The author has brilliantly unfolded the story of transition in Lebanon. He has traced the coming into being of Lebanon in 1926 as an entity that European colonial powers cobbled together amidst Arab-speaking but competing religions minorities, the Christians and Muslims. The Turks during Ottoman Empire ruled but after its collapse when the First World War ended. France as mandate holder of League of Nations gave Lebanon a constitution. Lebanon became a parliamentary democracy with power sharing according to a 6:5 ratio of legislative seats, cabinet posts and so on. In 1943, Lebanon became independent. The leaders struck an unwritten accord. The National pact decreed that the President should always be a Maronite (Christian), the Prime minister a Sunni and the speaker of the Parliament a Shi’ite, remaining to be shared among various groups. The author with great erudite analysed the pact as “not surprisingly, the pact masked deep divisions. Worse, it entrenched confessional politics and failed to offer a resilient state structure that could adjust as demographic and social realities shifted. The pact thus laid the basics for a weak and fragile polity wherein major decisions had to meet the crippling requirement of virtual intercommunal unanimity.”

Nevertheless the pact witnessed a booming economy but in the words of the another “Lebanon become polarized and its consensus-based version of democracy ever more nominal rather than real. Most Lebanese, meanwhile, remained poor and rural despite the urban service-sector boom. Internal economic migrants began creating teeming shantytowns around Beirut and other cities.” In April 1975 a full blown civil war broke out. Syra entered and for almost three decades the civil war continued. Arab League brokered “Document of National Reconciliation.” Constitutional amendments were effected. The Presidents was made weaker, Sunni Prime Minister and Shi’ite Parliament stronger. The author criticized the Accord stating communalist polities were more firmly anchored. The rise of Rafi Harari was significant and Syria
pulled strings. Harari was assassinated on 14 February 2005. And largest public demonstrations, that the Middle East has ever seen brokeout. Syria withdrew and an international fact finding mission into Harari assassination followed paving the way for international investigative commission. In May 2005 legislation elections followed. There was need for change in the electoral law. “Opposition leaders faced the choice of postponing the balloting indefinitely while they negotiated a new law, or having the elections go forward on time but under the imperfect 2000 law. Not wanting to risk a delay that might blunt their momentum, they selected the latter option.” Under subtitle “The tasks ahead” the author suggested priority to economic reforms, secondly, “its task is to organize nationwide consultations and recommend to parliament a draft electoral law that all Lebanese will find acceptable. This is the first time that Lebanon has used an apolitical commission in order to organize and inform a systematic nationwide discussion of a key and rather sensitive issue.” Thirdly the security issue. The truth about Harari murder must be known and setting up a international tribunal has to be achieved.

Fourthly, Then there must follow “Then there must follow a serious and comprehensive dialogue on the country’s future. This discussion must include all the various factions, plus civil society. Without this, the gains of March 14 and after may dissipate. Friends of democracy should hope to see civil society become a growing force.”

The author has given a road map for Lebanon’s future progress. Many divided societies suffering from political in stability and economic crisis, will do well to make an in depth study of the authors article, draw lessons from their own respective countries and apply them in context of their peculiarities.

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**Note.**

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