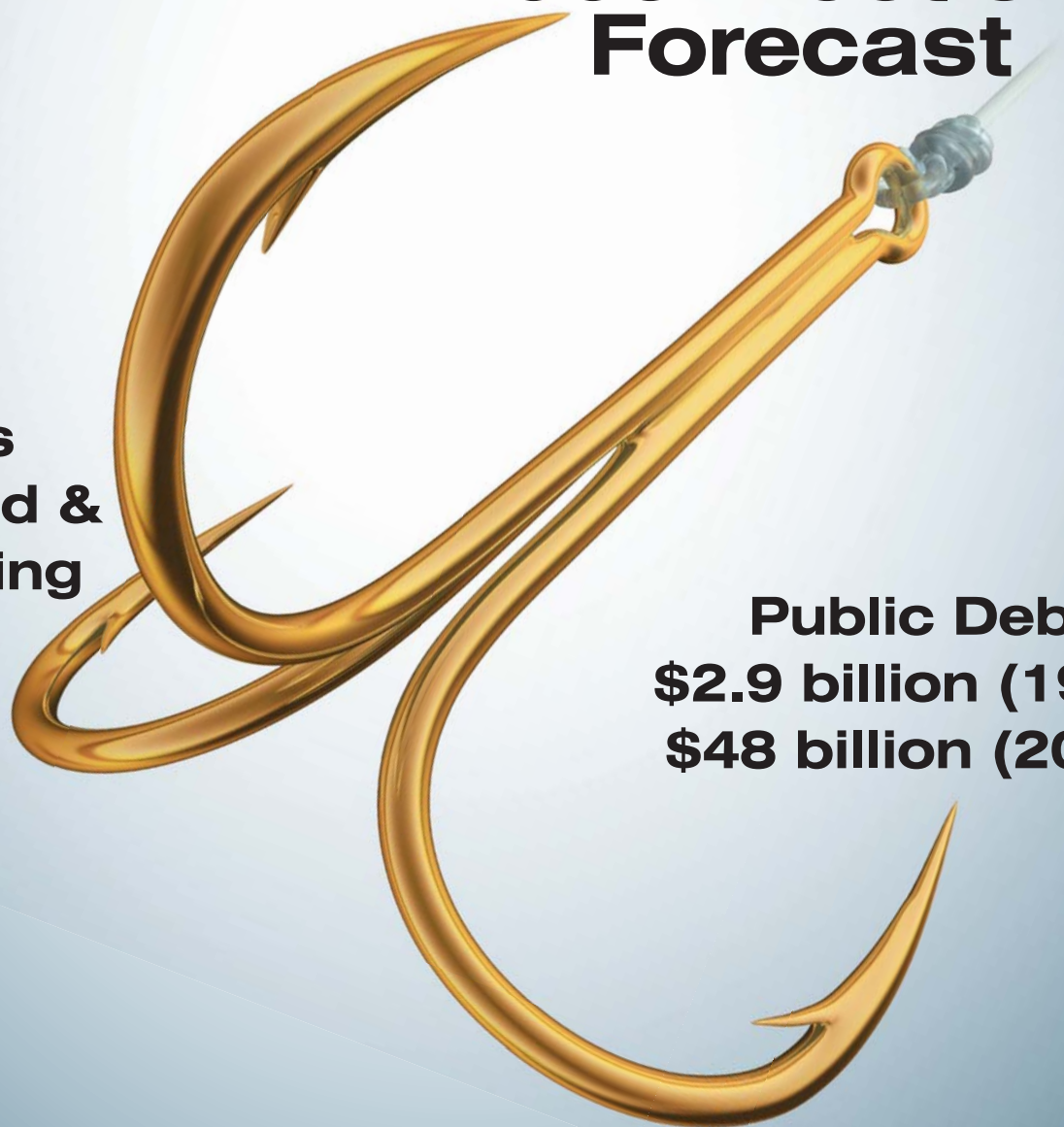
The Monthly meets Mr. Joham Verkammen,
Ambassador of the Kingdom of Belgium

Elections, Drugs and Public Debt

2009 Elections Forecast

**Drugs
Protected &
Spreading**

**Public Debt
\$2.9 billion (1992)
\$48 billion (2009)**



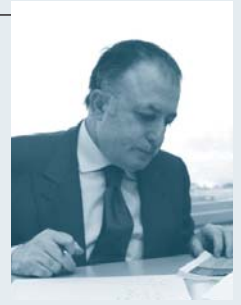
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Madeleine Albright, the leaders of Lebanon, and the banality of evil



It has been said that the heart of Rome was not in the marble of its Senate, but in the dust of its coliseum or fighting arenas. The subject of concern today is the arena of parliamentary elections in Lebanon, and the international observers or 'referees' that have been delegated to monitor this election.

We have elected 'war lords', or more accurately 'war criminals' to office, rewarding them with legitimacy as a prize for killing 'the other' on our behalf. Should we add up the number of victims killed by these 'emperors or quasi-emperors', either directly or by proxy, the numbers would be very high, and yet more staggering when foreign powers are involved.

To elaborate on this point, let us all remember the following conversation that took place on CBS's 60 Minutes on May 12, 1996:

Lesly Stahl: "We have heard that half a million Iraqi children died. This is more than those who died in Hiroshima ... Is that price worth it? ..."

Madeleine Albright: "It is a difficult choice.... But we believe that it is worth the price."

It is therefore befitting that such observers monitor such an election, conducted in accordance with an appalling electoral law that only fosters polarization.

Let us not forget that many of those observers have approved the 1996 elections that were boycotted by a large segment of society, and also the 2005 elections, that were conducted under tragic and dubious circumstances, judging them as 'fair and impartial'.

Ruthless was Rome, but more chivalrous.

Today, the "killings" are by proxy, through the ballot box and under regional and international auspices. Maybe we deserve it. But are these leaders and observers really so bad? Of course not, they are human. Like us ordinary people, they have their families and their stories of joy and tears. Look at Bill Clinton, George Bush, Tony Blair and Condoleezza Rice and most recently, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, who had 'a conscience revival experience', just like Kofi Annan did before him. They play music, dance, joke and travel. They are only human. Humans that find themselves caught in a Hobbsian machine, executing orders that cause the plight of millions without a blink of an eye. They have only their vanity to celebrate. Sometimes they shed words of wisdom and worthless tears. They are only human and pathetically so. They are a living proof of Hannah Arendt's thesis on the "banality of evil". This banality is further illustrated by the Arab League's participation in this charade by sending their observers as well.

Jawad N. Adra