



**2015 - 2016**  
**Model Arab League**

**BACKGROUND GUIDE**

**Joint Cabinet Crisis – March 14 vs. March 8 Alliance**

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National  
Council  
on US-  
Arab  
Relations



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## **1989 TA'IF ACCORD - Power-Sharing Agreement**

The Ta'if Agreement—a consociational or power-sharing agreement enacted by the Lebanese government in 1989—constitutes a reconstruction of the electoral system, evening out the seats for Christians and Muslims of the country, as well as among Shiites and Sunnis. The agreement came about with the end of the Lebanese Civil War in 1989: “In autumn 1989 in al-Ta'if, Saudi Arabia, a majority of the surviving members of the 1972 Lebanese parliament agreed on a political reform document.”<sup>1</sup> Within the Ta'if Agreement was the inclusion of most of the heads of militias into the postwar political system, further legitimizing them as big players within Lebanon.

In accordance with the Ta'if Accord, the Lebanese president must be from the Maronite Christian community. While the prime minister is Sunni, the parliamentary speaker is Shia. In addition, the deputy speaker of parliament and the deputy prime minister in Lebanon must be Greek Orthodox.<sup>2</sup>

## **March 14 Alliance & March 8 Alliance**

The March 14 Alliance is a coalition of political parties formed in 2005 following the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, whose son Saad Hariri is the alliance's current leader. The name "March 14" comes from the date of Lebanon's 2005 Cedar Revolution, during which tens of thousands of Lebanese protested against Syria's presence in Lebanon.<sup>3</sup> Currently, the March 14 Alliance takes up 60 out of 128 available seats in the Parliament of Lebanon. The core of the coalition is made of the Christian Qornet Shehwan Gathering and the Sunni Future Movement. Ever since, the alliance took a strong stance against the Alawite government in Damascus and opposes any Syrian interference in Lebanon. The alliance also has close connections to Saudi Arabia; Saad Hariri has dual-citizenship, both Lebanese and Saudi Arabian.

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<sup>1</sup> A.S. NORTON, *Lebanon after Ta'if: Is the Civil War over?*, in *Middle East Journal* 45 (3), 1991, p. 458

<sup>2</sup> I. HARB, *Lebanon's Confessionalism: Problems and Prospects*, 2006, on [https://web.archive.org/web/20090322103601/http://www.usip.org/pubs/usipeace\\_briefings/2006/0330\\_lebanon\\_confessionalism.html](https://web.archive.org/web/20090322103601/http://www.usip.org/pubs/usipeace_briefings/2006/0330_lebanon_confessionalism.html)

<sup>3</sup> A. TARTICI, L.H. TESLIK, *Lebanon's Parliamentary Elections (June 7, 2009)*, 2009, on <http://www.cfr.org/lebanon/lebanons-parliamentary-elections-june-7-2009/p19578>

The March 8 Alliance is a coalition of political parties in Lebanon whose name comes from the date of a 2005 pro-Syria rally organized by Hezbollah a few weeks after the assassination of Rafiq Hariri.<sup>4</sup> It was founded as a counterpart to the March 14 Alliance. Currently, the March 8 Alliance holds 68 out of 128 seats in the country's parliament. Winning the majority in the 2009 Parliamentary elections enabled the alliance to form the Lebanese government of June 2011, which ruled until March 2013. The major parties of the alliance are the Shiite Hezbollah, the Shiite Amal Movement and the Christian Free Patriotic Movement. Politically, the coalition takes a strong pro-Syrian stance. Further, Hezbollah is oriented towards Iran.

The two alliances have a strong animosity towards each other. This animosity is not only on a political but also personal level. For years, Saad Hariri has blamed Hezbollah for the 2005 assassination of his father, and as a result, the assassination has fallen under international scrutiny. In The Hague, the Special Tribunal for Lebanon was established "to hold trials for the people accused of carrying out the attack of 14 February 2005 which killed 22 people, including the former prime minister of Lebanon, Rafiq Hariri, and injured many others."<sup>5</sup> The tribunal is of international character, however, its existence is not uncontroversial.<sup>6</sup>

## March 8<sup>th</sup> Alliance

1. Leader of the **Free Patriotic Movement (FPM)**: Michel Aoun
2. Minister of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants: Gebran Bassil (**FPM**)
3. Leader of the **Amal Movement**: Nabih Berri
4. Minister of Finance: Ali Hassan Khalil (**Amal Movement**)
5. Leader of the **Loyalty to the Resistance Bloc** (Hezbollah): Mohammad Raad
6. Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs: Mohammed Fneish (**Hezbollah**)
7. President of the **Marada Movement**: Suleiman Frangieh Jr.
8. Secretary-General of **Hezbollah**: Hassan Nasrallah

## March 14<sup>th</sup> Alliance

1. Leader of the **Future Movement (FM)**: Saad Hariri

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Special Tribunal for Lebanon-website: <http://www.stl-tsl.org/en/about-the-stl>

<sup>6</sup> M. LUTZ, *Is Lebanon's special tribunal a turning point in international law?*, 2014, on: <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/4/11/lebanon-s-specialtribunalturningpointforinternationalallaw.html>

2. Minister of Justice: Ashraf Rifi (**FM**)
3. Minister of the Interior and Municipalities: Nouhad Machnouk (**FM**)
4. Minister of State for Administrative Development: Nabil de Freige (**FM**)
5. Supreme Leader of the **Kataeb Party**: Sami Gemayel
6. Minister of Labour: Sejaan Azzi (**Kataeb Party**)
7. Minister of Economy and Trade: Alain Hakim (**Kataeb Party**)
8. President of **Lebanese Forces**: Samir Geagea

## Questions to Consider in Your Research

- On which issues do the two alliances clash?
- What are the major functions of the Lebanese Parliament?
- What role does sectarianism play in these alliances? For instance, do Sunni politicians in Lebanese politics mainly/always side with Sunni parties?
- To which external powers do the alliances uphold good relations?
- Which external powers traditionally engage in Lebanese politics? Which external powers have been seen/are seen as neutral when interfering in Lebanese domestic politics through mediation?
- What are possible fields of cooperation between the two alliances?
- Which individuals take on the leadership role within their alliance?
- What is my cabinet member's role within his alliance? What are his major responsibilities and how does/can he influence the other cabinet members?
- How are my cabinet member's beliefs different from others in the same cabinet?