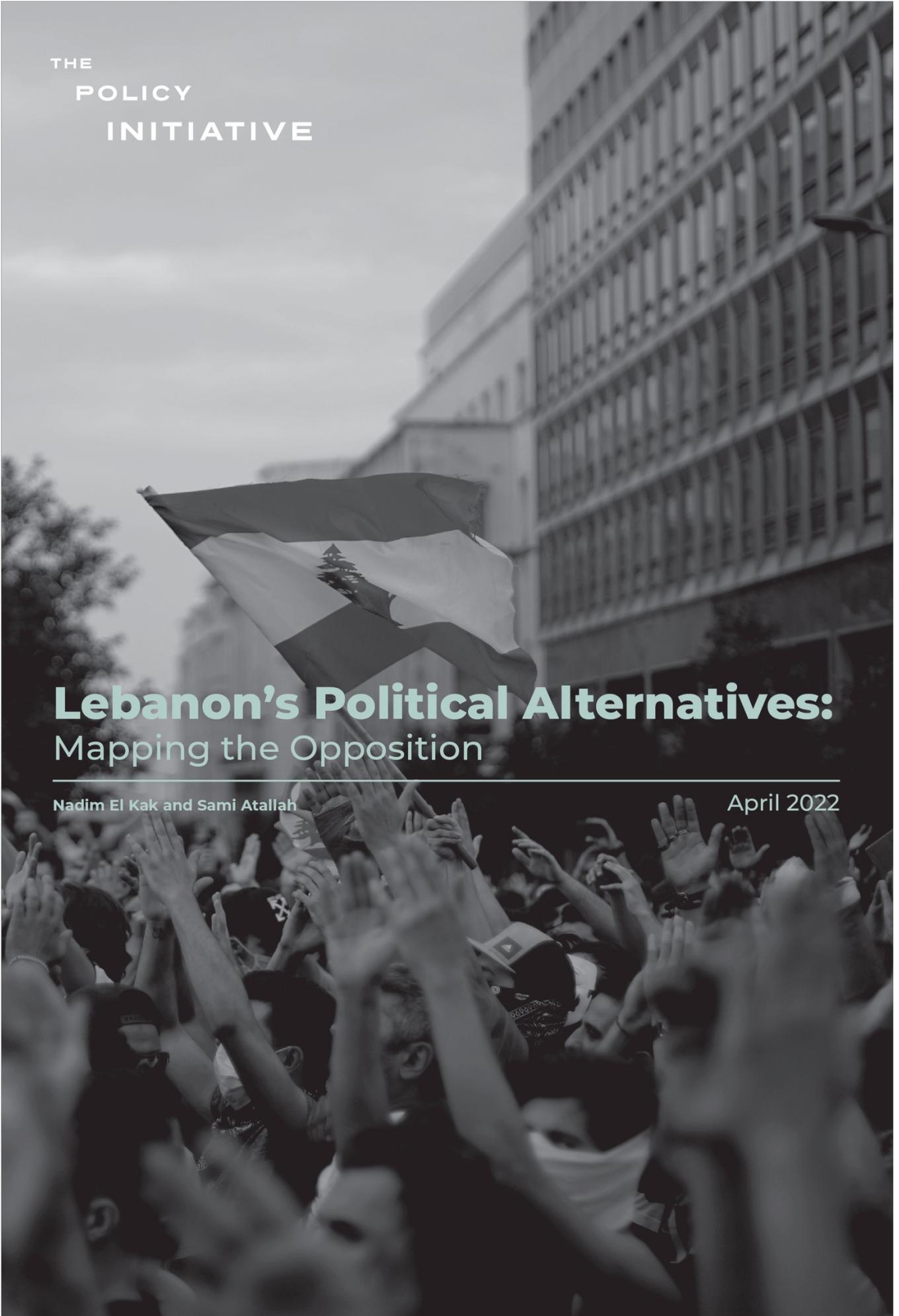


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Lebanon's Political Alternatives: Mapping the Opposition

Nadim El Kak and Sami Atallah

April 2022



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Acknowledgments

The completion of this study would not have been possible without the contributions of our colleagues. We would like to thank our editor Micheline Tobia for her feedback and edits, as well as Sami Zoughaib for assisting in the formulation of the survey questionnaire. We would also like to recognize the contributions of Hind Khaled and Maya Saikali who designed the figures and tables in this report, and to extend our gratitude to Georgia Dagher, Wassim Maktabi, and Carol Abi Ghanem for their participation in brainstorming sessions.

The corresponding author is Nadim El Kak.

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Dr. Sami Atallah is the Founding Director of The Policy Initiative. He is trained in economics and political science, and was the director of the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies from January 2011 till December 2020. He led several policy studies on political and social sectarianism, the performance of parliament, government monitoring, electoral behavior, the role of municipalities in dealing with the Syrian refugee crisis, municipal finance, economic diversification and industrial policy, and oil and gas governance. He has several policy and academic publications. He is the editor of *Towards Achieving a Transparent and Accountable National Budget in Lebanon* (Beirut: LCPS 2013), co-editor of *Local Governments and Public Goods: Assessing Decentralization in the Arab World* (with Mona Harb, Beirut: LCPS 2015), co-editor of *Hollowing out the Lebanese Parliament (2009-2017)* (with Nayla Geagea, Beirut: LCPS 2018), and co-editor of *The Future of Oil in Lebanon: Energy, Politics, and Economic Growth* (with Bassam Fattouh, I.B. Tauris 2020). In addition to his research, Atallah served on the committee established by the Lebanese prime minister to draft a decentralization law and participated in the deliberations of the parliamentary committee which reviewed the draft law. He holds an MA in International and Development Economics from Yale University, an MA in Quantitative Methods from Columbia University, and a PhD in Politics from New York University.

Executive Summary

In the last few years, Lebanon witnessed an increase in the number of political groups that seek to challenge the establishment. Yet, little is known about their political structure, policy positions and how they compare to one another. Based on original survey data, this study unpacks differences in the internal organizational structures, policy stances, strategies for political change, and alliances of fifteen of the most prominent alternative political groups. The study finds that groups have contrasting leadership structures and uneven checks and balances on power. They also have varying stances on the best strategy to bring about political change, though they generally agree that their struggle against the regime ought to take place across multiple arenas of confrontation, one of which is the upcoming 2022 parliamentary election. On the programmatic front, most groups have progressive stances on social policies, but they differ on economic issues. Specifically, some prefer market-led solutions to the crisis, which lean towards preserving financial sector interests, while others favor more redistributive policy prescriptions that lay a majority of the costs on banks and large depositors. As for their alliances, groups are split between those adopting principled and policy-based criteria to form their lists, in contrast to the more pragmatic approaches of those willing to ally with contentious actors like the Kataeb Party.

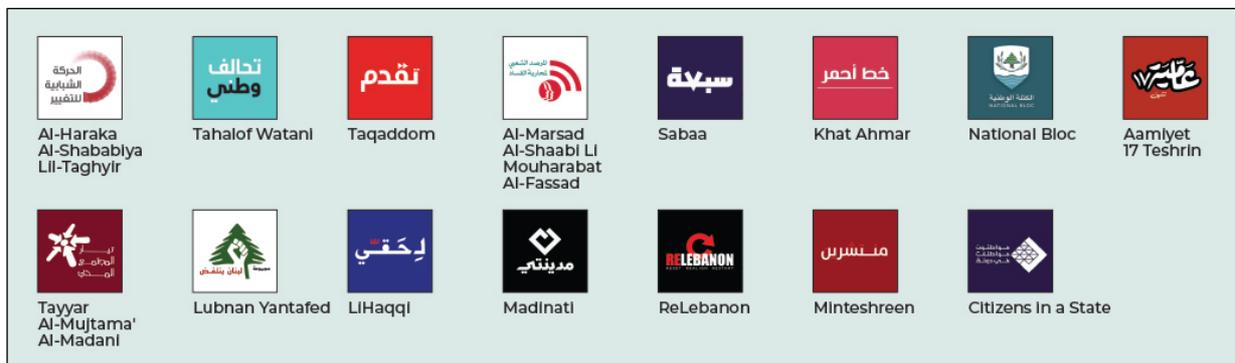
Introduction

On the evening of October 17, 2019, Lebanon witnessed an unprecedented nationwide uprising against the ruling political class. People of different socioeconomic and confessional backgrounds mobilized and swept the streets of the country. From peaceful marches to roadblocks and civil disobedience, the October uprising deployed different antics to showcase its strong commitment and determination for better political representation. Various anti-establishment groups that had appeared in prior years took the lead in organizing against the ruling political class while new ones also emerged. These organizations took on different forms, played different roles, and sometimes had different goals for and visions of the revolutionary movement.

Anti-establishment groups can be roughly categorized into four types: Alternative political parties, student organizations, trade unions or professionals' associations, and grassroots organizations. This study, which focuses on alternative political parties, maps their internal organizational structures, policy stances, strategies for political change, and alliances. The aim is to fill a gap in public knowledge about those groups, revealing some of the layers and nuances that define and shape them.

Fifteen key alternative political groups, which were established before summer 2021, were selected for this study based on their party-like structure and opposition to the political establishment (Figure 1). These groups are: LiHaqqi (For My Rights), Madinati (My City), Al-Marsad Al-Shaabi Li-Mouharabat Al-Fassad (Popular Anti-Corruption Observatory), Mouwatinoun wa Mouwatinat fi Dawla (Citizens in a State), Al-Haraka Al-Shababiya Lil-Taghyir (Youth Movement for Change), Tahalof Watani (My Nation's Alliance), Taqaddom (Progress), Al-Ketleh Al-Wataniyeh (National Bloc),¹ Minteshreen (Spread Out), Aamiyet 17 Teshrin (October 17 Commune), Sabaa (Seven), Khat Ahmar (Red Line), ReLebanon, Tayyar Al-Mujtama' Al-Madani (Civil Society Movement), and Lubnan Yantafed (Lebanon Revolts).

Figure 1: List of alternative political groups that participated in the study



Recognizing that there are important nuances that distinguish these groups from one another, The Policy Initiative (TPI) developed an extensive survey that sheds light on these differences and overlaps, allowing the broader public to compare groups and make clearer sense of this growing landscape of oppositionist actors. More specifically, the survey is divided into four sections that each address different aspects of the groups' organization and stances:

The first section covers internal structure, leadership, and membership. Here, respondents are asked about their organization's founding date, its geographical reach, membership size, leadership structure, and democratic functioning. One of the key variables we look into is the level of women's representation within alternative political groups: The survey asks about gender balance within a group's membership but also examines the presence or lack thereof of women in key leadership positions.

The second section looks at strategies to bring about political change, from demanding a transitional government to participating in elections, organizing protests, and developing grassroots initiatives. We assess which combination of strategies each group relies on and the importance they attribute to the forthcoming parliamentary elections.

The third section examines political programs and policy objectives. It collects stances on a range of pressing policy debates using a 0 to 10 linear scale. With regards to economic policy, the survey asks about public sector restructuring, taxation mechanisms, financial sector losses, privatization of different sectors, and investing in oil and

¹ The National Bloc was included in our analysis despite having been part of the ruling class in the pre-war period because the party underwent an internal overhaul in February 2019, after being inactive for 10 years. The party democratized its leadership structure and the Eddé family, which had dominated the party since its foundation in 1946, left the organization.

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gas. In terms of social policy, the survey tackles social security schemes, personal status laws, women's citizenship rights, LGBTQI rights, and the return of Syrian refugees. The survey also looks into groups' stances on Hezbollah's weapons and Lebanon's foreign policy.

Lastly, the fourth section covers alliances and relationships with other political parties and opposition groups, including stances on polarizing actors such as the Kataeb Party or the Lebanese Communist Party. We look into how close different opposition groups are to one another and assess the basis upon which they are forming electoral alliances.

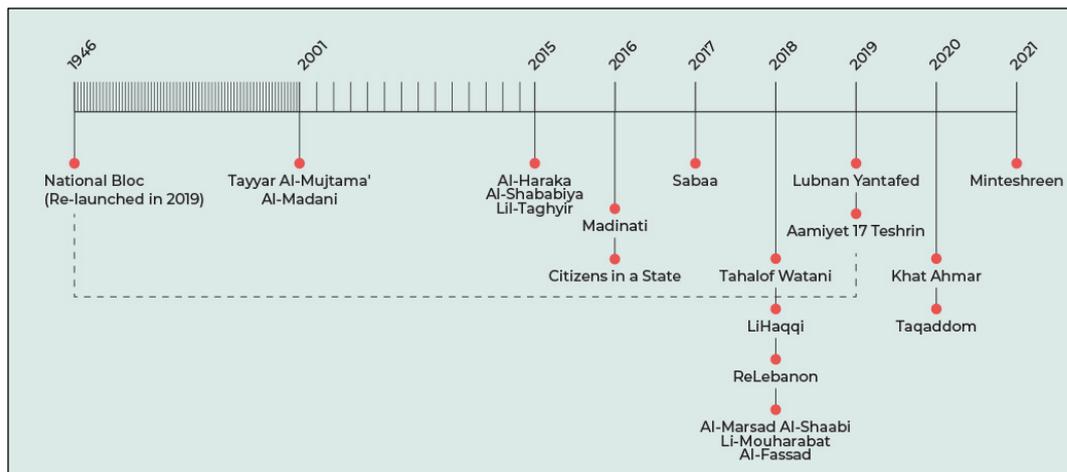
I. Internal Organization

A key building bloc of any political party is its internal governance structure. Unlike traditional political parties, many alternative groups have emphasized the importance of democratic and inclusive structures that guarantee the participation of their members. However, not all groups have adopted the same kinds of structures. To this end, we assess in this section two major elements: The first is the leadership model and tenure of elected representatives as well as the checks and balances that are adopted; the second is the level of inclusivity and representation of women and non-Lebanese nationals in the group.

A. Foundation and Geographical Reach

Since the 2015 garbage crisis and the protests that accompanied it, the landscape of anti-establishment groups in Lebanon has grown and evolved significantly. While the 2019 revolutionary uprising did play a significant role in speeding up that growth, many of the key alternative organizations that took part in the movement were founded a few years prior (Figure 2). In fact, seven of the 15 groups constituting this study were established between January 2016 and January 2018: Madinati (formerly Beirut Madinati) and Citizens in a State were founded in the run-up to the 2016 municipal elections while Sabaa, ReLebanon,² Al-Marsad Al-Shaabi Li-Mouharabat Al-Fassad,³ LiHaqqi,⁴ and Tahalof Watani⁵ formed prior to the 2018 parliamentary elections. Only three groups in this study were established before 2016: The National Bloc, which was founded in 1946 but restructured in 2019, Tayyar Al-Mujtama' Al-Madani, which was founded in 2001 by local activists and scholars, and Al-Haraka Al-Shababiya Lil-Taghyir, established by leftist political organizers during the garbage crisis protests in summer 2015. The remaining five groups (Lubnan Yantafed, Khat Ahmar, Taqaddom, Aamiyet 17 Teshrin, and Minteshreen) were formed following the October 2019 uprising, though it took them varying lengths of time to formalize their internal structures and officially launch as political organizations.

Figure 2: Founding date of each alternative group



² ReLebanon used to be known as "Sa7" in 2018, when it ran on the Kulluna Watani independent lists in the 2018 general elections. The group is led by Ziad Abs who was a member of the Free Patriotic Movement until 2016 when he was expelled from the party for publicly criticizing it.

³ Al-Marsad Al-Shaabi Li-Mouharabat Al-Fassad was officially established in 2018 but its founding members had already been organizing together since the 2011 anti-sectarian protests and the 2015 waste management crisis. One of the group's most notable figures is lawyer-activist Wassef El Harakeh.

⁴ LiHaqqi finds its origins in the protests of summer 2015, when various activists from the Aley and Chouf districts began organizing together and ultimately decided to run in the 2018 elections and establish a lasting political organization. Since then, the group has expanded its reach across Lebanon.

⁵ Tahalof Watani was initially an alliance between various alternative groups running in the 2018 general elections. Following the election, some groups exited the alliance and Tahalof Watani structurally transitioned into an autonomous political organization that merged different smaller groups and individual activists. This new structure was officially established in March 2020.

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In terms of geographical reach, six of the 15 groups' activities are focused predominantly on the greater Beirut region. These groups are Aamiyet 17 Teshrin, ReLebanon, Minteshreen, Madinati, Lubnan Yantafed and Al-Haraka Al-Shababiya Lil-Taghyir. The other nine do focus on Beirut but also have presence in different parts of the country, and many are investing in their efforts to expand their reach within the diaspora. The accuracy and extent of this demographic reach remains hard to determine, however, as groups do not publicly disclose such information about their members. For this reason, comprehensive and reliable data on the geographic presence of alternative groups was difficult to verify and hence cannot be expanded upon in this study.

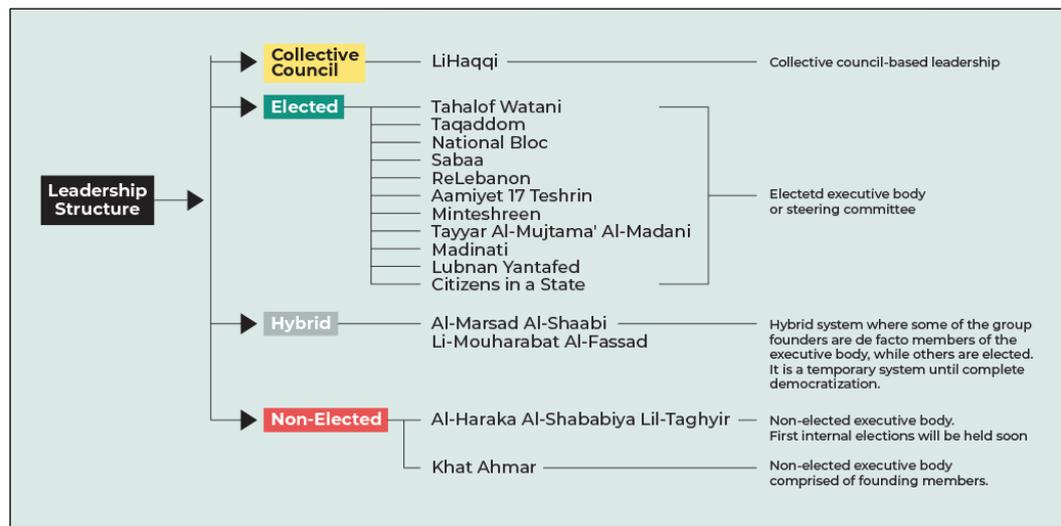
B. Leadership Structure

One of the most important features of how alternative political organizations are organized is their internal leadership structures. These mechanisms determine how decision-making takes place, distribute responsibilities and authorities amongst members, and shape the day-to-day operation of the group. One of the main purposes of leadership structures is to guarantee democratic functioning through mechanisms that establish accountability, representation, and alteration of power. However, these structures can take on varied forms, from top-down and centralized elected leaderships to more participatory forms of council-based direct democracies.

The survey reveals that 14 of the 15 groups have an executive body or steering committee where most authority lies (Figure 3). The one exception is LiHaqqi, which adopts a collective council-based leadership. This structure is more decentralized and participatory, as it grants autonomy to smaller elected councils with different roles and tasks. However, it makes decision-making more difficult and slower when it comes to contentious issues. It also requires high levels of consistent commitment and engagement by all 100 members of LiHaqqi's collective council.

Out of the 14 groups with executive bodies, Khat Ahmar and Al-Haraka Al-Shababiya Lil-Taghyir are the only two which do not hold elections and instead rely on an executive committee comprised of founding members. However, Al-Haraka Al-Shababiya Lil-Taghyir indicated that it was in the process of democratizing its internal structure by organizing its first elections. Meanwhile, Al-Marsad Al-Shaabi Li-Mouharabat Al-Fassad has a hybrid structure: Certain founding members are de facto members of the executive body while others are elected.⁶ The remaining 11 groups all have elected executive bodies or steering committees of varying sizes, which range between four and 30 members. Out of those 11 groups, nine also elect a president or secretary general, which holds additional powers within the executive body.

Figure 3: Leadership structures



While the leadership structure is a key determinant of how democratic a group is, there are other mechanisms that can establish additional checks and balances and limits on authority in order not to personalize power. The two mechanisms the survey examines are term limits on executive body members and presidents, and General Assembly veto rights.

Term limits make sure specific individuals do not remain in the same positions of power for too long. We calculate the maximum term limits by multiplying how frequently elections are held with the number of terms a given

⁶ Not all of Al-Marsad Al-Shaabi's founding members are still in the group.

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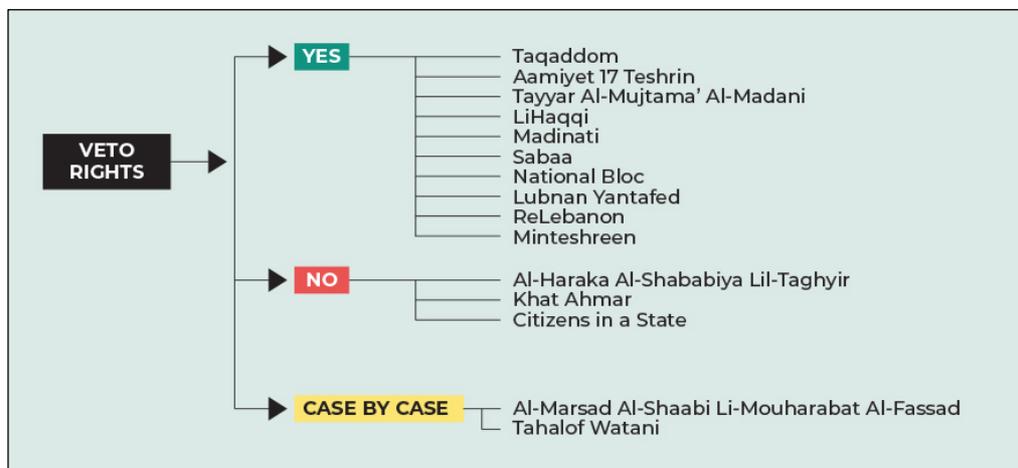
member is allowed to serve in the executive. For instance, if a group holds elections every two years and a member is allowed to serve up to two terms in the steering committee, then their maximum term limit is four years. We find that six of the 15 groups do not set any limits on how long a given member can serve in a leadership position (Table 1). These groups are LiHaqqi, National Bloc, Tayyar Al-Mujtama' Al-Madaneh, Tahalof Watani, Al-Haraka Al-Shababiya Lil-Taghyir, and Lubnan Yantafed. LiHaqqi's case differs from the other groups due to their collective-council based leadership: Considering they do not have an executive body, they do not need to set term limits since decentralized and participatory decision-making is already embedded in the nature of their leadership structure. The nine remaining groups all have term limits, both for their executive body and presidency (when applicable). The term limits range between 1 and 9 years.

Table 1: Term limits of executive body members and presidency

	Max Limit Executive Body	Max Limit Presidency
Tayyar Al-Mujtama' Al-Madani	Unlimited	Unlimited
Tahalof Watani	Unlimited	Unlimited
National Bloc	Unlimited	Unlimited
Lubnan Yantafed	Unlimited	N/A
Al-Haraka Al-Shababiya Lil-Taghyir	Unlimited	N/A
Citizens in a State	N/A	6 years
Khat Ahmar	8 years	8 years
Sabaa	6 years	6 years
Madinati	4 years	1 year
Al-Marsad Al-Shaabi Li-Mouharabat Al-Fassad	4 years	N/A
Minteshreen	3 years	9 years
ReLebanon	3 years	4 years
Taqaddom	2 years	2 years
Aamiyet 17 Teshrin	1 year	N/A

Meanwhile, veto power allows members of the General Assembly to reverse a decision made by those in leadership positions by forcing an organization-wide vote on the issue. Depending on the groups' bylaws, if a certain percentage of members oppose a decision that was made, they have the ability to reverse or waive it. Survey results indicate that 10 out of 15 groups give their General Assemblies veto power (Figure 4). The exceptions are Citizens in a State, Khat Ahmar and Al-Haraka Al-Shababiya Lil-Taghyir, while Al-Marsad Al-Shaabi Li-Mouharabat Al-Fassad and Tahalof Watani grant that right on a case-by-case basis, depending on the issue in question.

Figure 4: General assembly veto rights

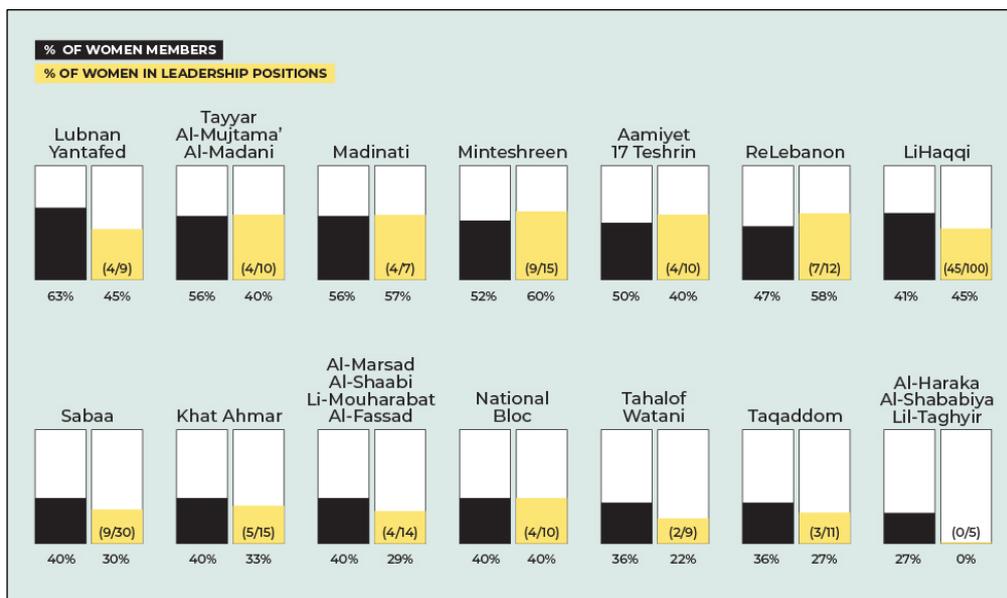


C. Inclusivity and Representation

Lastly, the survey examines how inclusive and representative a group's membership and leaderships are. Specifically, we look into the ratio of female members and their representation in leadership positions (Figure 5), as well as the presence—or lack thereof—of non-Lebanese voting members (Figure 6).

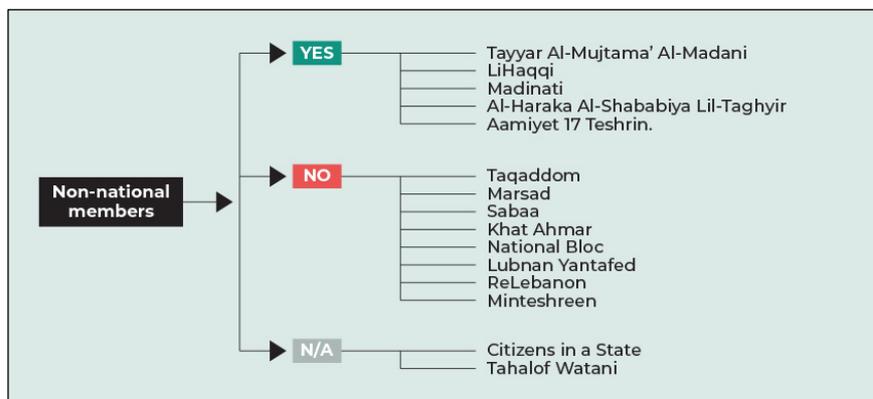
The data shows that at least 40% of voting members are women in 11 of the 14 groups which responded to this question.⁷ The three exceptions are Taqaddom (36%), Tahalof Watani (36%), and Al-Haraka Al-Shababiya Lil-Taghyir (27%). With regards to women's representation in leadership positions, however, women hold at least 40% of the seats in eight of the 14 groups: Minteshreen (60%), ReLebanon (58%), Madinati (57%), LiHaqqi (45%), Lubnan Yantafed (44%), Tayyar Al-Mujtama' Al-Madani (40%), Aamiyet 17 Teshrin (40%), and National Bloc (40%). The exceptions are Khat Ahmar (33%), Sabaa (30%), Al-Marsad Al-Shaabi Li-Mouharabat Al-Fassad (29%), Taqaddom (27%), Tahalof Watani (22%), Citizens in a State (21%), and Al-Haraka Al-Shababiya Lil-Taghyir (0%).⁸

Figure 5: Representation of women as members and in leadership position



The final variable we look at is whether there are non-Lebanese voting members in the group. While many alternative groups express support for the rights of non-nationals within Lebanon, not all of them have refugees or migrants in their organization. The data indicates that only five of the surveyed groups include non-Lebanese voting members: LiHaqqi, Madinati, Tayyar Al-Mujtama' Al-Madani, Al-Haraka Al-Shababiya Lil-Taghyir, and Aamiyet 17 Teshrin.

Figure 6: Representation of non-Lebanese nationals



Based on the previous variables, Table 2 presents a comprehensive overview of each group's answers, allowing the reader to visualize more clearly the characteristics of each internal organizational structure.

⁷ Citizens in a State chose not to respond to this question.

⁸ This data was collected in summer 2021 and changes to groups' leadership bodies may have occurred since then.

Table 2: Overview of the democratic structure

	Elections	Veto Rights	Term Limits	Women in GA	Women in Leadership	Non-Nationals
Khat Ahmar	No	No	8 years	40%	33%	No
Al-Haraka Al-Shababiya Lil-Taghyir	No	No	Unlimited	27%	0%	Yes
Tahalof Watani	Yes	Case-by-case	Unlimited	36%	22%	N/A
Sabaa	Yes	Yes	6 years	40%	30%	No
Al-Marsad Al-Shaabi Li-Mouharabat Al-Fassad	Hybrid system	Case-by-case	4 years	40%	29%	No
Citizens in a State	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A	21%	N/A
National Bloc	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	40%	40%	No
Taqaddom	Yes	Yes	2 years	36%	27%	No
Lubnan Yantafed	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	63%	45%	No
ReLebanon	Yes	Yes	3 years	47%	58%	No
LiHaqqi	Yes	Yes	Not Applicable	41%	45%	Yes
Tayyar Al-Mujtama' Al-Madani	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	56%	40%	Yes
Minteshreen	Yes	Yes	3 years	52%	60%	No
Madinati	Yes	Yes	4 years	56%	57%	Yes
Aamiyet 17 Tashrin	Yes	Yes	1 year	50%	40%	Yes

II. Strategies for Political Change

Lebanon's opposition groups are currently adopting different combinations of strategies in order to bring about political change. Based on official statements released by different groups, discussions that have taken place in online spaces, and interviews conducted with different activists, TPI identified four main approaches to bring about change, which are not necessarily mutually exclusive:

1. **Independent Government:** In order to take power and begin implementing urgent reforms to get out of the financial crisis, groups must continue to peacefully pressure the political class to form an independent transitional government with legislative authorities. Citizens in a State have been the most vocal proponents of this approach.
2. **Elections:** In light of traditional parties' unwillingness to relinquish executive power, groups must focus on making gains in the 2022 parliamentary elections and make sure they are not postponed. Electoral alliances between alternative groups and traditional opposition figures have already formed, with groups such as Taqaddom and Khat Ahmar allying with the Kataeb Party and Independence Movement⁹ under the "Lebanese Opposition Front" banner.
3. **Collective Action:** Groups must focus on reigniting a street movement that can topple the regime from below, in light of the inability to form an independent government or win through elections so far. Proponents of this approach, such as Al-Haraka Al-Shababiya Lil-Taghyir, do not view change from within the system as a realistic possibility.
4. **Grassroots Development:** Groups must focus on being more organized and active on the ground through helping develop new structures such as alternative labor unions, local neighborhood councils, and co-operatives in order to successfully challenge the regime in the long-run. LiHaqqi is one of the main opposition groups committed to this approach.

⁹ The Independence Movement was founded by Michel Moawad in 2006, who is the son of assassinated President Rene Moawad. Michel Moawad was elected to Parliament in 2018 after allying with the Free Patriotic Movement. He resigned from Parliament following the Beirut port explosion in August 2020.

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The survey asks groups to identify their primary approach to change, or the strategy they are most invested in pursuing at the moment. It also collects their levels of support for each of the four approaches, to determine which combination of strategies each group supports.

Table 3: Stances of alternative groups on different strategies of political change

APPROACH	Primary Approach			
	Independent Government	Elections	Collective Action	Grassroots Development
Al-Haraka Al-Shababiya Lil-Taghyir	5	2	8	6
Tayyar Al-Mujtama' Al-Madani	8	8	10	9
Taqaddom	3	9	5	7
Tahalof Watani	9	10	2	8
Khat Ahmar	3	10	5	8
ReLebanon	9	10	7	8
Sabaa	10	10	10	10
Lubnan Yantafed	9	9	9	9
LiHaqqi	5	5	7	10
Minteshreen	8	8	9	10
Al-Marsad Al-Shaabi Li-Mouharabat Al-Fassad	10	6	7	7
Aamiyet 17 Teshrin	10	4	10	10
National Bloc	10	10	10	10
Madinati	10	10	10	10
Citizens in a State	10	0		
Average	7.93	7.40	7.79	8.71
Standard deviation	2.60	3.27	2.46	1.38

The results indicate a general lack of consensus regarding the most effective primary approach to pursue at the moment (Table 3). On the one hand, five groups view the upcoming parliamentary election as their priority: Taqaddom, Tahalof Watani, Khat Ahmar, ReLebanon, and Sabaa. Others such as Citizens in a State, Madinati, National Bloc, Aamiyet 17 Teshrin, and Al-Marsad Al-Shaabi Li-Mouharabat Al-Fassad support the formation of an independent transitional government with legislative authorities. On the other hand, some groups are not as optimistic about reformist strategies from within state channels and instead prioritize on-the-ground organizing. Al-Haraka Al-Shababiya Lil-Taghyir and Tayyar Al-Mujtama' Al-Madani favor a return to the streets through collective action while LiHaqqi, Minteshreen, and Lubnan Yantafed prioritize public engagement with the grassroots.

Although there is a lack of consensus regarding which strategy to prioritize, most groups do recognize that each approach has its own merits and could be useful in serving their ultimate goal of regime change. The average score at the bottom of table 5 shows alternative groups' levels of support for each approach: On average, each strategy has a score between 7.4 and 8.7, indicating that all approaches continue to have a significant degree of support amongst most groups. Based on the standard deviation between results, the most polarizing strategy is elections, with some groups giving it a very high score while others a much lower one. Those least supportive of the elections strategy are Citizens in a State and Al-Haraka Al-Shababiya Lil-Taghyir, while Aamiyet 17 Teshrin, LiHaqqi, and Al-Marsad Al-Shaabi Li-Mouharabat Al-Fassad have some reservations about it as well, though to a lesser extent than the first two.¹⁰ The grassroots development strategy, meanwhile, has the highest average score and the lowest standard deviation, meaning that most groups consider work and recruitment at the grassroots level a top priority.

III. Policy Stances

While traditional political parties in Lebanon rely on clientelistic practices, sectarian discourse, and intimidation to reproduce their power, alternative groups focus much more on programmatic rhetoric that captures their policy

¹⁰ Groups who have the most reservations about elections aren't necessarily opposed to participating in them. In fact, most of these groups are fielding candidates in the 2022 parliamentary election.

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stances.¹¹ In light of Lebanon's unprecedented financial and social collapse, having clear stances on pressing policy debates is of utmost necessity. The survey hence mapped the positions of each group on 15 key questions covering a range of financial, economic, social, environmental, and geopolitical issues.

A. Economic Policy

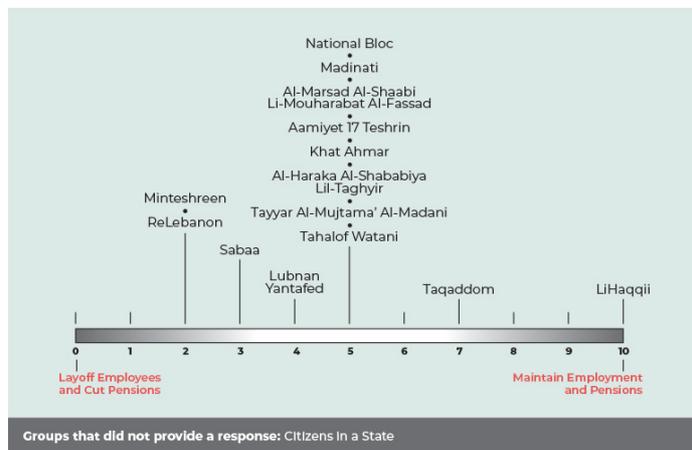
In light of Lebanon's economic and financial collapse, the survey examines alternative groups' stances on key debates taking place in policy circles. We identified six key economic issues that are essential to addressing Lebanon's collapse but are contentious: Public sector restructuring, taxation system, financial sector losses, privatization of state assets, the nationalization of banks, and investment in oil and gas. The survey briefly contextualizes each policy debate and presents two opposing perspectives on how to deal with the issue in question. Respondents were then asked to best describe their organization's stance on a 0 to 10 scale, with each pole representing one of the two presented perspectives.¹²

With regards to public sector restructuring, the survey asks:

“Given the government’s large public deficit and its depleted resources, many argue that it is necessary to restructure public sector employment by laying off employees and decreasing pensions. Others consider the existing employment and pension schemes as necessary because they serve as de facto safety nets. How would you best describe your organization’s stance on this policy issue?” (0: Lay Off Employees and Cut Pensions; 10: Maintain Employment and Pensions)

The results indicate that three groups—Sabaa, ReLebanon, and Minteshreen—lean more toward overhauling the public sector while Taqaddom and LiHaqqi in particular would rather maintain its current structure (Figure 7). Meanwhile, all remaining groups, which constitute a clear majority, believe in a middle-ground solution to this policy debate, wherein some public employees get laid off and lose their pensions while others maintain their positions and benefits.

Figure 7: Stances on public sector restructuring



Since Lebanon is in need to raise tax revenues to deal with its fiscal imbalance, it is important to map the position of emerging groups on how best to do so. Hence the survey asks them:

“Given current fiscal imbalances, there is general consensus that Lebanon’s taxation system needs to be reformed. Some argue that the government should implement excise taxes and increase VAT as they are easier to collect, have high revenue potential, and do not disincentivize foreign investment. Others call for increasing taxes on income, capital gains, and wealth. How would you best describe your group’s stance on this policy debate?” (0: Increase Excise Tax and VAT; 10: Increase Tax on Income, Capital, and Wealth)

The results show that almost all groups support a more progressive taxation system that targets higher-income earners and capital owners, with the exception being Minteshreen and Khat Ahmar (Figure 8). Of the 13 groups

¹¹ El Kak, N. & Atallah, S. “Discourse as an Electoral Campaigning Tool: Exploiting the Emotions of Voters”, Lebanese Center for Policy Studies, 26 December 2020.

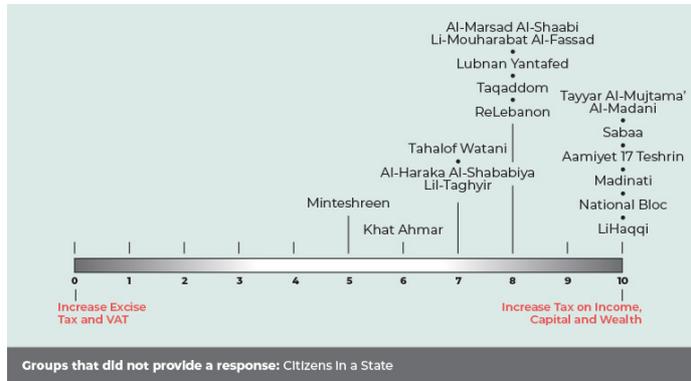
<https://www.lcps-lebanon.org/articles/details/4675/discourse-as-an-electoral-campaigning-tool-exploiting-the-emotions-of-voters>

¹² A score between 0-3 or 7-10 signals that the group has a clear preference and stance on the given policy issue, while a score between 4-6 reflects indecisiveness or preference for a middle ground if feasible.

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which do prefer an increase in income, capital, and wealth taxes, six responded with a 10, indicating their unequivocal commitment to progressive taxation schemes and opposition to relying on excise taxes and VAT.

Figure 8: Stances on taxation policy

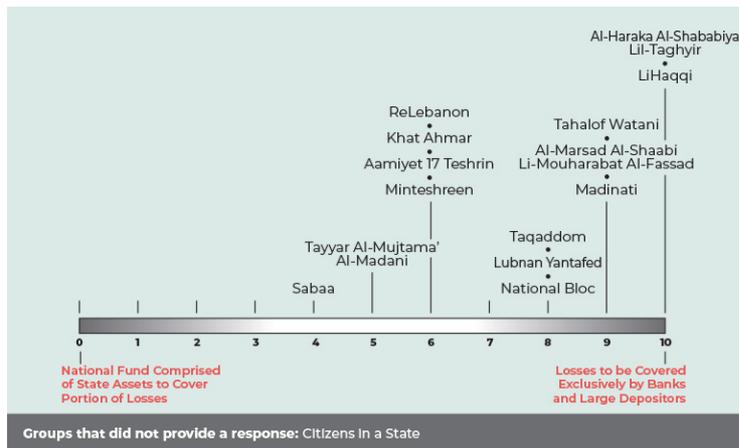


Concerning the distribution of financial sector losses, the survey asks:

“Lebanon’s financial sector has incurred massive losses. Some have argued that a National Fund comprised of state assets can be used to cover a portion of the losses. Others consider that these losses should be covered by banks and large depositors. How would you best describe your group’s stance on this policy debate?” (0: National Fund Comprised of State Assets to Cover Portion of Losses; 10: Losses to be Covered Exclusively by Banks and Large Depositors)

The results indicate that groups are divided between those who want losses to be primarily covered by banks and large depositors and those who have middle-ground stances on the matter (Figure 9). Those who want banks and large depositors to bear most if not all of the losses are LiHaqqi, Al-Haraka Al-Shababiya Lil-Taghyir, Madinati, Al-Marsad Al-Shaabi Li-Mouharabat Al-Fassad, National Bloc, Taqaddom, and Lubnan Yantafed. Those who support the selling of some state assets to cover financial sector losses, in combination with banks and large depositors covering a share are Aamiyet 17 Teshrin, ReLebanon, Khat Ahmar, Minteshreen, Tayyar Al-Mujtama’ Al-Madani, and Sabaa.

Figure 9: Stances on the distribution of financial sector losses



Complementing the issue of financial losses is the question of how the government should deal with the banks. To this end, the survey then asks:

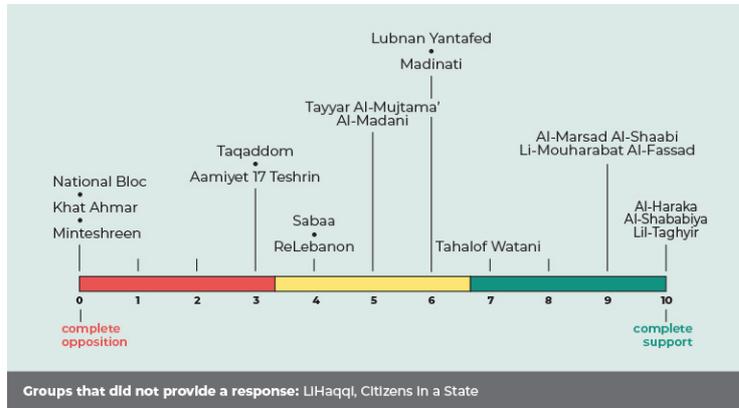
“In light of the losses incurred by the financial sector, some have argued that certain banks are insolvent and should be temporarily acquired by the state as part of a broader recovery plan. How would you best describe your group’s stance on this policy debate?” (0: Oppose Nationalization of Banks; 10: Support Nationalization of Banks)

The alternative political groups have divided views on this issue as well, with a slight leaning toward rejecting the temporary nationalization of banks. Five groups—Khat Ahmar, National Bloc, Minteshreen, Taqaddom and Aamiyet 17 Teshrin—are opposed to nationalization while Al-Haraka Al-Shababiya Lil-Taghyir, Al-Marsad Al-Shaabi Li-Mouharabat Al-Fassad, and Tahalof Watani are in support of the proposal (Figure 10). Aside from LiHaqqi and Citizens in a State who did not answer, all remaining groups have inconclusive stances, indicating internal indecisiveness

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within their group, or a more middle-ground position that is likely shaped by other variables such as the number of bankruptcies and proposed state acquisitions.

Figure 10: Stances on the temporary nationalization of insolvable banks



In light of the financial collapse and ways to raise revenues, there has been some discussion to privatize public assets. To this end, we asked the groups for their policy position on privatization of three different kinds of state assets: The telecommunications sector, the water sector, and the national airport. Specifically, the survey asks:

“How likely is your organization to oppose the privatization of each of the telecommunication sector, water sector, and national airport?” (0: Support Privatization; 10: Oppose Privatization)

The results show considerable variations among the assets at hand and the groups in question. On average, groups are generally opposed to the privatization of the water sector but there is far more division with regards to the telecommunications sector and national airport.

Looking specifically at the water sector (Figure 11), seven out of the 12 groups that responded are opposed to its privatization. These include: Citizens in a State, LiHaqqi, Al-Haraka Al-Shababiya Lil-Taghyir, Aamiyet 17 Teshrin, Al-Marsad Al-Shaabi Li-Mouharabat Al-Fassad, Tayyar Al-Mujtama' Al-Madani, and Tahalof Watani. Only two groups—ReLebanon and Khat Ahmar—are strongly in favor of privatization while Madinati, Taqaddom, and Sabaa are undecided.

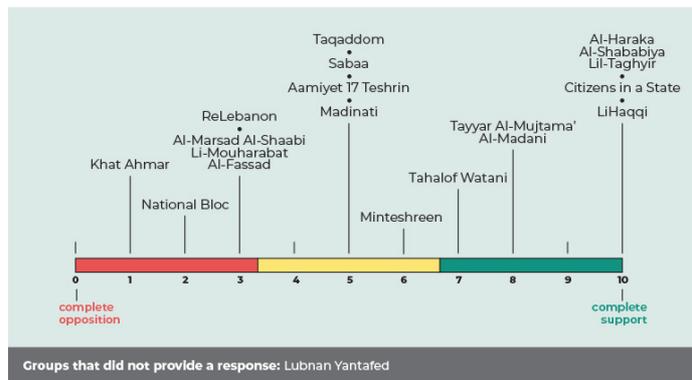
Figure 11: Stances on the privatization of the water sector



Support for privatization increases as we shift to the telecommunication sector (Figure 12). Four alternative groups—Al-Marsad Al-Shaabi Li-Mouharabat Al-Fassad, ReLebanon, National Bloc, and Khat Ahmar—have expressed their endorsement for privatizing the sector. However, five groups—Citizens in a State, LiHaqqi, Al-Haraka Al-Shababiya Lil-Taghyir, Tayyar Al-Mujtama' Al-Madani, and Tahalof Watani—remain opposed to privatization. The remaining groups all have inconclusive stances, while Lubnan Yantafed refrained from answering.

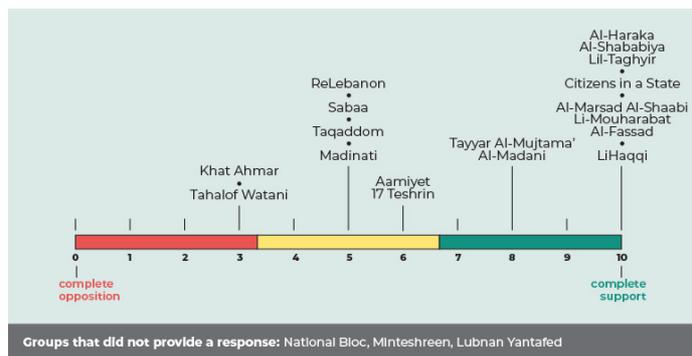
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Figure 12: Stances on the privatization of the telecommunications sector



The privatization of the national airport (Figure 13) is also a highly contentious issue as three groups are opposed to it while four groups support it: LiHaqqi, Al-Haraka Al-Shababiya Li-Taghyir and Tayyar Al-Mujtama' Al-Madani reject it, whereas Al-Marsad Al-Shaabi Li-Mouharabat Al-Fassad, Citizens in a State, Khat Ahmar, and Tahalof Watani endorse it. The remaining groups all have inconclusive stances, while Lubnan Yantafed, National Bloc, and Minteshreen did not answer.

Figure 13: Stance on the privatization of the national airport



After going through the different questions related to privatization and nationalization, Table 4 presents a comprehensive overview of each group's answers, allowing the reader to visualize and compare their respective positions with more clarity.

Table 4: Overview of the stances on privatization of key sectors and bank nationalization

	Telecom		Bank Nationalization
	Water	Airport	
Al-Haraka Al-Shababiya Li-Taghyir	10	10	10
Tayyar Al-Mujtama' Al-Madani	10	5	6
Taqaddom	8	8	8
Tahalof Watani	10	10	10
Khat Ahmar	5	5	5
ReLebanon	5	5	5
Sabaa	10	3	0
Lubnan Yantafed	5	5	5
LiHaqqi	3	1	3
Minteshreen	N/A	2	N/A
Al-Marsad Al-Shaabi Li-Mouharabat Al-Fassad	N/A	N/A	N/A
Aamiyet 17 Teshrin	3	3	5
National Bloc	N/A	6	N/A
Madinati	10	10	0
Citizens in a State	10	7	3

0 indicates complete support of privatization
10 indicates complete opposition to privatization

0 indicates complete opposition to nationalization
10 indicates complete support for nationalization

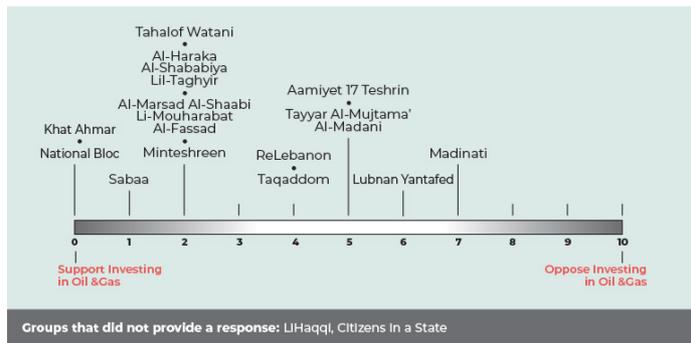
Lebanon's Political Alternatives: Mapping the Opposition

In light of Lebanon's pursuit to become an oil state, we asked the groups the following question:

“Some argue that investing in oil exploration and drilling is a worthy investment that can help resolve Lebanon’s energy shortages while others deem it unlikely to succeed, prone to corruption, and an environmental hazard. How would you best describe your group’s stance on this policy debate?” (0: Support Investing in Oil and Gas; 10: Oppose Investing in Oil and Gas)

The results (Figure 14) reflect overall support for Lebanon becoming an oil and gas producer: Seven groups (Al-Haraka Al-Shababiya Lil-Taghyir, Al-Marsad Al-Shaabi Li-Mouharabat Al-Fassad, Minteshreen, Tahalof Watani, Sabaa, National Bloc, and Khat Ahmar) are all clearly in support of the proposal while only Madinati indicated opposition to it. The remaining groups have inconclusive answers or did not respond. These results indicate that most alternative groups support offshore drilling and oil exploration for economic reasons and despite the environmental concerns.

Figure 14: Stances on investing in oil and gas



B. Social Policy

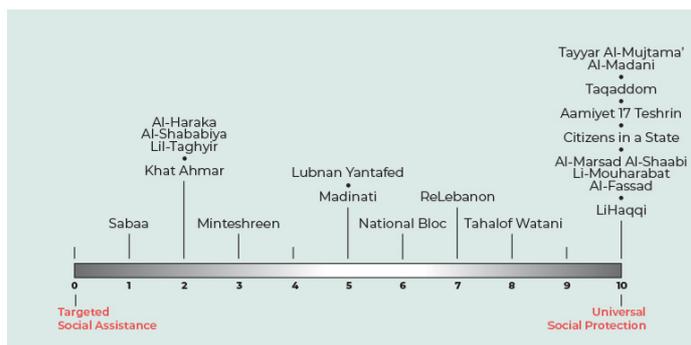
As a result of the social collapse engendered by Lebanon's overlapping crises, oppressed and marginalized groups in the country are now even more at risk as unemployment and inflation skyrocket while discrimination and violence increase. The survey thus maps out alternative parties' stances on five key policy debates concerning different vulnerable groups. Specifically, the questions cover social protection, women's citizenship rights, personal status laws, LGBTQI rights, and the return of Syrian refugees. Similar to questions on economic policies, the survey briefly contextualizes each debate and presents different perspectives on how to deal with the issue at hand. Respondents were then asked to best describe their organization's stance on said debate, using a 0 to 10 scale¹³ or through open-ended short answers.

In terms of social protection and assistance schemes, the survey asks:

“Poverty and vulnerability are rising in Lebanon and the government lacks a proper social protection scheme. Some argue for a universal social protection program, which would provide basic services to all segments of society, while others endorse a targeted social assistance program, such as the National Poverty Targeting Program, because they view it as more efficient and less costly. How would you best describe your group’s stance on this policy debate?” (0: Targeted Social Assistance; 10: Universal Social Protection)

The results show a range of different perspectives on this policy issue. While six groups completely support universal social protection, others have varying stances: Sabaa, Khat Ahmar, Al-Haraka Al-Shababiya Lil-Taghyir, and Minteshreen lean more toward targeted social assistance schemes, whereas ReLebanon and Tahalof Watani lean more toward universal social protection (Figure 15). Madinati, Lubnan Yantafed, and the National Bloc have inconclusive, middle-ground stances.

Figure 15: Stances on social security schemes



¹³ A score between 0-3 or 7-10 signals that the group has a clear preference and stance on the given policy issue, while a score between 4-6 reflects indecisiveness or preference for a middle ground if feasible.

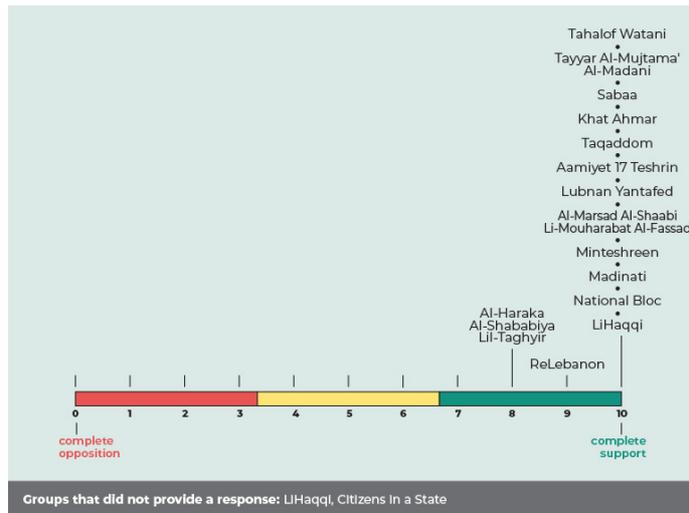
Lebanon's Political Alternatives: Mapping the Opposition

With regards to women's citizenship rights, the survey asks:

“There have long been calls to allow Lebanese women to pass on citizenship to their children while others have opposed them, often due to demographic concerns. How would you best describe your group’s stance on this policy debate?” (0: Oppose Women Passing on Citizenship; 10: Support Women Passing on Citizenship)

The results show an overwhelming consensus amongst alternative groups regarding this policy issue. Indeed, all but two groups—ReLebanon and Al-Haraka Al-Shababiya Lil-Taghyir—are in complete support of Lebanese women having the legal right to pass on citizenship to their children (Figure 16).

Figure 16: Stances on Lebanese women’s right to pass on their citizenship to their children

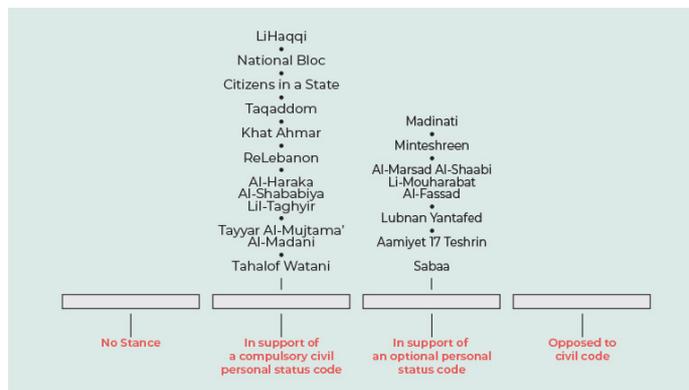


The survey then asks respondents about their stance regarding religious personal status laws, another policy debate that intersects with women’s rights:

“There have been various calls, particularly by women’s organizations, to implement a civil personal status code. Which of the following options best describes your organization’s position on personal status codes and religious courts?” (0: No Stance; In Support of Optional Civil Code; 10: In Support of Compulsory Civil Code; Opposed to Civil Code)

The results (Figure 17) indicate that while all groups are in support of the implementation of a civil personal status code, they do not all agree on whether it should be compulsory or optional for all citizens. In the latter case, religious courts would continue to exist and operate, creating a two-tiered, bifurcated legal system to rule on personal status matters. Aamiyet 17 Teshrin, Sabaa, Madinati, Lubnan Yantafed, Al-Marsad Al-Shaabi Li-Mouharabat Al-Fassad, and Minteshreen are the groups in support of the “optional” model while the remaining nine groups all favor a compulsory civil code which would apply the same secular law on all citizens.

Figure 17: Stances on personal status laws



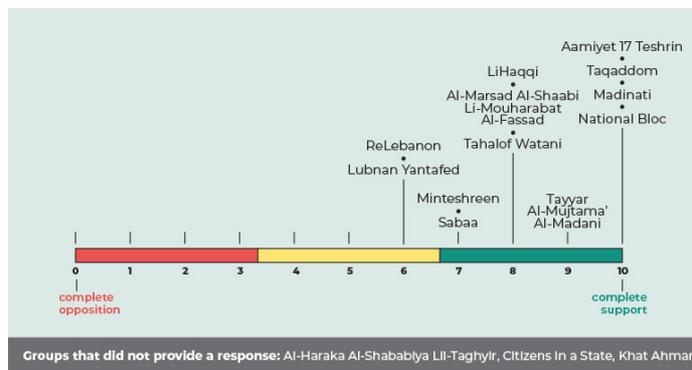
Lebanon's Political Alternatives: Mapping the Opposition

In relation to the rights of members of the LGBTIQ community, the survey asks:

“How likely is your organization to express support for the rights of the LGBTIQ community, including the right to same-sex marriage and child parenting?” (0: Oppose LGBTIQ Civil Rights; 10: Support LGBTIQ Civil Rights)

Ten groups are in support of LGBTIQI rights, but to varying degrees (Figure 18). While four groups—Madinati, Aamiyet 17 Teshrin, Taqaddom, and National Bloc—completely support granting sexual and gender minorities all their civil rights, Minteshreen, Sabaa, Al-Marsad Al-Shaabi Li-Mouharabat Al-Fassad, LiHaqqi, Tahalof Watani and Tayyar Al-Mujtama' Al-Madani support them but seem to have slight reservations. Out of the remaining five groups, three did not respond (Citizens in a State, Khat Ahmar, and Al-Haraka Al-Shababiya Lil-Taghyir) and two are neutral when it comes to LGTBQI rights (Lubnan Yantafed and ReLebanon).

Figure 18: Stances on LGBTIQ+ rights

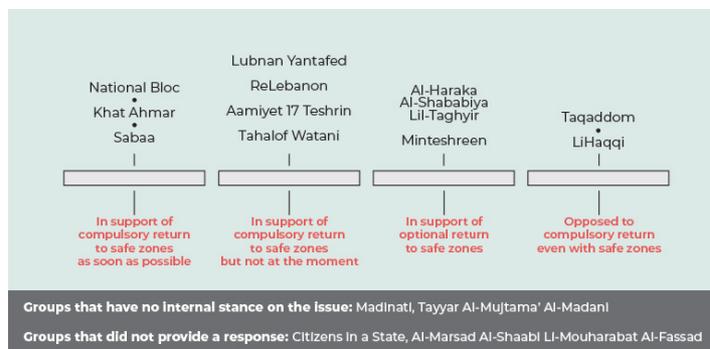


Lastly, the survey examines stances on the return of Syrian refugees to their home country:

“Some argue that Syrian refugees should be compelled to return to “safe zones” in their country while others oppose it due to security concerns. How would you best describe your group’s stance on this policy debate?”

The results show significant differences and polarization regarding this policy question and human rights issue. Seven of 14 groups support the compulsory return of Syrian refugees to their country: Sabaa, National Bloc, Khat Ahmar, ReLebanon, Lubnan Yantafed, Aamiyet 17 Teshrin, and Tahalof Watani (Figure 19). However, the latter four stressed the need to address security concerns before this takes place. Three groups—Al-Haraka Shababiya Lil-Taghyir, Minteshreen, and Al-Marsad Al-Shaabi Li-Mouharabat Al-Fassad—are opposed to compelling refugees to return to Syria and instead support their optional right to return to “safe zones”. LiHaqqi and Taqaddom oppose compulsory returns even with the presence of questionable “safe zones”. Madinati and Tayyar Al-Mujtama' Al-Madani do not have an official stance on this issue while Citizens in a State did not respond to the question.

Figure 19: Stances on the return of Syrian refugees



C. Foreign Policy and Hezbollah’s Weapons

Lebanon’s geographic location places it in the midst of a tumultuous geopolitical arena. On the one hand, a regional proxy war is ongoing between GCC countries and Iran. On the other hand, Lebanon also shares borders with Palestinian territories occupied by the Israeli state, which continues to violate Lebanon’s sovereignty and poses a military threat to the nation. This context has been used as justification by Hezbollah to maintain and grow its paramilitary wing following Lebanon’s civil war. As a result, this has triggered local and international tensions, particularly as Hezbollah engaged in military campaigns across the Middle East. Considering the contentious and

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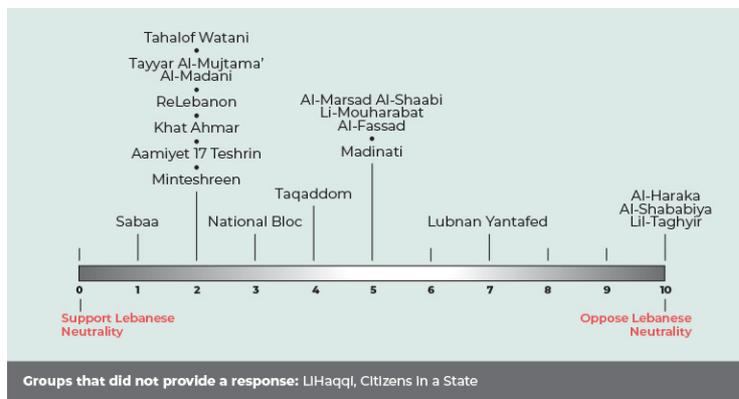
polarizing nature of these debates, the survey collected the stances of alternative groups on Lebanon's foreign policy and Hezbollah's weapons.

First, the survey asks:

“Given geopolitical complexities and instability in the region, some consider that Lebanon should thrive for neutrality in its foreign policy while others argue for interest-based or principles-driven stances toward foreign actors. How would you best describe your group’s stance on this policy debate?” (0: Support Lebanese Neutrality; 10: Oppose Lebanese Neutrality)

The results show that eight groups are in support of Lebanon not taking stances on or getting involved in regional conflicts, thriving instead for neutrality in its foreign policy (Figure 20). These groups are Sabaa, Khat Ahmar, Minteshreen, ReLebanon, Tahalof Watani, Aamiyet 17 Teshrin, Tayyar Al-Mujtama' Al-Madani, and the National Bloc. Opposed to them are Al-Haraka Shababiya Lil-Taghyir and Lubnan Yantafed who do prioritize expressing solidarity with regional causes they support. Madinati, Al-Marsad Al-Shaabi Li-Mouharabat Al-Fassad, and Taqaddom gave inconclusive, middle-ground responses that are difficult to interpret whereas LiHaqqi and Citizens in a State did not respond to the question.

Figure 20: Stances on Lebanese neutrality

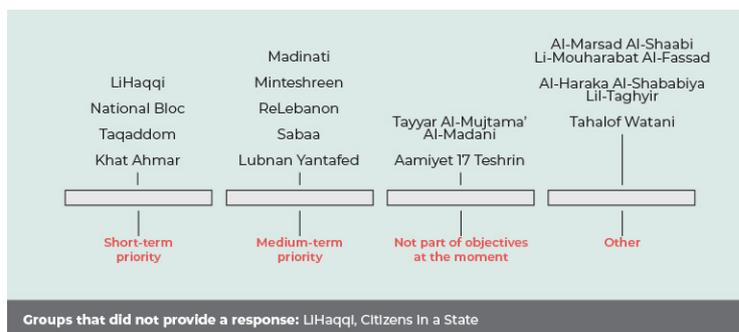


The final question concerns alternative groups' position toward Hezbollah's weapons. The survey asks:

“Some consider taking away Hezbollah’s weapons a priority in the short-term while others do not view it as such for different reasons. How would you best describe your group’s stance on this policy debate?”

The results indicate significant nuances between the proposed approaches to dealing with the issue of Hezbollah's weapons. Five groups—Khat Ahmar, National Bloc, LiHaqqi, Tahalof Watani, and Taqaddom—want to push for a short-term solution that pressures Hezbollah into relinquishing its weapons as part of a diplomatic process (Figure 21). Meanwhile, Aamiyet 17 Teshrin and Tayyar Al-Mujtama' Al-Madani do not view this issue as part of their list of objectives at the moment. The remaining groups have slightly varying views, with most considering the solution to this matter a longer-term objective which requires other conditions to be met, such as the integration of Hezbollah's weapons into the national army.

Figure 21: Stances on Hezbollah’s weapons



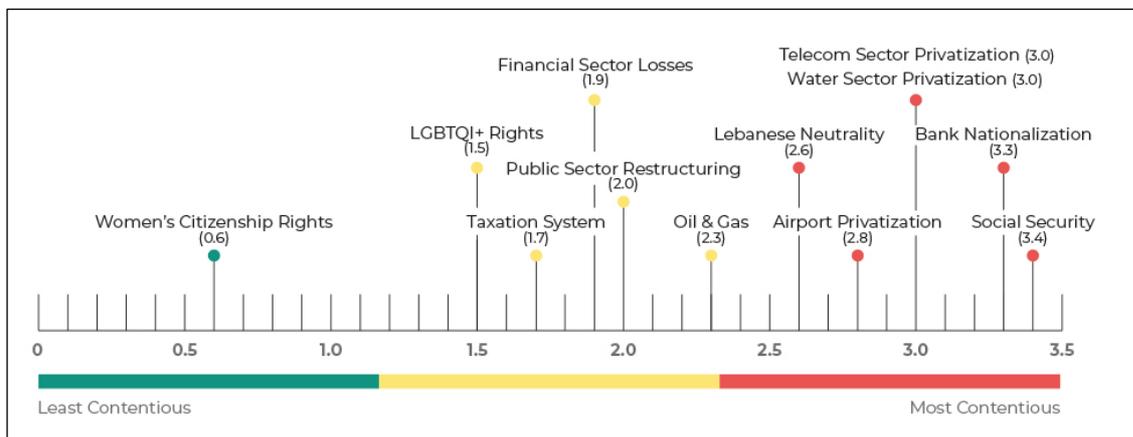
D. Analysis

In light of the range of data generated by the survey, a number of interesting questions and hypotheses can be raised and tested: Which policy issues do alternative groups agree on most? Which policy issues are most divisive and contentious? Which groups share similar policy stances, and where do they land on the left-right spectrum? Does women's representation in executive bodies have an effect on a group's economic and social policies?

By calculating the standard deviation between responses to each policy debate, the data shows that the policy issues that are least divisive are women's citizenship rights, LGBTQI+ rights, and taxation (Figure 22). With regards to these three policy issues, almost all groups agree that Lebanese women should have the right to pass on citizenship to their children, that the civil rights of gender and sexual minorities should be respected and protected by law, and that a more progressive taxation system should be implemented.

The two policy questions which are most divisive relate to social security and the nationalization of banks. Indeed, groups disagree on whether universal social protection or targeted social assistance is the best way to tackle poverty. They also have varying perspectives on how to deal with the potential insolvency of banks as a result of the financial crisis, with some groups completely rejecting nationalization while others are supportive of the state taking over the management of certain banks.

Figure 22: Least to most contentious policy issues



Note: This is based on the standard deviation of the responses.

By combining the data on different economic and social policies, an "Economic Index" and "Social Index" has been calculated for each group. These indexes can be used to place groups along the left-right political spectrum. Specifically, an index between 0 and 2.5 represents alignment with typically right-wing views while an index between 7.5 and 10 aligns with left-wing views. Scores between those two poles represent centrist views, with an index between 2.5 and 5 encapsulating center-right positions and an index between 5 and 7.5 capturing center-left stances.

It is important to note that these indexes and categories have limitations. First, the survey data is not entirely comprehensive since the study does not cover all policy issues in alternative groups' programs. Second, the left-right spectrum can be reductionist in and of itself as it fails to capture the nuances and explanations behind different policy stances. Third, many alternative groups still had not finalized their programs when they completed the survey, meaning that some of their policy stances may have evolved.

Nevertheless, the existing data is still useful in providing a preliminary picture of where different groups stand and how they align or differ from one another (Figure 23).¹⁴ With regards to social policy, all groups except Sabaa fall on the left or center-left side of the political spectrum (Figure 24). More differences can be noticed in relation to economic policy as five of 14 groups can be labeled as center-right while all other groups, excluding LiHaqqi, are center-left. According to this data, there is a divergence in economic policy between the five groups at the center-right and everybody else, implying that these groups ought to ally if programmatic considerations were the only determinant of alliances. Meanwhile, all other groups can generally be categorized as center-left and would agree on most economic issues. LiHaqqi is the sole exception as it finds itself fully on the left side of the spectrum when it comes to the economy.

¹⁴ Citizens in a State (MMFD) does not have an economic or social index because they did not respond to enough questions.

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Figure 23: Economic and social policy indexes of alternative groups

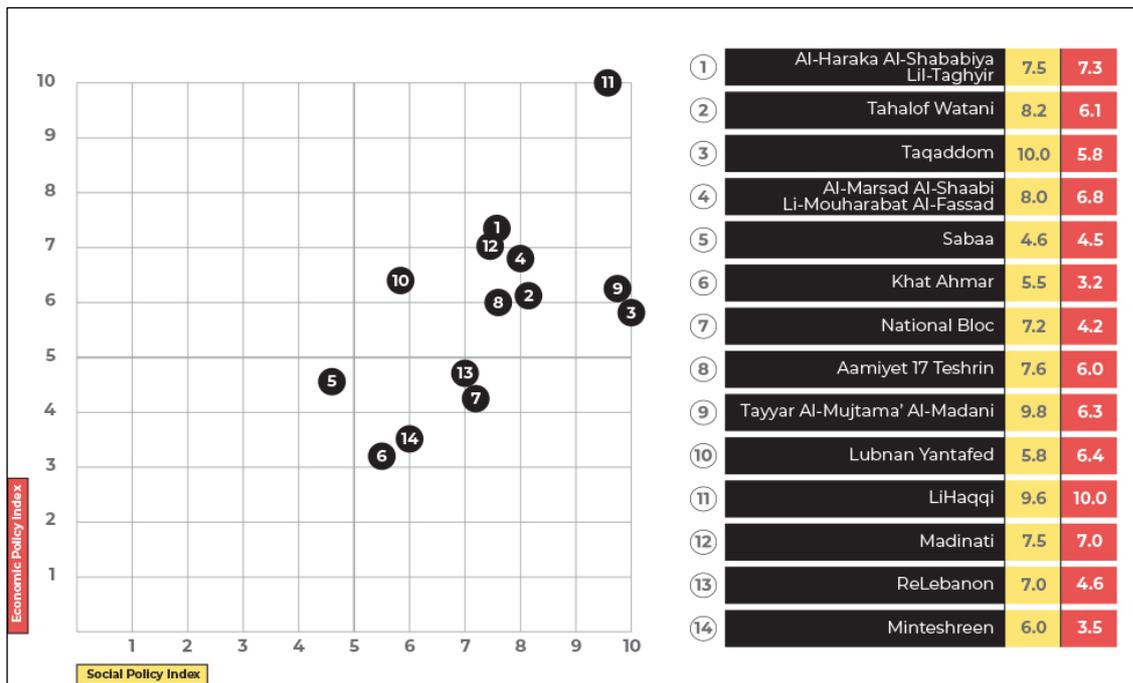
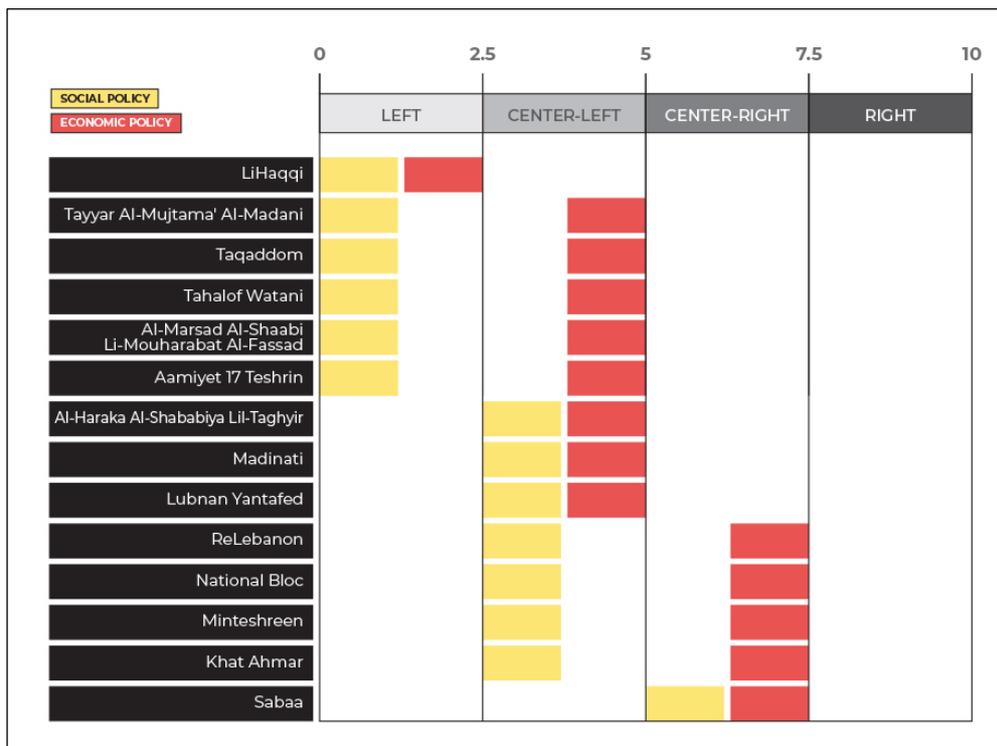


Figure 24: Positions of alternative groups on the left-right spectrum with regards to social and economic policy



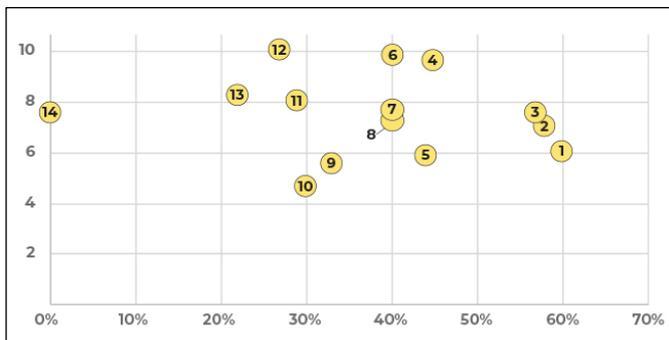
Having charted the policy stances of alternative groups based on their respective economic and social indexes, we can now determine whether the presence of women in leadership positions has an effect on policy positions. Based on figures 25 and 26, there is no noticeable correlation between policy positions and the increased presence of women in groups' executive bodies. In other words, the programmatic orientation of a group does not seem to be affected by its inclusivity or lack thereof of women. This does not mean that women's representation is inconsequential but rather implies that gender inclusivity, in and of itself, does not necessarily lead to a difference in policies.

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Figure 25: Relationship between representation of women in leadership positions and economic indexes



Figure 26: Relationship between representation of women in leadership positions and social indexes



% WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS		
①	Minteshreen	60%
②	ReLebanon	58%
③	Madinati	57%
④	LiHaqqi	45%
⑤	Lubnan Yantafed	44%
⑥	Tayyar Al-Mujtama' Al-Madani	40%
⑦	Aamiyet 17 Teshrin	40%
⑧	National Bloc	40%
⑨	Khat Ahmar	33%
⑩	Sabaa	30%
⑪	Al-Marsad Al-Shaabi Li-Mouharabat Al-Fassad	29%
⑫	Taqaddom	27%
⑬	Tahalof Watani	22%
⑭	Al-Haraka Al-Shababiya Lil-Taghyir	0%

IV. Alliances

The landscape of alternative political groups has grown tremendously since the 2019 uprising with a number of new actors emerging onto the scene. However, none of these individual groups has the large-scale, nationwide support to claim power or operate independently. This has led to a lot of coordination and meetings between groups and parties. In some cases, these connections resulted in close ties and sometimes formal alliances based on overlapping interests. In other cases, divisions between groups were apparent as stark differences in approaches, priorities, and political programs drove them away from one another. In order to understand the nature of these networks, this section investigates alternative groups' alliance choices and levels of coordination with one another, as well as with more traditional opposition figures and parties, such as the Kataeb Party or the Lebanese Communist Party

Prior to the launch of electoral campaigns for the 2022 elections, alternative groups seemed to be divided into two main camps: The Lebanese Opposition Front and April 13 Initiative. The former front includes the Kataeb Party and Michel Moawad's Independence Movement, as well as Taqaddom, Khat Ahmar, Aamiyet 17 Teshrin, Liqaa Teshrin,¹⁵ and other smaller groups. The latter brings together new alternative groups including Madinati, Al-Marsad Al-Shaabi Li-Mouharabat Al-Fassad, and Tahalof Watani. The National Bloc and Minteshreen are also part of the April 13 Initiative but recent developments in the lead up to the vote indicate that both groups now support alliances with the Kataeb Party, which was the main issue dividing the two fronts. In turn, the two aforementioned alliances are not the basis upon which electoral alliances are taking shape. The political leanings and the number of competing opposition lists will instead vary from district to district, complicating the task for anti-establishment voters but giving them the opportunity to select between different approaches to and visions of the oppositionist movement.

In order to shed light on the specific dynamics between different groups, our survey asked each respondent to disclose how close it is to other alternative groups according to a 0 to 10 scale (Annex 1).¹⁶ The results show that Tahalof Watani has the highest average score with a 6.6. Meanwhile, nine of the remaining 11 groups scored between 4.5 and 6.3, indicating that no organization is particularly close to or well-liked by all respondents. The one group that does stand out is Sabaa, which received by far the lowest average score with a 1.2. Furthermore, the average standard deviation is 2.7, meaning that there is significant polarization in how groups rated one another, with most

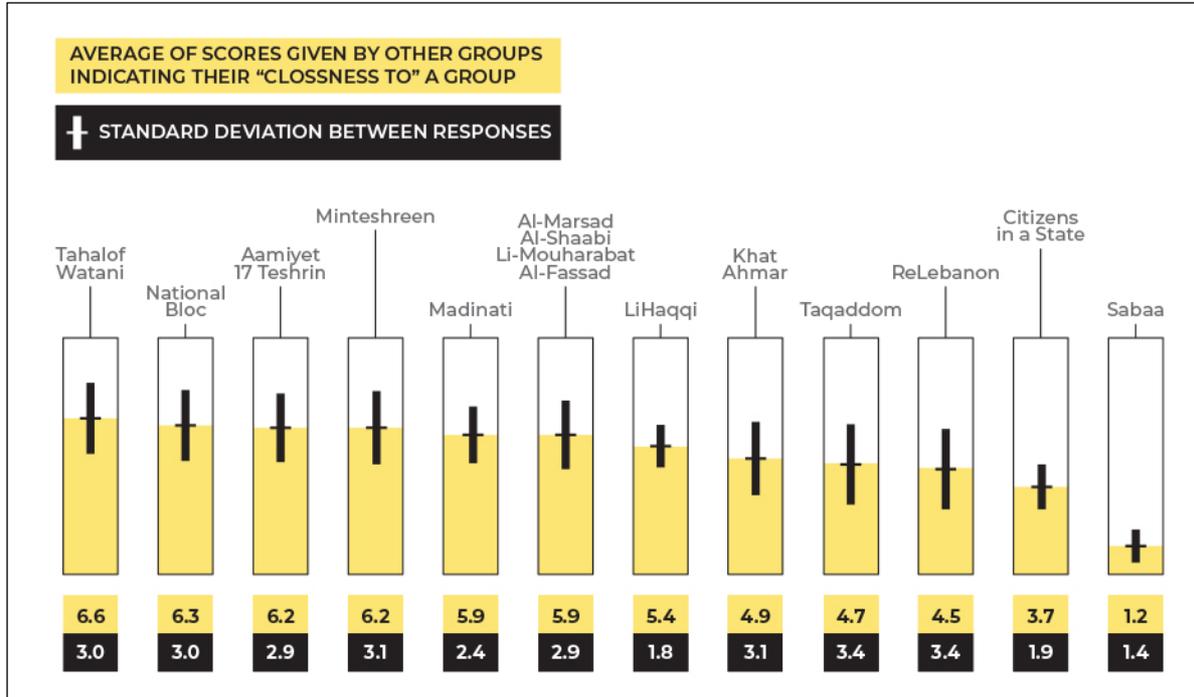
¹⁵ Liqaa Teshrin refused to take part in this study.

¹⁶ It is important to note that the answers of groups were submitted in the summer of 2021 and that changes in groups' stances may have occurred since then.

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groups receiving both very high and very low scores (Figure 27). The three exceptions with lower standard deviations are Sabaa (1.4), LiHaqqi (1.8) and Citizens in a State (1.9), signifying that most groups share relatively consistent views about them.

Figure 27: Average closeness to other alternative groups and their degree of polarization



Note: The degree of polarization is measured by the standard deviation of the responses.

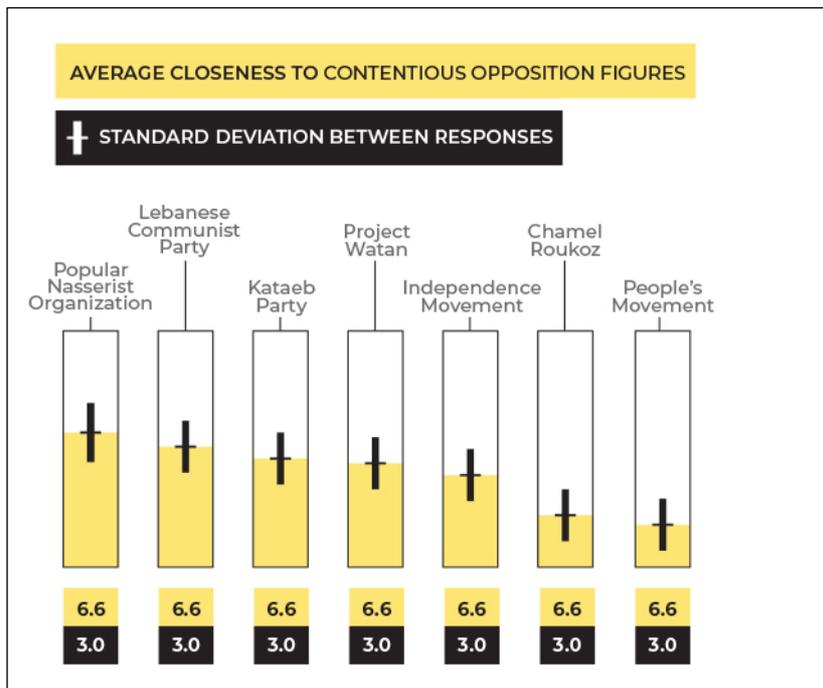
The survey questions were however not limited to alternative groups amongst each other. Indeed, various traditional political actors also claim to belong to the opposition yet are not recognized by all alternative groups. The survey thus asks each respondent to specify how likely it is to join an electoral alliance with eight other political actors who nominally oppose the traditional regime (Annex 2).

The results show that the Popular Nasserist Organization (Ossama Saad), the Lebanese Communist Party, the Kataeb Party, Project Watan (Neemat Freim), and the Independence Movement (Michel Moawad) have support from some alternative groups (Figure 28). Meanwhile, Chamel Roukoz¹⁷ and the People's Movement (Najah Wakim) are less popular and unlikely to garner the support of alternative groups.

The three political actors with the highest standard deviation in scores are the Independence Movement, Kataeb Party, and Project Watan, which means they are the most polarizing. Indeed, LiHaqqi, Al-Marsad Al-Shaabi Li-Mouharabat Al-Fassad, Al-Haraka Al-Shababiya Lil-Taghyir, Tahalof Watani, and Sabaa gave these three actors very low scores while groups in the Lebanese Opposition Front (Taqaddom, Khat Ahmar, Aamiyet 17 Teshrin) are already allied with them and ReLebanon would as well.

¹⁷ Chamel Roukoz is a former brigadier general, the son-in-law of President Michel Aoun, and was elected to Parliament in 2018 after allying with the Free Patriotic Movement. He left the alliance in October 2019, a few days after the start of the uprising.

Figure 28: Average closeness to contentious opposition figures and the degree of polarization



Note: The degree of polarization is measured by the standard deviation of the responses

Analysis: What Drives Alliances Between Groups?

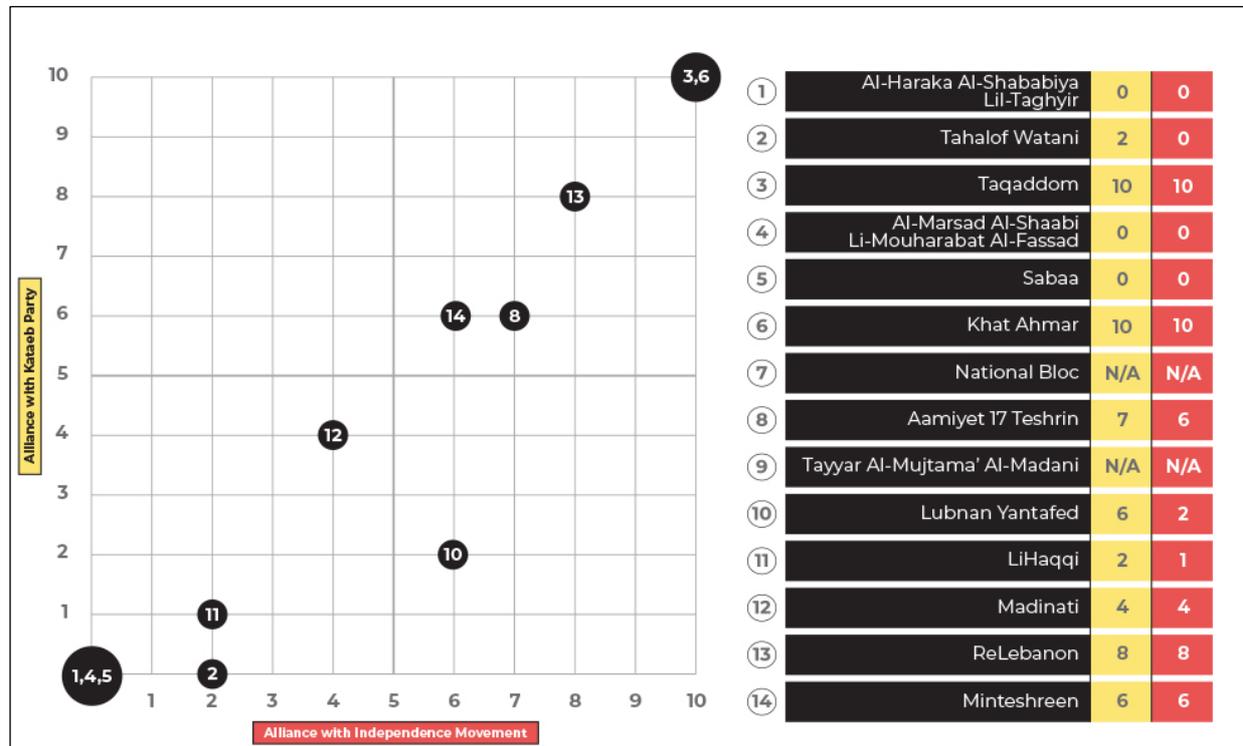
As the 2022 general elections near, alliances amongst alternative political groups have turned into a highly contentious topic. How do groups determine who to ally with? Are alliances formed according to alignment on policy positions? Or are strategies of effecting political change the determinant factor instead? What about the willingness to ally with contentious “opposition” parties?

Groups that are most aligned on policy issues are not necessarily allies (Figure 23). In fact, a look at the members of the Lebanese Opposition Front and the April 13 Initiative reveals that programmatic considerations are not the determining factor in shaping alliance choices. For instance, Khat Ahmar, Aamiyet 17 Teshrin, and Taqaddom—who are members of the Lebanese Opposition Front—all have considerably different views on a range of policy questions. Similarly, the policy positions of groups in the April 13 Initiative vary considerably, with Minteshreen and the National Bloc being center-right with regards to the economy while Tahalof Watani, Madinati, Al-Marsad Al-Shaabi Li-Mouharabat Al-Fassad, and Tahalof Watani are center-left.

Since programmatic stances do not seem to shape alliance decisions, could choices in strategy provide a more conclusive explanation? Based on the “primary approach” to effecting political change that each alternative group endorses (Table 3), alignment in strategies does not seem to shape alliances either: With regards to the Lebanese Opposition Front, Aamiyet 17 Teshrin supports calls for an independent government while Taqaddom and Khat Ahmar are eyeing the general elections. Meanwhile, with the April 13 Initiative, Tahalof Watani supports the elections approach, Minteshreen is a proponent of the grassroots development strategy, and remaining groups in the alliance support calls for an independent government.

Considering policy positions and strategies do not provide conclusive explanations as to how alliances are currently taking shape, a final hypothesis pertains to stances regarding contentious opposition figures. Based on online discussions amongst opposition groups and background interviews, it is evident that the question of allying with the Kataeb Party and Independence Movement is particularly polarizing. The survey data confirms this by showing a clear divergence between groups on this question (Figure 29).

Figure 29: Stances of alternative groups towards the Kataeb Party and the Independence Movement



A closer look at the answers reveals that some groups were undecided when it came to the possibility of joining an electoral list that includes the Kataeb and Independence Movement. Specifically, Minteshreen and Madinati both had middle-ground stances toward these two parties, while the National Bloc did not answer the questions. As the elections near, these choices are becoming clearer. For instance, the National Bloc will be running with the Kataeb Party in one or more districts but against them in others. Meanwhile, other groups remain firmly committed to their principles by refusing to join pragmatic alliances that would increase their chances of success at the expense of their integrity. This divergence in beliefs and values, rather than programmatic considerations, is thus one of the primary reasons why the landscape of anti-establishment actors is fragmented.

Conclusion

With Lebanon's first parliamentary elections since the 2019 uprising looming, Lebanon's alternative parties are facing a range of difficult challenges: First, the financial collapse and socioeconomic crisis have had profound repercussions on the morale of the streets and organizers, which risks limiting the national energy and momentum needed for strong electoral campaigns. Second, and as corroborated by the survey data, various groups and citizens have reservations and doubts regarding the possibility of effecting change through elections. This is due to a lack of trust in the freeness and fairness of the democratic process, as traditional parties not only oversee the elections but are also willing to deploy a range of tools including fraudulent ones in order to secure their return to power. Third, alternative groups disagree on a range of core issues, from the types of policies needed to address Lebanon's systemic crises to the framework and strategies upon which to form alliances. This has raised concerns over their ability to organize a progressive and united oppositionist campaign which had a chance of challenging traditional political parties across districts. Despite these realities, May 2022 remains an important juncture for a country which has been held hostage by its rulers and their policies. The outcome of the vote will not only shape Lebanon's short-term future, but also its longer-term prospects for a socially and economically just recovery.

Lebanon's Political Alternatives: Mapping the Opposition

Annex 1: Stance of alternative groups towards one another

CLOSSNESS TO	National Bloc		Al Marsad Al Shaabi		Aamiyet 17 Teshrin		Taqaddom		Sabaa		Tahalof Watani	
	LiHaqqi	Madinati	Minteshreen	Citizens in a State	Khat Ahmar	ReLebanon						
LiHaqqi		7	7	7	7	7	6	5	5	3	6	7
National Bloc	5		9	8	9	5	5	5	5	1	N/A	9
Madinati	7	8		8	8	1	7	7	5	2	1	8
Minteshreen	4	10	6		6	2	5	6	7	0	6	8
Al-Marsad Al-Shaabi Li-Mouharabat Al-Fassad	8	8	8	6		5	6	3	3	0	5	9
Citizens in a State	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lubnan Yantafed	8	8	8	5	8	5	8	0	3	0		8
Aamiyet 17 Teshrin	6	6	7	7	4	2		9	6	1	5	5
Taqaddom	6	8	6	10	6	3	10		10	1	6	9
Khat Ahmar	2	8	3	9	2	2	10	10		3	9	8
Sabaa	3	3	4	2	3	3	0	0	4		0	4
ReLebanon	4	5	2	8	6	7	9	8	10	4		9
Al-Haraka Al-Shababiya Li-Taghyir	5	1	3	2	9	5	7	2	0	0	2	0
Tayyar Al-Mujtama' Al-Madani	6	1	5	0	0	3	2	0	0	0	0	2
Tahalof Watani	6	9	9	9	9	2	6	6	6	1	10	
Average	5.4	6.3	5.9	6.2	5.9	3.7	6.2	4.7	4.9	1.2	4.5	6.6
Standard deviation	1.8	3.0	2.4	3.1	2.9	1.9	2.9	3.4	3.1	1.4	3.4	3.0

Annex 2: Stances of alternative groups towards contentious opposition figures and parties

ALLIANCE WITH	Lebanese Communist Party		Independence Movement		People's Movement		
	Popular Nasserist Organization	Kataeb Party	Project Watan	Chamel Roukoz			
LiHaqqi	3	2	2	2	1	1	1
National Bloc	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0
Madinati	4	4	4	4	4	3	2
Minteshreen	7	6	6	5	6	3	0
Al-Marsad Al-Shaabi Li-Mouharabat Al-Fassad	9	7	0	5	0	3	0
Citizens in a State	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lubnan Yantafed	8	7	6	3	2	0	0
Aamiyet 17 Teshrin	3	4	7	1	6	0	0
Taqaddom	7	7	10	10	10	5	0
Khat Ahmar	3	2	10	10	10	3	2
Sabaa	6	7	0	0	0	0	7
ReLebanon	8	8	8	8	8	8	7
Al-Haraka Al-Shababiya Li-Taghyir	8	5	0	0	0	0	5
Tayyar Al-Mujtama' Al-Madani	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Tahalof Watani	2	2	2	5	0	0	0
Average	5.7	5.1	4.6	4.4	3.9	2.2	1.8
Standard deviation	2.5	2.2	3.8	3.5	4.0	2.5	2.7

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