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КРИЗИС ПОЛИТИЧЕСКОЙ СИСТЕМЫ ЛИВАНА В ДИСФУНКЦИОНАЛЬНОМ КОНТЕКСТЕ

THE THE CRISIS OF LEBANON'S POLITICAL SYSTEM IN A DYSFUNCTIONAL CONTEXT

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Аннотация

Статья посвящена исследованию дисфункций политической системы Ливана, которые стали источниками масштабного кризиса за весь период существования в качестве независимого государства. В основе методологии данного исследования лежат теории политических систем, а также представление о дисфункциях как основных факторах дестабилизации политических систем. В качестве основных критериев оценки состояния политической системы используются дисфункции: распределения ресурсов в обществе, политического управления, политического участия и политического представительства. Анализ политической системы Ливана в соответствии с приведенными критериями позволил дать качественные характеристики глубокого ливанского кризиса.

Ключевые слова: политическая система, дисфункция, нестабильность, кризис, дестабилизация, Ливан.

Abstract

The article is devoted to the study of the dysfunctions of the political system of Lebanon, which have become sources of a large-scale crisis over the entire period of existence as an independent state. The methodology of this study is based on the theory of political systems, as well as the idea of dysfunctions as the main factors of destabilization of political systems. Dysfunctions are used as the main criteria for assessing the state of the political system: resource allocation in society, political governance, political participation and political representation. The analysis of the political system of Lebanon in accordance with the above criteria allowed us to give qualitative characteristics of the deep Lebanese crisis.

Key words: political system, dysfunction, instability, crisis, destabilization, Lebanon.

The relevance of the study of the Lebanese crisis is related to the need to comprehend the peculiarities of the political processes that are currently taking place in Lebanon. The cultural, socio-economic and political characteristics of Lebanon allow us to consider this country in terms of its specificity and uniqueness in the Middle East region. Thus, the multi-confessional composition of Lebanese society, combined with inter-communal traditions of interaction, produce a social pattern that is not typical of the region. Lebanon's form of government, the parliamentary republic, is also not a typical form of government in the region. Finally, Lebanon's economy was, until recently, based on a dynamic banking and financial sector, trade, and tourism; in this respect, Lebanon has been called the "Switzerland of the Middle East. At present, however, Lebanon is experiencing one of the worst crises of its entire existence as an independent state. Lebanon's unique society has developed a unique crisis in its own way.

Crisis manifestations are observed in many spheres of Lebanese society and are accompanied by synergetic effects, when crises in different spheres of society mutually reinforce each other. Most importantly, the protracted crisis in Lebanon demonstrates the inability of state institutions and political elites to implement the country's overdue reforms. Already today, the consequences of the political and economic crisis in Lebanon are large-scale; the main risks include the disintegration of the state, widespread poverty, increasing violence and the growing instability of the political system.

The effectiveness of the political system is measured by its ability to cope with crises and their consequences. Everything points to the weakness and deep crisis of the political system itself. Any crisis and the destabilization of the political system that precedes it has its origins and prerequisites. Dysfunctions of the political system can be seen as the first manifestations of the coming crisis, which can either be overcome and compensated for by political structures, or, growing, lead to deeper crisis manifestations.

Research methods and objects. Assessment of the state and dynamics of political system development, according to the authors, should be carried out from the perspective of its functioning, respectively, the basic functions of the political system, their qualitative and quantitative characteristics are the starting point of such an analysis. The main functions of the political system, which can be used as criteria of its state, should include: the distribution of resources in society; political governance; political participation; political representation of interests. Obviously, these functions are closely interrelated, and changes in one functional direction can change other functional characteristics of the political system. For example, the inefficient distribution of resources in society, as the most common dysfunction of political systems, can provoke dysfunctions of political participation, manifested in mass protests. On the other hand, inefficiencies in political governance, or flaws in political institutions, can be caused by the crystallization of political elites, which arises, not least of all, because of the weak capacity of channels of political mobility and weak representation of the political interests of different groups. In this case, the dysfunctionality of political representation becomes apparent.

Situational dysfunctional manifestations in one of the above directions, as a rule, do not lead to negative consequences for the stability of the political system. Having a certain margin of safety, the political system is able to function, for example, in conditions of economic crises, which can significantly change the distribution of resources in society, or be accompanied by a deterioration in the socio-economic situation. In this case, destabilization of the entire political system is not observed, but if dysfunctionality covers other areas of the political system, then the political system faces serious challenges. We state that the accumulation of dysfunctions in such areas as the distribution of resources in society, political governance, political participation and political representation leads to their mutual reinforcement and, as a result, to the crisis of the political system.

In our opinion, the political system of Lebanon currently demonstrates long-term dysfunctionality in all the above areas, which indicates not only its deep crisis, but also the reality of the system's collapse. On this basis, it seems relevant to study the crisis of Lebanon's political system through the analysis of its dysfunctions. Thus, at the tactical level, it is necessary to assess the Lebanese political system in four functional areas: the distribution of resources in society, political governance, political participation, and political representation.

Results and discussions. The distribution of resources in society is one of the main functions of the political system, and its paramount importance was mentioned by the founders of the theory of political In particular, D. Easton and G. Almond. Assessment of the implementation of the function of resource allocation in society can be carried out through the analysis of socio-economic indicators. Such indicators include the annual volume of GDP per capita, reflecting the dynamics of economic development; the Gini index, which allows us to assess the degree of uneven distribution of resources and the level of social inequality, etc.

The Lebanese economy in recent years has shown indicators of deep

In recent years, the Lebanese economy has shown signs of deep crisis. In absolute terms, Lebanon's economy shrank from \$55 billion in 2018 to \$33 billion in 2020, and GDP per capita fell by 40 percent in the same time. Inflation reached 84.3 percent, second only to Venezuela and Zimbabwe, 155,000 families were below the poverty line, and the value of the national currency on the black market depreciated by 129 percent. Such dismal results are usually characteristic of military conflicts or even full-fledged wars and came as a surprise in peacetime [1].

The aggravation of economic problems occurred in the fall of 2019, even then the country was on the verge of default. The government began to implement austerity measures: new taxes were introduced, pensions and civil servants' salaries were reduced. An attempt to introduce a \$6 fee for the use of the messenger WhatsApp was unsuccessful, due to the protests this fee was cancelled, but other taxes were not cancelled. The measures taken, in fact, did not work, and after January 2020. Under the conditions of political destabilization, after fierce discussions, a government of technocrats was formed, whose main task was to overcome the economic crisis, nevertheless, in early March 2020, the government announced a default.

We can assume that the degree of social inequality in Lebanese society has increased during the crisis. At present, the exact data of the Gini index, which characterizes income or consumption inequality, is not reflected in international statistics. It is known that in 2011 the Gini index was approximately 31.8 in a relatively stable economic situation, which corresponded to a moderate social stratification and, consequently, the ability of the political system to distribute resources in society, avoiding acute social polarization. However, in a crisis, the degree of social inequality increases and becomes a consequence of such economic phenomena as unemployment, inflation, etc. Today, according to estimates of international organizations, the richest 1 percent of the country owns a quarter of GDP, the richest 10 percent owns 55 percent of the total national income [1].

Along with the deep dysfunctions of the distribution of resources in society, it is obvious the crisis state of the political system by the criterion of political governance. To understand the political system and the degree of its governability, it is necessary to have an idea of the form of government, the mechanisms of power formation and the peculiarities of political elites. Lebanon has a political system based on a parliamentary republican form of government. Its peculiarity is the consolidation of the principles of confessionalism in the political institutions. The desire to represent the interests of diverse social groups correlates at first glance with the practice of consociative democracy in Western European countries, yet Lebanese society has not been Westernized and is still characterized by traditional oriental features. This fact characterizes the peculiarities of the functioning of political institutions, in particular political parties and electoral mechanisms.

In Lebanon, between 1943 and 1972, elections were held at intervals of four years. The electoral system was based on multi-member districts. In each constituency, several internal factions competed for a seat from a religious community, while in districts where several religious groups were represented, candidates from different communities had to reach an agreement and run on a common list in order to avoid splits. Consequently, lists of candidates (Christians, Muslims, etc.) rather than individual candidates competed in elections, and there was no separation based on affiliation with a religious community.

But by the mid-1970s the demographic profile of Lebanese society had changed: the increase in the number of Muslims upset the existing balance of power and led to the exacerbation of sectarian contradictions, which resulted in a civil war that lasted until the 1990s. Nevertheless, the Lebanese authorities have not been able to abandon the system completely. Only a Maronite may be elected president of Lebanon, a Sunni may be elected head of government, a Shiite may be elected head of parliament, a Druze may be elected minister of defense, and an Orthodox may be elected minister of education [5, p. 388].

The Lebanese specificity also includes the presence in the republic of a very large and ambitious and ambitious political class. The most influential groups include the Shehab and

Jumblat families, the Zmayel and Karameh, Hariri and Salam, and the bright charismatic leaders include Nabih Berri, Michel Aoun, Hassan Nasrullah, Samir Jaaja'a. It is also necessary to point out the tradition of the political role of the church and the mosque in the life of the country. This is particularly true of the Maronite and Shiite communities. The Maronite patriarchs, as representatives of the largest Christian community, often speak on behalf of all Christians in Lebanon [4].

But political instability and the current crisis situation in Lebanon are due, not least, to the nature of the political elites. Political leaders have led Lebanon down the road to state failure. For three decades, ruling elites have ensured loyalty through clientelism, providing preferential access to public resources and promising to protect the interests of religious communities. Thus, political elites have expanded the space of corruption and control over various spheres of society, in particular the media and the banking system.

As the socio-economic situation worsened, political elites remained committed to their political interests and ties with certain groups, and attempts to create a technocratic government to resolve the crisis were unsuccessful (default was declared in March 2020). A serious split between the political elites and the masses became evident in the growing protest potential in society. "The rift between the protesters and the rhetoric of the ruling political parties has never been so deep-the opposing sides seem to speak different languages. ... The political class has failed to respond to the importance and seriousness of the protests and the economic crisis that preceded them. This crisis was the result of economic policies and entrenched corruption that defined Lebanon's realities for decades after the civil war" [6].

It is clear that the dysfunctions of political governance and the nature of the ruling political elites have become the leading factors of political instability. The current situation is exacerbated by widespread protests and increasing violence in society. These manifestations suggest dysfunctions of political participation and political representation of interests. Numerous confessional groups are currently unable to solve the problems of political representation and the struggle for power through conventional means. Non-conventional political practices, including those of a violent nature, are widespread in Lebanon.

Both inter- and intra-confessional relations in Lebanese society are currently characterized by tensions. As mentioned above, Lebanese society is multi-confessional, with Muslims (Sunni, Shia, Druze, Alawites) and Christians (Maronites, Orthodox, Catholics, Protestants, etc.) represented. The multi-confessional nature of society is also reflected in the organization of the political system, as is the isolation of religious communities, each of which was formed under the influence of its own historical socio-cultural peculiarities. Lebanon is the only Arab country that has officially recognized 18 religious communities (5 Muslim, 12 Christian and one Jewish). Currently, Christian communities represent about 35% of the population and Muslim communities 65%, respectively.

Today we should add to the inter-confessional confrontation the factor of intra-confessional tension, which is a consequence of the struggle for influence, including in the criminal economy. For example, since mid-2020 there have been clashes between militants from rival Shiite clans in the Bekaa Valley over the control of production and smuggling of illicit crops. ...Sunni factions are confronting each other in Beirut and Tripoli. Saad Hariri remains the predominant Sunni figure, but his older brother Bahaa, a businessman sharply critical of Saad's previous collaboration with Hezbollah, has turned into a rival. In September 2020, the two brothers' alleged supporters confronted each other with rocket-propelled grenades and machine guns in central Beirut [7, p.13-14].

Hezbollah occupies a special place in the system of representation of Lebanon's interests. Supported by Iran, Hezbollah has substantial social, organizational, and security resources, which allows this organization not only to provide social assistance and maintain security in certain cases, but also to pose serious domestic and foreign political threats. For example, in July 2006, "Hezbollah provoked a severe crisis in relations with Israel by shelling northern Israel. In 2008,

another crisis involved the dismissal of the head of security at Beirut airport, which was under Hezbollah control and was carrying out smuggling operations there. The situation in neighboring Syria could not but affect the stability of Lebanon's political system. Despite the adoption of the Baabda Declaration in 2012. Despite the adoption of the Baabda Declaration in 2012, which implied noninterference in regional conflicts, in particular in Syria, Hezbollah fought on the side of the Assad regime.

Today, Hezbollah remains a key political actor. Like other political forces, the party has used identity and clientelism for decades to ensure political legitimacy. At the same time, among other political forces, this organization has a de facto veto power over government formation and decision-making, facilitated by its close alliance with the Amal Party, which ensures both groups a monopoly on Shiite representation. "Hezbollah is an example of a successful overlap between state and nonstate political representation.

It should be noted that Hezbollah is not the only one to use parallel structures (including illegal ones) to effectively protect political interests. Other confessional and clan groups also create duplicate structures, usually in the form of combat brigades. It is noted that given the number of the army about 70 thousand and the Interior Ministry forces about 30 thousand people, the total number of party and confessional formations in recent years has reached 40 thousand people, of which about 30 thousand accounted for Hezbollah. And today in Lebanon there is a widespread view that the exploded munitions are a secret arsenal of parallel power structures that freely exist and operate on the territory of the country. Above all, Hezbollah is referred to in this context [2].

The widespread use of non-state channels of representation and protection of interests by confessional and clan groups in Lebanese society confirms the inefficiency of the official system of representation of interests, fixed in the form of a party system. It turns out that the ineffectiveness of the official system of representation is compensated by the creation of informal structures and, as a rule, paramilitary structures. All this increases the overall level of illegitimate violence in society and indicates, among other things, an increase in unconventional political participation.

Lebanese society has demonstrated a high level of protest potential in recent years, with not all protests being peaceful. The problems of the protests are quite broad. Here are some examples. One of the first large-scale protests was against new taxes, including a tax on WhatsApp and other messengers. Attempts by the authorities to reduce the protest wave were unsuccessful, despite certain concessions. Citizens expanded the protest themes, expressing their discontent with the post-civil war political system, entrenched corruption, and the unsettled youth. A number of protests were related to fuel shortages and energy supply problems. Protesters in Beirut blocked roads leading to other cities, and erected barricades of stones and cars on several downtown streets. Some protesters also staged sit-ins on the streets and roads.

In addition to the chronic crisis in all spheres of society, Lebanon's ruling circles faced a new challenge: the state was not prepared to confront the pandemic, protect its population or at least attract external aid, which was an additional reason for the growing protest mood. By resorting to extreme measures in the form of nationwide isolation, politicians sought not only to contain the spread of the coronavirus and postpone the collapse of the health system, but also used restrictive measures to suppress protest activity [3].

Gender demands were added to the general protest issue in Lebanon: ensuring gender equality, restoring women's rights, and curbing domestic violence. Despite the fact that Lebanon is one of the liberal countries in the Arab world, gender discrimination is nevertheless present in both public and family life. Women have fewer rights to children in case of divorce, inherit less property than men, and are not entitled to pass on their citizenship to their children. Rights are often governed by the rules of religious communities rather than by law. Protesters call for equality to be enshrined in civil law.

Conclusions

1. Lebanon's political system is undergoing one of the greatest crises of its existence. At the level of the political system the crisis has multiple manifestations and covers all its main functional directions. The presence of a large-scale systemic crisis is indicated by traceable dysfunctions in as many possible directions as possible. In the case of Lebanon, the dysfunctions of resource distribution, political management, political participation, and political representation are observed together. All four of these dysfunctions were the criteria that made it possible to assess the depth of the crisis of the political system.

2. The current state of the political system is close to collapse. In order to overcome the systemic crisis it is necessary to reduce the acuteness of the political system's dysfunctions. The greatest concern is the dysfunctional distribution of resources within society, as the country is experiencing a major economic crisis. The system of political governance is not effective, where along with poorly functioning political institutions there is a split of political elites. Confessional systems of political representation are currently a source of tension, and the process of promoting and realizing the interests of numerous confessional groups is carried out through parallel non-state structures. The profound dysfunctionality of Lebanon's political system is reflected in the growth of protest potential and violence in society. All of these dysfunctions are indicative of the qualitative side of the Lebanese systemic crisis.

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