

# *The Monthly*

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# BALADIYAT 2016

**1028** MUNICIPALITIES  
AND USD **2** BILLION

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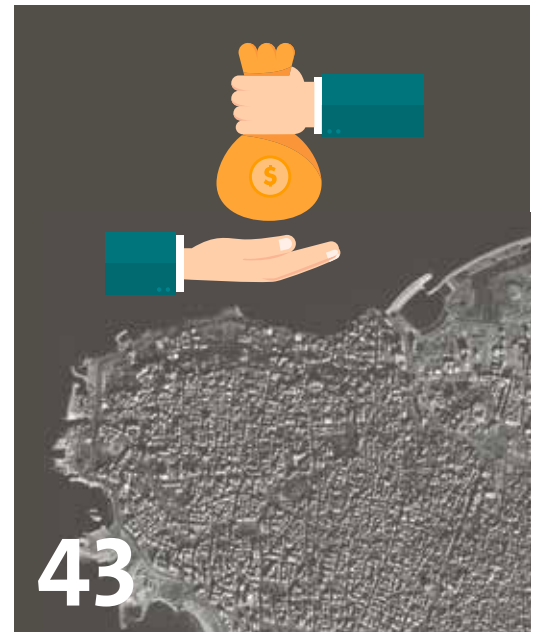
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# Editorial

## The Missing Third

By Jawad N. Adra

The Lebanese continue to surprise both themselves and their political leaders by their tolerance of the intolerable. The intolerable is the government's utter failure at managing public affairs and providing the merest and most basic rights and services in various areas; the poor management of public funds, the recurrent blackouts and decline in public education; the absence of health coverage and old age pension and most recently the glaring disregard for the people's health and environment by allowing mountains of garbage to pile up on the streets and valleys- for example. Ironically, there are still people supporting their leader as though he were their inescapable destiny. We are kidnapped, yet enchanted by and grateful to our kidnappers. We are depressed, yet thankful for those causing our depression.

Who do you really want for President of the Republic? Is this the main question? Are you Shia'a, Sunni or Christian? Do you fit comfortably in any of those categories? Is any of them a good fit for us? Who forces you to answer a question regarding your sect? Since 1995, Information International has been conducting surveys, which have detected the rise of polarity and the formation of alignments. Over the years, the wise support exhibited initially for civil marriage has clearly declined and the hesitation to mention one's sect has morphed into a proud disclosure. We used to stratify answers according to age, gender, income and educational level. Now, we present our findings according to sect. 'Christian' or 'Muslim' were once sufficient answers. Now, it has to be 'Sunni', 'Shia'a', 'Greek Orthodox', 'Maronite' and so on. Whether the respondent is a university professor, a lawyer, an engineer, a physician, a merchant, a carpenter; whether he is jobless, illiterate, rich or poor, it does not matter. The findings appear to converge or diverge depending mostly on the sectarian affiliation which has eliminated both geography and socio-economic data.

But are we truly sectarian? We are certainly submissive and helpless; coerced or careless. The problem does not lie in our sectarianism; maybe we are really not sectarian. Who are we or what are we then? 'We are citizens,' should be the obvious answer, except that we are not, at least not

now. If we are part of neither the sect nor the State, then who or what are we? The scientific answer substantiated by dozens of studies and surveys is: followers. We are followers of a leader who dictates to us what the answer should be. How else can we explain the current alignments? Civil War, emigration and poverty, fear and decay. Let the leaders reflect on the fact that close to 70% of respondents believe the Geagea- Aoun and Hariri-Frangieh alliances to be short-lived.

Since the nineties, the researcher has observed a glimmer of light, faint at times and brighter at others. The cross-sectarian unusual one third is currently on the decline. 15% to 20% of respondents used to answer 'not concerned' or 'no one' and the percentage would occasionally border on 40%. Will those form a nucleus for something bigger? Will leaders sit together and admit their responsibility? If neither option materializes, the next opinion poll will cover a sample of six leaders only speaking for five million Lebanese.

