

**ASSESSMENT OF LEBANESE CELEBRITY POLITICIANS' SPEECHES FROM A
DRAMATURGY PERSPECTIVE**

A Thesis presented
to
the Faculty of Humanities
at Notre Dame University-Louaize

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Media Studies

by
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Abstract

This research paper explores the concept of celebrity politicians. Three case studies are selected according to the literature's definition and characterization. They are Lebanese basketballer Fadi El Khatib, Member of Parliament Gebran Bassil, and Prime Minister and deputy Saad El Hariri. Three qualitative methods are adopted to obtain insightful results: discourse analysis of the celebrity politicians' speeches during Lebanon's 17 October revolution, focus groups with young adults aged between 21 and 26, as well as four in-depth interviews with two of the celebrity politicians selected as cases, Khatib, and Bassil, along with media and communication experts. This study assumes that speeches delivered by celebrity politicians are planned performances. Therefore, the theories adopted are "Dramaturgy" and "Impression Management" developed by Erving Goffman. The findings uncovered the staging and scripting techniques, like nonverbal messages, gestures, and facial expressions employed by every speaker, as well as the impressions reflected in each. Results also showed that political affiliations and prejudices influence the perception of an impression and the interpretation of a message. Finally, the interviews further explained this phenomenon and the implementation of different Dramaturgy tactics in political discourses.

Keywords: Celebrity Politician, Political Celebrity, Dramaturgy, Impression Management, Lebanon, 17 October Revolution, Character Assassination, Fadi El Khatib, Gebran Bassil, Saad El Hariri

Chapter 1

Introduction

The phenomenon of public figures engaging in politics has been ‘trending’ for several years. For instance, the famous Hollywood actor Ronald Reagan became the 40th President of the United States (U.S.) in 1981 and Titi Camara, the former Guinean football player, was appointed Sports Minister of Guinea in 2010 (Daily Mail, 2010). Artists and athletes are not the only ones ‘playing the role’ of legislators, but politicians, as well, act sometimes like celebrities. This concept is known as celebrity politics.

However, jumping into the political realm, as expressed by comedian Kevin Hart, alienates some of a celebrity’s audience. That’s why, musician Billy Joel preferred staying out of politics. Singer Taylor Swift too, considered that she is unqualified “to tell people who to vote for” and artist Bruno Mars’ “political views definitely don’t take the spotlight”! (Jeffries, n.d.).

In Lebanon, many famous people are trying to play a political role. They have been delivering patriotic speeches, making political statements, and criticizing officials and political parties but none has ever explored these cases from an academic point of view.

As a revolution ignited in the evening of October the 17th due to a six-dollar-tax per month imposed by the government on WhatsApp’s voice call services, thousands of protestors alongside celebrities hit the streets and blocked roads in protest (Sullivan, 2019). The Lebanese basketball player Fadi El Khatib, who had claimed his willingness to become a sports minister in 2017, was one of the main public figures to join and support the uprising, address the protestors through speeches from Riad Al Solh square and uploading others on his official Instagram (IG) page. On the other hand, political figures dealt with the rebellion differently. For instance,

Member of Parliament (MP) and leader of the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) Gebran Bassil, recognized as a statesman of a great popular interest, gave only two speeches as he was majorly targeted by the demonstrators. Additionally, while the public was asking the cabinet chaired by Saad El Hariri to stepdown, the Prime Minister (PM), who “gained popularity within Lebanon following his infamous November 2017 Saudi sojourn¹” (Jacinto, 2018), delivered three discourses that created controversy.

This being the case, the aim of this study is to analyze Fadi El Khatib, Gebran Bassil, and Saad El Hariri’s speeches or ‘performances’ during Lebanon’s revolution from a dramaturgical and impression management perspective and uncover how people actually perceived them.

¹ On the 4th of November 2017, Hariri suddenly flew to Saudi Arabia where he unexpectedly announced his resignation on Saudi’s Al-Arabiya TV. Lebanese people and officials believed he was detained and forced to stepdown; thus, received mass outpouring of popular support. President Michel Aoun refused the PM’s vacating and insisted he return home and resign in person. On December 5, 2017, Hariri revoked his resignation, and one year later, this crisis has mostly been uncovered.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter reviews the scholarly literature discussing celebrity politics and the public figures who transitioned to politics. It first defines the concept of celebrity politics and political celebrity, second, it explores the path of some celebrities who jumpstarted political careers. Third, this part tackles the changes this phenomenon caused, and finally, gives an overview of the Lebanese celebrities who embarked on this field.

2.1 Definition of Celebrity Politics and Political Celebrities

Although the concern about celebrity politics has been the focus of researchers for around 20 years, Wheeler (2013) considered that the presence of fame in the political world “can be tracked back to antiquity;” however, this phenomenon evolved in the era of late modernity. Street (2012) presumed that the rise of a post-democratic system led to the emergence of celebrity politicians. This new order converted politics into a spectacle performed to an audience, “not of citizens, but of spectators.” The author linked the concept of celebrity politics to the notions of political personalization and spectacularization of politics. The first term is explicated by Rahat (2018) as the process in which the importance, or political weight of one official outweighs the importance of the entire political party. The spectacularization of politics, according to Miguel-Sáez de Urabain, Fernández de Arroyabe-Olaortua, Lazkano-Arrillaga (2017), is “the tendency towards the personalization of political information, which implies the creation of two opposing characters” dramatization [appealing to emotion rather than to reason], fragmentation [emphasizing events over processes] and normalization [encouraging the presentation of fast, radical and simplistic solutions that bring back “normality”]” of political

news, information or campaigns which turned politics into an entertaining show. Wheeler (2013) defined celebrity politics as “a set of techniques, rooted in the production of fame, that officeholders and notable citizens might employ for the purposes of aggregating and representing public opinion related to electoral democracy, policy advocacy, and international diplomacy.”

Street (2004) differentiated between two types of celebrities in politics:

- representatives who were celebrities and traded on their background to get elected such as actors Ronald Reagan and Arnold Schwarzenegger. They became president of the United States and governor of California, respectively. Wrestler Jesse Ventura falls under this category too as he became the governor of Minnesota;
- politicians who used certain opportunities to link entertainment with politics to improve their images or deliver their messages like the Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi when he sang Elvis Presley songs with actor Tom Cruise; They can additionally be politicians who adopted techniques or tactics to promote themselves. For example, U.S. President Bill Clinton: he played the saxophone on the Arsenio Hall Show ². Another example is the President of Croatia Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic. She became an unlikely star of the Russia 2018 World Cup as she cheered for her countrymen every time they took the field, from the regular fan stands (before being invited by the Russian President to the VIP seats) while wearing Croatia’s red and white jersey (Russia Today, 2018; Purtill, 2018). Grabar-Kitarovic even received 25% more news headlines than any other player

² The Arsenio Hall Show is an American talk show presented by the comedian Arsenio Hall. It was aired from 1989 till 1994 – 2013 till 2014.

in the Croatian team (Russia Today, 2018). According to Street (2003), political endorsement by famous people is a phenomenon similar to the fourth category of celebrity politics. He considered that not only are celebrities sponsoring candidates, but politicians too, are invited to endorse or attend sports, art, entertaining... events. For instance, Lebanese deputies and ministers showed their unity by partaking in a football friendly game titled “We Are One Team” to commemorate the 35th anniversary of the outbreak of the 1975 Lebanese Civil War on the 13th of April 2010 (The Telegraph, 2010). They likewise competed against each other, on the 12th of July 2018, in a football match to raise funds for Kunhadi’s³ road safety awareness campaign (Kunhadi, 2018).

Entertainers who were engaged in politics and defended certain causes but were not seeking any political office are said to be political celebrities too. Street (2004) defined them as the famous people that are not politicians by occupation but pronounce on politics and claim the right to represent people without acquiring elected office. To illustrate, the researcher referred to musicians like Madonna and Chris Martin, Hollywood stars like Bruce Willis and Tim Robbins, along with other celebrities, who signed a petition against the war in Iraq and used different platforms to shed light on this issue. Add to that the Lebanese actors/actresses such as Badih Abou Chakra, Carmen Lebbos, Nadine Nassib Njeim, etc., TV-host Wissam Breidy and many others who joined protestors on the streets during Lebanon’s 17 October Revolution to voice their anger at the country’s corrupt politicians and their failure to find solutions for the economic crisis and provide the citizens with basic services, while singers like Haifa Wehbe, Carole

³ Kunhadi is a Lebanese non-profit organization aimed at raising road safety awareness.

Semaha, and Nancy Ajram supported the demonstrators' demands on their social media pages (Houssari, 2019).

- Mazzoni & Ciaglia (2014) added a third type of celebrity politics. This type can be the official who “by no will of his own” became a celebrity because he/she has been “a target of gossip.” Even though the attractiveness and popularity of a public figure are important factors for a statesman's success (Street, 2003), this person needs to have policy skills and political discipline, or else, he/she will fail (Wheeler, 2013).

Miguel-Sáez de Urabain, et al. (2017) asserted that because of the spectacularization of politics, the news, policies, ideologies and government plans no longer seem to matter. What's dominant in this era is the politics of image: the candidate's charisma, personality, rhetorical skills and performance. This phenomenon justified the presence of spin doctors who, exactly like public relations practitioners in media, are responsible for managing the image, style, interviews, public appearances, public speaking skills, and social media pages of the legislators. Former U.S. president Barack Obama proved to be a celebrity politician of the highest order (Street, 2012; Kellner 2010). For instance, his campaign speeches were set to a hip hop beat, he appeared and danced in The Ellen DeGeneres' Show⁴, he acted alongside the actress Amy Poehler, in a sketch in which he was a guest at a Halloween party hosted by Hillary Clinton (played by Poehler), slow jammed the news with TV host Jimmy Fallon, documented moments by taking selfies and used social media to communicate with people. Street (2012) commented “it was almost impossible to tell where the show business ended and the politics began.” Researchers inferred that statesmen engage in performances in order to promote a good image, construct a distinctive

⁴The Ellen DeGeneres Show is an American daytime television variety comedy talk show hosted by Ellen DeGeneres. The program combines comedy, celebrity, musical guests, and human-interest stories.

political persona, attract 'audience', connect the public to their political values. They also aim at showing themselves as "[people] of qualities [...] with inflections towards what are perceived as the contours of popular sentiment or sectional value, for example, the youthful, the ordinary, the thoughtful, the cultured, the funny" (Corner, 2003). Through the "artistry of entertainment in politics" they try to prove that "they have the common touch and know how to relax" (Street, 2004). Additionally, Kellner (2010) claimed that "media spectacle" transform politicians into global celebrities; hence, allowing them to promote national interests, participate in celebrity diplomacy after their term in office and deal with global issues. Obama as an illustration, used his super celebrity to engage in public diplomacy for his agenda and even utilized the media as an instrument to push through his agenda. Street (2004) ascertained that "all politicians are celebrity politicians, only some are more convincing, more 'authentic' performers than others." Comparably, Street (2012) discussed how the United Kingdom's (UK) Labour Party adopted celebrity politics tactics to recover from their loss in the 1983 general election. The party co-sponsored the Red Wedge⁵ events and attended them to convey electoral messages and recruit supporters. The author quoted former Prime Minister of the UK and leader of the Labour Party Tony Blair's autobiography who wrote: "we need to reach the people listening to Duran Duran and Madonna" to describe his experience with Red Wedge. Street (2012) added that:

"what is revealing about this remark is its implicit assumption that 'reaching' potential supporters entailed understanding their cultural lives and adopting the methods of communication that marked those lives. Such thinking was indicative of the way in which the politics was understood and communicated" (p. 348).

⁵ Red Wedge was a British collective of musicians who tried to engage youngsters in UK's politics, especially the Labour Party, during the 1987 elections.

2.2 Celebrity Transition into Politics

Different studies have examined the phenomenon of celebrities running for or serving in political offices in an attempt to explore the reasons for this increased involvement and to analyze their path into the field. Reeves (2015) claimed that the commercialization of the media in addition to the changes in political communication which emphasized a person's style and traits rather than other issues have been the main reasons for the rise of famous people's involvement in politics. Additionally, celebrities have been seen as attractive, charismatic individuals making their entry into political affairs easier, especially the actors and actresses who are trained to use body language for greater influence. This clarifies Reagan's success in his televised debate: it was his physical attractiveness and expressiveness that played the most effective roles (Patterson et al., 1992, as cited in Coen, 2015). Drake & Higgins (2006) stated that media shifted its focus from idols of production to idols of consumption which gave film and sports stars the chance of being immensely covered on numerous outlets. This massive exposure guaranteed visibility and consequently, familiarity. This established Para-Social Interactions (PSIs), or the relationship that exists between a public figure and the media users, with celebrities aiming at becoming legislators thereby strengthening trust between the two parties (Coen, 2015). As a result, celebrities now have more power than they even became "a new 'power elite' ranked alongside the political elite" (Drake & Higgins, 2006). Street (2004) added that celebrities have the power to politically represent the views and values of the public since, unlike officials, they are in touch with the popular sentiment. This created an affective bond between media stars and their fans, a bond that Marshall (1997) considered as essential to have alongside political rationality. In fact, Jesse Ventura's media advisor described Ventura's success as governor as follows: "Jesse worked in movies, he's been a pro-wrestler, he understands pop

culture. He gets it. He knows what's going to play in public, and he's not afraid to take chances” (Street, 2004 as quoted in West & Orman, 2002).

In the same context, Ribke (2015) completed a research conducted by Miguel (2003) in which he used Bourdieu's Field Theory to investigate the results of the Brazilian parliamentary elections between 1986 and 1998 in order to understand the conditions for the transformation of media capital into electoral power. Ribke's analysis focused on the relations between public figures, the fields from which they came, and their performance in the political sphere. He picked five cases of Brazilian stars who became celebrity politicians at two different periods of time:

- 1982-1990: Agnaldo Timóteo (a singer) and Silvio Santos (an entrepreneur, media tycoon and television host)
- 2006 - 2012: Clodovil (a fashion designer and TV presenter), Tiririca (an actor, comedian, and singer-songwriter) and Romario (a footballer)

His choice of celebrity politicians was based on three criteria: the impact of their candidacy on the media and the public sphere in general, their success in the polls, and the status of the office for which they were running. The researcher also alluded to articles written by David Marshall who examined the relationship between “celebrity culture as it evolved from the entertainment industries, and the actual construction of political personalities”. He added that focusing on celebrity as a system while dismissing professional classification can explain how “fame and prestige accumulated in one area of the field of the entertainment-media industries could, under certain conditions, be transformed into influence and prestige in other fields of power.” Ribke's (2015) findings showed that the Brazilian voters supported and voted for the Brazilian celebrity candidates because they believed that they understood them better than anyone else especially

that they perceive celebrity politics “as a form of engagement with politics by citizens who have long felt left out of the political game.” Hence, they considered that these public figures are able to perfectly represent them regardless of their ideological convictions. Marchichal (2010) believed that well-known figures succeed when they deliver political speeches because “they not only seek to raise awareness about a political issue, but they also take part in meaning-making processes about their roles and responsibilities via those they encounter.” Ribke (2015) in addition to Drake & Higgins (2006) declared that celebrities tend to integrate their political activities with the work they used to do in their previous fields. Ribke inferred that celebrities find it hard to abandon their distinctive features which made them famous and abide by the rules of the political field. He furthered that celebrity politics was effective to enhance their position in the media but was a main cause for the “absence of any long-term political alliances with other political parties and activist groups.”

Drake & Higgins (2006) used the Performance Theory drawn from theatre and anthropology. “This perspective allows a greater understanding of how a largely mediated political culture can attract and engage with its audience”. The authors used it to analyze and compare the case of Bono; a lead singer in the rock group U2, as a political celebrity as well as that of actor Arnold Schwarzenegger as a celebrity politician. It is important to mention that, along with the Performance Theory, the writers referred to Goffman’s Framing Theory. They concluded that both celebrities made use of their fame: to position themselves outside of the political mainstream, albeit in slightly different terms: Bono tended to reaffirm to the audience that he is a regular man who is able to talk on their behalf since he understands them more than the distant politicians; whereas Schwarzenegger “deployed his immigrant status and avoided complex political arguments in order to show that he is a ‘regular guy’ just keen to ‘get things

moving', in opposition to a supposedly self-interested, traditional political elite." This is similarly reflected in their bodily performances, the way they are dressed, the way they use their voices, tone and pace. The authors asserted that Schwarzenegger was encouraged more than Bono to utilize his star persona in politics.

Celebrity conversion into politics is, as mentioned by Street (2004) "the product of the social and political context" in their countries. Doidge & de Almedia (2017) reported in their study that analyzed the political career of the former Brazilian football player, currently politician, Romario that the socio-political context of the country was a vital stimulant for the footballer's entry into politics. Like Schwarzenegger and Bono, Romario "traded on his football stardom in order to place himself in the political spotlight" and "managed to conquer a significant electorate using his personality." They claimed that Romario played a significant role in the Brazilian national team while shedding light on the importance of football in this country as it "provides the potent symbol of national prestige and sporting heroes that reflect the nation's inhabitants." Besides corruption in football which he focused on fighting, Romario's shifting from "sporting tyro to public servant could be traced to a precise event, which was the birth of his sixth child, Ivy" who was born with Down Syndrome, a genetic abnormality caused by a third copy for chromosome number 21. After spending time with families with the same case, the footballer realized that these people are not politically represented; therefore, he ran for elections and defended their rights (Franks, 2013). Doidge & de Almedia considered that Romario's success as a member of the parliament, knowing that he was the sixth most voted candidate for deputy in Rio de Janeiro, and as a senator was due to his excellent combination of football stardom, the politicized climate, and the effective tactics he used. He delivered a speech for an almost empty parliament, as it coincided with a national holiday, to give an impression that he is

“a full-time politician” and worthy of public support. Also, the pictures he uploaded on his website were taken from the front row which show the audience as if they were looking up to him. These images gave him a sense of importance and reflected his leadership qualities. The celebrity politician used metaphors of football, or “football language” to describe political points, in his discourses to communicate with the electorates. This showed the public that he is “the man of the people”. In short, the academics deduced that celebrity politicians attain their position through their sporting prowess and that the media help promote “the sporting hero as a celebrity, which sustains their image in the public sphere, and can bring financial rewards” (2017).

2.3 Changes in Political Culture

According to Kellner (2010), celebrity politics is advantageous and disadvantageous. In fact, the spectacularization of politics challenged statesmen and celebrities to adopt substance rather than performance and segregate symbolic politics from hard work; notwithstanding that celebrities’ partaking in politics bustled the implementation of important policies. Drake & Higgins (2006) attested that the mediated politics era forced politicians to address the public as mass audience and to appeal to them by campaigning effectively and maintaining a good image. They mentioned that politicians are increasingly seen on TV talk shows, for example, as they are aware that popular formats help them reach a wider audience and “circulate their image more effectively than any conventional political speech in parliament [... since] disaffected public has lost interest in formalized politics.” Furthermore, representatives had to adapt to the increased power of the famous people and value their endorsement in vital causes to the extent that candidates attempt to use them to garner media coverage when needed. That is because they currently believe that “just as in advertising, gaining the support of prominent celebrities’ functions as a means of promoting product (in this case a political agenda) and leveraging media

coverage.” As a result, the development of celebrity has contributed to a change in contemporary political democratic culture” (Drake & Higgins, 2006). The researchers referred to John Corner and Dick Pels’s ‘restyling of politics’ which can be divided into two positions:

- A pessimistic position: the restyling of politics
- An optimistic position: this stand adopts the Performance Theory and assumes that ‘performative restyling’ can be perceived as a new way to service a more inclusive political culture.

Reeves (2015) posited that mixing politics and celebrityhood altered the way the public participates in the political life: they are no longer motivated to participate by ideology, but for self-cultivation and enjoyment. Add to that, it is lowering the quality of representation and hindering the functioning of democracy. The researcher conducted a survey experiment on Japanese citizens and used the Decision Theory which studies how people make decisions from a normative and descriptive perspectives to examine whether famous amateurs affect voters’ preferences, and whether political celebrities lowered the quality of representation. He randomly assigned the participants into one of four groups that “corresponded to different combinations of two treatment conditions: presence or absence of a celebrity candidate, and small or large level of co-partisan competition.” All groups included the candidates’ names and pictures and they all had different educational and occupational backgrounds, noting that they were all fictional except for a single real celebrity who was “placed on one of the small ballots and on one of the large ballots. In place of that real celebrity on the other small and large ballots is a counterpart, that is, a candidate with identical background information but a different name and face.” Reeves asked partakers to vote for one while he informed them that “all candidates on the ballot were running with the nomination of the party they most support.” The results proved that there was

no significant difference in support for the celebrities and their counterparts on the small ballots, while on the large ballots the same celebrities outshined all opponents overwhelmingly, tripling the support rate of their counterpart” (Reeves, 2015). In summary, the entertainment industry has conquered the political one, caused some changes in the field, and altered the way voters appraise and elect candidates.

2.4 Lebanese Celebrities in Politics

Despite the lack of academic articles about celebrity politics in Lebanon, data about well-known figures who embarked into the political life can be gathered from several news websites. Ghassan Rahbani, a Lebanese producer, composer, and singer, has “thrown [his] hat in the ring for Lebanon’s legislative elections hoping to make a change in a country run by political dynasties” (Yazbeck, 2009). Knowing that Lebanon is a parliamentary democratic republic, the majority of the statesmen “hail from political dynasties”, and Rahbani was one of the very first candidates to enter the political life as an artist. During the 2009 parliamentary elections, Ghassan Rahbani was backed by the leader of the Free Patriotic Movement, currently president of the Republic, Michel Aoun, and “all [he] asked for was that [his] voice be heard.” Rahbani affirmed to *The Daily Star* (2009) newspaper that “he is more comfortable on stage than on the campaign trail” and that he does not own a suit; in fact, he bought his first tie for his nomination as a candidate! He released few songs that encouraged voters to practice their right and choose wisely, as well as to “take their money and vote against” those who bribe them, referring to candidates that were doling out money to win votes (Yazbeck, 2009). Nonetheless, Rahbani lost the elections and “decided not to repeat this experience ever again” (Lebanon24, 2019).

Director and actress Nadine Labaki along with the singer, songwriter and actor Ahmad Kaabour ran with Beirut Madinati list for the 2016 municipality elections; yet, did not succeed (Lebanon24, 2019). Labaki expressed in one of her interviews that “artists should get more involved in politics” since art can provide an alternative thinking that will change political perspectives and progress in the right way especially that these people “have a very important role to play in the future and how the world will evolve” (Arabian Business, 2019). After announcing her candidacy, the late Lebanese cartoonist and illustrator Stavro Jabra depicted *Abu El Abed*, a fictional Lebanese character that forms the centerpiece of jokes, urging Labaki ‘to stay busy with her art’ rather than engage in this operose job (كفلاخ كفننبا اې نېدان... وش كدب ي كبل ل هبا!). The award-winning director replied to this cartoon on her official Facebook page by stating the reasons that made her run for elections listing the various environmental, social, and epidemiological issues that the city is suffering from and casting light on the current municipality’s corruption. She concluded by inviting *Abu El Abed* to vote for Beirut Madinati and ensuring that “her and his Beirut” deserves engaging in this operose job.⁶

Paula Yacoubian, a Lebanese-Armenian former journalist and TV-host, ran and won a seat in the Lebanese parliamentary elections in 2018. The Member of Parliament said to Annahar newspaper that the trash crisis that the country has been suffering from since 2015 in addition to her certitude that the ruling elite would not fix the problem were the main motives that made her participate in the political life (Naoufal, 2018). Knowing that Yacoubian had supported Lebanon’s Future Movement leader Saad El Hariri and worked for many years at his privately-

⁶ Nadine Labaki’s full reply to Jabra’s cartoon on her official Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/NadineLabaki/photos/a.174812995926281.42367.132561083484806/1013615252046047/?type=3>

owned Future TV station, she ran as part of the civil society, non-sectarian Sabaa party (Enders, 2018). The legislator considered that the votes she had were dispersed from different ages and genders, but it was mainly the young people who are more rational and less sectarian as well as those who were fed up of the corrupt political class' false promises and wanted a change. Finally, Yacoubian declared that she was ready to help the civil society, give them a voice, and try to help her country as this “would be a very noble cause” (Naoufal, 2018; Enders, 2018).

Chapter 3

Theoretical Framework

This section introduces the theories and the concepts that this study adopted. They are the Dramaturgy and Impression Management theories. It also discusses the areas of a performance and the notions used to conduct the analysis.

3.1 Dramaturgy

This research project adopted the sociologist Erving Goffman's Dramaturgy or Dramaturgical Analysis developed in his 1959 book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Goffman considered "all human interaction as, in some ways, very much like a grand play" and that "the world is much more like a stage than we commonly realize" (Kivisto & Pittman, 2013). Hence, Dramaturgy is a sociological perspective that focuses on the way people conduct, perform, and present themselves in social situations, and sees social interaction as theatrical performances or that in any communication process, humans assume roles (Hendriks, et al., 2016; Sannicolas, 1997). Goffman's work, according to Kivisto & Pittman (2013), was inspired by Shakespeare's words "all the world is a theater" and his lines in *As You Like It*: "all the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players", as well as from Kenneth Burke's 1945 Dramatism. In his book, Goffman (1956) used the term performance "to refer to all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers." He denoted that when a person performs a part, he/she implicitly requests the audience to form a particular impression about him/her according to what this individual is showing and what had been observed by the viewers: "they are asked to believe that the character they see actually possesses

the attributes he appears to possess, that the task he performs will have the consequences that are implicitly claimed for it.”

Several studies used dramaturgical analysis to assess the way people create meaning by staging, scripting and how they use the setting. Hendriks, et al. (2016) stated that “Dramaturgy offers insights for empirical studies of social media because it is sensitive to the way actors stage and script their performances in relation and in response to prevailing performances.” This approach helped researchers analyze the script used, and the way multimedia, visuals, graphics, and other props are utilized to shape the meaning and deliver the message. Yet, Dramaturgy has been applied to sociological cases not to the media or the political fields.

3.2 Regions in a Performance

Goffman (1956) mentioned that every play requires performing in different regions, “illustrated everywhere in our society,” which he referred to as the front and the back. The front region is the place where the performance takes place and it usually functions in a fixed fashion in order to successfully define the situation for the viewers. “Front, then, is the expressive equipment of a standard kind intentionally or unwittingly employed by the individual during his performance” (Goffman, 1956). The front includes the setting or the place which consists of all the décor, background items, and props that can help the actor perform his/her role. Another part of the front involves the person’s sex, age, racial characteristics, appearance, and clothing. To add, the nonverbal communication plays a vital role in the front region. The performer can convey the message through his/her posture, facial expressions, gestures, and undoubtedly the speech and the facts presented and his/her verbal message. Goffman (1959) claimed that while one’s racial characteristics or sex are relatively fixed, the nonverbal vehicles are mobile and

transitory, and can vary from one performance to the other. The front region can also be divided into two stimuli: the appearance; which informs the audience about the actor's social status for example, and manner, that "warns us of the interaction role the performer will expect to play in the on-coming situation." The theorist assumed that performers foster the impression that they had, the ideal motives and qualifications to acquire this role. Sometimes, "a performance will involve only one focus of visual attention on the part of performer and audience" like delivering and listening to a political speech. The goal of every performance is impression management. This can happen when the actor enters the presence of the others, gather necessary information about them, and brings into play these data that were already possessed in order to generate the desired response from the public. This tactic interests the audience in the speaker's conception of self, attitude towards the people, credibility, and competence.

The second region is the back region or the backstage. It is where actors are offstage and "where suppressed facts make an appearance" and illusions or impressions are constructed. It is defined as "a place relative to a given performance, where the impression fostered by the performance is knowingly contradicted as a matter of course (Goffman, 1956). Kivisto & Pittman (2013) clarified that the backstage is used: to serve as a storing ground for props that the audience should not see on the front stage, hence, maintain the proper atmosphere in the front region, and allow performers to do necessary discussions and adjustments. At last, using the back region is vital since it helps "maintaining the proper persona or atmosphere on the front stage" (Kivisto & Pittman, 2013).

3.3 Concepts of the Theory

This study used a few concepts provided by Goffman, but for the purpose of this research, some of the notions were added and removed accordingly.

A more developed definition of scripting was given by Kivisto & Pittman (2013) who considered that this concept is the “most important means of getting an audience understand a role” and “often the most important aspect of an actor’s role.” Script is vital for interpersonal communication as well. They argued that although most of people’s conversations are improvisational, some parts remain well-scripted.

In this study, the six speeches of the three celebrity politicians’ under-study, Fadi El Khatib, Gebran Bassil, Saad El Hariri, were regarded as scripts.

The key narratives of every discourse delivered were:

- Introduction: it consists of the theme or the central idea of the script and the hook that gets people’s attention.
- Plot: the actual story or issue around which the entire speech is based.
- Message or point of view of the speaker: the opinions, feelings, beliefs... of the person involved in a situation.
- Word choice: the selection of words that can help increase the impact on the viewers.
- Conclusion: the way the speaker ends the speech; whether by calling for action, using a quote, suggesting solutions...
- Audience for whom the speech is scripted.

Staging is considered “the other major tool the actor can employ to control audience reaction” (Kivisto & Pittman, 2013). The stage, particularly the front region, and the setting are able to provide the audience with the context of the performance. Kivisto & Pittman mentioned that the stage and setting can also create the context of social interaction. When these elements are used skillfully, they can guarantee the performer that he/she will be able to convince the viewers to adopt his/her perception of reality. That is especially true since these tools are able to manipulate and control the understanding of reality (2013). Staging in this thesis consists the setting; the décor and props, if any, appearance and clothing, the attitude and the voice of the speakers.

Dramaturgical analysis has thus been used to assess how the Lebanese basketball player Fadi El Khatib, MP Gebran Bassil, and PM Saad El Hariri presented themselves during the revolution and how they scripted, staged and ‘performed’ their speeches.

3.4 Impression Management

The Impression Management theory is one of the well-known theories in identity performances and was founded by Erving Goffman too. Impression Management is a process in which individuals attempt to influence how others perceive them or the impressions that these others form of them (Leary, 2001; Gwal, 2015). Goffman presented Impression Management dramaturgically. The sociologist suggested that people construct the impression they want to convey in the backstage, then, they present themselves based on their audience in the front stage (Kienzle, 2017). Jones & Pittman (1982) examined the phenomenon of impression management, which they referred to as self-presentation. They defined the term as “an actor's shaping of his or her responses to create an impression that is for one reason or another desired by the actor.”

According to Leary (2001), “people are more motivated to control how others perceive them when they believe that their public images are relevant to the attainment of desired goals.” Gwal (2015), too, stated that individuals who successfully perform impression management gain important advantages in various situations. In point of fact, Jones & Pittman (1982) affirmed that impression management strategies can protect and maintain one’s power in a certain field and has an impact on the surrounding’s culture and performance. Emanating an impression depends on different factors like the norms and values of the viewers and/or listeners, the role a person occupies, his/her self-perception along with his/her desired and undesired self, how he/she wishes to be perceived, etc.

Jones & Pittman (1982) identified five self-presentational styles that are:

- self-promotion; when a person tries to be viewed as competent,
- ingratiation; or when one tries to be viewed as friendly and nice,
- exemplification; when one tries to be viewed as morally exemplary,
- intimidation; it is when a person tries to be perceived as threatening,
- supplication; which is when a person tries to be viewed as helpless and weak.

In accordance with these styles, Bolino & Turnley (1999) developed an Impression Management Styles (IMS) scale to measure their respondents’ impression management behavior by analyzing their statements. The researchers' response format consisted of a five-point Likert-type scale that reflects the participants’ frequency of behaving in a particular manner.

Research on Impression Management has mainly been done on topics related to psychology.

Howbeit, Leary (2001) mentioned that some typical studies have been applied on leadership and negotiations. Accordingly, this research paper adopted the Impression Management theory to measure Khatib, Bassil and Hariri’s impression management behavior particularly by evaluating

their diction. As mentioned previously, the orators' choice of words reveals their self-conception, credibility and competence.

3.5 Research Questions (RQ)

- RQ1: What are the key performance strategies that Khatib, Bassil and Hariri adopted in their speeches?
- RQ2: What are the impressions that each speaker conveyed during his speech?
- RQ3: What objectives, inclinations, and strategies does each of the three celebrity politicians have?
- RQ4: Do branding and performance strategies vary between the three types of celebrity politicians?
- RQ5: Do Lebanese youths think that celebrity politicians were able, during the Lebanese revolution, to promote themselves and their desired impression successfully?
- RQ6: Does the presence of the celebrity politician affect people's perception and assessment of an impression?

Chapter 4

Research Methodology

This chapter explains the research design used in this thesis. It describes the methods, concepts and variables adopted along with the sample and tools chosen for data analysis.

4.1 Research Method

To gather insightful results, this study implemented three qualitative research methods namely: discourse analysis, in-depth-interviews and focus groups. DeFranzo (2011) mentioned that qualitative methods are applied to understand reasons and motivations, to uncover trends in thoughts and opinions and to provide insights into the problem. According to Learn Higher (2008), “qualitative data provides a rich, detailed picture to be built up about why people act in certain ways”. This method usually allows for comparison of the findings and looking for consistencies, differences, and patterns. Scilicet, this would be convenient in bringing explanations about celebrity politicians and politicized celebrities, their similar or different target, scheme and the audiences’ reactions. In general, investigating this topic from a performative and impression management lens requires utilizing qualitative approaches to obtain focused explanations, comprehensive data, descriptions, and inferences to answer the research questions.

4.2 Discourse Analysis Sample

A nonprobability purposive sample of Fadi El Khatib, Gebran Bassil and Saad El Hariri’s speeches delivered during the Lebanese revolution were analyzed.

The reasons why Khatib was chosen as the political celebrity in this study was because the athlete has been recognized as “one of the most notable local players” (Sharif, 2017), “one of the top five players in Lebanon” (Araton, 2002), “perhaps the most iconic Lebanese player in history, and [...] certainly a legend of sorts for Asian basketball fans everywhere” (FIBA, 2016). He was also named among the International Basketball Federation (FIBA) Asia Cup 2017 All-Star Five players (FIBA, 2017). The athlete’s prowess earned him the nickname *Lebanese Tiger* that reflected “the greatness and glory of the Lebanese basketball” (Abyad Aswad, 2018) especially that he has “shone for his country in international basketball for a long, long time” (FIBA, 2017). The former captain of the Lebanese National Team (NT) helped his squad qualify to several championships like the FIBA World Cup, FIBA Asia, and the West Asian Basketball Championship (WABA) (FIBA, 2016). The *Tiger* played for many regional and international leagues too. For instance, he joined Syria’s Ittihad Al Halabi team in 2004-2005, Ukraine’s Cherkaski Mavpy in 2007-2008, China’s Foshan Long Lions in 2014, and Fujian Guanzhou in 2015 (Abboud, 2015) and was “miles away from joining the National Basketball Association (NBA) in 2003” (Abyad Aswad, 2018). Lastly, he has earned international recognition particularly when Tim Grover, the personal trainer of the American former basketball player Michael Jordan, invited Khatib to do weightlifting and train alongside Jordan, and other professional players like Michael Finley, Ray Allen, Charles Oakley. Additionally, Jordan, himself, was quoted in the New York Times saying that he “believes Lebanon’s premiere player should be in the NBA” (Boyce, 2015). In an interview with Lebanon’s Al Jaras magazine in 2017, the basketball professional expressed his desire of becoming a Youth and Sports Minister primarily because people who are holding this position “lack the administrative, political, and ministerial qualifications” (Al Jaras, 2017). Khatib elaborated that he has a detailed plan to serve

the youngsters and sports. In 2018, Fadi El Khatib joined the Free Patriotic Movement leader Gebran Bassil in a televised episode called *قتلج ناريج عم* ahead of May 6th parliamentary elections. This appearance, in addition to the selfie joining him and Bassil that he posted on IG, stimulated interest among social media users on whether the FPM will nominate Khatib as a minister (Lebanon Debate, 2018). On May 11, 2018, the latter activated a Twitter account and shared some local and regional political tweets. A couple of days after the emergence of the Lebanese revolution, 49.14% of the voters on “mysay”, an online poll application, nominated Fadi El Khatib to become a sports minister in the new technocratic cabinet [refer to Appendix A].

The two speeches delivered by Khatib that were selected for the analysis were:

- A video he filmed in Saudi Arabia and posted on his Instagram official page on the 18th of October 2019 in which he promised that he will be joining the revolution the moment he arrives to Beirut. [Refer to the full speech in Appendix B]
- A three-minute-thirty-second-part of his interview with Ghayyath Dibra’s *Inside Game*⁷ which was aired in 2018 yet Khatib reposted it on IG on 18 October 2019. [Refer to the full speech in Appendix C]

As for Gebran Bassil, he was considered a celebrity politician in this study because Mazzoni & Ciaglia’s definition is applicable to him. His political career began in the late 1990s as a political activist for Michel Aoun’s⁸ movement to oppose Syrian forces occupying Lebanon.

⁷Inside Game is a sports show aired on LBCI and hosted by Ghayyath Dibra. It covers news related to local, regional and international sport events.

⁸ Michel Aoun was the commander of the Lebanese Army (1984–1988). In 1988, he was appointed Prime Minister, and in 2016, he was elected President. He centered his efforts on reasserting the dominance of the army over the country, which was overrun by both militias and foreign troops. Aoun was a leading figure in the movement to end the Syrian occupation of Lebanon as he declared the War of Liberation against them in 1989 (Zeidan, 2020).

In 2005, following the withdrawal of the Syrians, Aoun officially established the Free Patriotic Movement, won 21 seats in the parliament; wherefore, became the second biggest parliamentary bloc. Nonetheless, Bassil failed to win a seat in his hometown Batroun in 2005 and 2009 elections (Hilton, 2019; Azhari, 2020). In 2018, the FPM became the largest bloc in the parliament as the party won 29 MPs and Bassil was able to win a seat in Batroun as he received 12,269 votes in North Lebanon 3 district, according to Atallah & Zoughaib (2019). He served as a Minister of Telecommunications, Minister of Energy and Water, and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants.

Although Gebran Bassil “is one of the newer politicians on the bloc, having come to power after the country’s 15-year civil war” (Azhari, 2020), many see him as a controversial figure. Hence, he has been “a target of gossip” for many years thus a political celebrity. The criticisms that Bassil has received mainly revolve around him being the son-in-law of President Michel Aoun, and a provocative, racist and corrupt politician. To illustrate, many consider that Bassil rose to power, whether as a minister or leader of the FPM, through nepotism. Knowing that this is not unusual in Lebanon where the majority of politicians inherited their posts, some Lebanese accuse Gebran Bassil of becoming Minister of Telecommunications in 2009 after being endorsed by Aoun (Hilton, 2019). Others claim that while many FPM members favored MP Alain Aoun, Michel Aoun himself wanted Bassil to become the leader of the Free Patriotic Movement following his ascendancy to the Presidency. Azhari (2020) considered that “Aoun had handed Bassil the party’s reins in 2015 over fears that leadership elections could sow division.” While the literature mentioned that the parliamentarian is seen as provocative, justifications to prove this argument remain unavailable. Only Assaf (2019) quoted FPM’s Deputy Edy Maalouf acknowledging: “Gebran Bassil may have a peculiar character that might not to be appreciated

by everyone." Bassil is considered racist mainly because of his speeches against the Syrian refugees (who account for 1.5 million according to the Human Rights Watch, whereas Lebanese officials aver that "the number is much higher" according to Azhari, 2019), and Palestinian refugees (475,075 registered refugees as per the UNRWA's records in December 2019). For instance, he has frequently called for the decent deportation of the refugees and considered them a burden on the country. He gave different statements regarding this issue too. For example, he said: "Lebanon will no longer tolerate refugees and they must be returned to their countries", during a conference with the US Secretary of State. He also said: "it is not fair to accept what happened with the Syrian refugees as what happened with the Palestinians, we can still work towards the return of the displaced people to their land safely with their dignity and to save Syria for them, as well as our Lebanon for us..." during his visit to Australia in 2017, etc. (Sky Line International, 2019). The leader of the FPM has been seen as a corrupt politician; yet, no one has been able to provide evidence for this allegation. Bassil filed different lawsuits against those who spread false news about his wealth or corruption accusations. For instance, in 2015, TV host Joe Maalouf ran a report that discussed the properties acquired by Bassil during his political career, and "accused him of corruption, exploiting his position and collecting a huge alleged wealth". Four years later, the Mount Lebanon Court of Publications exculpated the MP and abided Maalouf to compensate with an amount of ten million Lebanese pounds (LBC International, 2019). Similarly, MP Paula Yacoubian came under fire when she indicted Gebran Bassil for graft claims alluding to his "involvement in contracting Karadeniz-owned power barges to reduce Lebanon's electricity deficit" (Boswall, 2019). Former Minister of Energy "asked his lawyer to respond to the lies that were made by Yacoubian ... during which she directed baseless, fabricated accusations against [him] that she knows he is innocent of" (according to Bassil's

media office statement, cited in Boswall, 2019). In January 2020, the Civil Court of Cassation dismissed the graft claim request submitted by Yacoubian (Al Kalima Online, 2020). Also, when several Lebanese media outlets reported that Bassil bought the private plane of banker, businessman and former minister Adnan Kassar for \$21 million, the latter denied the news and said: “this report is totally baseless” (The Daily Star, 2011).

When the uprising against, supposedly, “نالك ينعونك” (translated to: “all of them means all of them”) broke out in 2019, Gebran Bassil “has clearly been the main target” (Assaf, 2019) and “emerged as the target of a popular profane chant” (Hilton, 2019). In fact, “crude chants were aimed at Bassil’s mother (Azhari, 2020) in addition to being “booed at protests across the country [... and] the subject of insults and crude humor in many videos circulated on social media” (Assaf, 2019). The protestors justified their insults by reiterating the same accusations that have been mentioned previously in this study. On the other hand, supporters of the Free Patriotic Movement, like MP Mario Aoun, deemed that “Bassil was being “targeted because of his successes” (Azhari, 2020). Charbel Nahhas, who was a two-time FPM minister but broke away from the party in 2012 admitted too that “Bassil had been troubled by the impression among his peers that he was in his position because of nepotism [... which] translated into an overbearing approach to politics that led Bassil into chronic conflicts with other parties.” Nahhas added that Gebran Bassil is “a hyperactive person. He works on all the files and learns, which is a rare thing to find among politicians in Lebanon [... and] because he was so hyperactive, he would easily antagonize even those who are with him” (Azhari, 2020). Paradoxically, Saad El

Hariri, who is currently one of the main opponents of Bassil, affirmed in an interview⁹ with Dima Sadek's *ن بول؟* political talk show in 2018 that “Gebran is the hardest-working man”.

With that being said, Bassil still enjoys support from various Lebanese. Numerically, and besides heading the biggest party in the parliament, data showed that there are more than 32,000 FPM members, up to October 2018 (Al Joumhouria, 2018). To add, the party's Vice President for Management Affairs Martine Najem Kteily reported in 2020 that the number of affiliates is currently increasing (Lebanon Files, 2020).

The researcher examined two speeches delivered by Gebran Bassil post the eruption of the protests:

- The first discourse is the one he delivered on 18/10/2019 when he addressed the Lebanese from Baabda Palace after meeting President Aoun. [Refer to the full speech in Appendix D]
- The second is that of the 3rd of November when he gave a speech also from Baabda in front of regime proponents who took part in a rally in support of President Aoun. [Refer to the full speech in Appendix E]

Saad El Hariri is deemed as a celebrity politician too for different reasons. Hariri, leader of the Future Movement, was thrust onto the political stage in 2005 after the assassination of his father Rafik while serving as prime minister (France 24, 2019). The Premier and deputy received 20,751 votes in 2018's parliamentary elections, and his “Future Movement- and Progressive Socialist Party-backed list ‘Future for Beirut’ settled for six seats” in Beirut 2 district (Atallah & Zoughaib, 2019). Hariri is perceived as a celebrity particularly because of the plain folks tactics,

⁹ *ن بول؟* - Saad El Hariri's episode URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6vlu8TuyEy0>

or the techniques used to portray a politician as ordinary as any other citizen, he practiced. In fact, the PM is known for his social media presence and, notably, for his selfies, posing with world leaders and regular citizens, that he even launched an application to let people share their selfies with him online. Hariri wrote in a tweet “liked more than 500 times”: “download the application to share the selfies that brought us together” (Arab News, 2018). Similar to Arab News which mentioned that the launching of the application “came at a peak time” one week before the parliamentary elections, Jacinto (2018) questioned whether Hariri’s ‘selfie diplomacy’ will “boost his chances in Lebanon’s upcoming election” and The Daily Star (2018) assumed that “the king of selfies” introduced the app “to woo young Lebanese on social media.” Furthermore, the statesman surprised the Lebanese on New Year’s Eve by joining the crowd at Nejme Square and dancing next to the DJ (National News Agency, 2019) in an attempt to promote himself as a regular man who parties like anyone else on New Year’s. To add, Hariri’s sudden resignation from Saudi Arabia on November 4, 2017 received lots of local and international attention. For instance, the majority of the Lebanese population reacted with mass suspicion, sided Hariri and urged that he comes back. President Aoun, too, refused the resignation, and President of France Emmanuel Macron decided to “insert himself into this crisis” to release the detainee (Timsit, 2017).

The researcher analyzed the following two discourses given by Hariri:

- On the 18th of October, he promised the Lebanese some sweeping economic reforms and gave his cabinet a 72-hour ultimatum to come up with a convincing plan. [Refer to the full speech in Appendix F]
- On 29 October 2019, he delivered a speech in which he announced his resignation and that of his cabinet. [Refer to the full speech in Appendix G]

Based on these choices, the revolutions' discourses delivered between 17 October and 3 November 2019 were selected since it is during this time that Lebanon was witnessing the peak of the massive demonstrations. This allowed the researcher to compare the celebrity politicians' various 'performances' during one critical, nationwide situation.

4.3 Research Tools

First, to analyze the speeches according to the Dramaturgy and Impression Management theories, the researcher conducted a textual analysis in which the staging and scripting elements were evaluated. Discourse analysis is a qualitative method concerned with the way language is used, how, why, and when. This technique focuses in particular on three aspects of language:

- The form and the content of the language;
- The ways people use language to communicate ideas and beliefs;
- Institutional and organizational factors that might shape the way the language is used (Wimmer & Dominick, 2014).

Textual analysis is beneficial as it allows researchers to explicitly understand a situation or subject under study, uncover deeply held attitudes and perception, and communicate practices that might not be detected by other methods (Wimmer & Dominick, 2014).

The researcher applied this method to examine research questions 1 and 2 based on the Dramaturgy concepts and Impression Management styles introduced previously. This method was basically useful in scrutinizing the scripting part mentioned in the theory. That is to say, investigating the verbal messages conveyed and spotting the frequency of occurrence of certain terms and/or sentences in order to deduce the impression that the speakers were trying to convey.

Second, in an attempt to probe this phenomenon and the three celebrity politicians' objectives, perceptions and strategies, interviews with Fadi El Khatib, and MP Gebran Bassil were conducted. This was essential particularly that the interviewer was able to collect supplementary data about the interviewees' personal characteristics and nonverbal cues which were of great value in interpreting the results. For an in-depth analysis from a political and media standpoint, the researcher interviewed two political communication specialists, Dr. Joseph Ajami, PhD. in mass communication, and Ghadi Francis, journalist and political campaigns specialist, to thoroughly look into celebrity politics and politicians, purposes, merits, scripting and staging techniques, and impact on public opinion. These interviews were made to answer RQ1, RQ3, and RQ4. Principally, this procedure involves asking questions to converse with an interviewee(s) with an aim of collecting in-depth data regarding a subject. Interviews are advantageous as they are the "most flexible means of obtaining information because the face-to-face situation lends itself easily to questioning in greater depth and detail" (Wimmer & Dominick, 2014). It is also easier to gather additional information either because one can simply observe answers during the interview, or due to the developed rapport which helps the interviewee elicit replies to sensitive questions that would remain unanswered when using other methods (Wimmer & Dominick, 2014). In this study, interviews were helpful since they yielded a high percentage of responses in comparison with other techniques. They also guaranteed that the gathered information would be more accurate especially that the interviewer and the interviewees were present to clear-up erroneous questions and/or answers. Finally, interviews were more adaptable because they allowed for posing further questions when needed and make on-spot adjustments.

Third, to uncover the stances, feelings, and reactions towards the chosen celebrity politicians, the researcher organized two focus groups. According to Wimmer & Dominick (2014), the focus group “is a research strategy for understanding people’s attitudes and behavior” that requires interviewing 6 to 10 individuals simultaneously in a relatively unstructured discussion. The participants consisted of Lebanese politically affiliated as well as non-partisan youths in the 21-26 age range because 21 is the voting age in Lebanon. Partakers in focus group 1 were requested to read the discourse transcripts. Concomitantly, the researcher removed the names of the speakers as well as any clue that might hint at the spokespeople. Then, they engaged in a conversation, which included 12 questions regarding their views towards political celebrities, as well as every ‘anonymous speaker’ and his speech. The aim of this strategy was to examine if the celebrity politician’s presence affects the impression he is trying to manage and whether people’s assessment of a performance and their perception of the impression conveyed can be biased when the speaker is known (RQ6). Participants in focus group 2 were given the exact same speeches as that of focus group 1 with only one difference; the names of the speakers were included. The moderator posed the same questions as that of focus group 1 and led a typical discussion. Thereof, generating rich understanding of the youths’ experiences and opinions apropos this phenomenon and check whether the ‘known celebrity politicians’ succeeded in delivering their desired impressions to their supporters and opponents (RQ5). This method usually provides well-founded ideas that can trigger deeper investigations using other techniques. Besides, focus groups offer less inhibited and more complete responses, and, like interviews, many information can be detected by noting facial expressions (Wimmer & Dominick, 2014). The pro of applying this tool was the ability to unlock new insights because, in the first place, it allows for greater interaction. In the second place, the moderator benefitted from the flexibility

of this technique hence was more in-control as in probing the participants for more detailed answers. This secured explicit results. Co-creation was another focus group advantage. Truly, since this method requires engagement and discussion, the respondents were able to elaborate on the others' ideas which aided in comparing and contrasting the sentiments.

Chapter 5

Data Collection and Analysis

This section presents the findings in regards to the textual analysis of the six speeches, the two focus groups, and the interviews. All gathered information are then interpreted, analyzed, and compared based on the theory's concepts and literature review to generate answers for the research questions.

5.1 Discourse Analysis

a. Fadi El Khatib Speeches

On the 18th of October 2019, Khatib, who happened to be in Saudi Arabia uploaded a three-minute video expressing how he wishes to be part of the revolution. Then, he informed the viewers, mainly his IG followers or users, that as soon as he comes back to Lebanon, he will join them in Beirut while stating his reasons.

In details, his hook consisted of a very short desideration, or a keen desire to take part in the protests as he declared: "اي يهيب وش يلابع نوك دوجوم لّ ه نك عم اي تحن يهيب" (translated to: Oh how I desire to be with you right now!). He added that once he arrives to Lebanon, the first thing that he will do no matter what obstacles he will face is to participate in "this revolution that makes one's heart feel full" (انّا اركب نوكب لص او ليه الشرا ع اسلا 11 حبصلا لوأو قودوعسلا نم قلاغش اهلما ع وه لبئ قره اظملا ع لزان) "ام ركند عيش ي أب: راطم حوننم راطم شم، حوننم يدب يشم! يدب رج طنشلا يناؤرنه شم ي عم. يالا قزرا ان ي عم يدبه. Translated to: tomorrow, hopefully, I will arrive from Saudi Arabia at 11:00 a.m. and the first thing that I will do even before thinking of anything else is to join the protests

whether the airport is open or not, I even won't care if I'll have to walk and carry my bags. What I care about is this revolution that makes one's heart feel full).

As for the plot, the speaker explained first why he considers the uprising not only astounding but a must while using expressions that reflect contempt such as the repetition of the word “against those” or “those” as an ambiguous reference to the corrupt politicians or anyone who made the Lebanese people suffer: "قروئلا ه يلا دض يلو ه يلا لا ب ، قمارك دض يلو ه يلا ، ازوعوج دض يلو ه يلا ، ازومرح " (translated to: This revolution against those who have no dignity, against those who made us hungry, against those who deprived us, those who burnt and destroyed our country, against those who ruined all of the good things in Lebanon). By using the pronoun “you”, Khatib aimed at addressing the politicians in an attempt to describe them as failures or incompetents: “You’re still not ashamed of not finding solutions, radical solution...”; “You know we are not sheep nor babies...”; “...all the Lebanese people wherever they go make Lebanon proud, except you”, etc. Add to the above, he justified his accusations by explaining that the politicians ruined tourism and deprived the citizens from their basic needs like water, electricity, hospitalization, employment, etc. He stated that Lebanon is bankrupt and held them responsible for it when he said: “you stole and smuggled everything into foreign accounts”; “you left nothing for the Lebanese people. You stole everything and you couldn’t care less...” Khatib did a comparison between the Lebanese citizens, including the celebrities, and the political figures in order to further abhor them. Verbatim, "انحن انعبر يلا هس! هس او يظو نازلا اي لاب فرش. انحن انعبر يلا هس نازلا: يلا او ، نيلملاو ، نيض ابرلاو ، نينانلا ونا نازلا ام او تلمع ونا يش نينانلاو ، اونغب نبو ام او حورب هس او غريب نازلا ل ونا او يظو و نيرمد او يظو انمارك انونلاخو انطرح قحسم ريغل" (translated to: “We are the ones who made Lebanon proud, you did nothing; you disgraced us you honorless people. We are the ones who made Lebanon proud; we the artists, the athletes, the

actors, the singers, all the Lebanese people wherever they go they make Lebanon proud, except you. You destroyed it and you undignified and humiliated us”). Besides attacking and inculcating leaders, the athlete threatened the latter by promising that “in this revolution, we will show you [the politicians] that we Lebanese people do have a dignity, and that we will be able to hold you accountable and put you in jail and that we will, hopefully, see you one day being punished just like what happened with the Ukrainian Minister of Finance along with other politicians.” To emphasize that this revolution is the ‘ultimate savior’ which will allow the Lebanese people to “live decently in a decent country”, he, first, reiterated the expression “we will keep on demanding to...” several times. Second, Khatib suggested a solution which is the urge of having an equitable judicial system that will be able to save the country from its unqualified statesmen: "مزلّ نوكيف ناضق مع مكطحت قح لانو قسوبحل اباك عل طرلّ وود نم تاباسح قلودلا: نپو " (translated to: We need to have judges that will throw you in jail and monitor every dollar smuggled outside of the government’s accounts: where did it go and to whom).

In his conclusion, Fadi El Khatib vindicated himself by clarifying that he is not “putting the blame on a specific political leader”; hence “don’t assume that I am speaking against a politician in particular.” He ended by recapitulating his main demand: "انحن انب دلبل!" (translated to: We want a country!), while using a kind of courtship attempting to win his argument: “Had you given us a decent country, we wouldn’t have had any problem with you, but you, instead, threw us in a trashcan.”

Fundamentally, Khatib, through his message and word choice, was able to reflect four impression management styles which are self-promotion, ingratiation, exemplification, and intimidation.

When analyzing the ‘performance’ from a staging perspective, one can notice that Fadi El Khatib did not use any of the staging props, visuals, or sound bites. The video he posted was self-shot using his phone’s front camera. Only a bit of his black shirt was visible in addition to part of a painting affixed on the wall.



Figure 1 - Khatib in Saudi Arabia using the front camera to film his speech

His voice indicated regret at first particularly when he wished to join the protestors. Later, it changed to hostility, annoyance, and disgust as he was talking to the officials. His facial expressions showed sadness, anger and contempt. Although his video was entirely a close-up shot, the basketballer often used his body language, namely pointing his finger. This gesture was utilized, first, to emphasize his argument when he said: “but in this revolution, we will show you that we Lebanese people do have a dignity...”. It indicated accusation too as if he literally ‘pointed the finger of blame’ at the politicians. For instance, he claimed: “you destroyed it and you undignified and humiliated us”, “you know we are not sheep”, etc. It finally showed aggressiveness and wrath throughout his entire speech.

The second speech under-study was given by Fadi El Khatib one-year prior the demonstrations during a televised interview with Ghayyath Dibra. But, it was chosen for this research paper because the speaker reposted it on his official Instagram page one day post the beginning of the revolution. His message and point of view suggest that this video has been reposted not only because it remained suitable a year later, but because it proves that his disquisition and predictions were accurate and precise. Verily, the sportsman himself wrote as a caption under this IG post: “... I said this a year ago and look where we are now. Truth said.” Khatib’s message came about as a reaction for the criticism targeted against the Lebanese singer Ragheb Alama when he released the song "راط دلبلالا" (translated to: The Country ‘*Flew Away*’) in 2018 to depict the deteriorating situation in the country. In his introduction, the interviewee illuminated that the topic he is about to tackle is ‘out of subject’ but it’s necessary since it reflects anger and pain: "... يدب قرطنا ارب عوضومل يوش قشلا يض ابرلا. يه نكدب اهوربندع، ةخرص نكدب " (translated to: ... I want to talk about a topic that is not related to sports. You can consider it rage; you can consider it coming out of pain). Then, he elucidated that Alama’s song

was not directed at any politician but was made to showcase the agony and challenges of the Lebanese people, and to compare the so-called “Switzerland of the Middle East¹⁰” with the ‘current Lebanon’. To elaborate on that idea, he averred: “we currently have a country that is being eroded by garbage, eroded by diseases. Hey politicians and responsables: we currently have the highest cancer rate in the world and today our passport is worthless.”

The plot depended largely on emotional appeal especially that he addressed his father who previously asked him not talk about this subject; yet he did. He told him: “Forgive me dad. But I want to tell you that it’s not okay to see your children and their children getting sick, losing their own country, thinking about emigration, about leaving Lebanon...”. After that, he raised different rhetorical questions like: “why should we do that? Can the country of culture, country of civilizations, and the country of tourism be dismissed? Because of what?” etc. In the second part of the plot, Khatib made use of the logical appeal to support his arguments and present his demands: "انذب سان انمكحت انيطعن مومينولما. انذب سان ان ردوت فرعون انبه سحن ونا بعشلا ينانبالا بعش و ه يوت دمص يبو لشم ام اندمص لك، نينسلا ه 20 ان حنو قيس ونا نكدعبو نيدم اص ينانورن ام ريغ نك عم ريغو قيص خشلا نك حلاصم نكيس ارك (translated to: we want leaders who are able to give us the bare minimum. We want leaders who are able to empathize with us, to know that the Lebanese people are resilient and strong. We were able to resist all of these past years and we have been tolerating for 20 years but all you care about are your own interests, political posts, and your deals while you *threw the Lebanese people in the trashcan*). The celebrity politician restated the accusations mentioned in the first speech such as “you couldn’t provide us with roads, hospitalization, electricity and water. People are dying outside the hospitals’ doorsteps and

¹⁰ Lebanon has been referred to as the Switzerland of the Middle East for “its unique status as both a snow-capped holiday destination and discreet banking hub for Gulf Arabs” (Alison Tahmizian Meuse)

in response what are you doing?" Howbeit and unlike the other discourse, Fadi El Khatib absolved the political figures and blamed himself and the citizens by declaring: "شم قح، نكپلوع" قحلا انبلوع انحن نم يلبول نكانلصو انحن يد ونزل، لآه انحنو نكانلصو انحن نكانبخنزا انحنو، نكلاننوص قحلا انبلوع انحن." (translated to: But you are not the ones to blame, it is us that should take the blame because we actually made you, we elected you and we voted for you, we have no one to blame but ourselves).

The conclusion consisted of a call for action along with a menace or an alarming prediction. The speaker announced that although the Lebanese are not really suffering 'today' (in 2018), they will soon "once you will not be able to withdraw your salaries and then you'll regret it" ("مويلا ام" مع اوسحبا عجولاب سب اركب ام مكناشاعم اوضبؤن حر. تاشاعملا ل حمل اولصون حر ام اهو دخالن يدعو اولوؤب انحن انمدن") Correspondingly, he asked "every Lebanese person who loves Lebanon to take a firm stand for the sake of the country because what is coming is worse than what we're facing today [...] we will reach devastation and total collapse." Finally, he browbeat the Lebanese officials by asserting that no one will accept the fall through of Lebanon, then affirming: "حر نكبراحن رخلل" (translated to: we will fight you [the politicians] till the end).

Apropos impression management, the basketball player reflected self-promotion especially that he endorsed himself as proficient to tackle this topic although it's not related to the theme of Dibra's episode, and regardless of his father's recommendation. At the end of his speech, he showed intimidation not because he warned about the situation, but since he threatened the political class of fighting them till the end.

When Khatib posted this video on IG, he added a sad background music to his entire speech.

This composition reflected the intended tone of the speaker and his words. This time too, he did

not use any props or visuals. The décor was that of LBCI's studio, i.e. a white, orange, and blue background along with the program's name "Inside Game" on the screens. Khatib was casually dressed in a blue-grey shirt and a multi-colored scarf. The assessment of his body language is limited to his upper body parts, in particular his facial expressions and hand gestures since he was seated and shot from a medium distance (mid shot angle). The speaker gestured a lot mainly for emphasis, reinforcement, and description of the ideas he is trying to convey. In actual fact, he used his fingers when listing problems such as "roads, hospitalization, electricity and water" because it "offers a natural visual that reinforces the number" (Fruciano, 2016). Another example is when he utilized his hands to indicate the past and the present when he compared between the "Switzerland of the Middle East" that people used to talk about" and the present-day "country that is being eroded by garbage, eroded by diseases".



Figure 2 - Khatib gesturing to compare between the present-day and the Switzerland of the Middle East

Gesturing for accentuation was exceptionally visible when he repetitively pointed in the air or on the table in front of him while explaining that “Ragheb Alama’s song, or Nadine Labaki’s film are made to showcase the pain of the Lebanese society, the things that we are suffering from in Lebanon, the things that we are witnessing...”; and when frightening the viewers about the forthcoming situation: “...once you will not be able to withdraw your salaries and then you’ll regret it”. His pointed finger reflected aggression (“we will fight you till the end”) in addition to blame and emphasis too when he acknowledged: “it is us that should take the blame because we actually made you, we elected you and we voted for you, we have no one to blame but ourselves.” As for Khatib’s facial expressions, he conveyed anxiety, disgust, and anger at first especially when listing his obsessions like thinking of emigration and his fear of getting sick or talking about his beautiful country that is being damaged because of political posts. He revealed regret upon talking about the old and current Lebanon, or the difference between the United Arab Emirates’ passport and the Lebanese’s. The athlete at last appeared sad whenever he tackled the resistance and strength of his people. These expressions accorded with the speaker’s vocalics. For instance, his voice pitch increased once he addressed the politicians and their mismanagement or when he asked the Lebanese to “take a firm stand for the sake of the country.” Khatib paused for emphasis, alert and to make his audience focus and reflect on the information being presented peculiarly when he asserted: “...to showcase the pain of the Lebanese society.”

It is worth mentioning that in the two speeches, the sportsman used the pronouns “we” and “us” or any expression/word that indicates that he too is suffering and anxious about the future exactly like any other citizen. To illustrate, he said: *ام اذب؛ ازومرح؛ ازوعوج، انبلع او كحض، انحن انب؛ دلب انبناز ونزا* ...*قل ابلاب* (translated to: stop lying at us; made us hungry; deprived us; we want a decent country,

threw us in a trashcan, etc.) in speech 1 and “we want leaders; we were able to resist; you couldn’t provide us; we have no one to blame but ourselves; we will reach devastation”, etc. (Add to the above, "انذب سان؛ انمكحت؛ اندمص ازحن؛ نپدماص؛ انوطع؛ قحلا ازبلع؛ انحن لصون حر رامدل راين لا لم اش..."). Fadi El Khatib repeated the expression “you threw us in a trashcan” in both of his discourses along with the statement "قضايرلا نازبلو نندا نازبلو قراضحلا نازبلو قناؤنلا نازبلا" (translated to: Lebanon of culture, the Lebanon of civilizations, the Lebanon of art, the Lebanon of sports). Similar to the purpose of gesturing, repetition served as a tool to highlight his point of view and convince the audience of the accuracy of words.

b. Gebran Bassil Speeches

Bassil gave his first speech during the second day of the protests precisely after his meeting with President Aoun in Baabda Palace. He kicked off with two statements that simultaneously reflect sympathetic awareness, acknowledgement, and warning: "نا ام لصح وه" (translating to: What happened was an accumulation of crises and failures that led to the people’s explosion and I understand them because I am fed up just like them although I could not express the way they did because of my position, but I understand them well. What happened was expected, and what is to come might be more grave if not rectified). In his introduction, Bassil tried to evince foresightedness and initiation as well especially when he said: “in the paper that I presented at the Baabda meeting earlier in September, I said that Lebanon needs an *electric shock* [...] not a treatment or a surgery” in addition to “I also said that the few amount remaining of the financial

balance may barely suffice until the end of the year if we do not implement the required policies.”

Also in the plot, Gebran Bassil recognized the revolution as “an opportunity to save Lebanon and its economy from corruption and wrong financial and economic policies”; notwithstanding that he alerted that “it can also turn into a major economic, financial, social and security disaster, and plunge Lebanon into chaos and strife.” He titled ‘his admission and admonition’ “The Great Crash or the Daring Rescue” (and, in a nutshell, the speaker blamed one or more political group for “The Great Crash” whereas exonerated another party(ies). He

differentiated between the two groups cryptically by using the phrase “those who want to”; yet, ensured that these individuals are known: " امه نېب نم دېري لاعشا قئارحلا قارحلا رضخلا سبابلاو مهو نونفورعم ،مهناراعش نم نېبو نم ءافطا دېري قئارحلا ل لب عنم اهعل دنا نم ل لاخ صلختلا سبابلا نم كرتو ،رضخلا مهو (translated to: it is between those who want to start fires and “burn verdant along with the dry”, and they are known by their slogans, and those who want to extinguish fires - or even prevent their outbreak – “by getting rid of the dry and keeping the verdant”, and these people are known too). The leader of the FPM showed skepticism in the spontaneity and intentions of the protestors when he claimed that his bloc has the selfsame position as the “spontaneous demonstrators” along with hinting that some political figures are abusing the uprising: "مهذوجوب [نېضراعملا حلاصلال [يلاغتسلّا عراشلا يئ مويلا؛ " بلكري [ضراعملا [موئلا ةجوم ةبوعش ةئداص : لوأحو اهنرح نع اهراسم قحملما نم لجاقنؤح، هئاواغ ةئس ائسلا ةئلعملما سبئر طائساب سلجمو ةموكحلاو ةئروهمجلا بباونلا...؛ كانه "اروباط سم اخ" دوجوم سانلا نېب فورعم - ،لومجم نونفورعم، ضعبلما مهنم نم ضعبلماو هتءادئو هتاراعش (translated to: their [those who are opposing the reforms] exploitative presence in the streets today”; “they are taking advantage of a sincere popular uprising to “divert it from its rightful course” in order to achieve their declared

political goals of toppling the President of the Republic, the cabinet and the newly elected parliament...”; “there is a known – unknown fifth column that exists among people. You may know some of them from their slogans and appeals, while others you may not know them since they aim to cause problems and to ruin and destroy the country”). However, he demonstrated confidence by considering that the sincere rebellion is “not directed against us, but rather in favor of what we and the people are asking for, that is, for the benefit of our country”; and it “must strengthen the President’s position, ours, along with the position of all reformers, and weaken the position of those who are opposing the reforms”, etc. Bassil cleared himself, Strong Lebanon, and President Michel Aoun from corruption and futility while showing competency. For instance, he provided the viewers with a full, detailed reform plan or solutions for different local problems such as the budget, economy, inflation, banks and high interests, wasteful institutions, customs, smuggling, exports and imports, logical tax imposition, benefiting from the state’s capabilities, electricity issue and the network of generators, telecommunications, the decent return of the refugees, laws to tackle corruption, laws to recover looted funds, lifting banking secrecy, and lifting the immunity of deputies, ministers, and employees. In parentheses, Bassil was majorly criticized for his inability to deliver 24/24 electricity when he was an energy minister, and regardless, speaks as if he was never in a key position to introduce typical improvements. Knowing that he had developed a plan in 2010 that was adopted by the Council of Ministers, the proposal failed because of the “absence of political will and weak governance” (Jessica Obeid, as cited in Rose, 2019). To elaborate, different sources blame it on the Lebanese political system which is based on constitutional powers and administrative positions that contributes to “decision-making paralysis” (Bahout, 2016). Saliba (2010) asserted that the Lebanese Constitution “reflects a de facto acknowledgement that no major decisions by the

Lebanese government can be made without the consent of all major religious communities, no matter how large the majority supporting the government may be.” That is to say although many ministers agreed on Bassil’s reform plan, Amal Movement’s Minister of Finance opposed it to protect his party’s interests in “maintaining deals to buy diesel in favor of generators” as admitted by former Minister of Energy Cesar Abi Khalil (Elnashra, 2020). Add to his conflict with Bassil on the applicability or otherwise of value-added tax (VAT) on *Deir Amar*’s power plant contract (Al Attar, 2019). All of that led to Gebran Bassil’s failure to execute his electricity project; howbeit, insists in several speeches on solving the issue.

Amid his performance, the parliamentarian appeared friendly and qualified not only because he explained his strategy, but when he alluded that he is “listening to the people’s righteous demands and they are asking for job opportunities in the midst of this competition” once he broached the refugees’ issue. Concomitantly, he manifested supplication various times in his plot by mentioning:

- “There are many reforms proposed by President Aoun written in the Baabda paper¹¹ and were theoretically approved by all the main forces, but they must be implemented, and accordingly we have developed within the bloc a plan which includes the electricity issue, the squandering of the state’s money, ...”
- “...prevented us from achieving it [the reform plan] since 2005, 2008 and 2016, either through the permanent presence of some of them in the cabinet...”

¹¹ Baabda Paper is an economic action plan issued in September 2019 by President Aoun and the assembled political figures in Baabda Palace. It states the seriousness of the Lebanese situation and proposes a list of measures to manage the crisis.

- when talking about the electricity issue: “...unraveling the network of generators that existed before us, and we have to dismantle it”
- “During our meeting yesterday, I asked why the government had not passed this law yet, which would give people confidence that we are working on seriously.”
- “We have the nerve to pass these three laws and come forward. Will the others come forward as well?”, etc.

Moreover, Bassil seemed as if he had the forethought to what might happen if an adequate strategy is not implemented post-haste. In other words, he was able to anticipate the typical crisis Lebanon is currently suffering from; ergo, honestly presented to his audience two scenarios, a good and a bad, which he called “options”. Firstly, he divulged that he had previously proposed to the executives “to hold continuous around-the-clock meetings on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday” even if that requires “sleeping in the Serail to finish work early next week.” That is because he was cognizant of the fact that “we no longer have the time, as the financial sector can’t bear us and will eventually collapse. People can no longer tolerate us as well and they will rise.” Secondly, he confirmed that “today, we are still able to do all of the mentioned matters in a few days, not to give people promises to get them off the streets, but to meet and work while people are still on the streets”. He stated that he had already, in the speech he gave on the 13th of October 2019, set the 31st of October 2019 as a due date to fulfill all the promises. Otherwise, the Government should resign. Although he asked the Lebanese to keep on protesting “since they form a source of pressure” on the government to carry out this plan “quickly and effectively”, he urged them to give the cabinet one last chance because “the alternative to the current Government is *blurry*, and it could be much worse than the current situation, especially the absence of a Government.” The political celebrity even warned that “we may lose this beautiful

true sign of trust for the people), but challenged the others to follow-suit too: "لحننا النبيليس" " (translated to: Will the others come forward as well?).

In the conclusion, Gebran Bassil addressed "our people" or "انلهمأ" viz. the supporters of the Free Patriotic Movement, for whom he had told earlier in the discourse that he understands well their participation in the protests, while conveying his total confidence in them: "مبنا نازخ حلاصلًا"

" (translated to: You are the reform holders and annexation of the country. We will not spare you for the rescue when the reform lags and the country is lost. Stay with us. Listen to us).

To sum it up, the speech of the FPM leader revolved around commiserating with the people and supporting their demands, holding some parties liable and vindicating his bloc, warning from potential adverse events and offering diverse scenarios, presenting the problem and suggesting a strategy to solve it. So, one can deduce that Bassil relied on the three rhetorical appeals, ethos, logos, and pathos (credibility, logical, and emotional appeal). In brief, his scripting disclosed four out of five impression management styles which are: self-promotion, ingratiation, exemplification, and supplication.

Staging-wise, Gebran Bassil's fourteen-minute speech was delivered from Baabda's press conference room. Although he was arraigned for speaking from the Presidential Palace, the deputy justified it in front of the media prior his talk: "I asked the President to make my discourse here [in the Palace] post my visit due to the current situation". Apart from his papers or notes which designate that his messages and plan were not improvised but well-prepared in the 'backstage', Bassil had no staging props. The décor was restricted to the picture of the

presidential palace hung in the background. He was formally dressed as he stuck to a dark attire and tie (navy blue).



Figure 3 - Bassil speaking from Baabda's Presidential Palace conference room – Photo credits: Al Modon

The speaker was relaxed and calm throughout his entire speech even when he talked about the people who are trying to overthrow President Aoun's term or toppling the cabinet and the parliament. This was also clear in his voice pitch as it did not change regardless of the subject he was tackling except when he increased his pitch to emphasize and strengthen the idea that the legislative body was "elected by the citizens in a just way for the first time". Not only did he retain an informative tone of voice, but Bassil maintained appropriate eye contact all through his disquisition. The spokesman gestured relatively. Case in point, he made use of his fingers to list the rescue plans "McKinsey", "CIP" and "Cedre" that must be launched. He utilized his hands for explanation and description, for example, he raised his hand to demonstrate augmentation in accordance with his statement "placing very high fees on imports to protect our balance trade."

Moreover, he gesticulated for prominence more than once. To illustrate, Bassil pointed repetitively on the lectern or used the “hand chop gesture” to accent that he asked why the government had not passed the corruption laws yet, then he pointed towards himself when he stated: “not our law”; hence description, and continued with the emphasis gestures mentioned before to say: “which would give people confidence that we are working seriously.” Although he spoke with equanimity, his facial expression indicated, from time to time, contempt, sadness, and anger. To give an instance, he showed contempt, as in to express certainty and that the task is cinch, while saying: “I proposed yesterday to hold continuous around-the-clock meetings on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, even if we have to sleep in the Serail to finish work early next week” add to that “I had set a due date on the 31st of October, and I think that it is more than enough time given for us to be done”. Scorn was visible whenever he spoke about the aim of the “known – unknown fifth column” that exists among the demonstrators, and “if the Government cannot do its job then it should resign”. When he elucidated that he has “warned of this scenario [the crisis] for a while, and [he] did not dare to put it out in the media, but it was written in the paper of Baabda”, Bassil showed contempt, but directly after conveyed anger upon affirming that he is not informing about that today to make the protestors leave the street since “it is their right to demonstrate and express their anger.” The parliamentarian revealed sadness as he explained about the worst case scenario particularly when he invited the Lebanese to imagine the crisis without a government, security, money, and food.

On 3 November 2019, Gebran Bassil spoke to the supporters of President Michel Aoun and the Free Patriotic Movement who gathered at the Baabda Presidential Palace as a rebuke to the revolution that was calling for Aoun’s resignation. The counter-protest was titled “الفرل ل هأ”

(translated to: *People of loyalty*) especially that advocates rallied to express their full fidelity, support and trust in the President.

Bassil started his discourse by directly revealing who are his audience "اي افولنا ل هأ" then reminding them of the highlight of his 13th of October¹² 2019 speech; namely "تلاطلا بلق" (translated to: turning the table). He said this expression during the commemoration held at Lebanon's Hadath Square when affirming that President Aoun is "pursuing his resistance march to save the country from the corruption that occupies the state" then asking him "not to wait too long", to "hit on the table" when he "feels he can no longer bear" and in their turn, the FPM is "ready to turn the table!" (National News Agency, 2019). Then, he invited the supporters to help the bloc and the President in their fight against fraud "because we alone, through constitutional institutions, cannot achieve complete change". The FPM chief explained that "people preceded [them] and overturned the tables", but he certified that the demonstrators are protesting in favor of what they are asking for, which matches his words in the oration analyzed earlier. To be specific, he said: "we are not here to contradict or confront them. On the contrary, we are here to strengthen them, stand by their side, and continue together." Similar to his disquisition on the 18th, Bassil seemed strategic as he presented a few solutions to combat corruption. First, all current and former officials and employees must "disclose their accounts' activity from the very outset of the assumption of their responsibilities before the Special Investigation Commission of the Bank of Lebanon." Second, a special judicial commission headed by the Supreme Council of Judicature should be formed. Thus, referring those whose accounts are suspected to investigation, and those

¹² October 13 marks the day when the Syrian army invaded the Presidential Palace during the "Liberation War" in 1990, forcing army commander at that time Michel Aoun to take asylum at the French embassy in Beirut (Chedid, 2016). The FPM annually organizes a commemorative event to memorialize these incidents.

whose funds are not clean to trial. Moreover, those who have declared their money before the Constitutional Council shall be subject to a comparison between today and the time when they assumed their responsibilities...

Forbye, Gebran Bassil criticized the protestors when he indicated that:

- “Many have believed that you are indifferent to your country, and your uprising came to prove them wrong” referring to the protestors who accused FPM supporters of being unconcerned about the country’s interest because they withdrew from the uprising once it only targeted and insulted Bassil and the President.
- “Even if the music was a way to attract some, the National Anthem remained louder than any other sound”: hinting at how partying or rave has defined the Lebanese revolution everywhere.
- “The revolution is an uprising on injustice, but it is not biased, otherwise, it falls and ends”; “If you generalize the charge of corruption, then you are protecting the corrupt without knowing.”; “[we were] subjected to targeted campaigns against us. It started with the good people saying “All of them” and ended with the main drivers to us alone. We moved from “All of them” to “Only them”; “they said, “*Refugees come in, Gebran go out*”, etc.: alluding to the rebellion’s only attacking the Free Patriotic Movement and the President.
- “Instead of blocking the roads on the people, let us block the road on the deputy that refuses to approve these laws, and on the politician that escapes accountability, and on the judge that does not want to hold anyone accountable or enforce the law!”: pointing out at the revolutionaries in Beirut who were blocking the roads on everyone, but opened

the way for the Leader of the Progressive Socialist Party, Walid Jumblatt who was driving his car along with his son, Taymour, which is also an MP, then took selfies with them.

Besides, Bassil promoted President Michel Aoun, himself, his bloc, and the FPM supporters as competent and ideal frequently throughout the entire speech, namely because they were:

- fighting corruption, naming the corrupt, and refusing to participate in corruption,
- seeking to build a nation,
- lifting the banking secrecy of all their accounts two years before the revolution,
- raising the slogan of “freedom, sovereignty, and independence” for fifteen years and succeeded in restoring them,
- currently raising the slogan of “confidentiality, immunity, and recovery” until they recover all looted money,
- being patriotic and loyal to Lebanon not any foreign party,
- fighting for the rights of the Lebanese.

To substantiate this idea, the deputy repeated the expression “our pride” or “our greatest pride” six times in addition to “we are proud” six times too in the plot. Bassil gloried that they “did not conspire with a foreign state against the children of [their] country”; they “were able to turn Lebanon into an oil country despite the desires of many who want us to remain minors financially”, that they “returned the Charter and full partnership of the Lebanese”; that they “reconnected the dispersed to their homeland” and restored their right to vote, etc. By the same token, he challenged the others to be virtuous like the FPM: *اذه وه يدحنلا ةبمدلآب يذلا ه عنري رايئلا* "اذه وه يدحنلا ةبمدلآب يذلا ه عنري رايئلا" (translated to: this the challenge of moralism that the Free Patriotic

Movement raises in front of all people). He additionally dared anyone to prove that his party is corrupt: " از رخ انزا ما لخدن قومونم ملو داسندا كراشن ياب ؤنص عم يدحتزو ،نيسافلا يا نأ دحا تبئي س كعلا " "

(translated to: We are proud that we did not enter the corruption system and did not participate in any deal with the corrupt, and we challenge anyone to prove otherwise). Bassil responded by implication to the criticism claiming he's racist by also taking pride in it as he added that they "are fanatics of [their] patriotism, racists in [their] Lebanese nationality...". He clarified that "our biggest and greatest pride is when we said that the Lebanese residing and dispersing must come before the migrators and refugees" which suggests that this is not racism but patriotism. Pride was remarkably visible too when he avowed to his people: "I saw myself in you through the anger coming out of your throats." This statement manifested affability as well. Add to the

above, he conveyed confidence in the FPM devotees by declaring: "انرصو نا ملحلا شي عن يبن ،قلود "

ملو نا ل م ما دؤنن اذبعش ،ملحلا اذه قوح انراهر نم طؤنا وه يلح اذبعش"; "يلح نورداق منزا نأ اوجرخ، هنم [13 نپرشت

... (translated to: we started living the dream of

building a nation. We have not lost hope that our people will realize this dream because our bet

is only on our people"; "you can get out of it [the frugal October the 13th] because you are the

children of October 13, 1990. You are the children of resilience", etc.). The political figure

reflected friendliness, empathy, and identification with his audience especially that he commonly

used "we", "us" and "our". By way of illustration: "We are Aoun's generation"; "I followed you,

moment by moment. I heard your voice and saw the enthusiasm in your eyes"; "we, like you,

rose against injustice"; "my friends, my comrades"; "We can endure this because we are the

people of loyalty"; "I hear your heartbeat and I know how each one of you feels", etc. Bassil's

plot marked helplessness oft-times too. To give an instance, he argued that "is not fair that we

suffer injustice twice" (once when they were isolated and persecuted in the 1990s and early

2000s, and once because the revolution was majorly directed against them); “we were alone, as usual” (when talking about their fight against corruption); “it is not our responsibility but the responsibility of the judiciary, which blocked the files” (upon saying that the FPM fought corruption and their mission did not totally succeed because of the corrupt judges); repeating twice the expression “our retribution is great because...”; “we were racing against time to prevent the crash, but corruption, loss, and public debt preceded us”, etc. He sounded helpless yet ideal when he affirmed several times that “we did a mistake” or “our biggest mistake” then justifying them. As examples: “Yes, we made a mistake. We made a mistake when we got distracted with work and projects [...] rather than confronting those who lie and distort our image...” since they believed that the truth will always be “stronger than a false impression [...] but] it became clear to us that this impression caused by lies, rumors, and political assassination has become a reality in the minds of some people”; “We got it all wrong when the idea of us crashing into an entire sect got to us every time we tackle the corruption of a leader or an official in a sect. When we considered preserving national unity was more important than preserving our image and defending our morality”, etc.

The part where the former minister majorly applied supplication and exemplification at once was when he wrapped up his speech. Indeed, Bassil employed pathos as he apologized to his mother because she was cursed by the protestors. He not only asked for forgiveness but made her appear quintessential as well while implying that he is impervious to all of these insults. Verbatim, he began his conclusion by saying: "يهمم ولوأ [...] رذعأ كنم هزم يبببب لاط تناو نذما بئذ ل كل" (translated to: and to my mother, I say [...] I apologize to you because I'm the reason you have been hurt, yet you are not guilty). He secondly indirectly announced that he is unaffected since she taught him to love Lebanon and that its dignity is more important than his ("كنك لو اي امام يذم لع

because no one can reach his dignity except if he does something outrageous) ("يُزِيلُ عِزَّكَ إِذَا لَمْ يَعْرِفْ نِزَاكَ") and finally because she “knows what [she] has raised”) ("تَبْرَأُ إِذَا مَا يَعْرِفُ"). At the end, he promised her that “time will restore [her] right and the truth will prevail because only the truth will triumph”.

On the whole, Gebran Bassil mixed mainly the logical and emotional appeal all through his speech, suggested a little strategy to solve the issue of corruption and guarantee transparency. He also criticized the wrongdoings of the uprising, and acquitted the Free Patriotic Movement from corruption and the failure of making a change. To end, the speaker relied on self-promotion, ingratiation, exemplification and supplication in this discourse too.

Moving to his staging, the leader of the FPM delivered his speech directly in front of audience, unlike the others where they were merely via media. This ‘type of staging’ may be regarded as “direct address”. According to Lowe (2018), “direct address is the standard way for characters to communicate their thoughts to the audience.” It is “a moment of direct connection with the audience” as well. It was broadcasted on traditional and new media too. Gebran Bassil began his performance by walking onto the stage while saluting the public. Then, he made two checkmark signs, which is the logo of the FPM, using his right and left hands, and later did a fist which he frequently uses every time he appears on stage in order to respond to the crowd. He continued on greeting people for almost thirty seconds utilizing the same gestures and finally adding a heart-shaped gesture by joining both hands while curling his index fingers and pointing his thumbs down. Simultaneously, music was being played then stopped once he started giving his talk. The entire place was decorated with Lebanese flags along with the orange Free Patriotic Movement

and a few Lebanese army flags carried by the rallies. Others were holding pictures of President Aoun, Bassil, Bassil and his mother, in addition to placards saying: “refund of looted money”, “fighting for reform”, "الامر ك يلب بساحن ماعلا لامها اوئرس قراح رخص ك عم" (translated to: in order to hold those who looted public money accountable, *Haret Sakher* supports you), etc. Some people were clutching banners with sarcastic statements aiming at revealing why the protestors are attacking Bassil. For example, "اليس اب دح او رعزأ هنم: قرونانا ضنخ وديو، رلّ ولبسلا عطو طنزلا وديو، رحبلا نم عجرې، "علا نبرج هملا وديو، ندلاب قنرسلا ليشي وديو، قنصر صملا بيجي ابرهكلا 24/24 بكرو، قح لالاو، تادلو مللا دادع لّ عسنت" (translated to: Bassil is an imp because he lowered the mobile phone bill, he wants to extract petroleum from under the seabed, he wants to return the misplaced to their countries, he wants to lift banking secrecy, he wants to provide 24/24 electricity, he installed generator meters, and the list doesn't fit in all of his mischievousness). Behind the speaker was a simple green background with a silhouette of a man, most probably that of President Michel Aoun. In the middle of this background, there was a small Lebanese flag in which they replaced the cedar with their new slogan "قنرس، قنصاحم دادرسا" (translated to: confidentiality, accountability, recovery) written in green color. The same slogan was printed on the lectern too.



Figure 4 - The performance's green background and slogan



Figure 5 - The performance's background with the silhouette of a man – Photo credits: Tayyar Jaj

Bassil was business-casually dressed; he wore dark navy blue pants and a blue button-front shirt. Like his previous discourse, Gebran Bassil seemed well-prepared as he did not improvise but had his notes. Although he was reading, the politician succeeded in maintaining eye contact with the public. He seemed very content whenever he took the stage and started speaking. He demonstrated happiness and pride as he called his people "اي افولنا لهما" not only through his facial expressions, but through his tonality and increased voice volume. Dissimilar to his speech on the 18th, Bassil was not calm as his pitch varied. It majorly heightened particularly when asking his rhetorical questions like: “what does the corrupt want better than being equal to the moral character?” or when making or strengthening a point such as: "شيم ازلنا نهدس ان نار عزو"، "منأو امهم" (translated to: we are not all corrupt and scoundrels; no matter what the cost, we will not be a tool in the hands of foreigners). The spokesman's pace changed a lot as well as he paused frequently. For instance, he claimed: “We were alone” then paused and continued: “as usual...”. Likewise, when announcing the FPM's new slogan, he listed the words

slowly, paused between each, and repeated it three times. Bassil may have used the pauses to enhance the message delivery, to stress his idea, and give his audience time to process what he has just said. His pauses can be dramatic ones in order to “set up and spotlight what [he] will say next” (Fripp, 2019). This might be the case especially that he adjoined this statement to an important accomplishment achieved by the *Aounists*¹³ who have raised the slogan “freedom, sovereignty, independence” for 15 years and succeeded in restoring them. His pause can also be a reflective one as in giving his audience time to contemplate on these three words (Fripp, 2019). Gebran Bassil applied an informative tone explicitly when presenting the steps to build a nation like creating a civil state, establishing a Senate, applying administrative decentralization... In addition to when he explained about what can happen after disclosing the former and current officials and employees’ accounts activity.

The parliamentarian’s face expressed different feelings such as:

- Anger when declaring: “that is how the corrupt avoid the judgment and the moral character becomes the victim of the charge!”; “nor do we accept that the revolution ends with the staying of the corrupt and the departure of the moral characters”; “the scoundrels are the ones who have installed checkpoints and took illegal taxes, reminding us of the militia and the days of the war”; “Yes, we made a mistake. We made a mistake when...”; etc.
- Sadness upon warning: “we have difficult and long days ahead”; “We were racing against time to prevent the crash, but corruption, loss, and public debt preceded us”. Add to that he conveyed sadness and anger while addressing his mom.

¹³ People who support President Michel Aoun are called Aounists.

- Contempt and/or disgust specifically when talking about the corrupt, for example, “[they] carried out the policies of loss, looting, and corruption”; “you are protecting the corrupt without knowing”; “They argued that this is not enough!” (when talking about lifting the banking secrecy); “Our pride is that we “torture” and not obey...”; “the people of betrayal are very few in our ranks”, etc.
- Happiness was clear every time he greeted the crowd, not only at the beginning, but almost three minutes before ending his speech when people chanted and expressed their love and support; hence, he saluted them and did the heart-shaped gesture again. He was jovial as well as he was concluding: “Long live loyalty. Long live the people of loyalty. Long live the Free Patriotic Movement. Long live Lebanon” and lastly when honoring the mothers in the FPM.

Other times, he used his face or facial expressions in accordance with his words. For example, he raised his eyebrows as if he was silently saying “do not want to” while at the same time publicly revealing that “some do not want to” lift their banking secrecy. Bassil was gesturing a lot for different purposes:

- For description: he pointed towards the public then towards himself while saying “it became necessary for you to participate with us”. He gestured as if something is being turned upon when he claimed “turning the table” and “overturned the table”. The MP did a negligence sign as he mentioned “you are indifferent to your country”, made number “2” with his fingers as he told “we suffer injustice twice”; and a “no gesture” as he affirmed “we are not all corrupt and scoundrels”, etc.

- For listing: Bassil enumerated what happened to the FPM from 1990 to 2005 (“denied, isolated, and persecuted...”) while counting them on his fingers. He did the same upon saying “confidentiality, immunity, and recovery”.
- For emphasis: he either pointed on the lectern, downwards, or made the hand chop gesture to foreground the fact that the FPM is “not here to contradict or confront [the rebels]. On the contrary, [they] are here to strengthen them, stand by their side, and continue together”. Add to when he said “the National Anthem remained louder than any other sound”; “we’re the first ones” when ensuring that everyone must be held accountable; “which will settle our deficit” upon talking about recovering the looted money, etc.

In closing, Gebran Bassil ended his 24-minute speech the same way he started it: he saluted the public, did the fist, and the two checkmark signs along with the same music that was played at the beginning.

c. Saad El Hariri Speeches

One day post the start of the demonstrations, PM Saad El Hariri made a press conference from the Serail. He commenced by justifying the reason behind communicating with the public while resorting to pathos: “At these critical moments, I must address the Lebanese people directly and be candid with them, because despite everything we were and will remain one family named Lebanon. The country is going through a difficult circumstance that has no precedent in our history, and I hope the Lebanese will hear my honest words carefully, away from the political biddings that we have seen on the screens since yesterday.” Directly after, he differentiated himself by, first, promoting that he was aware of how critical the Lebanese

situation is, and second showcasing the efforts he has been doing for the past three years in order to prevent “this tragedy” that was “exploded on the streets”. Rigorously, he publicized: "يذاو لواح ذنم ثلاث تاويز جلاع نأل لّولح مدّواو هبابسأ قَبْذُوح حل. رنكأ ذنم نم ثلاث تاويز تالوق لكال انبالرش يذ نإ نطولا انذلب تضررنا جراح فورظ هبلع، مندارا! وهو فرصي اماع دعب ماع رنكأ نم حبصأو ملوخدم مزيد ريبك عجر دلا انزا حل دعب انالك ماب". (translated to: For the past three years, I have been trying to address its causes and offer real solutions for them. More than three years ago, I told all of our partners in the motherland that our country was under circumstances beyond its control, and that year after year, it spent more than its income, and its debt became so great that we can no longer continue in that way). To proof that his words are honest, Hariri exposed the reasons behind the arrears. As a matter of fact, “electricity costs the state two billion dollars per year”, “the chain of the ranks and salaries that we are committed to turn out to have exceeded expectations and cost about two billion dollars in additional deficit per year” ... In the same context, he turned a major part of his plot into a narration, in which he reported what happened with him using little narrative techniques, perhaps to ensure that he is being transparent. In brief, he first recounted that he informed his partners in the cabinet that the “real solution” for Lebanon is to “increase the State’s income, namely, to develop an economy that will create employment opportunities, especially for young men and women.” He also suggested changing the laws to guarantee refinement bearing in mind that these rules were established in the 1950s and 1960s, i.e. ‘logically invalid’ (“we cannot live in the year 2019 while working with old laws”). However, he believed that the government was not able to implement it on its own. Thereof, resorted to getting funds from the international community; hence, the Cedre Conference’s 11 billion dollars. The Premier certified that all the statesmen agreed on carrying out the reforms; howbeit, he “kept finding [himself] in a procrastination period and faced with every bump in the road

lasting for weeks, months, and seasons” when it came to all the solutions whether the electricity, the deficit, and even during the formation of the cabinet. As cited by Hariri, every time he would reach the end line of solving the problem after conducting many meeting, committees, proposals, and contracts, “someone would come to say: it does not work”; an expression that he repeated four times in addition to his one-time “nothing is working”. According to the speaker, this was all because “they” did not focus on managing the issues, but only “cared about settling scores at the expense of time, that is, at the expense of the people, or settling scores with the international community”. Besides gnomically blaming his partners by referring to them with “they” rather than clearly naming them, the PM criticized the practices that he, apparently, was forced to agree on, like forming a National Unity government or committees with at least nine ministers “so that everyone would be happy”. In other words, Hariri absolved himself from all the wrongdoings exercised by the politicians. Truly, he reconfirmed that اننا و "لكننا ملغى يترأ تأجل إلى قوسنا قوسنا ليس إلا يكف ل

نازلنا دليلاً دوناً إلى عارض يلهأ ديدج نأ ترررؤ "قلواطلا بلقا" إلى ع يسنن يكف ل بلونن إلى ع دلبلا. ذنم 4 رشكأو تاونس رودأ اناوزلا لوج أو نم دلب إلى رخأ نيمأنا صرنا رامئسلا او قدع اسملاو مع دلا (translated to: Everyone knows that I resorted to a political settlement in order not to lead the country into a new civil conflict, and I decided to turn the tables on myself so that it would not turn on the country. For four years and more, I turned corners and traveled from one country to another to secure opportunities for support, assistance, and investment for Lebanon). To boot, he added: “for months, we have been waiting for our national partners and the Government to go along with the agreed solution, but we can no longer wait” knowing that he is the Head of the cabinet and, by constitution, he has all the administrative powers to ‘make things happen’. Likewise, he considered that he “did [his] duties to protect the country and restore consideration to the constitutional institutions.” Later, Saad El Hariri expressed his corroborations for the people’s

"بعش ي اءادأ هءاوءي يسايس ىلع ءروص ام هءودءهشأ ىلع ىدم رهشأ نيزسو فوس ءدر نوكنء هلءفن , uprising. As illustrations, ءرءبك."ببض غلا .ببض غلا ! اعبط وه ءءهءن اعضوا ءهشوعم نكلو مساسا بونسيم يسايسلا لءولسللا ىذلا دلءلا ىن يساسم ببسللا وه ءلءامملا (translated to: any person who faces a political performance as seen for months and years will react with anger. Anger! Of course, it is the result of the living conditions, but it is based on the level of political behavior in the country, which is the main reason for procrastinating solutions, hesitating in decisions, and disruption of the state in the face of every problem, big or small). Like Gebran Bassil, Hariri believed that "there are parties on the inside who rejoiced in everything that happens and turned a blind eye, so the groups took the streets and rode the wave of young men and women who stood in the face of everyone, including me." Into the bargain, he deemed that there is a foreign plan to sabotage the situation or to ruin Lebanon since it settled down in Syria. Nonetheless, "all of this does not negate the fact that there is a real pain that exploded yesterday". The political celebrity seemed oppressed and helpless as he avowed "فرعأ نيزءنكلا نأ اولبني نورظنني مهدي انم اولم عيو ىرءرحلا دعسب شبك (translated to: I know that many are waiting for "Saad El Hariri to be attacked and be made a victim", and there are people who started throwing their scoundrels at us). He included in this accusation an emotional appeal when he mentioned that his late father Rafik faced the same situation (اممب امك اولعني قب اسلاب فبيك " نكلو اذه رما عيظنسن .سيءرلا عم قيفر ديهشلا) موي."بل غلا ملكئلاو هءلع هنع اءحل. ام ىزمهيو وه موزلا ملكئلا نأ عم سارلا "نود نم فونك" (نود نم ءلم اءم)مهربخأ نأو (translated to: but this is a matter that we can overcome and talk about later. What I care about today is to talk to people without flattery and tell them how anger is planted in their hearts day after day). At the end, he invited all the officials to find alternative solutions to prevent additional suffering or clashes in the streets. Yet, he granted himself and his partners "a very short period of time" to "provide a clear, decisive, and final answer that

convinces [him], the Lebanese, the international community, and all those who are expressing their anger in the street today, that there is a decision by everyone to achieve reform and stop the loss and corruption, or I will have another say.” He concluded with revealing that his short notice is only 72 hours then said “long live the Lebanese people. Long live Lebanon.”

Based on this analysis, one can deduce that Hariri relied on narration and a few information to present the problem, and on emotional appeal specially to vindicate himself. He thus used self-promotion, exemplification, supplication, and intimidation only once (“I will have another say”).

Moving to his performance, although Saad El Hariri sounded relaxed especially that he gestured passably, fairly used his space, had an expressive face and some vocal variations, the PM licked his lips a lot throughout his speech, 32 times in particular. As mentioned by the body language expert Jonathan Choufany during a personal interview in 2018, lip licking indicates discomfort in a certain situation, anxiousness, or guilt. Amin (2019) clarified that even though one “might feel the need to repeatedly lick [his] lips when [he is] anxious or nervous”, continual lip licking can be caused by environmental or medical conditions that make the lips dry out hence makes one feel the need to lick them more.



Figure 6 - Hariri licking his lips during his speech

Hariri made a bit of mistakes too and resorted to verbal fillers like clearing his throat, taking a deep breath, or coughing after stuttering. Regardless of his errors, he seemed prepared at least because his speech was scripted. In fact, he was reading off of a teleprompter ergo appeared as if he kept eye contact. Concerning his gesturing, Hariri made use of his hands and/or fingers for various reasons:

- For comparison: he moved his hands to both sides as in differentiating between the “annual expenses and the annual income”.
- For description: he used his hands to indicate “all” when he said “we have agreed with all our partners in the country”. He depicted that the laws are old upon saying that the laws were established in the 1950s and 1960s; and did a “no” sign recurrently when stating that “it does not work” or “reforms do not mean taxes”. He also pointed towards himself whenever he affirmed that “we cannot implement it on our own with our capabilities” and “stood in the face of everyone, including me”, etc.
- For emphasis: like pointing frequently on the table to highlight that of course people will “react with anger” when faced with nonchalance, or the uprising is a result of poor living conditions and political behavior.

To further support his ideas, he not only gesticulated for insistence, but reiterated some of his words while increasing his voice pitch too, such as “anger. Anger!”; “we have to change all the established laws [...] change them all...” Hariri used his face to express or depict a certain situation like nodding upwards when he said “they answered: no”. Saad El Hariri applied some vocal variations like heightening and lowering his pitch (“More than three years ago, I told all of our partners in the motherland that our country was under circumstances beyond its control”;

“based on these reforms, they will finance this solution” ...). Additionally, he utilized the falling tone when he posed the question “how much did it cost money and the economy, and caused a decline in growth?”. He speeded and decelerated his pace and paused sometimes, for example when he asseverated “all of this does not negate the fact that there is a real pain that exploded yesterday”. These pauses designated accentuation because his statement was accompanied with emphasis gestures. They can offer a chance for reflection as well. Add to that, he made use of his breathing to convey annoyance or as if to nonverbally indicate that he is fed up. That is when he declared that “ever since the beginning of the government formation, I kept finding myself in a procrastination period and faced with every bump in the road lasting for weeks, months, and seasons”. On a final note, his faced communicated different feelings such as:

- Sadness and anger: he lowered his eyes while telling: “away from the political biddings that we have seen on the screens since yesterday” and “but this is a matter that we can overcome and talk about later”.
- Anger and contempt: when assuming that “perhaps there are parties on the inside who rejoiced in everything that happens”; “but we only presented them with political objections and records”, etc.
- Contempt and disgust: whenever he claimed that “many are waiting for “Saad El Hariri to be attacked and be made a victim”, as well as “whoever thinks he has another solution, he should have presented it earlier, and even if he decides now, for reasons of his own [...] let him come forward and for us to organize a quiet transition, take control, and implement the solution he is thinking of”.

- Disgust and fear: when he reminded his audience that “there are people who started throwing their scoundrels at us just as they did in the past with the martyred Prime Minister Rafik El Hariri”.

To wrap up with, Saad El Hariri, who was formally dressed in dark navy blue, presented his performance from the Serail. That’s why, the background consisted of two Lebanese flags as well as a third one placed in his office that was shown in the frame.

“In response to the protestors’ demands” Saad El Hariri spoke from his official residence for only two minutes to inform the former of his resignation. The PM started by presenting the main problem and concurrently showing exemplification nathless helplessness: "ذم 13 اموي ارارن رظنن ب عشللاو لحب يسايس فؤوي ازاو روه دنلا لاوط تلواح هذه قرنلا داجيا جرحم عم بسزل نم هلاخ توصل سا زلا ةپامحو دلبلارطا خملنا نم ةپش بعملناو ةبداص نزل او ةبذل. موبلا ل فحأ مكبلع تلصو ينزا ق برط يلاا حبص او دودسم ل دب (translated to: For 13 days, the Lebanese people have been waiting for a political solution that stops the deterioration. Throughout this period, I tried to find a way out, through which we can listen to the voice of the people and protect the country from security and socio-economic risks. Today, I reached a dead end, and it has become necessary to create a big shock to face the crisis).

In the body paragraph, Hariri recited what will he do after delivering his speech and why, for example: “I am going to Baabda Palace to submit the resignation of the government to President Michel Aoun and to the Lebanese people in all regions, in response to the will of the many Lebanese who took to the streets demanding change, and in compliance with the need to provide a safety net that protects the country in this historic moment.” He thus appeared ingratiating and promoted himself as an ideal, considerate, cooperative politician who deserves praise. Indeed,

the statesman exhorted the demonstrators to make Lebanon's interest, safety, peace, and prosperousness a priority (يؤادن ىلا نأ نينانبالا لك اومدؤو ةحلصم قملاسو نازبلا نازبلا عنمو يلصم املسلا قيامحو). Then he called on his "partners in the political life" to abide by their responsibilities which include protecting the country and improving its economy since the revolution is "a serious opportunity that should not be lost" (ام مزلّ عېضك). This means that Saad El Hariri, just like Gebran Bassil, supports the uprising and believes that it is a valid chance for improvement and that it is not targeted against him; thus, revealed self-confidence. The speaker was perceived even more supreme when he justified his vacating with " (دوعنو ب هذك بصانملا معملا قمارك قملاسو دلبللا" (translated to: Positions come and go but what is important is the dignity and safety of the country) in addition to "ام يف ربكأ ادح نم ودلب" (translated to: No one is greater than his country). It is noteworthy to disclose that "no one is greater than his country" is the late PM Rafik El Hariri's most famous statement. With that being said, the Premier can be reminding the people of the Hariri legacy or Rafik's nationalistic positions and propitiating the Lebanese or, at the minimum, 'his' Sunni community. He concluded with another 'typical closing statements for a patriotic speech' yet used repetition for prominence: "May God protect Lebanon, may God protect Lebanon, long live Lebanon."

All in all, Saad El Hariri relied majorly on the emotional appeal and managed the self-promotion, ingratiation, exemplification, and supplication impressions.

Touching on staging, the speaker was also formally dressed in a navy blue suit and a dark red tie. In accordance with the idea that Saad El Hariri is reminding the audience of his father by mentioning his well-known quote, the former was standing in front of the late Prime Minister's photo hung on the wall as well as the Lebanese flag.



Figure 7 - Hariri reminding the audience of Hariri legacy by standing in front of his late father's picture - Photo credits: France24

Add to the above that, unlike his speech on the 18th, this performance was made at his own *Beit El Wasat* not at the Serail. Besides chiefly conveying contempt, disgust, and sadness, the PM looked somewhat eccentric as he appeared tired, monotonous, and sluggish. Omitting his only four-time-gesturing, Hariri was totally static. He even barely moved his head and it was solely to look to the sides or perhaps at the present reporters. The mid shot angle prohibited the viewer from seeing his full body to assess his nonverbal communication. On that account, one can only view him gesticulating four times when he lifted his hands in conformity with his words to depict the situation or as if he is nonverbally saying “current”. That is for example when he said “socio-economic risks” (i.e. the current socio-economic risks), or “in response to the will of the many Lebanese who took to the streets demanding change” (i.e. in response to what is currently happening), etc. The political celebrity seemed as if he was reading his script from a teleprompter; therefore, implies as if he maintained eye contact all round. Furthermore, he licked his lips three times, swallowed his saliva seven times, sometimes panted heavily, talked slowly,

and sporadically paused between every one or two words. Very detectably, Hariri swallowed his saliva stiffly every time he brought up the idea of resignation; exactly upon saying: “I am going to Baabda Palace to submit the resignation of the government to President Michel Aoun” and “I place my resignation at the disposal of the president and all the Lebanese”. According to Choufany, fear and tension usually lead to the dryness of the mouth or throat which makes the person lick his lips and/or swallow his saliva frequently. Lip-licking likewise indicates anxiety and/or guilt. Also recognizably, Saad El Hariri’s voice trembled awkwardly at the beginning of the speech particularly while saying "امروي" or “days” ("نم 13 امروي"; translated to: for 13 days) which also designates nervousness and trepidation.

5.2 Focus Groups

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the two focus groups were conducted virtually via video-conferencing service Zoom. As explained earlier, the participants were young adults with dissimilar political views aged between 21 to 26 as 21 is the voting age in Lebanon. Group 1 consisted of six females and a male, while group 2 had five males and two females. They have diverse professional backgrounds too; architecture, interior design, civil and chemical engineering, journalism, radio/TV, law, business, pharmacy, and physical education. Some of them are living in Lebanon while others are currently pursuing their Master’s degree abroad. For confidentiality, only the initials of the partakers were mentioned.

The first focus group was held on Saturday, March 6, 2021. Three participants were Free Patriotic Movement and President Michel Aoun proponents i.e. pro-regime, they are: TS, 25 years old, MAC, 25, and MN, 23. The other three participants were affiliated to the Lebanese Forces (LF), Amal Movement, or only a revolutionary; hence, anti-regime: NR, 23, Amal

Movement, SB, 26, Lebanese Forces, KG, 23, activist. The last volunteer was CH, 24, a non-partisan who did not support the demonstrations either. Participants in this meeting were told that each speech was delivered by an anonymous celebrity politician during the protests.

Focus group 2 was conducted on the 12th of March 2021. Like the first one, three participants were affiliated to the FPM and the President; AM, 26 years old, KS, 23, and MS, 26. Those who were anti-government belonged to the Lebanese Forces or Kataeb Party, and they all participated in the revolution as well. They are MM, 22, Kataeb Party, GM, 24 years old, Lebanese Forces, and MW, 24, LF. Finally, RT, 25, was neither aligned to a political party nor to the uprising. All respondents were aware that the discourses were given by Fadi El Khatib, Gebran Bassil, and Saad El Hariri.

Are Celebrity Politicians Supported and Qualified?

When asked about whether or not celebrities should stay out of politics, the majority of the youngsters in focus group 1 refused this phenomenon. The main reason was that the former's viewpoints might estrange their fans. As stated by TS, "it is okay that they give a political opinion, this is freedom or democracy eventually, but not in a biased way or one that reflects their political partisanship." NR added that they have the right to be affiliated to a certain party, but must keep this position to themselves since they are not always well-informed or qualified to talk about politics, or, according to CH, their admirers might be influenced or driven away. If they are unknowledgeable about the topic, "let them stick to what they know", said NR. Add to that, some public figures are either provocative or instigating. Hence, they must not take advantage of their fame to talk about something they don't really know about just to give their thoughts. To support this claim, MN gave the example of the Lebanese singer Elissa who is

strongly affiliated to the LF; therefore, uses Twitter or TV to spread hate speech against President Aoun, Gebran Bassil, and the FPM. On the other hand, SB refuted all previous sayings by asserting that famous people have the right, just like any other regular citizen, to express freely their opinions regardless of their fan base beliefs. This matter depends on whether they support a superstar blindly, or they have enough critical thinking to shape their own point of views and love the celebrity only for what he/she does. “You think that Elissa is exasperating only because what she says is against your beliefs. [...] People should learn not to follow others blindly, that way, they will not be influenced by what [Elissa] utters” (SB). She furthered that every celebrity who engages in politics will be attacked regardless, while suggesting that when TV host Hicham Haddad was pro-FPM, his fan base was almost all *Aounists* whereas Aoun’s opponents hated him, and now it’s the other way around as he became anti-FPM. MAC related her answer to the revolution by reckoning that many public figures were pressured to join the protests only to show that they empathize with the people and are as ordinary as them to the extent that celebrities who didn’t participate or at least advocated it were humiliated by the dissidents. Indeed, “that was obvious propaganda and self-display, they simply followed the trend” NR contended. As an illustration, singer Julia Boutros, known for her revolutionary, patriotic, and resistance songs, was shamed for being absent all through the revolt. Nonetheless, Boutros is the wife of FPM deputy Elias Bou Saab so her forbearing was logical! In a nutshell, a celebrity who does not weigh in on politics remains more accepted and loved than the ones who voice their affiliations out loud.

Additionally, participants in focus group 1 considered that celebrities, no matter how loved they are, are not always qualified to represent the public in case they sought a certain governmental position. “They must only do what they’re really good at” said TS. “If they were better in

politics, they would have been politicians from the very start.” MAC argued that half of the Lebanese politicians are not competent either, so if public figures want to run for office, they must give up whatever they currently do to guarantee that their fans won’t be swayed wrongly. Yet, in the standpoint of CH, “celebrities are just like politicians; they either take advantage of the situation to reach their goals or enter the political realm to make money off of it.”

In contrast, respondents in focus group 2 did not object this phenomenon. MS ensured that “politics is not restricted to specific individuals; it is part of our everyday life” that’s why it is very normal if celebrities talk or criticize the political scene. He even considered that it is healthier if public figures give their political opinions because they have an influence on people; thus, can help shape public opinion. Notwithstanding that they must express their thoughts in a very ethical way and for the public good, not for other hidden personal goals. MW, who acknowledged that all humans have the right to freely express their point of view, supposed that only the fact that the famous are able to exert influence at least on their fans makes this phenomenon somehow bad. AM believed that the problem in Lebanon is that “talking politics is regarded as taboo especially that it is associated with clash; therefore, many Lebanese remain politically ignorant.” Celebrities are free to discuss politics as long as they are aware that they have a greater responsibility due to their impact. In other words, if they are not well-informed, they will increase political ignorance and agitate an already squabbled public. AM gave the example of singer Maya Diab who admonished people on Twitter not to be in a hurry to take COVID-19 vaccines because their production requires a long term to be authorized at times when medical professionals were advising otherwise. Truly, “anyone who wishes to touch upon typical topics must be responsible and knowledgeable”, RT confirmed. According to GM, if these people really and earnestly needed to benefit their country with no profiteering, everyone

will surely accept their engagement in politics. MM furthered that famous persons played a very important role in the U.S. presidential elections. The endorsements they did helped direct skeptical voters to elect wisely which is why influencers who give sincere viewpoints are essential nowadays.

As for the representatives who act like celebrities, many, in both groups, thought that using propaganda techniques will not make them extra loved or supported, but simply liars! “Propaganda is all fake [...] especially in Lebanon, they are deceiving us” ensured MW. TS also insisted that “this is all staged”. NR however announced that it would not affect or impact her unless it’s genuine not forced. Nevertheless, MAC supposed that this depends on who is doing it. For instance, Obama is charismatic thus succeeded in reaching his objective. “This may also work in the case of MP Sami Fatfat since he is appealing but not with Saad El Hariri.” NR continued that maybe Hariri failed to impress his opponents because the tactics that work somewhere else does not work with the Lebanese people. Veritably, MM stated that culture highly affects propaganda and how people perceive it. So based on one’s culture, propaganda can be weighed or not. Add to the fact that those who oppose the statesman will deprecate him and vice versa. By way of illustration, GM assumed that Saad El Hariri will solely be able to manipulate his own followers as this depends on how much they love him, attached to him, and are affected by whatever he does. But in MS’ view, “propaganda must be complemented by achievements”. It is pointless if the politician promotes himself as a loved celebrity but does not do his actual job, for this will never have an effect on people. AM declared that the official must not act or show the citizens that he is “just like them”, since by definition, he is employed by the people and works for them, so “he instinctively has to be just like them.” Having said that, whatever ‘trick’ he uses will be regarded as fake. Withal, RT viewed that it is logical that

politicians implement propaganda techniques but with no exaggeration if they wanted it to truly work.

Political Celebrity ‘Type Three’: Target of Gossip or Assassination?

Aiming at exploring Mazzoni & Ciaglia’s (2014) third type celebrity politicians, the moderator asked the participants in focus group 2 to list the reasons that make a political figure a target of gossip and fake news. Bearing in mind that MP Gebran Bassil was given as an example, MW (Lebanese Forces) simply said that the only goal is to criticize him. MS (FPM) posited that it’s mainly the politician’s fault when it comes to communication. It starts with a legislator or the party incorrectly conveying a message which leads to misunderstanding, and as a result, embroils everyone in this mistake. Then, people who are eagerly waiting for him to make a mistake, will take advantage to lambast this official and spread fake news without any proof. Another reason is that fault-finding is a “normal exercise” practiced by everyone whether the person being condemned is famous or not. But this is predominantly applied to directly and personally attack and harm a successful individual. Add to miscommunication, which many in this group approved, GM (LF) and KS (FPM) opined that one’s message is promoted in the media in a way that matches the platform’s agenda and objectives. “They ‘market’ it as they want to fulfill their agendas”, said GM. In view of that, AM reiterated his standpoint that people are not well educated particularly when it comes to things related to the Lebanese constitution and political powers. Hence, they are easily swayed by what the media feed them and accordingly attack the representative. Moreover, the audience receive the message in a biased manner; they don’t assess it rationally but personally, based on who is talking not on the content. To support his argument, AM invited his teammates to think of the exact same speech delivered twice; once by Gebran

Bassil, and once by the head of Beirut Bar Association Melhem Khalaf who is supported by the revolutionaries. The one given by Khalaf will be endorsed whereas that of Bassil will directly be turned down. In short, “the main purpose of making someone a third-type celebrity politician is character assassination”, he concluded. MM commented on AM’s example by mentioning that Khalaf is new to the political realm but Bassil is not, which makes people evaluate him based on what they already know about him. “It is not about him, but about what he has done”. “Someone with so much responsibility and power like Gebran Bassil is being criticized accordingly regardless of whether it is character assassination or not”, added MM. “But character assassination is strengthening and rendering this person more powerful as his people are supporting him more, and some others are sympathizing with him”, deemed RT (non-partisan). According to RT’s judgement, one can deduce that smear campaigns can fit under the umbrella of “bad publicity is good publicity”. Veritably, MS presumed that character assassination can only affect the undecided audience. Yet overdoing it will make it obvious that the media or the opponents are trying to maliciously harm the politician’s reputation; thus, it will have a reverse effect. Overall, MS suggested that this phenomenon, whether the third type celebrity politicians or character assassination, can be solved if people learn to gauge the content, argument, or evidence, rather than the gossip.

Speakers and Impression Management

a. Fadi El Khatib Speeches

Focus group 1, that read anonymous discourses, concluded that the rhetorician was basically promoting himself and is not being sincere at all. They all criticized the fact that he happened to be abroad in times of the crisis, as mentioned in his introduction, which invalidates the speaker’s

claims that he is suffering like any other Lebanese living in Lebanon. MN even argued that “this is self-advertisement”. In view of that, the respondents asserted that the main impression the spokesperson sent was self-promotion. TS carried on that although what he is saying is the truth, the delivery was mainly understood as self-promotion, that’s why, MN claimed that Khatib was not being honest. Add to the above, they all agreed that he employed supplication throughout the speech. The majority also supposed that he is being emotional; as in relying on pathos to fulfill his objective. NR said that he relied on this appeal insofar as he became so pathetic: “he saddened me, especially that he is taking advantage of the Lebanese situation”. While CH assumed that Khatib is reflecting foresightedness, four partakers viewed him as populist. At last, not only the statement “we will fight you till the end” was seen as intimidating, but sentences like “you will [suffer] soon once you will not be able to withdraw your salaries and then you’ll regret it” and “what is coming is worse than what we’re facing today”, etc. were thought of as threatening as well.

Similarly, focus group 2, that was aware who the speakers of each discourse are, majorly thought that the chief impression conveyed by Khatib is self-promotion mainly due to his excessive usage of “I”. According to KS, the athlete has a clear announced goal which is becoming a sports minister which is why all his claims are based on populism. Add to the fact that Fadi El Khatib, just like most of the celebrities, applied for the golden residency in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) once the situation deteriorated in Lebanon. This reduced his credibility and “proved that he was being a populist”, KS ended. MW admitted that although self-promotion is obvious, he cannot be perceived as competent because Khatib simply presented the problem without offering any solution. MM, on the other hand, ensured that the sportsman is not in need to promote himself since he has a well-established image almost everywhere. He compared what Khatib did

to NBA star LeBron James' taking a stand on an important issue. Therefore, MM proposed that this is not self-promotion, but exemplification. MS added that he might seem ideal to the protestors only especially that he was appealing to their emotions. AM furthered that even though the speaker resorted to self-promotion and exemplification, he is being honest and transparent because "that is the truth, eventually". Others agreed that he was self-confident, ingratiating, and so emotional to mobilize the public.

b. Gebran Bassil Speeches

The first group concurred that the main impressions applied in this discourse were self-promotion and exemplification. Four members saw Bassil as self-confident whereas two other presumed that he was assertive insomuch as he was perceived as superior or egoistic. The majority considered that the ideas reflected the speaker's good understanding of the situation thus erudite, particularly that he tackled the citizens' needs and demands. Nonetheless, four youngsters admitted that his proposal may be either unrealistic or unreachable, that even SB said "his plan was off in la-la land!" Bassil's proposal was simultaneously criticized because the problems addressed are already known, so he is not presenting something new, knowing that these were the same issues that the demonstrators were listing and Lebanon is now suffering from. While many perceived him as empathetic and compassionate principally that he professed his understanding to the people's revolting and asked them to remain in the streets to pressure the government to work effectively, SB (LF), who announced that she might have guessed who delivered this speech, surmised that he is using intimidation to force protestors to leave the streets. Her justification was "it is either that we abide by the strategy he suggested and leave the streets or we will reach total collapse" and that is frightening, she supposed. On the contrary, NR

(Amal Movement) deplored this standpoint by insisting that “someone must lead and initiate”. “There is a problem and he suggested a solution, even though it is unreachable, but he did something”, she added. By the same token, most of the young adults had already averred that he is a problem-solver and another said that he is strategic. What SB discerned as threatening, few saw as heedfulness and foresightedness noting that CH, who approved that Bassil is being prudent, furthered that this is somehow pretentious as well. MAC (FPM) figured out that the deputy can be seen as populist chiefly due to the phrase “remember that there is a known – unknown fifth column that exists among people”. Three other partakers conformed to this idea, including TS (FPM). This speech, in sum, was “liked and disliked at once”, according to TS!

This oration was heavily debated by the second group especially that those who oppose him were evaluating it based on what he has done not on what he said. On the contrary, his supporters were assessing the content and the reasons that hindered him from putting his plan into action. The impressions that were listed by FPM affiliates were: exemplification, self-promotion, strategic, logical, self-confident, foresighted, honest, attentive, and aware. According to KS, he is consummate because his actions complied with his proposals. In fact, Bassil and his bloc were the only ones to lift their banking secrecy and immunity in order to help fight corruption in the country. Besides, he weighed up the situation and anticipated the current crisis if we don’t adopt a solution. Thusly, he is prudent as well as frank, “since he did not lie to the public; he told them the truth rather than declaring that everything is okay or will be okay”, claimed KS and MS. Khatib and Bassil’s speeches include self-promotion, but the main difference between the two, as stated by MS, is that Khatib publicized himself and what he will be doing in the future or during the demonstrations. Bassil promoted himself by giving an action plan to overcome the problem and showcasing the effects. AM discerned that the orator hyped himself a lot by mentioning

“what he did, what he envisioned, etc.”. Nevertheless, that does not deny the fact that he is the only one who proposes strategies and solutions. Likewise, KS ensured that no one other than the FPM and President Aoun are calling for capital control and reform laws, the forensic audit and ways to retrieve looted money back. RT (non-partisan) affirmed that “this is a very logical speech: this is what everyone wants and is demanding for at the end of the day, but what we need most is to implement what he said.” Inversely, Kataeb and Lebanese Forces affiliates expostulated the speech by saying that it is trivial and that Bassil is populist and dishonest. They surmised that he is untrustworthy because “actions speak louder than words” (as cited by MW) which is why she does “not listen to him speaking anymore”. In his turn, MM avowed that “we have been hearing the ‘electricity story’ more than a hundred times”. He also objected his talking about the McKinsey plan stating that no one demurred it which makes his idea “not on point”. As for the return of the displaced proposal, “it’s inconvenient right now”, he concluded. In reply to this point, MS explained that the cabinet must ratify the McKinsey plan and all the ministers, not only Bassil, must approve it due to Lebanon’s consensus democracy. Else, it will never be implemented. In the same context and reflecting on the criticism that “Bassil wants to do something but he never does”, MS adduced that the electricity plan is developed by him, it is not cogent that he, at the same time, does not want to implement it. In actual fact, Bassil’s adversary Samir Geagea (president of the Lebanese Forces) is the one who said: “it is his own project, he definitely wants to execute it!” He carried on that if Bassil is being obstructed, that does not mean that he doesn’t want to put his words into action. AM seconded that the problem lies in the Ministry of Finance. Proof is, the minister Ali Hassan Khalil, himself, publicly announced "أنا
"روخف ليطعنا لمعم ريد راعم" (translated to: “I am proud to cripple *Deir Amar*’s power plant project”). It is ergo a problem with the constitution or the system that hinders one from achieving

something, not solely Gebran Bassil. MS linked this case to character assassination by attesting that “the Lebanese are ‘assassinating’ the minister who offered a strategy that was approved by the entire government because they do not dare arraign the minister of finance (that belongs to Amal Movement/powerful speaker of the house Nabih Berri) who impeded it.”

c. Saad El Hariri Speeches

Concerning the Prime Minister’s speeches, his excessive use of supplication made the answerers in focus group 1 view his entire discourse negatively. For instance, NR believed that “he is not helpless, he is simply blaming others for the problem in times where he must be responsible” since he, supposedly, occupies a powerful position. CH proposed that he is trying to make himself ideal, yet the others admitted that he failed to do so and, instead, appeared incompetent. In CH’s opinion, in spite of his attempt to employ ingratiation when he supported the revolutionaries, or when he declared “people sent us a message, but they have been waiting for us to send them a message for several months now...”, many, including CH herself, recognized him, instead, as more of a populist. MAC clarified that he is emotionally taking advantage of the public or “manipulating the recipients’ emotions”. Hariri’s immoderate use of “I” and “me” made the minority think that he is resorting to self-promotion whilst the majority thought he was boasting or showing off himself and his ‘false’ achievements. In actual fact, TS averred that “he is self-confident to a provocative level”. Rather than employing self-promotion, he was trying to victimize himself, said MAC. She explained by comparing, unknowingly, Bassil’s speech to that of Hariri: “it is as if we are listening to two brothers complaining about each other. The first is the elder and is mightier (or sturdy), the second is younger and is acting as a victim! Yet, the content is somehow similar”. In the same context, KG and MN stated that

the repetition of the expression “it doesn’t work” proved that he was victimizing himself with the aim of making the audience sympathize with him; thus, vindicate and love him. Granted that his statement “I will have another say” reflected intimidation, MN, by contrasting how Hariri started and ended his ‘performance’, deduced that the speaker is a hypocrite. “He started as a very helpless man and suddenly made a 180-degree change as he became threatening” which makes one question or even nullify all of his previous arguments, he inferred.

The opinions of the second focus group were not different from the ones mentioned earlier. Truly, they all granted that it is mostly based on supplication and that he was trying to appeal to the listeners’ emotions. GM (LF) and MS (FPM) clarified that had the name of the speaker been hidden, one would feel the presence of confrontation and would profess that the spokesperson has fulfilled all of his duties; i.e. exemplification. Natheless, the fact that Saad El Hariri, the man who has utmost powers in Lebanon, is speaking annuls all his claims. “He could have accomplished these things without giving excuses since he’s the Prime Minister”, MS furthered. Heeding that he has the greatest powers, he seemed populist too when he mentioned some statements like: “we have been waiting for our national partners and the Government to go along with the agreed solution, but we can no longer wait”, etc. They questioned why didn’t he take some actions “while he was waiting”, warned or at least informed the public about these wrongdoings. On the flip side, AM (FPM) declared that “even if we remove his name, the speaker will remain so obvious!” The participant suggested adding a sixth impression, “comic”, to the Impression Management theory. He perceived the entire discourse as a comedy aiming at “underestimating the minds of the audience”. While KS claimed that Hariri is reputing himself frequently, AM contemplated that he is admitting his mistake because the “Hariri policy”

قريباً (is the direct and main reason of the current collapse. AM elucidated that the

‘debt policy’ established by Rafik El Hariri since the 1990s which was based on lending money from foreign sources like the international conferences Paris 1, 2, and 3, as well as the high interests offered by the banks to the depositors led to this crisis. Having said that, Saad El Hariri is telling the listeners that he sought another amount of money from CEDRE which will aggravate the problem rather than solve it. In addition to the above, KS agreed that Hariri is acting, but his performance is a mixture of comedy and drama at once. MM (LF) elaborated that it’s satirical that “it makes one cry”. The difference between Bassil and Hariri speeches is that the latter’s is full of poetry whilst the former is more organized and simple, according to MM. RT supposed that the discourse is logical and populist at once “regardless of who the speaker is”. Yet, all of these speeches are kind of very identical, she lastly deduced.

Khatib, Bassil, or Hariri?

To summarize the youths’ stances, the moderator asked each which speaker was more logical and which one was emotional the most. In focus group 1, SB who also assumed that Saad El Hariri gave the third ‘anonymous speech’, favored Fadi El Khatib’s discourse although she negatively criticized it at first! She supported her choice by saying that she chose it “based on the vibes conveyed”. She added that she could relate with the first one, the second speaker “gave us a useless reform plan” and the third disquisition was totally inapt for the situation. TS, NR, and MAC believed that the second was cogent especially that he proposed a plan. MAC declaimed that all of the speeches were ill-suited since “it’s not the appropriate time for these claims” apropos Bassil and Hariri’s, whereas Khatib “had no point since citizens were ahead of him and had already joined the uprising regardless of what he said.” Nevertheless, she admitted that Bassil tried to stick to logos only setting aside how really convincing he was. CH, who preferred

the athlete's, accorded with MAC while insisting that "[Bassil's] points are logical but obvious for it is everyone's demands anyways". NR oppositely attested that what Gebran Bassil proposed "was what we really need today" and that he seemed as "willing to put himself out there and take responsibility." MN objected all of the speeches reckoning that "they are all illogical especially [Hariri's] one." As for who employed pathos the most, all participants agreed that it was Fadi El Khatib. Add to it that the majority posited "it was emotional and staged too".

In focus group 2, there was a consensus that Gebran Bassil was the most logical, except for MW and MM (LF) who named Fadi El Khatib and "no one", respectively. It is important to mention that GM (LF) noted that "Gebran was very logical only if we hide his name before reading the speech." At last, four partakers perceived Khatib's disquisition very emotional, two thought that Hariri used pathos the most, and MM pondered that it was the three speakers equally.

5.3 Interviews

Celebrities in Politics

To start with exploring the phenomenon of celebrities weighing in on politics, mass communication expert Dr. Joseph Ajami denoted that these public figures foster democracy and strengthens a country's accommodating everyone, and giving him/her the right to vote, be voted for, market and promote him/herself, name, ideas, and image. Add to that, their engagement leads to great competition regarding different aspects like public approval, votes, likes and shares on social media, and even in getting an edge over the others. The interviewee related his idea to the Libertarian theory "which allows for competing ideas, even the false [ones]" in that open market. From a celebrity politician's viewpoint, basketballer Fadi El Khatib believed that famous people's participation in politics increases public engagement only if this celebrity is qualified

enough to hold a political position. He explained that competent people will be able to work effectively if the position they will handle is their field of expertise; thus, will introduce many improvements. As the public realizes these ameliorations, they will be stimulated to participate more in the political life. By the same token, journalist Ghadi Francis stated that the main advantage of leading lights' talking politics is that they "normalize people's interest in public affairs" and remove the 'elitism stereotypes' i.e. restricting political discussions to the intelligentsia only. Indeed, "when a loved and nice sport public figure engages in politics, he encourages other people who have other ideas to express themselves as well." Another advantage mentioned by Francis is that it diversifies the political narrative; ergo, benefit from different perspectives, unprecedented or unrepeated worthwhile ideas. On the contrary, celebrities who are not qualified to talk politics would increase sophistry which means devaluing the political speech, its profundity, wisdom, as well as increasing its superficiality.

Celebrities Weighing in on Politics: Reasons and Goals

The interviewed celebrity politician Fadi El Khatib claimed that the main reason that made him get involved and deliver political speeches is his concern about Lebanon. He conceded that he was able to foresee the current crisis and warn everyone about it during his 2018 Inside Game Interview. The reason is that since he is also a Lebanese businessman, his dealing with the banks that were offering illogical interests, along with the failed financial management supported by a corrupt political system, and the news about the closure of some banks were all messages indicating that the system is gradually collapsing. On that account, he sensed the responsibility of alerting people in the midst of all reassurances uttered by the Lebanese officials. Having said that, and knowing that Khatib engaged in politics before the start of the uprising, it became clear

that, regardless of his intense interest and partaking in the revolution, he did not abuse it for political reasons. Joseph Ajami declared that the “so-called revolution”, which he avouched is a misnomer, was “a golden opportunity to exploit.” It actually “provided [celebrities] with a great opportunity to express their views up to jumping on that bandwagon because even politics and revolutions are fashion!” Add to that, public figures were able to take advantage of it to enhance their status and brand themselves as caring citizens who want to fight corruption because the rebellion “was accessible, easy, cheap but even free [...] and the political status of the country gave them good content that they were able to exploit”. It was in a nutshell “a window to go through and express their anger, indignation, and pain”, reckoned Ajami. Correspondingly, Khatib admitted that many rode the revolution’s wave for political purposes especially that a number of famous persons “were holding some meetings for that purpose”. In spite of what preceded, celebrities are well-aware that they are influencers. They are capable of giving people incentives “to join, like, share, and subscribe to [their] ideas.” Thereof, a few sincerely joined the demonstrations because they found it “a great opportunity to make a nudge, or dent in people’s opinions, behavior, and political ideology”, added Ajami.

Celebrity Politicians: What Makes Them Distinct?

Scrutinizing why it is easier for the renowned to throw themselves into the political realm compared to non-famous individuals, Joseph Ajami suggested that these people first have the ability to capitalize on their own fame. Second, they have an already-established name recognition which makes it possible for the public to identify them, their views, and affiliations. In point of fact, Ghadi Francis posited that they “have something positive to kick off their journey with, for example, they resemble people, they are civil just like them, they are cut from a

different cloth.” Their social media presence, according to Ajami, boosted that recall too and made it easier for them to further capitalize on their political affiliations and promote their ‘brand’ and political agenda. Third, these people enjoy a certain celebrity status: they have followers, they have fans who love them, look up to them, and even idolize them. Scilicet, they have an already entrenched credibility which is “so important: it means that people think highly of [them] and this is an added advantage, no doubt”, Ajami denoted. Cashing in on 17 October’s revolution surely degraded many personalities’ integrity, yet Fadi El Khatib acknowledged that his rejection to undertake the ministry that was recently offered to him helped him maintain his trustfulness.

In the basketballer’s opinion, it is not merely his name recognition that enriched his public acceptance, nor solely his sports achievements. It is a mixture of the above, as well as his attainments and knowledge in different fields and the strategies and improvements that must be introduced in some political sectors:

“... we don’t have technocrats working in our ministries. That’s why we were more accepted by the Lebanese because they perceived Fadi as someone who has succeeded in sports, in business, in politics, and at the same time, he is speaking the people’s language. So definitely, that was an added value for me.”

In a country where ‘parachute politicians’ are dropped into their governmental positions due to political considerations or their affiliations, as mentioned by Khatib, celebrity politicians can benefit from a prominent strong point. The sportsman listed how can a technocrat celebrity politician work for the Ministry of Youth and Sports because he is erudite. He discussed that this specialist understands well what are his duties, objectives and what areas must be addressed. He

knows how to develop individual and team sports, how to succor talents, provide them sponsorships, lobby for local and foreign support to reach international championships, organize the federations, market the games, restructure the entire sports field, and raise funds for the country through sports. Not only that, but a sports minister's job involves activating small villages and engage them in sports also. In other words, competent celebrity politicians are probably welcomed because they will be able to make a difference since, based on Khatib's assertion, "we know all of this and we can determine what should be accomplished and how because we spent time thinking, examining, working, and accordingly setting plans."

On the personal level, Ghadi Francis assumed that getting into politics may personally benefit the celebrity. She elucidated that when famous personalities thrash out a topic outside of their domain, they primarily educate themselves before discussing it. They will thus upgrade their proficiency in another field because they will feel responsible towards public opinion, as a result develop into better leaders.

Withal, being distinct can have its downsides too. Rather than ennobling and evolving into better leaders, Francis pointed out to the big potential of celebrities becoming profiteers who exploit their work and careers to serve their political ambitions. Consequently, "their integrity in their initial job will be decayed". That is especially true when that job becomes a means to an end thereof "sometimes accompanied with corruption, discretion, bias, personal interest, exploiting people" etc. They will, eventually, "change into politicians, or practice politics in their day-to-day life". The political campaigns specialist agreed with some focus group participants who stated that weighing in on politics can affect the popular figures' image and sometimes damage them as individuals. This frequently happens in Lebanon because it is a polarized society, she

explained. So “when they give a political opinion, a part will be against them, and another will support them; hence, their initial jobs will be affected: they will enter this chaos!” Nonetheless, Khatib recognized no disadvantage in celebrities’ involvement in politics only if they are being honest, candid, engaging for the sake of the country not their personal gains, and “shedding light on the things that really must be tackled, specially the little issues that no one is aware of.” For that reason, Francis declared that once a public figure “starts talking and theorizing like politicians, he/she will directly fail because he/she won't be perceived as real anymore but as someone who is ambitiously seeking a political post.” Same goes to when they make any mistake. Stardom made these stars under constant scrutiny and forced them to maintain a certain level of excellence. Therefore, “any little fall or snafu or misstep may ruin the credibility of this person”, said Ajami. This con is tricky to the extent that the specialist illustrated it by describing the basketball fans who will think that Fadi El Khatib “is having a bad night” if he “scores only 10 points in a game”! Even more, “the media can ruin their potential” if they “make a lousy mistake”. He supported his standpoint by referring to America’s Gary Hart who “was a leading candidate in the Presidential primaries in America in the 1980s up until a young, beautiful model called Donna Rice sat on his lap on his yacht.” When the National Enquirer magazine captured that moment and published it, Hart “resigned and quit the presidential campaign.” Indeed, “media can make or break a celebrity” Ajami concluded.

Data gathered from the interviews proved that what has been mentioned previously is not restricted to celebrity politicians only, but to the political celebrities too. In sooth, Ajami claimed that it is not only Fadi El Khatib who has the name and glory in his field and “is capitalizing on his fame coming from his athletic prowess” as he “is probably the most celebrated name in the history of [Lebanese basketball]” but Bassil and Hariri also do have the same ‘privilege’. He

furthered that Saad El Hariri benefits from his last name, and the fact that he is the “son or heir of a politician and belongs to an empire called “Hariri Empire”.” Similarly, Gebran Bassil capitalizes on his status as a leader of a large political party and his being the son-in-law of President Michel Aoun. Their celebrityhood leads them to the same drawback: the fear of making any faux pas. The media expert alluded to Bassil’s becoming the target of jokes, insults, and chants during the revolution. The song directed against Bassil “entered the collective memory of the Lebanese [...] every time you think of [it] or any time you think of Gebran Bassil. you automatically think about [...] what has been] sang in the streets.” This means that political celebrities do have plenty of responsibility and “all eyes are on [them]”: everybody is waiting for them to fall down “and the biggest disadvantage is that this mistake can be magnified because [they] are celebrities.”

With that being said, it is obviously easier for a celebrity to enter the political world while “it would be a long road to hoe for a person coming out of nowhere to establish him/herself as a potential candidate”. A ‘regular’ person’s entry to this realm requires “passing through many phases [...] whereas the celebrity is able to skip many of these them” assumed Joseph Ajami. Yet, what is challenging is the famous person’s ability to make the transition from being a celebrity in his field, to a celebrity in the political world. Ajami clarified that, in Khatib’s case for example, the sports figure needs traditional and new media to attain that convergence as it is the latter that will enhance his chances. As a matter of fact, “that’s what actually happened [with Khatib] to the extent that at one point and even now, his name was being thrown around as a potential government minister. This means that he had already put himself in a position to be thought of as a potential government minister in any new government.” In short, Ajami inferred that being a celebrity politician or political celebrity is “a status and a burden at once.”

Celebrity Influence vs. Political Influence

According to Ghadi Francis, there is a fine line between influence in popularity and influence in politics. “A celebrity is someone you like, you comment on their posts, you follow what they’re wearing [...] you enjoy their lifestyle; they are people that you watch but they are not people that you choose to lead you in politics.” Yet, influence in politics is the power to impact human decision and behavior to accomplish political objectives and affect a policy. The respondent alluded to the value of communication that has the ability to transform a celebrity into a politician or make the politician a real influencer.

“A politician who is able to play this kind of communication into his best interest will succeed as a political celebrity and if an influencer is able to go into politics from being mindful and have a large fan base, maybe on social media which can really help today, in addition to a rich background in political issues will be able to make an influence and succeed.”

Second-Type Celebrity Politicians: A Successful Approach?

Examining the goals of utilizing propaganda techniques by type two celebrity politicians, Joseph Ajami referred back to the idea of name recognition in which politicians aim at making a name, creating a good image for themselves, and generate publicity. Another objective is their need for “more fans, more support, more approval rate, etc.” Still, name recognition alone is not enough as “it might have a negative connotation”. When addressing this concept, the communication and media expert stressed on differentiating between “fame” and “infamy” which “is the state of being famous for the wrong reason” like being a popular criminal for example. Hence, propaganda’s grail is to project a positive name and image of the legislator.

That is especially true if we take into account that “it makes people feel that [politicians] are close to them” and in touch with the real world, mentioned Ghadi Francis. The journalist considered that it is helpful since it can promote a certain character about the politician. To exemplify, Saad El Hariri’s two videos singing the *Hala Bel Khamis* song that went viral on social media in 2017 could reflect his fun character, notwithstanding that it “did not really benefit [him] for several reasons”. Being perceived as funny by the Lebanese people, explained Francis, will never change his opponents’ opinion about him nor his popularity, which is not dependent on propaganda. Add to that, “he is not a fresh, clean politician [... and] has his own baggage which makes it impossible for everyone to believe that he will be able to solve Lebanon’s crisis even if he keeps on singing *Hala Bel Khamis* [forever].” Francis deemed there is nothing negative with propaganda or acting like celebrities except when the approach leads to sophistry or appears as trifling for fun. She criticized Hariri’s throwing a paper airplane in the sky a couple of years ago which was used later on as a joke that people shared on social media after UAE’s launching their rocket to Mars! “What he did showed how pathetic Lebanese politics is and how pathetic he is too; hence, his propaganda wasn’t for his advantage that time.” To preserve the positive powers of propaganda, the political campaign professional underscored the importance of having a clever team to set accurate goals that can guide an efficient strategy. The political branding tactics must remain real as in reflecting who this person really is, argued Francis. “Be a celebrity but be a real one [...] do not set a show”. Moreover, she condemned the statesmen’s adopting ‘foreign techniques’ to promote themselves. Propaganda tools must be properly adapted to the country, culture, and citizens; else, they will not be effective. Verily, “the campaign must be inspired from the receptors because this politician represents them as well as the objectives and target he has, rather than reproducing another person with different aims’

campaign.” Ajami claimed that politicians try to sustain their marketing efficiency by resorting to tactics put under the umbrella of propaganda such as public relations (PR) or public diplomacy. By using these techniques, they try “to prevent its becoming obvious brainwashing”, rather, let it appear as “good work and good will”. Even though Ghadi Francis considered social media as an addition that aided politicians in acting like celebrities by posting a lot of pictures, and interacting with different issues, she assumed statesmen must remain real while publicizing themselves if they want to succeed. A political celebrity also “needs the charisma, the money, and some deeds to “plant in people’s mind the idea that [he] is a good guy, a trustworthy guy, worthy of your votes” supposed Ajami. Yet, propaganda can really work on some people without huge effort because “the Average Joe¹⁴” is being majorly targeted. To put it another way, “propaganda works because people think it is public policy, which is good will, whereas in fact it is propaganda.” He touched on the TV ads on different local stations displaying the American ambassador to Lebanon distributing face masks or help realizing some projects in Lebanese rural areas. That’s the fine line between public diplomacy, public relation, and publicity: The U.S.’ work is not good will but propaganda, the communication expert posited. But after all, the success and failure of all approaches “depend on the quality they are presenting”, in the opinion of Francis.

Do Celebrity Politicians Resort to Propaganda?

“Not at all. I wish!” Although Fadi El Khatib affirmed in a short statement his refraining from adopting propaganda techniques, this claim cannot be generalized to all public figures. In fact, the basketballer conceded that other famous individuals follow some branding strategies to

¹⁴ Average Joe: an ordinary, average person

increase their fan base or followers on social media. He claimed that he does not endorse these tactics because he is “honest and straightforward” and prefers staying that way. To support his idea, he referred to a PR specialist who told him she was shocked upon checking his Instagram profile and realizing that he doesn’t have a very organized page, and only about 155 thousand followers. She made certain that had he branded himself better on typical new platforms, he would have no less than two million followers. The interviewee added that he “uploads whatever comes to [his] mind” even if the picture is blurry, without editing it or adding filters.

On whether he might do propaganda in case he becomes a minister, Khatib, again, ensured “I’ll stay as I am because people loved me as I am”. He believed that the work he will accomplish especially in fighting corruption will outweigh any marketing tool that he might implement. He would also never turn to propaganda not only because that “is not the real me”, but because Khatib supposed that he wouldn’t have to appeal to a particular group because he is “loved from both sides” in the country. Therefore, he wouldn’t allow any governmental position to ruin this admiration. In sum, as cited by him, “I guarantee that I wouldn't be anything other than myself.”

Third-Type Celebrity Politicians: Is It Truly “By No Will of Their Own”?

Before all else, why does a political figure become a target of news and even character assassination? Joseph Ajami declared that their status and popularity is the initial reason that exposes them to gossip. “No one will target someone who has no followers or power or political position” eventually! Another reason is that “people are fascinated with news about celebrities” and they love juicy stories regarding these individuals, which is something psychological. That is part of the supply and demand notion, so a person who gives people constant food for thought will become an easy target as well. Add to that, “gossip has been a major part of journalism for a

long time.” The interviewee reiterated the disadvantage he stated earlier which is the popular person’s meeting the public’s expectations; otherwise, he/she “will become a prey for the media” that “thrive on bad news”. However, character assassination is another kind of “game”, according to Ajami and Francis, who shared the same stance regarding this topic. As expressed by the former, slander “is a political game no doubt and it goes beyond entertainment and gossip. It falls deep into what we call political agenda of his opponents as they try to find any gap or any little misstep or mistake, or any statement that he makes to capitalize on it and try to ruin his political career.” Similarly, the latter professed that anybody might be “a target of character assassination when he is harmful for someone, for an agenda, a group, a political party, a nation.” In today’s political game, Francis explained, “people are being fought by being smothered” i.e. “by targeting their popularity”. That is because literally assassinating a leader will not affect his/her followers; rather, his/her popularity might grow. Nevertheless, character assassinating him/her might lead to his/her failure. Consequently, another political group will be able to replace him/her and inherit his/her popularity. “This is how the game is done”, the journalist avowed.

Concerning Gebran Bassil, the deputy has been a target of fake news and character assassination because “he is of great interest for all people”. To begin with his status, Francis deemed “he is the spearhead or the logo of [President Aoun's] term and he is the logo of his alliance with Hezbollah and politically perceived for the last three years as the leader and that he is the head of the 'entire thing'. Ajami likewise, stated that Bassil “holds so much power or at least he is perceived so. For instance, people are accusing him of being the shadow President of Lebanon in place of his father-in-law but on the other hand, President Aoun himself said in an interview for Al Joumhouriya newspaper that no, "Gebran Bassil is my student, I don't work for him", reported

Ajami. Vilification is thus the price the leader of the FPM is paying for holding more responsibility than his actual role. Videlicet, Ghadi Francis assumed that Bassil served the “I am the leader image” by being on the front lines, while in fact, he is not. Politically wise, the interviewed representative claimed that his plan on giving back the Lebanese Christians’ their rights will definitely make him a target because other politicians believe “I am snatching something from them, and they don’t like that.” He added: “same goes to the accuse that I am racist because I want Syrians to return back to the safe regions in their home country.”

Psychologically speaking, Bassil is attacked partly because of envy”. Ajami expounded that “no one works for 18 hours like this man, no one is as ambitious as him, no one is that controversial, no one was that worth the traveler when he was Minister of Foreign Affairs”. Assuredly, Gebran Bassil himself attested that he used to work a lot when he was a minister and spend long hours, sometimes till to 2:00 in the morning, at the office. The former minister considered that hard work is uncommon in Lebanese politics as officials “are there, but they don’t work”. Hence, he is “their antipode, and they hate this ‘model’ in politics” which is one of the factors that made the opposition assail him. Enviousness is not exclusively Ajami’s judgement, but Bassil’s as well. For instance, he discussed that “others are jealous whenever a person exceeds them in one way or another, so this surpassing provokes them.” Committing to the position held is unconventional in Lebanon to the extent that many Lebanese favor the official who talks not the one who works, in Bassil’s opinion. He gave the example of the electricity issue as he deems it is the accurate representation of “talking vs. working”. “You hear all Lebanese saying “they didn’t provide 24-hour electricity”. Bassil acknowledged that people are right, but questioned why hasn’t anyone looked into the detailed plan that all previous ministers have set and worked on, queried the politicians who theorized about the failure of this project, then examined the reasons behind its

failure. Predicated on Joseph Ajami's averment, Gebran Bassil poses a risk on his rivals. Apart from being the son-in-law of the President of the Republic, Bassil is a powerful Maronite leader who heads the biggest Christian political party and has the largest bloc in the parliament; hence, is a potential candidate for presidency. Other Maronite politicians, including Sleiman Franjeh and Samir Geagea, are thusly trying to terminate him politically because they also have similar presidential aspirations. Furthermore, the parliamentarian contemplated that he is dissimilar to other politicians as he entered political life with different purposes and goals which might represent some things they are not. Francis even warranted that he entered the political scene as a new brand. Since literature on Bassil provides no justification for why he is said to be provocative other than MP Edy Maalouf's explanation, the statesman and Ghadi Francis tried to fill in this gap. Being that "new brand" is a major reason in the journalist's opinion. Yet, the way he approached this fact failed at proving this point:

"He is provocative for a very clear reason: he did not enter the Lebanese politics in the same way that others did, so he is dealing with totally different brands [the other politicians]. He actually entered this field as a new brand. But one time he needs to deal with them on the basis of "I don't resemble you", other times he wants to deal with them on the basis of "I can play your exact same game in a better way".

As for Gebran Bassil, he agreed with Maalouf and granted that his character cannot be always tolerated by people. The respondent admitted that he is forthright and sometimes utters things that might hurt the other. Despite thinking that "maybe I am really provocative, maybe it's a character-flaw, a defect, perhaps it's my boldness or my candidness", the legislator argued that one's traits are not what solely matters in politics. "What matters is whether I am corrupt or not,

whether I work for the sake of the country or not.” Similarly, in Ghadi Francis’ point of view, politically assassinating him “is blamed on the character he adopted for a couple of years”. She furthered that Bassil “has so much self-confidence or self-flattery that makes one not always accept his character”. This means that the third-type political celebrity “served character assassination through his personality and his TV appearances” and by taking different positions that gave people the opportunity to target him.

With all of this in mind, it would be vital to take into account Bassil’s anti-thesis to the definition of third-type celebrity politicians. It is not true that a political figure becomes a target of gossip and character assassination “by no will of his own”. Quite the opposite, it is his personality and political performance that play a huge role in him being a target. It is “not by no will of his own, definitely”, carried on Ghadi Francis. “This happened because of his political work.” She discussed that his opponents did not decide to attack him because he was standing tranquilly apart, but due to a certain reason he triggered. The interviewee even divulged that it is “not because of his character but because he is a spearhead in a certain political project [...] whether it is named President Aoun's term, or Hezbollah, or whatever”. Regardless of what this project is, "التايمس نلا ددعت دوصوملاو دحاو: ناربع" (translated to: the names vary, but the intended is one: Gebran); an originally Lebanese proverb altered by Francis!

All things considered, can Gebran Bassil be a new phenomenon himself? A fourth-type celebrity politician for instance?!

How is this “Political Game” Played?

Gebran Bassil reckoned that he has been facing this “attack” for 16 years, ever since he started his political career. He gives the example of the media spreading news about him spending 700 thousand dollars on his convoy to visit Syria, when in fact, he didn’t even go to Syria. Hence, this converges with the literature stating that Bassil is being attacked through fake news. Francis described that “the media usually use sex, money, and scandal to attack a politician” along with betrayal accusations. Another tactic, according to Ajami, is through the use of propaganda. He clarified that his adversaries “are waiting for any misstep to capitalize on it and try to ruin his image.” By simply having an ambition of becoming the Republic’s future president, his opponents propagate a hyperbolized idea that "yes he wants to become a president at any expense, at any cost, even if he has to ruin the country". The media specialist furthered that the ‘attackers’ tend to “give him too much power in an attempt to make him fall from this pedestal he is on.” To exemplify, “they put in the people’s mind [...] that he is currently standing in the way of forming a new government.” To cut a long story short, they are disseminating a false image of Bassil “being so much ambitious and a dictator who is even obliterating opposition within his own party”.

October 17th revolution was an alternative tool used by the head of the Free Patriotic Movement’s foes in an attempt to politically assassinate him. To illuminate, the West, the U.S. Europe, activists, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and social media gathered “on one side of the battle” versus a certain party. The former bombarded the viewers with the same message, but “what we see on TV is not what all people really want”, assumed Ghadi Francis. She believed that what happened is not about the event itself, but about the media; the one that

does the propaganda. The entire event was thus related to media agenda. “We don't really have journalism in Lebanon, we have mouthpieces”, she said. Each propagandist has a particular interest which makes this field a business in which “whoever buys it takes it.” This means that setting media agendas against Bassil is another way to slander him. Besides being controversial, putting agendas to attack him has further political dimensions. Francis reported that it happened to form a source of pressure on Hezbollah by pressuring his ally as well as the person who represents President Michel Aoun’s ideology, i.e. it was disguisedly targeted against the President. Bassil added to these two factors and his contentiousness that he was traduced because he is an ambitious politician, due to his ideology and plans, and since “they want to end President Aoun’s continuity which we, the FPM, the Aounists, represent.”

Is Character Assassination Working?

Joseph Ajami presumed that character assassination is working to a certain extent; whereas Ghadi Francis adjudged that its success and failure depends on how strong and stable the attacked politician is. If he/she is as such, “the scandal won’t really affect him/her and he/she will be able to overcome it.” For it to fulfill its objectives, smear campaigns “must build a solid base in order to be able to harm the person.” In Bassil’s case, media intensively tackled his properties and wealth, for example, hence established a base before trying to attack other issues. The journalist accordingly challenged anyone to “try to convince people that Gebran does not own a private jet before defending him in anything else”! The media, thereof, built a kind of sturdy wrong image about him. Responding to the focus group participant MS’ opinion that overdoing character assassination is no longer effective because it is producing a reverse effect, Bassil viewed it the other way around. He refused the citizens, even his opponents’ claim: “even

if Gebran is truly corrupt, he is not the only one, why are you solely attacking him?” by affirming that this statement confirms that his rivals succeeded in harming his reputation.

“I am not corrupt and I refuse to be one of them [the corrupt politicians], which basically means that they succeeded at, at least, spreading a false image about me; hence, character assassination reached its objectives. It is similar to when someone accuses Samir Geagea of murdering people during the war. You’ll find people telling you: “okay he killed, but he’s not the only one”, it’s the same concept with only one difference; he’s not the only one but he really killed back then, whereas I didn’t!”

To bear out his point, the former minister mentioned that he has always asked the antagonists to prove their accusations and even dared the Americans to do so after they sanctioned him; howbeit, no one presented any evidence. All of this means that “character assassination succeeded because, although there are no proofs, people still don’t believe it and refuse to see anything positive”, concluded Bassil.

Are Targets of Gossip and Fake News Always Targets of Character Assassination?

While the primary aim of spreading fake news on Gebran Bassil is to terminate him politically, third-type celebrity politicians are not always targets of character assassination. “Always keep in mind that bad publicity is the best kind of publicity” proclaimed Ghadi Francis. She gave the example of media stations’ broadcasting fake news on the Lebanese politician Wiam Wahhab that he was targeted at the Lebanese-Syrian borders by a drone aircraft. Knowing that bombardments happened at that place when Wahhab was in Syria, he was not really attacked! Instead of ending his political career or damaging his reputation, this wrong piece of

news transformed Wahhab into a national hero. He thusly took advantage of it to create and head the Arab Unification Party!

Can Propaganda Save Bassil?

“Definitely yes”, according to Bassil, but only “if his team was very, very smart” to accurately rebrand him, according to Francis. The journalist explained that Gebran Bassil did hire a good foreign PR firm; yet, it was not able to create a perfect, purposeful campaign to adjust his image. The reason is that foreigners do not understand well the old and current Lebanese political context, and the exact perceptions of the citizens towards politics, Bassil, and his plans. She therefore suggested that the team he employs must research, examine, and analyze the Lebanese society, diversity, media, the deputy’s political history and the project he is working on. Else, uploading pictures on social media, for example, would be useless, said Francis. Yet, she supposed that rebranding Gebran Bassil is possible “since a politician is never ‘assassinated’ except when he actually dies or ‘kills himself politically’.” As for the leader of the FPM, he doesn’t “like to adopt typical techniques like the selfie diplomacy and so on because [he is] authentic.” “That is who and how I am; I am natural and I don’t do this type of effort.” Aside from viewing some of these techniques as childish, Gebran Bassil lastly disclosed “I have weak communication points, and that is one of them, but that’s me, eventually.”

Celebrity Politicians, Dramaturgy, and Impression Management

Jumping to the research’s theory, the interviewed celebrity politicians denied planning any performance strategy for their speeches. Information gathered show that neither Fadi El Khatib nor Gebran Bassil design their discourses based on a certain impression they wish to

convey. Nonetheless, Bassil asserted that “a politician must appeal to people’s emotions not logic all of the time” especially that this can help a controversial figure overcome the audience’s refusal of his words or proposals only because they don’t like him. The two interviewees however ensured that they determine their discourse’s goals before ‘going on stage’. “I perfectly know and set my objectives when preparing my speech” says Bassil. Khatib too, divulged that he “definitely has messages or goals to convey.” While the basketballer’s aim is to fight the corrupt and cast light on unscrupulous issues, the legislator revealed the five main purposes he builds his speeches on:

- “Sometimes it is to explain about a project I am proposing;
- Sometimes it is to defend myself against something negative that is being said about me;
- Other times it is to attack/condemn an opposition;
- Sometimes it is to clarify to the public my point of view towards a certain topic;
- Other times it is to create an impact. “That is especially true when I am addressing the FPM supporters because, particularly post-revolution, I am sympathizing with them, I think they are being attacked or bullied and what I intend at doing is to raise their morale.”

Although the statesman assented that not resorting to staging and scripting techniques “is where I go wrong”, he announced that he didn’t introduce these tools to his speeches after the rebellion to appeal better to the citizens. Natheless, he kind-of changed his approach as he added a sixth goal which is “letting people really listen to what I am saying or proposing because they usually refute it only because I am delivering it.” For example, “I now count to ten before saying something especially if it might offend someone. I am also trying to reflect my sympathy with

the Lebanese post 17 October.” Francis commented that the official has “changed a lot”. His orations that used to reflect colossal power and knowledge, are now different. As a matter of fact, the journalist tweeted after one of Bassil’s speeches in 2021 that his style, tone, and approach have been recently positively revamped. Furthermore, what happened during the uprising led Gebran Bassil to “think in another way” that he even asked Francis, who usually opposes him, to provide him with her professional feedback and criticism.

If that is Bassil’s way of maintaining his power, how can Khatib, who goes unprepared every time, keep up his influence? As uttered by him, his honesty and frankness is what preserves his credibility. “People know that I will be talking about something true not fabricated, and they also know that I will be talking about the current situation we are all living, and they feel at the same time that I am talking in the name of everyone feeling that pain”, which, in his view, is what made the audience perceive him positively. In fact, credibility can be a major player in how the listeners perceive an impression that even Ajami claimed “the answer [on whether the revolution affected perception] is related to how credible the celebrity is.” The initial judgement “planted in our heads” towards a celebrity politician will make it harder for him/her to change; especially if it was negative. So, whenever we “think of a certain politician, something automatically comes to [our] minds.” Yet, Francis, who thinks that ameliorations can always happen, enjoined celebrity politicians to “destroy all of [their] ego, admit that [they] failed and try to change the entire thing rather than staying as is and fixing tiny little things every now and then.”

In general, what was basically altered post-17 October is the celebrity politicians’ exploitation of social media. That is since “they realized that social media is so trendy and prevalent”, explained Ajami.

Knowing that the adoption of the performance techniques by Saad El Hariri, i.e. type two political celebrity, remains uncertain as the researcher was not able to interview him, literature guaranteed he has been trained by professionals on how to speak publicly. For instance, Britannica (2021) stated that “Hariri worked to forge and refine his own political identity” after winning the 2005 parliamentary elections. Also, he has been developing his speaking skills, mainly by Paula Yacoubian, though her company “Integrated Communications”. Her firm provides tailored and customized training to politicians and “fine-tunes several aspects including eye contact, hand gesture, and charisma” (as cited by Yacoubian for The Daily Star newspaper). While Yacoubian denied coaching Hariri and restricted her job to only “giving him some tips here and there”, The Daily Star (n.d.) affirmed that “Prime Minister Saad El Hariri’s public appearances are said to have improved thanks to training received from Yacoubian.” Assuming that this is the case, Hariri might, unlike type one and three celebrity politicians, be preparing ahead his speech’s impression, scripting, and staging techniques. Apropos whether he modified his disquisitions because of the rebellion, Joseph Ajami supposed that Hariri himself and his speeches changed 180 degrees! The interviewee quoted not only President Aoun who declared during an interview that “Saad El Hariri has changed, he is not the same person anymore”, but Hariri too, who informed Aoun that “I have changed.” For Joseph Ajami, conversion is necessary “to prevent being perceived as very stubborn, conservative, and that you're not open to new ideas.” However, it must not be acute particularly when it comes to the character since it will damage the individual’s image. He exemplified that, Hariri has been known as a moderate politician. Yet suddenly, amid the quarrel over ministerial portfolios during his cabinet formation trial in 2020-2021, he took extreme positions and made immoderate declarations which altered

his entire personality. So if truly Saad El Hariri amended his discourses after the revolution, what he did “is a horrible change”, Ajami wrapped up.

In the opinion of the media professionals, “it's definitely a performance, all of it is a performance!” (Ghadi Francis). Applying typical techniques is a way to brand themselves, or sell their image to the audience, and that, for Ajami, is the job of media consultants who are in charge of managing the image, campaign, and even the candidates themselves. With reference to Francis, representatives do not present the same brand per every performance. Every time they make an appearance, they sell the audience a different image and impression. To give an instance of that, Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah, classified as Lebanon’s best public speaker, can on a certain occasion, give the impression of the considerate, even sometimes humorous, leader, while in another speech can seem the most threatening of all. The journalist referred to one of his famous statements "ركنك ول، دحاً يا، دحاً نأ عزن و حلاس هلقيس، ةمواقم ل لائق ن بولابركلا ن بؤداه شئسلًا" (translated to: if anyone, any person, thinks of disarming the resistance, we will fight him like the martyrs of Karbala) (a reference to a battle in Islamic history pivotal to the Shia). Nasrallah managed to project the threatening impression during that discourse in an attempt to “convey a certain message regarding a certain goal.” Having said that, it can be deduced that impressions sent vary according to the objective that the speaker wants to fulfill. Hence, although Bassil and Khatib don’t manage their impressions, they are unconsciously there through their orations’ goals. The perception Nasrallah transmitted is now stuck in the public’s minds that nothing can change it “unless he personally tells us otherwise”, viz., if he delivers an impression that contradicts the first. Same goes to President Michel Aoun who told the Lebanese "اي بعش ن انبل، مي طعلا" (translated to: Oh great people of Lebanon). That phrase, which served a particular aim at that time and later on became his trademark, reflects pride, confidence in his people, and grandeur. Ghadi Francis

proclaimed that the leaders were exuding their ideologies and revealing a part of who they are. Showing varied impressions is healthy because celebrity politicians must be as broad as possible to intrigue and attract the audience more. As an illustration, Francis clarified that former President Barack Obama is a distinct person with a distinct message almost every time he makes a performance.

“Obama in David Letterman's¹⁵ show is different from Obama who took off his jacket, is different from Obama when he appears with his wife, different from Obama when he's surrounded with people, different from Obama who killed Bin Laden, etc.”

Public figures are thus “messengers”, in Francis’ standpoint, who have to ‘play their role’ exclusively at every appearance.

Moving to the scripting and staging techniques, Francis shared her personal experience with an Iraqi official for whom she handled the ‘production of his performances’. She made clear that the latter is the leader of a group that fought the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) and accordingly, had to deliver a speech after a massacre that took place in the country. Because that was the ‘theme’, the ‘stage’ was the museum of resistance and the ‘script’ threw light on grievance, murder, and ideology. To perfectly perform his part, the statesman was trained by Francis to higher his pitch, tone, and voice when necessary, to pause when needed, and to gesture appropriately. By imitating different parts of the Iraqi politician’s oration, the trainer was able to prove that staging and scripting techniques have the power to alter the entire meaning of the exact same statement. “Saying it calmly with a smile is a total different message than when you

¹⁵ David Letterman is an American TV host. He interviewed President Obama in his show “My Next Guest Needs No Introduction”.

say it with a specific tone, higher pitch, and gesture”, she adduced. As Francis said that “there are a lot” of techniques, Ajami furthered that media consultants advise the celebrity politicians on what to wear, when to smile, what to do, when to cry, when to have teary eyes, when to be joyful, and so on.” As for scripting, the mass media professional reckoned that politicians come up with a slogan as part of their discourses. This indicates that the slogans MP Gebran Bassil includes and announces in some of his speeches, especially those made during important occasions, such as "قبس، قيس، قيس، قيس" launched on the 3rd of November 2019, is a distinctive scripting method implemented, in Lebanon, by Bassil almost solely. Other means utilized is “speaking the people’s language”. That is done by finding commonalities between the speaker and the audience, then setting ideas correspondingly. Joseph Ajami insisted that stating a message that the public can relate to and that resonates with them is crucial because this would give the impression that the celebrity politician is comprehensive, and friendly as he “came down from [his] Ivory Tower”. Francis likewise considered that a political celebrity must give the audience what they really need to listen to succeed in creating an impact. That can be part of a spokesperson giving the impression that he/she is realistic and pragmatic, not a dreamer. Even being a dreamer “in a positive sense”, according to Ajami, is healthy as it gives hope to the listeners, while ‘negatively dreaming’ projects the perception that this person is “selling [people] words.” Hence, self-promotion and exemplification should be reflected by offering doable and manageable projects or promises. At last, honesty, transparency, finding common ground, remaining true to themselves, and allowing their “real personality shine” exceeds any ‘fake’ or arranged tactic.

Discussion

Information collected from the three research methods, particularly the interview with Fadi El Khatib, proved Street (2004) claim that “celebrity conversion into politics is the product of the social and political context in their countries.” Verily, the athlete’s aim of becoming a sports minister is to enhance related institutions that were mishandled due to the parachute politicians’ duplicity and incompetency. Moreover, celebrities’ participation in the so-called revolution was, as uttered by Joseph Ajami, “the perfect window” for a few of them to express their anger and willingness to fight corruption. The country’s social and political context can however be “a golden opportunity to exploit” and promote themselves as ideal celebrity politicians. In both cases, the Lebanese crisis was an ideal reason for public figures to kick off their political journey from. In consistence with Doidge & Almedia (2017), popular people do trade on their stardom to place themselves in the political spotlight. Their status is not the only ‘advantage’ they build on, but these stars capitalize on their good name recognition as well as their influence. This is not solely the case of celebrities embarking into the political life, but type two and three political celebrities too who benefit from their family history, and current standing to promote themselves. Granted that these factors are vital, celebrity politicians have to make the most out of their communication skills as well to make a successful transition from their domain to the political world. The media, new or traditional, play a crucial role in making or breaking a potential representative. Referring back to the literature, footballer and statesman Romario made a good legislator because of the excellent combination of his football prowess, the politicized climate and the effective tactics he employed. Whilst Fadi El Khatib already has a well-established basketball stardom, a suitable socio-political context, and an effective previously

planned strategy for the Ministry of Youth and Sports, will he be able through good use of communication to become a next successful Romario?!

The findings have also revealed that celebrities' engagement in politics is vital for the society as well as democratic system. Other than enriching democracy and providing an open market for varied names, ideas, and viewpoints, this phenomenon fosters every citizen's right to think, and express his/her thoughts freely. Add to that, it equally grants everyone the privilege of having political aspirations, and accordingly, promote themselves and their image. Focus groups' partakers and the interviewees agreed that public figures' weighing in on politics encourage all other people to provide their opinions in public affairs. By doing so, celebrities not only eliminated political discussions' restriction to the intelligentsia or the "elitism stereotype" but broke the taboo of talking politics due to fear of reaching a clash. As a result, popular individuals and the public will enhance their knowledge in public affairs, and decrease political ignorance; thus, be able to make educated decisions in the future. So, in contrast to Reeves' (2015) results, mixing politics and celebrity does not necessarily hinder the functioning of democracy. Albeit, unqualified celebrities might increase political discourse or discussion's sophistry and superficiality; therefore, it is not always healthy that they give their opinions regarding every issue. The best thing to do, according to journalist Ghadi Francis, is to admit that they are not well-informed in this particular field. "The problem in our society is that everyone thinks he has the solution for everything" so unfortunately, we don't have people who are able to frankly say "I don't know". By saying so, it became evident that celebrity politicians restyled politics. Besides, it furthered John Corner and Dick Pel's pessimistic and optimistic positions towards it. While Corner and Pel argued that this phenomenon encourages the public's focus on image rather than content, and matching the aesthetic needs of the media, Ghadi Francis added that it

has a huge potential of increasing sophistry. Regarding the optimistic standpoint, celebrity politicians made politics more inclusive by introducing a performative restyling. Indeed, Gebran Bassil ensured that, today, a politician must appeal to people's emotions, not only logic, which makes impression management, staging and scripting vital. Francis in like manner, depicted how performative restyling affects perception, interpretation, and even the entire meaning of a message. Even though Corner and Pel's perspectives encompassed the phenomenon as a whole, Bassil added a new pessimistic viewpoint to third-type celebrity politics in general, and character assassination in particular. The presence of type three celebrity politicians allowed for rumors spread by people and the media to become an integrated 'standard' in politics. Fake news is now powerful that people can really be swayed. That is because "politics in Lebanon is superficial; it is based on gossips".

In accordance with foreign celebrities' views, the stars' engagement in politics can truly alienate the fans, especially in a polarized society like that of Lebanon. Although the mass media expert deemed public figures as influencers who are able to impact public opinion and decision-making, people are still hesitant about supporting celebrities with political aims. That is due to their belief that, in contrast to Street (2004), celebrities just like the politicians, do not resemble nor feel the ordinary citizens. To put it another way, they are not "in touch with the popular sentiment" (Street, 2004). For instance, some of the focus groups' participants criticized celebrities for leaving Lebanon as soon as the crisis began and seeking another nationality, such as UAE's Golden Residency in basketball player Fadi El Khatib's case. Even more, others refuted his speech because he delivered it from Saudi Arabia; i.e. theorizing from abroad. On the other hand, Khatib clarified that residing in a foreign country does not mean that the celebrities do not sense the public's pain. He illuminated that the uprising was not tailored to the less fortunate or

unemployed merely, but for everyone who wants a better Lebanon regardless of his/her status. Youngsters vetoed popular figures too because they considered their declarations as provocative. This finding too contradicted Reeves' (2015) analysis that the entertainment industry always "conquers the political one." Gleaned from participant SB's reply that a person finds someone maddening only when he/she says something against the former's beliefs, one can presume that provocation is a point of view. This justified the lack of evidence in the literature which mentioned that MP Gebran Bassil is provocative. Even though Bassil himself acknowledged that his straightforwardness can infuriate the listeners, the perception of the former minister varies between his supporters and opponents. Indeed, the focus groups conducted revealed that prejudices, basically triggered by political affiliations, affect how the public perceives and even understands a certain message. As a matter of fact, SB, a partaker in group 1 that read anonymous speeches, made smart guesses about whom the speakers might be. She thus interpreted the messages subjectively. Same can be applied on participants in focus group 2 who were aware of whom the orators are. Free Patriotic Movement supporters defended Bassil's speech; whereas the dissidents condemned it. Not only that, but the young adults evaluated the orations based on what they know about the speaker. For example, while AM (FPM supporter in focus group 2) conceded that Gebran Bassil is the only statesman who proposes solutions and strategies rather than criticizing the situation, the representative's opponents regarded him as a populist because they believe his actions did not match his words. Similarly, FPM affiliates and opponents repudiated Saad El Hariri's claims and considered them satirical because he is the politician with the utmost powers in Lebanon which invalidates all helplessness and exemplification impressions he conveyed. Other *Aounists* assessed Hariri's speech based on what they know about Hariri's family and their debt policy which led to the current crisis. To add, in

spite of having a consensus that the discourse of the FPM leader is the most logical, GM (focus group 2), affiliated to the Lebanese Forces, asserted that Bassil is majorly convincing “only if we hide his name before reading the speech”. With that in mind, we would be certain that a political celebrity’s presence affects the perception and assessment of an impression (RQ6). As a matter of fact, Bassil adduced that some Lebanese rebut his proposals only because they are delivered by him. Even MW (Lebanese Forces, focus group 2) admitted that she does not listen to Bassil when he speaks.

The interviewed celebrity politicians asserted that they have never thought of impression management while planning their speeches. Bearing in mind that Fadi El Khatib’s discourses are almost always spontaneous; hence unprepared, Gebran Bassil focused on the importance of determining ahead certain impressions and reflecting them through statements; yet, he never does. This explained why the latter’s disquisitions are not perceived identically by everyone; thereof, generate a lot of controversy. Truly, TS (FPM supporter/focus group 1) had mixed feelings about what she read, and focus group 2 saw his speech as highly debatable. This also answered research question 5 which aims at examining whether celebrity politicians are perceived the way they intend. Knowing that impressions are not mapped out, some messages were judged negatively by the young adults. To illustrate, the basketballer’s self-promotion as a credible person who wants to fight corruption was understood as a trial to market himself by exploiting the revolution. Saad El Hariri’s 180-degree veer in the beginning and end of his speech shifted his exemplification and supplication impressions into hypocrisy and illogic.

Even if the interviews proved that celebrity politicians type one and three do not take impression management, staging and scripting practices into consideration, the textual analysis and focus

groups manifested that these techniques are actually present in every performance and identified by the audience. To begin with the key performance strategies (RQ1), staging is basically restricted to:

- hand gesturing for emphasis, accusation, reinforcement, description, comparison, and listing;
- eye contact;
- vocal variations in the volume, tone, pitch, and pauses;
- facial expressions that mainly reveal anger, contempt, disgust, anxiety, sadness, regret, fear, pride, and happiness.

The stage on which the performance will take place is sometimes planned as well if we take into consideration Ghadi Francis' choosing the museum of resistance as a grandstand since it matches the theme of the Iraqi leader's oration. All assessed performances were made via media, except for Gebran Bassil's on the 3rd of November 2019. His direct address allowed for more usage of props (flags and placards held by the crowd), visuals (suitable background), soundbites, even cheering of the public, and staging techniques like greeting, doing the fist, making a heart-shaped gesture, smiling, etc. The scripting methods in political performances include the creation of a slogan like Bassil's "قبرس، قبرس، قيساحم دادرئسا", talking the people's language, choosing what ideas to cast light on such as Francis' focusing on grievance, ideology, and murder to match the performance's theme, word choice, reflecting empathy, and employing the three rhetorical appeals; ethos, logos, and pathos. Touching on impression management (RQ2), all of the three celebrity politicians always utilized self-promotion, followed by exemplification and sometimes ingratiation. Only Fadi El Khatib displayed intimidation, whereas the two political figures

resorted to supplication in an attempt to acquit themselves. Knowing that the five impressions mentioned in the theory were chiefly implemented, the textual analysis and focus groups uncovered that other impressions are showcased and discerned. They are honesty, hypocrisy, self-confidence, heedfulness, victimization, foresightedness, skepticism, egoism, empathy, strategic thinking, logic, problem-solving, cognizance, populism, incompetency, and irony.

As mentioned previously, impressions are not planned ahead in Khatib and Bassil's case. Hence, this research could not discover what inclinations, objectives, and strategies do celebrity politicians have from applying the performance techniques (RQ3). However, both respondents do design their speeches according to clear goals like fighting the corrupt, explaining a proposal or point of view, defending themselves, condemning the opposition, and creating an impact. Establishing our assumptions on literature, Saad El Hariri is the only political celebrity who choreographs his propaganda tactics and manages his impressions prior his disquisition delivery. In that, his case would go along with Corner (2003) who affirmed that statesmen's engaging in performance aim at attracting the audience and showing a certain value like the youthful, the ordinary, and the funny. On the flip side, Khatib and Bassil have the same opinion towards propaganda. They both do not consider adopting typical techniques as they viewed it negatively, and in some cases, the selfie diplomacy for example, childish. The two public figures preferred remaining authentic and insisted on maintaining people's love for whom they really are. This means that propaganda, or overdoing propaganda, can not only alter one's true self, but damage his/her image too.

Finally, the research methods rendered too much information on type three celebrity politicians; accordingly, provided an opportunity to examine an under-scrutinized topic. Despite the fact that

Mazzoni & Ciaglia (2014) mentioned that third-type celebrity politicians are targets of gossips, the study's results revealed that rumors serve beyond just promoting these people. In fact, the media and rivals are giving them negative publicity to terminate their political careers, i.e. character assassination! Taking into account that this finding cannot be generalized as another Lebanese politician Wiam Wahhab for example, was once a target of fake news that did not harm him eventually, Gebran Bassil is undoubtedly a target of political assassination. According to the interviewed experts, the reasons behind this attack are political, personal, and psychological. Data gathered also showed how crucial are one's character, image, and communication skills in politics. Aside from being perceived as a person with a peculiar character, the specialists clarified that Bassil is paying the price of an exaggerated image of a man with so much power that was associated with him. Even MM (LF affiliate in focus group 2) divulged that "someone with so much responsibility and power like Gebran Bassil is being criticized accordingly" while in fact, a minister or deputy does not own utmost power according to the Lebanese constitution. Not only Gebran Bassil himself admitted that he has some communication weak points, but MS (FPM supporter/focus group 2) also professed that assassination starts with a politician miscommunicating a message that the adversaries can exploit. Ghadi Francis furthered that the legislator has not, to date, correctly 'fight in that media war' which outweighs any other war. All things considered, whether character assassination succeeded or not remains debatable as Bassil affirmed that it did, whilst a few focus group participants believed that it is no longer effective, triggered sympathy, or created a reverse effect. Since Bassil refrains from resorting to propaganda that can save him, Joseph Ajami recommended mild changes in the tactics if not the entire strategy, and Francis suggested smart rebranding. Considering that MP Gebran Bassil, unlike any other celebrity politician of his type,

is always a character assassination victim, and keeping in mind Bassil and Francis' argument that the former became a target by a will of his own, the classification of the FPM leader as a third-type political celebrity in this study becomes thus questionable!

Chapter 6

Conclusion

With unprecedented economic, financial, and political crises, to say nothing of an unequalled corrupt and negligent ruling class that has been robbing the Lebanese since the 1990s, and with an emergence of a revolution, there have been tremendous politics on the table for almost two years. Celebrities and statesmen have taken advantage of a typical situation to deliver patriotic performances with distinct personal or national goals in mind. Although 17 October 2019's uprising precipitated public figures' engagement in politics, basketballer Fadi El Khatib has been weighing in on politics way before 2019 as he announced his readiness to hold a ministerial position as a technocrat. But as celebrity politicians are interfering in a domain disparate from their expertise, there have been many tactics, including propaganda, to promote political celebrities as stars too, whether willingly or reluctantly. Correspondingly, Khatib, PM Saad El Hariri, and MP Gebran Bassil were deemed in this study as celebrity politicians type one, two, and three, respectively.

Due to the absence of any examinations of this phenomenon in Lebanon, this research paper attempted to explore these three cases by considering political speeches delivered during the rebellion as performances presented by well-prepared speakers. That is to say, analyzing politics through a performative lens by adopting Erving Goffman's Dramaturgy theory as well as Impression Management. By employing three methods; textual analysis, focus groups, and interviews, the researcher was able to prove that, although in most occurrences, or at least in the cases of the first and third type, the staging, scripting, and impression management tactics are not

previously planned, the utilization of these techniques is there, and clearly discerned by the audience.

This study additionally revealed that political celebrities type three, or those who unwillingly become famous because they were targets of gossips, are very so often victims of character assassination and not simply rumors. Add to that, the findings contradicted this concept's definition as the interviewed FPM leader argued "it happened by a will of his own".

Regardless of the fact that people do perceive an impression biasedly, and that sometimes a few orators go either impromptu or with only rational goals in mind, speakers are, in a nutshell and as uttered by Khatib, "actors in a play in which the producer hands them in a script and they simply perform it"!

Limitations and Recommendations

Due to the current pandemic, as well as a few participants' residing in foreign countries, the focus groups were held via Zoom. Therefore, the moderator was not able to assess youngsters' nonverbal cues upon watching the 'performances'; that's why, impression management evaluation was restricted to partakers' reading the speeches rather than viewing them. Also, it would have been beneficial if the focus groups included participants specialized in art or theater, and political science who would be able to professionally, whether dramaturgically or politically, study the performances' scripts. These specialists might have provided uncommon academic angles either distinct from the dominant ideology, or related directly to the Dramaturgy theory. Finally, an interview with PM Saad El Hariri or any of his media consultants would have helped the researcher examine accurately second-type celebrity politicians and address Hariri's

case more objectively. That is to say, mitigate the interviewees' criticisms of the Premier by unveiling his point of view, like in the case of MP Gebran Bassil. However, none of Hariri's team members cooperated.

Since Fadi El Khatib delivered many of his speeches through his social media accounts, chiefly Instagram, and because political celebrities are currently enhancing their use of typical platforms, it would be useful to evaluate the public's attitude towards the speeches by analyzing their comments or interactions with the speakers on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. Finally, based on this research's finding that Gebran Bassil became famous by his own will, it is recommended that future studies explore third type celebrity politicians as a phenomenon by itself to settle this controversy.

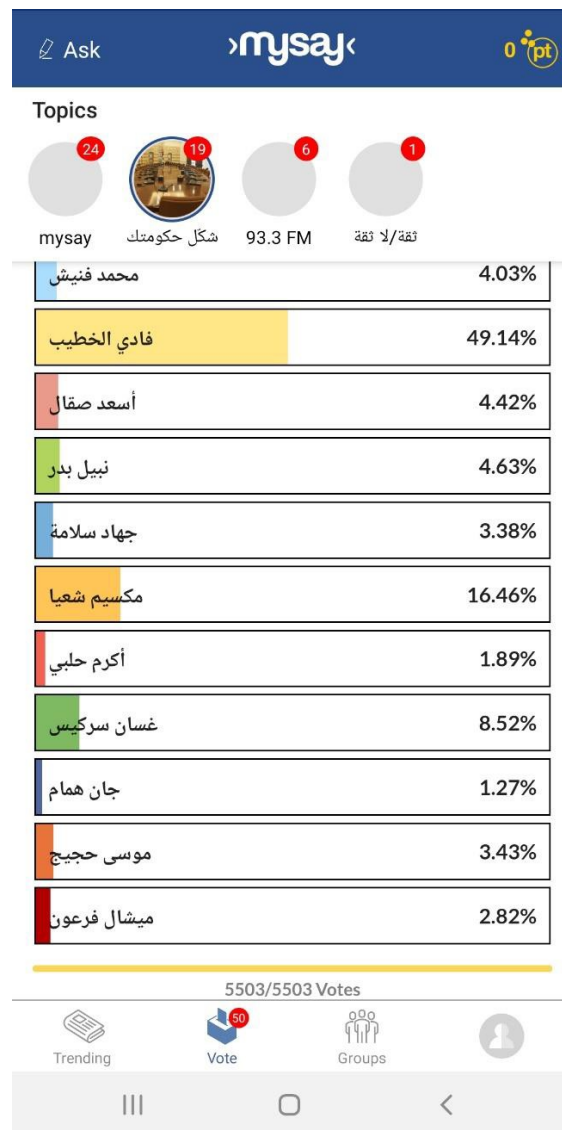
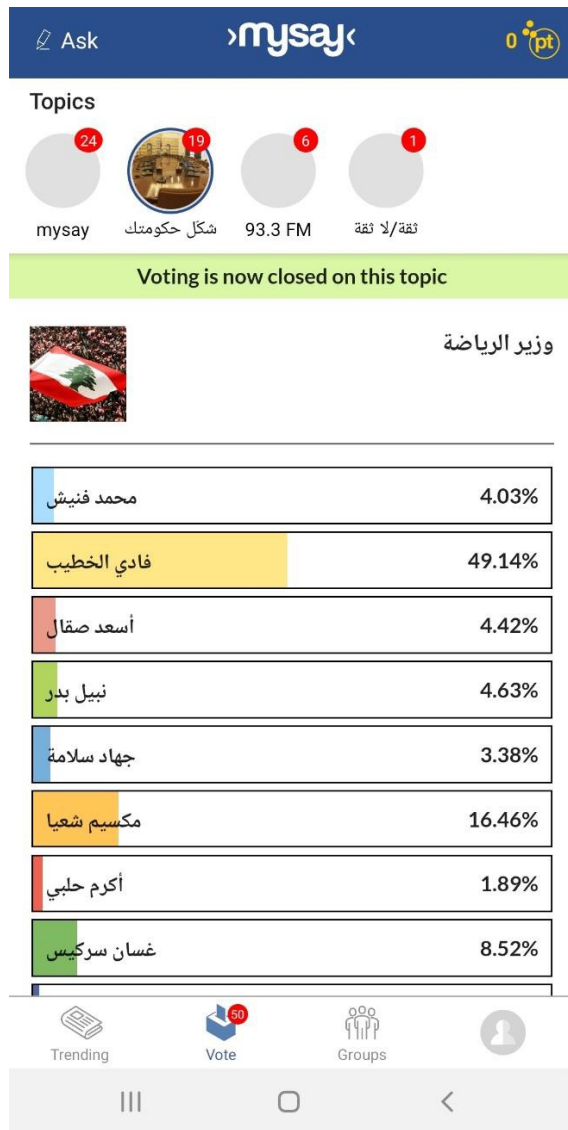
Appendices

Appendix A Mysay

Voting Results

49.14% of the voters nominated Fadi El Khatib to become Minister of Youths and Sports

(<https://www.mysayapp.com/>)



Appendix B

Fadi El Khatib's Speech on the 18th of October – Arabic Version

اي يبي وش يلباع نوك دوجوم له نكعم اي تحن يبي. انا اركب نوكب لصاوا لاه اشنا قع اسلا 11 حبصلا لو او قودوعسلا نم قلاغش اهلما ع وه لبق قره اظملا ع لزان ركد ام عيش ياب: راطم حونتم راطم شم، حونتم يدب يشم! يدب رج طنشلا يناؤرنا شم يعم. يالا قؤرا يعم يه يدبه قروثلا يالا ريكب بلؤلا. قروثلاه يالا دض يلوه يلا لا، قمارك دض يلوه يلا لا، ازوعوج دض يلوه ام يالا، ازومرح دض يلوه يلا انؤورح اورمدو، اندلب دض يلوه يالا حيزم عيش يا اولخ ام نازبلا:، اوشنسط قح ايسلا يالا ابرهكلا لاب اهوئبلخ ام، عيجن ياهما انؤيرش ام، اهاي ائش سلا انؤنبلخ ام تونن، هبلع اهوئج ضارمما وش، انلا لا دع يند نم بپارض؟ اوئلمع ولك اهوئطح نبع نكلا دعو، انبلع لدب ام اوؤلان لولح، لولح قيرزج بعشلا يناؤبلا يالا مع، تومب دلبل، ل غش اولمحنب يالا ام مع غطب يراصم. تالكشلا يالا مع لمع يراصم ام مع ردؤن اوضؤب نم يند ام يراصم، نازبلا ونهزو ونؤرس ونبرهو. ونبلخ ام يش اؤب يناؤبلا. نكبايحب اوئطح ولك يناؤرنا شم مو ران نكعم يالا طرنب اولننو نكلا ح شم. سب ل. مزل نوكب يند اوضؤ مع مكطح قح لانو قسوبح لاب لك رلؤود علط تاباسح نم قلودلا: نپو، حار نپو حار نپلو اج قيرظلا. ام اؤب انبلع اوئحضت قيربخب قيرسلا قيرصملا يلا اهوئش نع مكنا باباسح. ونزا اؤنرعب انحنو حيزم انحنو فيراوخ نوكلا شم انلوؤب اوجئل دلؤو يكلاه. لك دحاو ودب بره ل ام اوبره تاباسح وريغ. اورغ اؤب يدبه مس يالا نازبلا اوئحضت مع اهدب انبلع. حر انلضن بلاطن عجرئل انلضن حرو، لاومما بلاطن انع نوكبلا انلضن حرو، دلبل بلاطن انحنو يالاو سان مع شينن نازبلا قمارك. قضاؤرلا نازبلا نازبلا قراضحلا نازبلا قضاؤرلا نازبلا. انحن انحنر يالا ونزا ام اوئلمع ونزا يش اوئطو مس نازبلا اي لاب فرش. انحن انحنر يالا مس نازبلا:، نبلشملاو، نبيضاؤرلاو، نناؤرلا نناؤرلاو، اونغب نپو ام اوئحورب مس اوئحورب نازبلا لؤو ونزا اوئطو موئرد اوئطو اننمارك انؤنبلخو انطوح قح سمم، ريغل سب ركني يدبه نكبي جرفن حر قروثلا ونزا انحن يناؤبلا انع ونزاو قمارك نكطحن حرو نكباطن حر انحن ونزاو، قسوبح لاب انحن بر اي ونش ينجونزا رانلا يالا يند فوشن مكئساحم لئم ام ريزو اوئساح لاهما انؤاركوأب اسؤرو نادلب. انا ام مع سبير يا لاط ام ادح ينا مع يكحب سبير دض، نيعم انا مع يكحب دض مؤاطلا ولك نم 20 قهن لاهل يالا مع يناعن ارو نم. انحن انذب دلبل! ول انطوع دلبل ام انع نك، قكشم سب ونزا شم انطوع انناؤر ونزا دلبل قناؤرلاب.

Fadi El Khatib's Speech on the 18th of October – English Version

Oh how I desire to be with you right now! Tomorrow, inshallah I will arrive from Saudi Arabia at 11:00 a.m. and the first thing that I will do even before thinking of anything else is to join the protests whether the airport is open or not, I even won't care if I'll have to walk and carry my bags. What I care about is this revolution that makes one's heart feel full. This revolution against those who have no dignity, against those who made us hungry, against those who deprived us, those who burnt and destroyed our country, against those who ruined all of the good things in Lebanon: you ruined tourism, you deprived us from electricity, you deprived us from water, you deprived us from hospitalization, you spread diseases in the country, is there something else that you didn't do yet? You're still not ashamed of not finding solutions, radical solution, for the Lebanese people who are dying, who are unemployed, who are not able to make any money although you have imposed taxes. Businesses are not able to withdraw their money from banks because Lebanon is bankrupt, because you stole and smuggled everything into foreign accounts. You left nothing for the Lebanese people. You stole everything and you couldn't care less and once the state collapses you'll leave it. But no! We have to have judges that will throw you in jail and monitor every dollar smuggled outside of the government's accounts: where did it go and to whom. Stop lying at us with your "lifting the banking secrecy off your accounts" story. You

know we are not sheep nor babies to believe something like that since the person who needs to smuggle money will do it using other people's accounts not his own so stop this '[banking secrecy] theory' that you're lying about. We will keep on demanding to get our looted money back, we will keep on demanding to have a decent country, we will keep on demanding to live decently in a decent Lebanon; the Lebanon of culture, the Lebanon of civilizations, the Lebanon of art, the Lebanon of sports. We are the ones who made Lebanon proud, you did nothing; you disgraced us you honorless people. We are the ones who made Lebanon proud; we the artists, the athletes, the actors, the singers, all the Lebanese people wherever they go they make Lebanon proud, except you. You destroyed it and you undignified and humiliated us. But in this revolution, we will show you that we Lebanese people do have a dignity, and that we will be able to hold you accountable and put you in jail and that we will, hopefully, see you one day being punished just like what happened with the Ukrainian Minister of Finance along with other politicians. I am not putting the blame on a specific political leader so don't assume that I am speaking against a politician in particular, I am talking about the entire ruling political elite that have been making us suffer for more than 20 years. We want a decent country! Had you given us a decent country, we wouldn't have had any problem with you, but you, instead, threw us in a trashcan.

Appendix C

Fadi El Khatib's Reposted Speech – Arabic Version

... يدب قرطنا ارب عوضو مل يوش قشلا يض ابرلا. يه نكذب امور بدع، عخرص نكذب امور بدع، عجو. لوأ يش هجوب قبح
 رينك قريك قبدصلاو يخللا بغار قملاع. يدبه قينغلا يالا املع بغارر قملاع شم يا لاطيلا قينغلاه، قسايس يالا املع
 بغار مع ملين وا قملاع نبدان يكبل اور بعيل نع عجو عم جمل، ينانيلا نع عجولا يالا مع اوشين انحن، نانيلا مع يالا مع، اونوشن
 يشلان نع نبي يالا ام مع قنحني نانيلا سب مزلا، قنحني نع ارسبوس قشلا يالا اوزاك انع او كحني. ازلصو دليل مع اولكاه، قلايزلا
 ضارم اولكاه راص. انرص قنجر ملاب يلوما اي، ملاعلا نبيسايس ايو، دليلاه نع نيميني ضرمة، ناطرسلا انرص ريخم دليلام
 موبلا ملاعلا نادلب يلع ونزب انرويساب ام ولا قمي. انأ مرهح قلودلا قنجر ملاعلا يالا اوزاك انغل اوجي، قح ايسلا اوجيل، اوطسبني
 كذب تنزا اذا message و voice note نرويساب قنجر ملاب يلوما ايلاح ملاعلا. انأ ام ناك يدب قرطنا لك يديه ييبو عيضا و مل
 يلوب ام قرط ييم، عوضوم يكح اعضولا نع يلاحلا سب. ل! انأ ييب يدب رذع اكنم. انأ كلق يدي
 فوشت كدلو دل و و كدلو مع اوضرمي امو مهلا دلم معو اور كذب قنجر ملاب معو اور كذب اولمحي مهلو او نانيلا او كرتيو نلاح، انأ
 ينانيلا لك لا قله ودنع دل و مع ركنب يا رويساب ودب بيحي ونزلا. دك؟ ش يلا، قنقن لا دلب، قراضحلا دك قح ايسلا؟ بكلكل ارو نم؟ وش
 نك عم ريغ. انذب سان رذوب سح فرعو انين ونز بعثلا minimum ش يلا ل امرك؟ قسار كلا ام انذب قسار ك. انب سان انم كحت انيطعي
 ينانيلا بعش وه يوق لشم دم صيبو ام اندمص لك، نينسلا 20 ان جزو قنس وتنزا نكدي عيو نيدم اص ام يناقرف
 ريغو قيص خشلا نكح اصم ريغو نكيس ارك تاينصلا يالا بعثلا نبيكو اولمعي ينانيلا قلايزلا بت اؤرط ام مع اور رذوب
 ، انوطعي، افش تسا ام مع اور رذوب، انوطعي، ابرهك يامو ام مع اور رذوب، انوطعي، ملاعلا مع تومح بايع تايفش سلا ونز او وش مع
 ؟ اولمعي يا دحاو اذ انكزم عيطي ادح نكذب خرص يوسار اولوس عدت، وسار اولور يطن نكذبو ضرمة ام ادح سار ريطب ادح.
 شم قح قحلا نكبلع انيلع انحن نم يلوب نك انلصو انحن يين ونز، لآه ان جزو نك انلصو انحن ان جزو نك انلصو، نك انلصو قحلا
 انيلع انحن. انأ انم نم ينانيلا لك وزم او عوي موبلا ام مع اوسح عجولا سب اركب اوض يوق حر ام مكناش اعم. اولصون حر
 تايش اعمل ل حمل ام اودوخا نيدعو اولو يوب انحن انم دن. انأ بالظ نم لك صخش ينانيلا بحب قنقو فوي نانيلا نانيلا وزم يالا
 ياج اوسا رينك يالا نم وه له رضاح. انحن، رهضن مع مع، حورن مع، يجن سب اذ انم يينك رام دل ل صون حر قنجر ملاه
 انديلا لم اش. ل انحن ل و انأ ل و يا ينانيلا حر ودلب بحب رخللا نكبر احن حر، قنجر ملاه انانيلا ل صوي.
 ر اهنلا

Fadi El Khatib's Reposted Speech – English Version

... I want to talk about a topic that is not related to sports. You can consider it rage, you can consider it coming out of pain. First I want to salute my brother and friend Ragheb Alama. The song that Ragheb Alameh did was not against any particular politician. Ragheb Alama's song, or Nadine Labaki's film are made to showcase the pain of the Lebanese society, the things that we are suffering from in Lebanon, the things that we are witnessing, the change that must be accomplished for the sake of Lebanon yet is still not being accomplished. They are about the "Switzerland of the Middle East" that people used to talk about. We currently have a country that is being eroded by garbage, eroded by diseases. Hey politicians and responsables: we currently have the highest cancer rate in the world and today our passport is worthless. I give my full respect to the United Arab Emirates whose people used to come to Lebanon for tourism and fun, and now their passport is the world's most powerful. I honestly didn't want to talk about this topic and my father sent me a message and a voice note telling me not to discuss typical topics, but no! Forgive me dad. I want to tell you that it's not okay to see your children and their children getting sick, losing their own country, thinking about emigration, about leaving Lebanon just like what every Lebanese parent including me are thinking of doing in addition to getting a dual citizenship for their kids. Why should we do that? Can the country of culture,

country of civilizations, and the country of tourism be dismissed? Because of what? Political posts? We don't need these posts; we want leaders who are able to give us the bare minimum. We want leaders who are able to empathize with the us, to know that the Lebanese people are resilient and strong. We were able to resist all of these past years and we have been tolerating for 20 years but all you care about are your own interests, political posts, and your deals while you *threw the Lebanese people in the trashcan*. You couldn't provide us with decent roads, hospitalization, electricity and water. People are dying outside the hospitals' doorsteps and in response what are you doing? You're threatening anyone who complains *of having his head severed. No one will sever the head of anyone!* But you are not the ones to blame, it is us that should take the blame because we actually made you, we elected you and we voted for you, we have no one to blame but ourselves. I wish that all Lebanese wake up because even if you are not really suffering today, you will soon once you will not be able to withdraw your salaries and then you'll regret it. I ask every Lebanese person who loves Lebanon to take a firm stand for the sake of the country because what is coming is worse than what we're facing today. Today, we are still able to make plans and enjoy ourselves but we continue that way, we will reach devastation and total collapse. Neither us, not anyone who loves his country will accept that Lebanon reaches this situation. We will fight you till the end.

Appendix D

Gebran Bassil's Speech on the 18th of October – Arabic Version

ريزولا نيسب ل -- مهننا كرحت- سانلاو وه -/ <https://www.tayyar.org/News/Lebanon/311204/> Retrieved from
سئلاوم هج ا- اندض-حزو ن- اما م- براهيم ن- اما- لّ ا نّ ذا- بيجل ا- وا- لّ ا رايهن- كلا ريي

نا ام لصح وه مكارت تاؤانخاو تامزا يدا يلا خاننزا ازاو ،مهراجنزاو سائلا مهمهنا يئزل "نلابح نلهم". امبر مل عطسنا ن ربع ا مهلهم يئزلكلو ،يعنوم بسب ادبج مهمهنا . ام لصح نك يئلا او ،اعنوم مطع ا مل نا مئي كاردنسل اا . قزو يئ يئلا ادبج امحرط يئ لؤاوا رمش تلى ،تئانلا لولوا يئ امبواجب نازيل ن ا عجاج يئلا قمدص ،قئابرمك سئل يلا جلاع وا قئلمع قئارج امزلا قمدص "قظؤيلا توملنا م". امك تلى اضوا يئلا املا دبصرلا نا يئشملا دؤ لّ انبكي قرتلا لوطا نم قئاهن قئسلا مل اذا دمئعن تاسايسلا قئولطملا .

ابلاح دهش ن انك مئي لكشي قصرب مءاصئواو نازيل داؤزلّ تاسايسلاو داسنلا نم قئداصئولّ او قئلاملا ،قئطاخلا امك اضوا نك مئي ب لباقملنا يلا لوجئئ قئرك قريك نازيل لخديو ،قئبم او قئبامبج او قئلامو قئداصئوا يئ قئبلاو يئضونلا . نارايخلا ام ناحضوا نؤاونع نارصئخيو ،ناضقئتمو نؤريك: رايهنلا ريبكلا داؤزلّ او ،بيجل راصئخايمو امه نؤب نم دبري لاعشا قئارحلا قارحلا رضخلّ او سببلاو مهو نؤفورعم نؤبو ،مهنا راعش نم نم عافط دبري قئارحلا لّ لب اهعلّ دؤنا عنم نم للاح صلختلا نم سببلا كرتو ،رضخلّ او مهو اضوا نؤفورعم .

يلع مويلا ملكئنا ن ا نع ازاوخ نحن يئ ،بؤؤلا نازيل لئكئنعو انؤوم يئلا دؤنع ا نا مطعم اؤونع نؤره اظملا اذلو ،نؤدبري مهنا قئراشم يئ رايئلا له ا هذه مهمنأ نكلو ،تارهاظملا بوجوب مدع اارو رارجزلّ او رايخ يا و ا يا رم ا عبطاخ . لكئلا لؤوا ن ا ام سئل لصحئ اءجوم ،انض حل اصل لب بالاطمو انبلاطم ،سائلا يا حل اصل دبلا . قئس كانه تاحلصا يدان امب سببرلا نوع قزو يئ تئؤناو ادبج اهيلع ابرظن مويلا لك ،قئبمبج املا امنا بجي نؤبو ،اهؤبئب انعضو دؤ قزو لئكئلا نمض يئ نازيل نا ناونع اءه قايئسلا ،ابرهكلا لمئش رءلاو يئ ،قئودلا دؤاؤلاو قئلاعلا يئ ،نيجزانلاو ،نيدلا قمدخ ،داصئقلاو ،داسفلا نؤواؤو قءانسلّ او نم تاوؤر نازيل كلاملّ او قئرشبلاو قئبئزلاو قئبئاملا او قئراؤعلاو قئوجلاو قئرهؤلاو قئرحبلا تحب يئغ امنا بوهم .

نم بئ انش ام بيجي قئؤؤب قئؤوم انؤومو سببرلا عم عيمج فاعض او ،نبحاصلّ او فؤوم حلاصلا نؤضراعلا نؤذلا انؤوعئم يئ نم هؤبؤبت ذئم ماوعا 2005 و 2008 و 2016 ،ام نم للاح مئادلا دوجولا يئ مهضعبلا ،قموكحلا و ايل لاغئسلّ او مهووجوب عراشلا مويلا .عناض او يلا جراخلا يئلا تئاب مبابسا كانه ،قئلامو قئوشكمو قموهم يئ ضعبلا لخدلا نم تاءجلا قئس ايسلا يئلا نشي برحلا قئداصئولّ او يلاع وعديو نازيل يلا طائسا ،دهؤلا وهو لكئلا بكري مويلا قجوم قئبئعش لواحؤو قئداص انرح نع امراسم قحملنا نم لجا قئبؤب مئاؤغ قئس ايسلا قئلاملا سببر طائساب سلاجمو قموكحلاو قئرهؤمبجلا بؤوزلا بئخئملا ائبؤح سائلا نم لؤلّ او قرم لداع لكشي .

نا انؤوم ذئم سما: يئ سلاجمو ملاعل اا اعامبج او اارزولا قئبلا دعب سلاجم نك اارزولا:

- 1- مئؤؤب ل بؤؤج تابلطو داصئولّ او قئز او مللا لم الكئم سائلا قئناك .
- 2- مدع بوجو رارقا قئز او ملنا نؤد لمئش ققارتئو ،تاحلصا امعم ربع نؤواؤو تارارقو لئخاد سلجم اارزولا رومو برخا اهؤب نمض جم اؤوب حضاو انعضو ائك اءجا قئبؤكئم نم يئ انبلاع امبج قريخلّ او .
- 3- مدع لؤؤؤلا ضرئب يا بئارض يلاع قماع ،سانلا يتح ولو تئناك نا نؤد ،قريغص ضرئب قئبؤرض قريك ابرئشلّ او يلع ربع انؤؤوم قئبئادلا "بؤبجلا قريغصلا لبق قريكلا" ذائناو ، تاءارجا قئبؤؤج فؤوب قءانسلّ او ،داسنلاو رءلا نم تاردؤم قئودلا .
- 4- انحرط سما ادبجم قئدع روم او اؤاهنا نك مئي رارؤا لبق يئ هو قئز او مللا راصئباب:
 - ابرهكلا نؤمك 24/24 سببلا 20 و 21 يئفو ماعلا 2020 ،يا يلا لوصولا قئس رفص يئ زجع كيئفئئو قئز او ملا قئكش تادلو مللا يئلا تئناك انؤبلا نؤز ائلق قئوجوم اهكئفئئ .
 - قئعنئملا دؤاونلاو فراصلما نمض قئس ولو ،داؤؤا مئ مئرعئ فراصلما لّ ا ائنا نؤك انلمع دؤ يلاع اهؤؤؤا .
 - ريبئانلا قئخئبملا يئ عاطؤلا دحل او ماعلا امم .
 - تلّ اصلّ او فؤو اهؤب رءلا .
 - تائهلما تاسؤؤملا انؤا قئبئانصلاو يئلا لّ موزل دهشئو اهل ارده .
 - ادبؤؤو يئ عرئشلا رئغو يئ عرئشلا بئرهئلاو كرامجلا رنكسلا تالكئشو قئبؤئلا .
 - بئرهئلا تالكئشو يئ بؤرضلا قئبؤئلا .

تاءارجا قەپرس قەدايزلا دجلاو رېدصنلا دئو ، دارپىسلّا نىم ىرج تىپدجلا نىع قەپامج لك ام مېي مەنەنصن ائىظو رىع عضو موسر قەپلاع ادج ىلع قەپامجل مدارپىسا ائىزايم ىراجلا.

-قلاطا ، لمغلا رارۇب نىم سلجم رارۇا لىبۇ عارزولا ، قەزاوملا قەطخ داؤزىلّا "يىزىنوكام" قەطخو ، رامئىسلّا CIP قەطخو حلاصلّا "ردپس" فەپلانو ، نىجال قەپرازو برخاو لمغلا نىصصخىملا نىم قەشرو عدبو ىزاوتلاب لمغلا.

-نىوحزارىلا عضوو قەسەپس قەموكحلا ىنلا موئىد ىلاع مزلالا لىبومىلا نىم ئنو ، مەندوع قەلودللا نىم لىبى عمەنچەل طۇن سىلۇو ىلودلا ، نىچزانللا انو ىلا عەبتسا سارزلا بل اطم قەحەلما ىنلا نىم ئناب بلاطك لمغلا قەسەنەلما لظ ىن ىن اذە قوسىلا . انىمزا لىحزىس فەپكەن جلا نى لىحن قەمزا ؟ نىچزارىلا

-قەداعىسا نىبزاؤن رارۇا غىرو ، قەبەنەلما لاوملّا قەپرسلا غىرو ، قەپىرىمەلما قەزاصحلا نىع دئو ، نىنظوملاو عارزولاو باوزىلا تىلاسى لىلاخ انىعەمئىجا سىم ىلع بىس مدع رارقا قەموكحلا اذە ، نوناقلا سىلە ىنلا نوناقلا نوناقلا نىحن) "نئوناق" (اب ىنلا نوناق ىا نىم مەنأش عاظع قەنلا سارزلا ائىزاب لمغەن قەپجە.

-قەعومجەم روم ىلاع رارغ قودىنەلما قەپىنەلما ، ىدەپىسلا ، صاخلاو ماغلا نىع اطۇلا نىب كلاملّا او رارۇا ، قەپرحەلما قەسۇانم ىنلاو قەپەنەلما تىردىن ىنكەپو اىچەنن ذخا رارۇ دحاو ىن سلجم رارزولا رىنول تارل ودىلا نىبۇلام تەئىم ىن مەلّا او ، ماغلا ىن ەذە مازىنلا ، قەعومجەلما اىب ىف سلجم ، باونلا نى دىك لىكلا نوكە ىف سلجم عارزولا تىنفاو دق نىم كەپو ، اەپلە زاغلا نىزىت اەپلە نال صونە انىم كە لىك رىسخن عىراشەلما ەذە بىسب تادىيازىملا .

كەزە وە ام مەما نىم رارۇا دىعوم نىحزو ، قەزاوملا مەما ادىچ مەلەن بىجە لىلاخ عەپسلا ىن ىن ، اەرارۇا اىمە مەلّا ەذە رارۇا روملّا 5-

، اەعم بىسبىو قىض تىقولا تىحرط نى سىملا اب دۇغەن تاعەمئىجا قەلصاوتىم مايا دىلّا او تىسلاو قەمچىلا ىلع رادم قەعاسلا ىنح ولى انرىضا نى ىن مەنن ىارسلا ىك ىنەنن لمغلا عەلطم عوبىسلّا ، لىبەلما ىننەل فەپاخ دئو تىردىح مەما دىغەن كەلمەن عاظۇلان ، تىقۇلا ىدەلما مەما دىغەن رداق ىلع سارزلاو طۇسەپسو انىمەن مەما دىغەن قەدائى ىلاع فوسو انىمەن ضىنەنە .

للازى انىكەماب موئىلا مەنۇلا لىكە ەذە ىن روملّا مايا ، قەدودەم لى نى ىطەن سارزلا جورخىلا ادوغو ، عراشەلما نىم نىل عمەنچەن لمغەن مەنۇلا سارزلا لى نولازى ىن اەدىنەن نولكەشەپ ، عراشەلما ردىصم طغۇس ىك لمغەن قەپلاغىبو قەرسىب نود ، عوككە قەلظاممو ، وۇطاب . ىطەنە ، قەموكحلا و نىم ، اەنم دىرەپ اەسەن ، قەسەرنە مەك سارزلا نىمەن نى اەپطەن قەسەرنە مايا ىو قەدودەم ىن ، عراشەلما نىم لىجا

لمغلا اذە . تىك دۇ تىددىح ىن قەمكەلما ىنلا اەنۇلا ىن 13 نىرەشە ، لولّا ادغوم ىنەنە ىن 31 نىرەشە اەنۇلا دۇنەعو ، لولّا رىنكە نىم انىكەپو قەپاك نى ىنەنن لىق دىعوملا اذە . مەما اذو عەطسەن قەموكحلا مەنۇلا ، اەلمەن اەدىنەن لىحزە اەنۇلا نوكە اەنۇلا قەلۇوسم انىعوىو ىن رايخەلما ىنلا انىكەل اىك انىدەن فەسلاو ، مەنەن لىدەلما نى قەموكحلا نىع قەپلاحلا وە نىم كەپو ، ىبەبىض قەندۇاس نوكە ىن

رىنكە نىم مەنۇلا ، ىلەللا قەصاخ مدع قەموكح دوجو عوسما اذەو .

رايخەلما نى رىللا ىن ىنەنن نى وە ، لىصىح ىضونىلا ىن عراشەلما لىل ووصو ىلا نى اوركەننو ، قەننەلما كەزە "روباط سىماخ" دوجوم سانلا نىب فورەم - ، لىو جەم ضىعەلما نونرىع مەنم نىم ضىعەلما مەنەلادىو مەنارەش رىللا لى نونرىع مەنەل قەدەپ ىلا رىسكەنو بارخەلما لىكەشەلما لىعەنلا اىزو ، دىلەلما ىنلا مەظەل رىنكەل انىكەل نوكەل انىلصو دق ىلا ساسەلما عىضولاب رەنەن ، ىلەلما قەپىلا سارزلا دىچەن اەلوم اىكەن قەنرەلما ىنلا اوسلّا دىلەلما لىو نىم ىضونىلا ىلا مەطىسبو ، عوجەلما سارزلا دئو ، اەضەب اذە رىسخن ىنلا لىمەلما . هارن موئىلا دىوئىب ، نىبۇنەنلا دوجوملا دەشەلما نىل دق مەنۇنى بىسب بىلطملاو راعشەلماو قەجەللا . لىو اەنۇلا لىوئىخەن دەشەلما

نود عىضولما اذە ، نونىزانىلا نود ، قەموكح نودو نىم لاومأ ىن نىحط نودو ، فەراسەلماو قاسمما ، تاقورحمو نى ىلا نىكەل ذىخان انا ؟ دىلەلما مەنۇلا نىم اذە وپرا نىسەلما دىمەلۇ ، قەننەن كەل ورجا مەنۇلا ىلاع ىن ، مەلەلّا اىمەن وە بونىكە قەزو ىن ادبەن-مەلوقاؤ موئىلا سىلە جورخەلما سارزلا لىب عراشەلما نىم نىم مەنۇح رىبەنلاو رەماظىلا مەبىض نىع نى بىجە دىعەنن قىيىچەل ەذە بىلەلما- لىب قەلواەل ىدەنن اوسما قەسەرفلا نى املاط اعم قەرفەتم نىم داؤزىلّا لىجا .

سىرە سلجم عارزولا ىرپەرحلا دىعە ماعەل نىمەلّا او ، دىعەسەم بىزەللا بىسلا نىسح رىصنەللا دئو انىعەن انىدەن ىن اذە عوزوملا ىلع ىدم عەبىس مەنقومو تاعەس ، اىضواو سىرەو سلجم باوزىلا مەنەن ىرەب سىمەن قەزولە رىنەن بىجەو ، ادبەن تانەكەلّا ، قەپسەپسەلما لولەلماو تىقۇلواو ىنكەپو ، قەرضاح نى رەمظەن سارزلا انى نوداج عىش قىيىچەن ، ام نىم لىلاخ قەللا نىلا داسەنلا نىبزاؤن لىمەن وا ىا اىمەن : غىر مەك ، قەزاصحلا غىر قەپسلا قەپىرىمەلما قەداعىسەلما قەبەنەلما لاوملّا . اناو ىلاع ، دادەسەلما تەغىر مەك قەپسەلما قەپىرىمەلما نىع ، ىسەن بىلەلما نى باوزو عارزو نىم غىر لىكەلما مەنۇنى ، قەزاصحلاو قەپسەلما مەنۇنىلا ىلا قەمكەم قەصاخ قەداعىسەلما قەبەنەلما لاوملّا اەنەنرەت ىن نوناقلا .

نىحن كەلمەن قەزەلما ىلع رارقا ەذە قەللا نىبزاؤنلا دىقەنن ، اەب انىقەلەپس لىمەن ؟ نىورخەللا ەذەو نىم نىم انىمەن نوكە قەلەق قەنۇ قەنۇنىو سارزلا .

، اىنەنرەت ىنەنرەت ىلا اىزەلما ىن ىنەنرەت رايخەلما رايخەلما لولەلما : مەنۇلا نازىخ قەزاصحلا لولەللا نىلو ، دىلەلما مەنۇنىلەن اەنەنرەت داؤزىللا لىكەنەنرەت لولەللا عىضەپو دىلەلما . اوئىلا انىعەسەو ، انىعەم ىلاو ادبەن دىعوم رىخا ارىكەشو .

Gebran Bassil's Speech on the 18th of October – English Version

What happened was an accumulation of crises and failures that led to the people's explosion and I understand them because I am fed up just like them although I could not express the way they did because of my position, but I understand them well. What happened was expected, and what is to come might be more grave if not rectified. In the paper that I presented at the Baabda meeting earlier in September, I said that Lebanon needs an *electric shock*, a "*wakefulness from death shock*" and not a treatment or a surgery. I also said that the few amount remaining of the financial balance may barely suffice until the end of the year if we do not implement the required policies.

What we are witnessing now can be an opportunity to save Lebanon and its economy from corruption and wrong financial and economic policies. On the other hand, it can also turn into a major economic, financial, social and security disaster, and plunge Lebanon into chaos and strife. The two options are clear and contradictory, and they are summarized in two major titles: "The Great Crash or the Daring Rescue", and in short, it is between those who want to start fires and "burn verdant along with the dry", and they are known by their slogans, and those who want to extinguish fires - or even prevent their outbreak – "by getting rid of the dry and keeping the verdant", and these people are known too.

Today, I have to talk about the choice that we made in the "Strong Lebanon" bloc, and about our position, which I think most of the "spontaneous demonstrators" want as well, and that's why I understand the participation of the supporters of the Free Patriotic Movement in these demonstrations, but I alert them not to be drawn into any wrong decision. That's why I declare that what is happening is not directed against us, but rather in favor of what we and the people are asking for, that is, for the benefit of our country. There are many reforms proposed by President Aoun written in the Baabda paper and were theoretically approved by all the gathered forces, but they must be implemented, and accordingly we have developed within the bloc a plan which includes the electricity issue, the squandering of the state's money, the high interests in debt service, the displaced people, corruption laws, the economy, and benefiting from Lebanon's wealth including its seawater, river, atmosphere, real estate, water, oil and human resources... under the title: Lebanon is rich but looted.

What is currently happening must strengthen the President's position, ours, along with the position of all reformers, and weaken the position of those who are opposing the reforms, those who have prevented us from achieving it since 2005, 2008 and 2016, either through the permanent presence of some of them in the cabinet, or their exploitative presence in the streets today in addition to the outsiders, whose causes are now understood, uncovered and declared. And some others, locally, are waging an economic war on Lebanon and calling for the overthrowing of [Michel Aoun's] term, and, today, they are taking advantage of a sincere popular uprising to "*divert it from its rightful course*" in order to achieve their declared political goals of toppling the President of the Republic, the cabinet and the newly elected parliament which was elected by the citizens in a just way for the first time.

Since yesterday, our position in the media, during the Council of Ministers, and throughout our meeting that took place tonight after the Council of Ministers, is the following:

1. Providing a radical solution comprehensive to the budget, the economy, and the demands of all people.
2. The budget should not be approved without including reforms, accompanied by laws and decisions within the Council of Ministers and other matters that follow within a clear program. We included written parts of it in our recent meetings.
3. Not accepting the imposition of any taxes on the general public, even if the amount is small, without imposing a large tax on the wealthy. This is based on our constant saying “*large pockets before the small ones*”. As well as taking radical measures to stop loss and corruption, and benefit from the state’s capabilities.
4. Yesterday, once again, we raised several matters that could be completed before the approval of the budget, which I will list briefly:
 - Ensuring electricity 24/24 and not 20 or 21 hours in the year 2020. This means reaching zero deficit in the budget and unraveling the network of generators that existed before us, and we have to dismantle it.
 - Banks and high interest are both parts of the rescue basket, and even if the banks were fined, we would have worked to save them.
 - Limitation of inflated measures in the public sector.
 - Limiting the loss in telecommunications.
 - Closing of unnecessary and wasteful institutions, organizations, and funds.
 - Customs and legal and illegal smuggling, namely scanners and audit firms.
 - Tax evasion and audit firms.
 - Rapid actions to increase exports and reduce imports. It has been talked about protecting everything that is manufactured nationally by placing very high fees on imports to protect our balance trade.
 - By a decision of the Council of Ministers and before approving the budget, the rescue plan “McKinsey”, the investment plan “Capital Investment Program” (CIP), and the reform plan “Cedre” will launch. As well as the formation of ministerial committees and other specialties to work in parallel and begin the workshop.
 - The matter of the refugees and setting up a government policy based on their return to their home country. Also, securing the necessary funding for the state by the international community and not only for the refugees. I am listening to the people’s righteous demands and they are asking for job opportunities in the midst of this competition. How will we be able to solve our crisis if we do not deal with and solve the refugee crisis first?
 - Adoption of laws to recover looted funds, lift banking secrecy, and lift the immunity of deputies, ministers, and employees. During our meeting yesterday, I asked why the government had not passed this law yet, not our law but any typical law, which would give people confidence that we are working seriously.
 - Results of a group of matters, such as the sovereign fund, coordination between the public and private sectors, maritime properties, and the approval of the finished gas tender, were issued. It is sufficient to take a single decision in the Council of Ministers to save hundreds of dollars per year. And what is most important in this group is the commitment to the decision in the Parliament, after the political blocs, present in the Council of Ministers, have approved it. They can increase it, rather than decrease it so that we do not lose these projects because of the biddings.

5. There is something more important than when the budget will be approved, and we know well that it must be approved urgently, but the most important thing is to approve these matters with it. Due to the lack of time, I proposed yesterday to hold continuous around-the-clock meetings on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, even if we have to sleep in the Serail to finish work early next week. I am worried and I did warn about the fact that we no longer have the time, as the financial sector can't bear us and will eventually collapse. People can no longer tolerate us as well and they will rise.

Today, we are still able to do all of the mentioned matters in a few days, not to give people promises to get them off the streets, but to meet and work while people are still on the streets. They form a source of pressure for us to work quickly and effectively, without setback, deceleration, and procrastination. The government, or whoever wants it, gives itself an opportunity, just as the people can give it a chance for a few days to finish this work, while they remain on the streets. In my speech I gave on the 13th of October, I had set a due date on the 31st of October, and I think that it is more than enough time given for us to be done. If the Government cannot do its job then it should resign, since it is responsible for us falling into the second option that we were talking about. Unfortunately, the alternative to the current Government is *blurry*, and it could be much worse than the current situation, especially the absence of a Government, and this is considered to be worse.

The other option that we do not wish for it to happen is chaos on the street leading to strife. Remember that there is a known – unknown fifth column that exists among people. You may know some of them from their slogans and appeals, while others you may not know them since they aim to cause problems and to ruin and destroy the country. So what is coming will be worse because we would have reach the impingement of the financial situation hence our Lira collapses and people will lose their money and that's when the worst disaster occurs which will transform the country from chaos state to hunger, and people will end up brawling and we may lose this beautiful scene that we are seeing today of the Lebanese being united, since it may be divided due to the need, the slogan, and the appeal. Dear Lebanese, imagine this situation without a government, without security, without money in the markets and banks, without flour and fuel. Where do we take the country then? I have warned of this scenario for a while, and I did not dare to put it out in the media, but it was written in the paper of Baabda. I am telling you about it today not for people to leave the street, but it is their right to demonstrate and express their anger and we must help achieve these demands and, together, try to avoid the worst as long as the opportunity for rescue is available.

Prime Minister Saad Al Hariri is ready, the Secretary-General of Hezbollah, Mr. Hassan Nassrallah, has spoken with us for seven hours and his position is clear, and the Speaker of Parliament, Nabih Berri, is enthusiastic about the paper of Baabda. Political capabilities must be available. Time and solutions are present. It is enough to show people that we are serious about achieving something, for example through the three laws of corruption or any of them: lifting immunity, lifting banking secrecy, and recovering looted funds. I stand ready, as I have lifted my own banking secrecy. I ask the ministers and deputies of our political bloc to lift their banking secrecy and immunity and to present themselves to a special court for the recovery of looted funds, as we have put in the law.

We have the nerve to pass these three laws and come forward. Will the others come forward as well? This would be a true sign of trust for the people.

Finally, I would like to address our people on the street and in the Free Patriotic Movement by saying: You are the reform holders and annexation of the country. We will not spare you for the rescue when the reform lags and the country is lost. Stay with us. Listen to us. Until next time. Thank you.

Appendix E

Gebran Bassil's Speech on the 3rd of November 2019 – Arabic Version

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بساب ل

لاؤوكي ن ب لزيه - خ فئالو - فاخ ن -ك انتمار - دآ يم انتل و ن بؤ ل - أب ن - زنه يه - قرونلاب واقب - نلا يدسان - بحرو ل - اوما مد

اي ، انولا له املنم اندعاون يه مكافواو نحن 13 نپرشت يقينان ، تدحلاب مويلا قيروط يلع تتيب بعشلابف ، ادبعي قيسانم رورم فصن قتلولا قيسانرلا ادبلا ، يبعش كارجب انم ل اندحو ردون نم ل لاخ تاسوسولما قپرونسدلا طوننا قفون ريغلا ، لمكلا راصو نا امزل اوكراشت انعم . امتغو امبمسا ، قلوطلا بلق نكلو سانلا تبلوون انؤيس قلوطلا يه .

نحن انك انردح انءالرش يلا نولصاو انزا انه ل و عيطسن نا لمكن اذكه ! انيطع او انسين قصرف ل 31 نپرشت! انؤيس سانلا اذهو ، او ادبو ام انك انوعد هبللا يه تدحلا هادبلا نحنو ، موپلا انه ل مهضوانلا و ، مهه جاون لب ، س كغلاب يلا نوكونو مهپوونلا مهيناج لمكونو اوس .

، انبلا نيشو تاباش رنك مكنا اودونعا ريغ نبلانم تناو ، مكنتوب مكنتواننا مهنا نمرينلا يلع اوس يلا يح ، قح ولا تناك قليسو يوسولما بذجل ، ضعلما امنا يوب ينطولا ديشنلا يلع انم يا توصلنا . انما مكنعان قظحل تعمسو قظحلب مكنتوس تيارو عيشلا سامحلا مكنويعي . تيار يسفن ، مكهين علاطلا بضعلاب ، مكرجانج نم نحن انصفتنا مكلم يلع ، ملظلا كلذل نحن ل ملظن ادح ل او . ردبو بضعلاب ترعش ام قداصلا ترعش ، مكنتونكا نم ملظلاب يذلا ضرعنا مل قلووننا نم اذه مهزم بلط مكنويعي مهچونب چراخلا نم . نمو يصرح يلع ، مكنتونك حاجن مكلا لووننا : " يه قرونلا قضااننا يلع ، ملظلا سب قرونلا ام ملظب طقسب يهنتبو . "

ل دوع انزا ، نپنرم ملظنن قرم نم زومر ، داسيلا قرمو اياحض نم داسيلا . نحن نم 90 يلا 2005 انوفن انولزعو انودمطض او لك تاسايس داسيلاو بهنلاو ردولما . اندعو ملح قووب قووبو رپرحتلا قپوونلا يثلا انلضان املج انم . انلخد سبلا انادبو قلوونلا نم عون نا دض داسيلا . انرصو ، قداغلا لشم ، اندحو انك شيعن ملحلا نا يدين ملو ، قلود نا لمما دونن انبعش اولمعو اذه قووح ل لاضن

، ملحلا انزاهر نم طونو وه يلع انبعش . موپلا ، اوس برن ، ملحلا اذه ، مكافواو نحن ل لمما اولفون انزاب غلئون يينبو داسيلا قلود مهزم مبنممع اذا قمع ، داسيلا نپسانلا نومح نا نود نم اونرع . اذام نسح دسانلا ديري نم نا بوايني ؟ يم دل آب هوش ي مل مروض قعاشلا او بذكلاب نتخ او حبصي لشم مهضعب .

مبنمعا اذا ، لكلا ، مداوم او نپسانلا ل ردوننا بساحن ادحا . اذكه برهي نودسانلا رپصبو بساحلا نم مه مداوم قوحص قمعنلا !

اذله بجي نا نوكوني راعش " ينعني نك نك " س بولو قلاءاسملا ملظلا . مهلك بجي نا اونوكوني تح مهلكو ، مهلو انحنو قلاءاسملا بجي " نا اونوكوني تح قيساحملا اذلا اونك مهلو انحنو نپسان . انسل نكلو انك نپسان ، نارعوو نودسانلا مه نم اورمع مهروض نم قلوونلا ام ، سانلاو نارعزلا مه زج او حلا اوبكر نم انوركدو تاووخلا او ذخ او ما يابو ايش بولملا برحلا .

انما تنشكو تارچ ، يباباسح مل عنرا قپرسلا قپنرصلما نع يباباسح لب بساحن تنشك يباباسح ذيم نپنرس نا نود نم يذلاسي انباونو انوارزو عنر سممايو ، دحا قپرسلا انيعدو قپنرصلما قپوونلا اولعوبل انلشم . ضعلما ل ديري ! نا اوجج اذه ريغ فاك . اهدعو ، قپادبلا نكنا رونا اولضنت يثلا نيناوونلا امانمدن عنر نع قپرسلا عنرو قپنرصلما قنارصلا نينظوملاو نبلووسملا نع نوناقو ، نيقياسلاو نيلا احلا قبو مهمل ل اومما دادرستا يلك لسك بساحت ي نم بطاع ماغلا ن اشلا : ، قنارصح ، قپرس ، ينعني دادرستا . ، قپرس ، قنارصح دادرستا .

انعنر نحن قدمل 15 قيس راعش " قپرح قدايس ل لاؤيسا " يح موپلاو ، مهاندرستا عنرن راعش " قنارصح ، قپرس دادرستا " يح انلاوم درسن يثلا انلا دسب انزعج . لذب عطق قرطلا يلع عطونن ، سانلا قپرطلا يلع بئانلا يذلا ضنري نا مده روي ، نيناوونلا يسايسلا يلعو يذلا برهي يلعو ، قيساحملا نم يضاونلا يذلا ل ديري بساحي ل و نأ قبطي نوناونلا !

لَ عَطُونِ قَبْرَطِلَا يِلَعِ اَنْسِنِ بِلَا طَمِبِ قَبْسَايَسِ زَجَعِي اَهُيُوقُحْ ، مَوْبِلَا مَكْنِمِ نَوَعَرَسِنِ نَوَزُونُكْ رَايَهَنْلَ اَبِ يِلَا اَمَلَا . تَنْوَلَا مَوْبِلَا
يِه رِيخْ اَنْلَا سَبْلُو رَايَهَنْلَ اَبْر ، هَعَجْرَسِنِ لَعِطْسِنِ هَعْنِمِ . اَذَهَوِ قَبْسَا حَمَلَابِ بِلَا طَرَلَنِ نَكْمِي هَوْبِيُوقُحْ مَوْبِلَا . اَنْوَعَدُو اَنْسَايَسِ فَنْطَرَلَا
اَهَنْوَوِ رَايَهَنْلَ اَبْر قُوْحِنِ اَنْبِلَطَمِ نَأَبِ حَبِيصِي اَنْبِلَا قَلُوْدِ قَبْرَدَمِ نُوْدِ نِمِ بَلَقْ مَاطَرَلَا لَبِ هَرِ يُوْطُكْ نِمِ لَلَاخْ ، اَنْرُوْسِدِ قَبْرُوْلُوْمَاوِ نِمِ
خَوْبِيَشِ سَلَجَمِ نَوَكِي هَيْدَلِ تَايَحِ لَاصِلَا قَبْطَرُو ، قَبْرَايَهَنْلَاوِ قَبْرَايَهَنْلَا قَبْرَايَهَنْلَا قَبْرَايَهَنْلَا قَبْرَايَهَنْلَا قَبْرَايَهَنْلَا قَبْرَايَهَنْلَا
ءَاشَرَا لَلَاخْ

قَايَحِ يِمَنْبُو نَبْرَانِيَلَا مَهْمُطَانِمِ . اَذَكِه اَدْبِنِ نَوَزَاوْبِ لَقْبَنْتُو قَبْصِ خَشْرَلَا لَاحِ لَلَا دَحُوْمِ اِيْحِ بَرْدَه قَلُوْدَلَا قَبْرَدَمَلَا اَوَّلَا طَرَا قَدَامَلَا نِمِ 95
رُوْتَسَدَلَا نِمِ . نَحْنِ اَنْكِ اَنْدَدَعَا اَعُوْرَشْمِ لَامَكِ هَنْلَعِنِ لَوَأَبِ قَبْسَانِمِ . اَذَه وَه رَكْفِ لَاشْرِيْمِ يِه هَذَهَوِ ، نَوَعِ مَسْرِدَمِ يِنَا سَاَنْلَا ذَخْ اَنْ
مَهْمَدَارِبِ قَلُوْدَلَا ، قَبْرَصَعَلَا ، قَبْرَدَمَلَا قَبْرَايَهَنْلَا .

اِيْ ، ءَاَنْوَلَا لَهْ اَنْبَاجِ مَوْبِلَا نَحْنِ سَبْرَلَا دِنَعِ دَمْبَسْرَلَا نَوَعِ هَمِ ، مَعْدَلَا سَبْلُو هَيْطَعْرَلَا مَعْدَلَا لَبِ مَهْمَسِنِ مَنِمِ ! مَكْرَاشْرُو قَبْطَبْتَبِ
يِنَا هَنْلَعِ قَبْلَمِ لَوَاوِ مَنَبِلَ وُ فَصْرَبِ "يِدَايَا قَبْطَبْتَبِ" اَهْضَرْنِي بَعْشَلَا يِه نَا مَزَلِي ، نَبْطَرُوْمَلَاوِ نَبْلُوْوسَمَلَا لَكِ نَبْلَا حَلَا
وَأ نَوَزَاوْبِ نُوْدِ نِمِ ، نَوَزَاوْبِ نُوْدِ نِمِ مَكْحِ نُوْدِ نِمِ قَبْرَحِ لَامِ ، قَبْرَايَهَنْلَا نُوْدِ نِمِ ، بُوْكَشِ لَكَلَا ، اَبَاوْبَلِ هَجْمِ اَنْرَبِ قَبْرَحِ فَشْكَبِ
لَوَا نِمِ مَهْمَلُوْمِ مَهْمَايَلُوْوسَمِ قَبْرَه مَامْ قَبْرَحِ نَلَا قَبْرَايَهَنْلَا قَبْرَايَهَنْلَا قَبْرَايَهَنْلَا قَبْرَايَهَنْلَا قَبْرَايَهَنْلَا قَبْرَايَهَنْلَا
مَهْمَا بَا سَحِ
اَهْمَا رِي يِلَعِ مِ سَلَجَمِ لَا ءَاَضْلَلِ .

نِمِ نَوَكِي لَكَا نَهْ قَبْشِ مَهْمَا بَا سَحِ يِلَا لَاحِي اَذَاوِ قَبْرَحِ نَلَا تَنَاكِ مَلَاوَمِ رِيغِ قَبْرَحِ نَلَا لَاحِي قَبْرَحِ مَكْحَلَا . عَضْ خَبْلُو لَكِ نِمِ حَرَصِ مَامِ
سَلَجَمَلَا يِرُوْسَدَلَا مَهْمَا لَقْبَنْتَمِ مَلَاوَمِ نَعِ قَبْرَايَهَنْلَا تَبْرُو مَوْبِلَا نَبْ مَلَسَا مَذَهَوِ ؛ مَهْمَايَلُوْوسَمِ قَبْرَحِ نَلَا نِمِ عَوْنِ نَاكِ يَارَلَا مَاعَلَا .

اَذَكِه زَبْرِي سَاَنْلَا يَمْدَلَا نَوْرَعُو ، دَسَاَنْلَا نِمِ نِمِ لَلَاخْ ، ءَاَضْرُلَا ءَيْرَبِلَا مَرَجَمَلَا نِمِ اَهَنْوَوِ ، يِلَا اَمَلَا حَضْرَبِ لَ اَبْغَلَاوِ قَبْرَدَمَلَا
بِيَسَايَسِ لَ جَمْرَبِمَلَا .

اَذَه وَه يِدْحَلَا قَبْرَدَمَلَا اَبِ يِنَا هَعَجْرِي "رَايَهَنْلَا يَنْطُوْلَا رَحَلَا" مَامْ لَكِ اَذَكِهَوِ ، سَاَنْلَا بَهْدِنِ يِلَا تَايَاخِنَا نَبْرَانِ اَهْبِ مَدَاوَمِ نَبْرَلَا
اَوْبِي نَأَبِ ، لَمَعَلَا اَذَه اَوْ مَوْبِي فَرَعُو ، اَوْضَرِ نَبْرَلَا نَبْرَانِيَلَا نِمِ سَاَنْلَا نَا مَهْمَبِ اَوْزَبِي .

اَذَه وَه اَهَنْوَوِ رُوْدَلَاوِ ، اَنْرُوْدِ مَهْمَا عَقْرُوْمَلَا نِمِ . عَقْرُوْمَلَا اَنْبَايَحِ لَبْ كِي لَسْمِ اَمِ لَصْحِ ، اَنْعَمِ رُوْدَلَا رَرَحِي اَمْبَادِ . يِنُو لَاحِ مِ لَكِ
مَهْمَا نَبْرَانِيَلَا نِمِ . مَامْ اَوْ قَبْرَايَهَنْلَا لَمَهْمَا بَصْرَانِمَلَا . نَحْنِ اَنْبَارَكِ يِه اَنْبِيْمِدَا . اَنْبِيْمِدَاوِ اِيْ بَابَشِ لَ لَبْوَيْ لَوَّو نَحْنِ نَا لَبْوَيْ
قَبْرَايَهَنْلَا
يَعْتَبِنِ قَرُوْنَا ءَاَقِبِ لَبْحَرُو نَبْرَانِيَلَا مَدَاوَمِ .

اِيْ بَابَشِ اَبُو تَابَشِ ، نَبْرَانِيَلَا مَلِ نَحْنِ لَانِمِ ءَايِطَحْنِ اَنْبَابِ اَنْبَايَحِي عَمِ ، دَاَسَنْلَا يِلَعِ لَبِ مَلُو هَايِرَا حِ سَكَعَلَا تَكْفِنِ ، نَبْرَانِيَلَا نَعِ لَبِ
، مَهْمَايَسِ نَاكُو لَكَا نَهْ قَبْمِ قَبْرَحِ مَهْمَا نَكَلُو ، مَكْمَلَا مَهْمَا مَكْمَلَا حِ اَنْبِلُوْوسَمِ تَسْبَلِ لَبِ قَبْرُوْوسَمِ ءَاَضْرُلَا يِنَا بَجْحِ تَاَنْبَلَا .
اَنْبَايَحِ اَوْ اَنْبَايَحِ نِمِ لَلَاخِ نَوْرَدَايِ ، عَحْلَا صَحْلَا يِلَعِ نَأَبِ قَبْرَحِ اَنْهَوِ ، حَلَا صِلَا اَنْبَايَحِ اَنْبَابِ اَنْبَايَحِ : اَنْبَايَحِ يَضْرَا بِلَا حَلَا صِلَا اَبِ نِمِ نَبْ
نَبْرَانِيَلَا قَبْرُوْوسَمِ قَبْرَحِ حَلَا صَمِ تَنَاكِ بُوْرَأِ نِمِ اَنْبَرْدَقِ نَكَلُو ، اَهْدَحُو قَبْسَايَسِلَا مَكْمَلَمِ عَقْبَسِنِ نَأَبِ اَهْلَكْفِنِ . ، اَنْبَايَحِ ، مَعْنِ اَنْبَايَحِ اَنْبَابِ اَنْبَايَحِ
عَبْرَا شَمَلَاوِ لَمَعَلَا نَكُو اَنْهَوِ زَا جَرَلَا رَنَكَا يِدْصَنْلَا نِمِ نَبْرَلَا اَنْبَرُوْوسِ نَوَهْشَبُو نَوَبْخَكِي نَوَعْرَزَبُو يِنِ لَوُوْعِ سَاَنْلَا
اَنْبَايَحِ قَبْرَحِ نَأَبِ رَهْمَطْسِ اَمَمِ اَهْمَا نَمَلَا نَكِ بُوْرَأِ عَابِطْرَلَا نِمِ اَنْبَايَحِ . اَنْبَايَحِ نَبْرَانِيَلَا اَذَه جَنَانِيَلَا نِمِ
، يِسَايَسِ لَ اَبْغَلَاوِ قَبْرَحِ رَا صِ يِنِ هَذِضْعِ سَاَنْلَا . قَبْرَحِ نَكَلُو يِنِ رَصْرَبِنَسِ قَبْرَايَهَنْلَا اَنْبَايَحِ دَكُوْ . "قَبْرَايَحِ
قَبْرَحِ اَبُو بَدْلَا

اَنْبَايَحِ رَنَكَا اَهْمَدِنِ اَنْبَايَحِ قَبْرَحِ اَنْبَايَحِ مَدْطَصِنِ قَبْرَايَحِ اَهْمَلَكَا بَلَكِ قَبْرَمِ سَمْنِ مِيْعَزِ دَاَسِنِ اَهْلِ وَا لَوُوْوسَمِ اَهْمَدِنِ عَوِ ، اَهْبِ اَنْبَايَحِ نَا
ظَاَنْحَلَا يِلَعِ دَحْوَلَا قَبْرَطُوْلَا يِه مَهْمَا نَأَبِ نِمِ ظَنَّا حِي يِلَعِ عِبَادِنُو اَنْبَرُوْوسَمِ نَعِ اَهْلُو ، اَنْبِيْمِدَا اَنْبَايَحِ نَأَبِ قَبْرُوْوسَمِ "بَدْلَا ، بَدْلَا قَلْعِي
ءَايَشِ يِنِ اَهْمَدَلَا" ، عَقْبَسِنِ حَبْرِنِ نَأَبِ اَهْبِلَعِ قَبْرُوْوسَمِ ، "لَعَشَا لَعَشَا يَأَبْشَبِ قَوَا شِغِ نَا اَهْمَدِنِ نِمِ" . رَبْكَمَا اَطْخَا اَمِ اِيْ يِقَا فَرِ
يِنِ رَايَهَنْلَا يَنْطُوْلَا وَهْمَا ، رَحَلَا رَخْبِنِ ءَايَشِ رَنَكَا مَبِيْسُو مَبِ عَبْدِنِ ضَرَعْرَبُو يِلَا غَلَا نَمَلَا قَبْرَحِ مِ تَلَا مَحِلِ ، اَنْبَايَحِ اَهْمَدِنِ سَاَنْلَا
نَوَبِيْطَلَا "نَلَكَبِ" اَهْمَدَانُو ، نَوَبِيْطَلَا نَوَكْرَحَمَلَا اَنْبَايَحِ ، اَنْبَايَحِ اَنْبَايَحِ نِمِ "نَلَكَبِ" يِلَا "نَدْحُو" فِدَمَلَا نِمِ وَه سَاَسْمِ نِمِ طَاوَسِ
اَنْبَايَحِ دَهْمَلَا يِسَايَسِ . يِنِ نَكَلُو نَأَبِ لَوُوْوسَمِ دَحَا عَقْبَسِنِ نَأَبِ اَنْبَايَحِ اَنْبَايَحِ : اَنْبَايَحِ نَحْنِ طَبْرِي رَايَهَنْلَا بَعْشِ . رَنَكَا اَمِ نَوَعِ عَقْبَسِنِ
مَلَعِ اَنْبَايَحِ وَه بَعْشَلَاوِ اَنْبَايَحِ "لَمَكَبِ يِنِ اَمُو يَشِ اَنْبُوْبِ" .

اَنْبَايَحِ يَكْلِ ، يِقَا فَرِ اِيْ لَ اِيْ ، يِقَا فَرِ رَبْكَمَا اَنْبَايَحِ رَبْكَمَا اَنْبَايَحِ وَه : اَنْبَايَحِ يِنِ وَكِ تَلَقِ "يَنَابِ شَمِ قَبْرَمِ اَدْحِ ، نَبْرَانِيَلَا لَبِ اَنَا قَبْرَمِ نَبْرَانِيَلَا" . اَنْبَايَحِ
اَنْبَايَحِ اَنْبَايَحِ يِنِ اَنْبَايَحِ نَبْرَانِيَلَا قَبْرَطُوْلَا يِه مَهْمَا مَلَا عِلَا نِمِ ، مَهْمَا نَأَبِ تَابَشِ اَنْبَايَحِ سَبْلُو اَنْبَايَحِ ، اَهْمَدَانِ نَلَا لَبْوَيْ نَأَبِ يَأَبْ لَزَعِنِ نَوَكْمِ
اَنْبَايَحِ رَجَبِيْوْبِصِ عَمِ مَهْمَا ، لَخِ اَدَلَا نِمِ اَمَمِ نَلَا نَمَلَا نَاكِ اَدَاوِ نَوَكْنِ جَرَا خَلَا دَبِي . اَنْبَايَحِ اَنْبَايَحِ قَبْرُوْوسَمِ عَمِ يِسِيْرِ نَوَكْمِ
نَصْرَحِ نَلَا اَنْبَايَحِ نَوَكْنِ يِلَعِ تَابَا سَحْلَا قَبْرَايَهَنْلَا وَه قَبْرُوْوسَمِ يِلَعِ بَا سَحِ نَطُوْلَا . اَنْبَايَحِ اَنْبَايَحِ اَنْبَايَحِ

It is not fair that we suffer injustice twice. Once from the symbols of corruption, and once from the victims of this corruption. They denied, isolated, and persecuted us from 1990 until 2005, and carried out the policies of loss, looting, and corruption. Yet we came back by the power of the liberation dream and the power of the case that we fought for. We entered the State and started the second kind of fight against corruption. We were alone, as usual, and started living the dream of building a nation. We have not lost hope that our people will realize this dream because our bet is only on our people. Today we see together this dream. Do not kill the hope that we are uprooting the corruption and building a nation. If you generalize the charge of corruption, then you are protecting the corrupt without knowing. And what does the corrupt want better than being equal to the moral character? The corrupt deforms the image of the moral character with lies and rumors until they become alike. If you accuse everyone, the corrupt and the moral characters, we cannot hold anyone accountable. That is how the corrupt avoid the judgment and the moral character becomes the victim of the charge!

And for this reason, the slogan “all of them means all of them” should be of accountability and not of injustice. They all have to be held accountable and we’re the first ones. They all have to be held accountable if they are corrupt and we’re the first ones. However, we are not all corrupt and scoundrels. Corrupt are those who have built their palaces with the state and the people’s money. The scoundrels are the one who have installed checkpoints and took illegal taxes, reminding us of the militia and the days of the war.

I dared to disclose my accounts. Not only did I lift the banking secrecy of my accounts, but I disclosed my accounts two years ago without being asked by anyone. Yesterday, our ministers and deputies lifted their banking secrecy and invited the rest to do the same. Some do not want to! They argued that this is not enough! Let this be the beginning. After that, you are welcome to approve the laws that we presented on lifting the banking secrecy and the immunity of current and former officials and employees, as well as the law of retrieving looted fund in order to hold anyone who practices public affairs accountable that is to say: confidentiality, immunity, and recovery. Confidentiality, immunity, and recovery.

For fifteen years, we have raised the slogan “freedom, sovereignty, and independence” until we restored all three of them. Today, we raise the slogan “confidentiality, immunity, and recovery” until we recover our money, which will settle our deficit. Instead of blocking the roads on the people, let us block the road on the deputy that refuses to approve these laws, and on the politician that escapes accountability, and on the judge that does not want to hold anyone accountable or enforce the law!

Let us not block the roads on ourselves with political demands that are unable to be met today, because you will be speeding up the financial crash. The time is today and the priority is to delay the crash, not to speed it up. We could prevent it. Let us demand accountability and that can be achieved today. Let us cleanse our political system and survive the crash. At that time, we will be able to fulfill our demand to have a civil state without overthrowing the system, but rather developing it throughout the constitution. By establishing a Senate that would have the power of entity and the Charter. Furthermore, we apply administrative decentralization and extended finances that facilitate the lives of the Lebanese people and develop their regions. This is how we start with a unified Civil Status Law and gradually move towards a civil state, based on Article 95 of the Constitution. We have already prepared a complete project, which we will announce on the

first occasion. This is the ideology of Michel Aoun, and this is his school that takes people willingly towards the modern, civil, and secular state.

People of loyalty, we came to President Aoun to derive support from him, not to give him support, but to get it from him! We are here to join him in implementing his program, which he announced by the half of his term. The first “clean hands” operation imposed by the people is for all current and former officials and employees to be obliged, by or without law, without judgment and prosecution, and complaint, to automatically disclose their accounts’ activity from the very outset of the assumption of their responsibilities before the Special Investigation Commission of the Bank of Lebanon. If necessary, a special judicial commission shall be formed headed by the Supreme Council of Judicature.

Those whose accounts are suspected shall be referred to an investigation, while those whose funds are not clean shall be referred to trial. Those who declare their money and possessions before the Constitutional Council shall be subject to a comparison between today and the time when they assumed their responsibilities. This will be the second type of disclosure to the public opinion.

This is how people distinguish moral characters from the corrupt, and through the judiciary, they will know who is innocent and who is a financial criminal. And only then the lie and programmed political assassination will be revealed.

This the challenge of moralism that the “Free Patriotic Movement” raises in front of all people. This is how we go to elections sorting out the moral characters who have accepted to do this work from the corrupt who refused. People know how to distinguish between them.

This is our role, and the role at that time is more important than the situation. Sometimes the situation binds you, just as what happened to us, while the role always frees you. Either way, dignity is more important than both. In the face of dignity, the position does not matter. Our dignity is our morality. Young people, our good manners and morality does not accept, nor do we accept, that the revolution ends with the staying of the corrupt and the departure of the moral characters. Young men and women of Lebanon, we did not make a mistake by coexisting with the corruption. On the contrary, we fought it and we did not remain silent about the corruption. We named them. There have been a hundred problems with them before you and it is not our responsibility but the responsibility of the judiciary, which blocked the files. We believed that through the reconciliation, we would be able to achieve reform, and here we admit that we have failed. We failed through consensual reform because among the corrupt is a network of interests that was stronger than our political capacity alone. However, we can tear it down with your help. Yes, we made a mistake. We made a mistake when we got distracted with work and projects. We were concerned with achieving more rather than confronting those who lie and distort our image and plant a false image of us in people’s minds. We thought that the truth would come out at all costs and that it is stronger than a false impression. It became clear to us that this impression caused by lies, rumors, and political assassination has become a reality in the minds of some people. But the truth will prevail in the end, I assure you.

We got it all wrong when the idea of us crashing into an entire sect got to us every time we contact the corruption of a leader or an official in a sect. When we considered preserving national unity was more important than preserving our image and defending our morality. And when we thought that the saying “*Lie, lie, something sticks in your mind*”, we can win over it with the saying “*Work, work, clear any clouds of minds*”. As for our biggest mistake, my friends in the Free Patriotic

Movement is the thing we are proudest of and because of it we pay the high price, as well as being subjected to targeted campaigns against us. It started with the good people saying “All of them” and ended with the main drivers to us alone. We moved from “All of them” to “Only them” because the main goal is to overthrow the [President Aoun’s] term and eliminate us politically. Nevertheless, I say that no one can cancel us since we are the people. We are not only a movement but the people. The most they can do is delete us physically and the people will proceed and nothing can stop us.

My friends, my comrades, our biggest mistake is our greatest pride. It is when I said, “My loyalty is not to anyone in Lebanon. My loyalty is to Lebanon.” Our pride is that we said that our national unity is more important than the whole world and that one-third of our people are not terrorists. We will not accept the isolation of any of our components so that our country does not explode from within, and that no matter what the cost, we will not be a tool in the hands of foreigners. We are proud that we have settled with a major component in our country to fortify our nation, without the settlement being on the financial accounts or bargaining at the expense of our country. Our pride is that we said that we are fanatics of our patriotism, racists in our Lebanese nationality, and open-minded in our orientalism. Our biggest and greatest pride is when we said that the Lebanese residing and dispersing comes before the migrators and refugees. However, they said, “*Refugees come in, Gebran go out*”. Our pride is when we did not conspire with a foreign state against the children of our country, nor did we conspire with the children of our country against a foreign state. We are proud that we were able to turn Lebanon into an oil country despite the desires of many who want us to remain minors financially. We are proud to have returned the Charter and full partnership of the Lebanese, and made them feel that they are equal in rights and pride. We are proud to have returned the balance between our administrations, institutions, and economy. We are proud that we have reconnected the dispersed to their homeland, and that we have restored their rights to citizenship and their rights to vote. We are proud that we did not enter the corruption system and did not participate in any deal with the corrupt, and we challenge anyone to prove otherwise. Our pride is that we “torture” and not obey and oppose anyone who wants to volunteer us to become part of a political structure that we reject. One that we do not resemble, nor does it resemble us. Our retribution is huge because of all of this. Our retribution is great because we know a lot and we are even more stubborn; however, do not be afraid because we can handle more. And I’m telling you, “Watch out, because we have difficult and long days ahead.” We were racing against time to prevent the crash, but corruption, loss, and public debt preceded us. We can endure this because we are the people of loyalty, while the people of betrayal are very few in our ranks. In big crises, my friends, two things emerge. Fear, which we can understand, and betrayal, which we cannot understand and has no justification. We are Aoun’s generation, and for us to endure a lot, there must be neither fear nor betrayal among us. Yesterday, the President of the Republic charted a path for us to abide by and walk to achieve our dream of Lebanon. To General Aoun, we say, you taught us that “For Lebanon, everything is easy and possible.” And to the Free Patriotic Movement, I say: I hear your heartbeat and I know how each one of you feels. I told you before that we are on the way to a frugal October the 13th. Now we are in its core, but you can get out of it because you are the children of October 13, 1990. You are the children of resilience. Behind every dark cloud, the sun rises. And the Free Patriotic Movement has been and will remain the sun of Lebanon.

And to my mother, I say – and God bless all of your mothers in the squares and your mothers at home – I apologize to you because I’m the reason you have been hurt, yet you are not guilty.

Nevertheless, mom, you taught me to love Lebanon and that my dignity is not more important than the dignity of my country. You taught me that no one can reach your dignity unless you do it yourself by an outrageous act. You know what you have raised, mom. You have endured a lot, but time will restore your right and the truth will prevail because only the truth will triumph. Long live loyalty. Long live the people of loyalty. Long live the Free Patriotic Movement. Long live Lebanon.

وه موپلا ملكنا نأ عم سا انا "نم نود فونك" (نود نم قلم اجم (مهربخأ نأو فبك عززنا بضغلا يند مبولق اموي دعب موي.
للكا ملعي يترأ تأجل يلا قپوسنلا قپوسنلا يلكل ل دلبلا دوأ يلا عارض يلهأ تررؤو ديدج نأ "بلؤا قلواطلا" يلع يسندن يلكل
ل تسلا بلؤوب يلع دلبلا ذنمو 4 اناو رنكأو تاووس رودأ اناو زلا لوج أو نم يلا دلب رخنأ نم أنل صرنا رامئسلا او قدع اسمل او معدلا
يتركلو نازبللا ازرظنتب تأدب برأ رومما قزظب قنلنخ دم دي لك ام لصح يهو؛ قحرا بلا قزظن تسبلا مدن يترنم قپوسنلا تبمق يترنم
امدان ذنمو نحن يترأ ذل يبابج اوب تبمق قنلنخ قداح او دلبلا رابعلا يلا تاسوسملا قپوسنلا. تهجو سا انا نكلو قناسر انا تراك
نم يلكل نجن ددؤنعي هجون انا قناسرلا ذنم رهشأ حضوزو قديدع انا قنلنخ جارخا دلبلا نم "قروج" يرضونلا داسفلا او ردهل او.
مل: ل رهشأ موزل انا الكرش رظنن يند قموكح او نطولا نأ قنو اوريس ل حل انا نكلو هبلع نوؤننملا مل دغن يلع نبردق راطنل او.
يك هبلد نأ مظن ل ح رخنأ نأ هبلع نأ يلد ي هب تيوب يندو، قباس اذ ررؤ، نأ اباسم قصاخ، هب نأ يلد ل ح رخنأ لوؤن
عجول، سا انا ل و موزل راجنل، عراشلا ل و موزل مادطصل سا انا شوجلاب وا بوؤلاب قنلنخ ل و حمس الله لرضنل
ل و انا وه ملسننپو مامز قبطيلو رومما يذلا ل حل انا ركني، هب يا ل حل انا يذلا نأ ركني نجنو، هب مل لوؤن: الله لكوني. نكل
مهما نأ امهم مل ل حل انا نأ دعي انا تؤولا. اناو ايصخش حنم أس انؤو يسندن؛ قنلنخ انا ريصق ام انا الكرش مدني يند قپوسنلا
قموكح او ابواج، احضاو انا هونو، امساح يند عؤوي عم نجل او نينا انا او انا لكو يلودلا نم ربعي هبضغ نع يند عراشلا موپلا نأ
كانه رارق عومجلا نم قنلنخ فؤو حلاصل او انا داسنلا او ردهل فوس يند نوكل م لاك رخنأ. لوؤا، انا دجم قنلنخ قنلنخ انا
بجوي نأ نوكل م لاك انا احضاو عومجلا. ل احب م نك نولء اسن يه ام هذو قنلنخ قنلنخ انا 72 قعاس. شاعو متشع
نا انا.

Saad El Hariri's Speech on the 18th of October – English Version

At these critical moments, I must address the Lebanese people directly and be candid with them, because despite everything we were and will remain one family named Lebanon. The country is going through a difficult circumstance that has no precedent in our history, and I hope the Lebanese will hear my honest words carefully, away from the political biddings that we have seen on the screens since yesterday. What we have witnessed yesterday from the suffering of the Lebanese people is a real pain, and I feel and recognize it and I am with every peaceful movement to express it. However, the important thing is how we will deal with the situation and provide solutions, because that is the responsibility that the Lebanese people entrusted us with, knowing that this tragedy exploded in the streets yesterday. For the past three years, I have been trying to address its causes and offer real solutions for them. More than three years ago, I told all of our partners in the motherland that our country was under circumstances beyond its control, and that year after year, it spent more than its income, and its debt became so great that we can no longer continue in that way. Electricity costs the state two billion dollars per year, as well as the chain of the ranks and salaries that we are committed to turn out to have exceeded expectations and cost about two billion dollars in additional deficit per year. Not to mention the differences in debts, loss, and so on. I stated that the solution is to reduce the difference between the annual expenses and the annual income to not reduce the need for new debts in the first stage. At the same time, I told everyone that the real solution is to increase the State's income, namely, to develop an economy that will create employment opportunities, especially for young men and women. And since this is the best solution, we cannot implement it on our own with our capabilities. We have agreed with all our partners in the country on reforms, and there is no solution without them. I have taken these agreements to our brothers and friends in the international community, and here I would like to clarify the following: Reforms do not mean taxes. Reforms are the way Lebanon works on reclamations and others. So, we have to change all the established laws since the years 1950 and 1960 because we cannot live in the year 2019 while working with old laws. So I informed our

friends in the international community of our decision and asked them in return to help finance this solution – meaning, to infuse funds to breathe a new life into the Lebanese economy – and they agreed, thankfully, based on these reforms, they will finance this solution with 11 billion dollars. This is the CEDRE Conference in a nutshell. I asked my partners in the State and the government: “Do you think that the problem is other than that?” They answered: “No.” I then asked them: “Do you think the solution is other than that?” And they answered with “No”. This means that they have not proposed any other solution. And for that reason, I put my trust in God and took action. However, ever since the beginning of the government formation, I kept finding myself in a procrastination period and faced with every bump in the road lasting for weeks, months, and seasons. I stated “Electricity Reform”, because electricity alone represents two billion per year. Since the formation of the government, I have been holding meeting after meeting, committee after committee, and proposal after proposal until I finally reached the end line someone came to say: “It does not work.” We have moved to the first direct step, which is to reduce the deficit. We cut expenses to the maximum and asked where can we increase our income? We held meetings, committees, and contacts in order to reach an agreement, and when we reached the end line someone came to say: “It does not work.” It is the first step in the reform and it also does not work. Instead of focusing on solving deficits and reforms, they cared about settling scores at the expense of time, that is, at the expense of the people, or settling scores with the international community, knowing that we agreed to encourage it to help us and invest in our economy. Consumer Protection Boards “does not work.” Each committee of ministers includes at least nine ministers, “so that everyone would be happy.” A National Unity government – We understood! National Unity committees as well, but the result remains, “Nothing is working!” How? Any person who faces a political performance as seen for months and years will react with anger. Anger! Of course, it is the result of the living conditions, but it is based on the level of political behavior in the country, which is the main reason for procrastinating solutions, hesitating in decisions, and disruption of the state in the face of every problem, big or small.

Perhaps there are parties on the inside who rejoiced in everything that happens and turned a blind eye, so the groups took the streets and rode the wave of young men and women who stood in the face of everyone, including me. It can be said that there is a foreign plan to sabotage the situation, or that there are regional changes and the balance of power turned over, and that if it settled down in Syria, it would be ruined in Lebanon. However, all of this does not negate the fact that there is a real pain that exploded yesterday. The people gave us more than one chance three years ago; “The first time, the second time, the third time, and the tenth time.” They waited for us to do something, to start reform, to launch projects, and to secure jobs for young men and women, yet everyone remained seated, felt comfortable with their time, and cared about scoring points in the court of others. Let us go back to the days when the country was disrupted when the government was shut down, and back to the harassment and the problems. How much did it cost money and the economy, and caused a decline in growth? The Lebanese were waiting for the government and all the politicians to take their work seriously, but we only presented them with political objections and records. I do not want to start with the biddings, and I know that many are waiting for “Saad El Hariri to be attacked and be made a victim”, and there are people who started throwing their scoundrels at us, just as they did in the past with the martyred Prime Minister Rafik El Hariri, but this is a matter that we can overcome and talk about later. What I care about today is to talk to people without flattery and tell them how anger is planted in their hearts day after day. Everyone knows that I resorted to a political settlement in order not to lead the country into a new civil conflict, and I decided to turn the tables on myself so that it would not turn on the country. For

four years and more, I turned corners and traveled from one country to another to secure opportunities for support, assistance, and investment for Lebanon; however, I started to see things differently after everything that had happened yesterday. It is not a look of remorse because I made the settlement. It is because I do not regret it, as I did my duties to protect the country and restore consideration to the constitutional institutions. The people sent us a message, but they have been waiting for us to send them a message for several months now and explain to them how to get the country out of the pit of chaos, loss, and corruption. For months, we have been waiting for our national partners and the Government to go along with the agreed solution, but we can no longer wait. Whoever thinks he has another solution, he should have presented it earlier, and even if he decides now, for reasons of his own, to make another solution, we tell him: There is no need for people to suffer, there is no need for the street to explode, and there is no need for people to clash with the army or security forces, God forbid. So let him come forward and for us to organize a quiet transition, take control, and implement the solution he is thinking of – the solution he thought of. We tell him: May God be with you. But more importantly, no matter what the solution is, we no longer have time. Personally, I'm going to grant myself a very short time. Either our partners in the settlement and the government provide a clear, decisive, and final answer that convinces me, the Lebanese, the international community, and all those who are expressing their anger in the street today, that there is a decision by everyone to achieve reform and stop the loss and corruption, or I will have another say. I say again, it is a very short notice and should be clear to everyone. In case you were wondering how long is this short notice, it is seventy-two hours. Long live the Lebanese people. Long live Lebanon.

Appendix G

Saad El Harir's Speech on the 29th of October – Arabic Version

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نتم 13 ايو بعشرا او رطنزي ارارن ل حب يسايس فؤوي روهنتلا اناو تلواح لاوط هذه قرنتلا داچنا جرحم عمسزل نم هلاخ توصل سانلا قوامحو دلبلانم رطاخما قينملا ا قداصنؤل او قوشيعملاو. موئلا فخال مكيلع يئنا تلصو يلاا قيرط دودسم حبص او ل دب نم قمدص قريك قهجاومل قمزلا. انا دعاص يلا ادبع رصق مدقم قلاؤنس قموكحلا قماخند سبيرلا دام علا ل اشيم بعشرا لوع يئنا بلانم ي قطانملا لك ابواج عم قدارا رينكلا نم نينلا نينانبلانم يلا اولزن تاحاسلا قبالاطملا ام انبلانم، ربيغتلاب قكيش نيم ان قرورضب نام ا يمحن دلبلانم هذه قظحلا قوخ پرائلا. يئانن يلا لك نينانبلانم ا اومدوي قحلصم قملاسو نانبلانم انبلانم قوامحو ملسلا يلما عزمو روهنتلا يداصنقلا لوع يا عيش رخال. لكل الكرشلا يئ قايحلا قيسايسلا لوزا: انبلانم موئلا قينك قوامحو عزمو نانبلانم لوصو قيرح يا هلا انبلانم موئلا داصنؤل اب. قصرنا كانه قديج "ام مزلا عيظن".

امعضا يئناؤنس سبيرلا فرصب نينانبلانم قناكو. بصرانملا قمارك مملانم دوعنو بهنن قملاسو دلبلانم. لوزا اضي اناو: "ام بف ادح ربكا نم وئلب" الله نانبلانم يمحى الله، نانبلانم يمحى شاعو متشع

Saad El Harir's Speech on the 29th of October – English Version

Retrieved from <https://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2019/Oct-29/494557-hariris-resignation-speech.ashx>

For 13 days, the Lebanese people have been waiting for a political solution that stops the deterioration. Throughout this period, I tried to find a way out, through which we can listen to the voice of the people and protect the country from security and socio-economic risks. Today, I reached a dead end, and it has become necessary to create a big shock to face the crisis. I am going to Baabda Palace to submit the resignation of the government to President Michel Aoun and to the Lebanese people in all regions, in response to the will of the many Lebanese who took to the streets demanding change, and in compliance with the need to provide a safety net that protects the country in this historic moment. I call on all Lebanese to make Lebanon's interest and safety, the protection of civil peace and the prevention of economic deterioration prevail over everything else. To all the partners in political life I say: Our responsibility today is to protect Lebanon and prevent any fire from reaching it. Our responsibility is to improve the economy, and there is a serious opportunity that should not be lost. I place my resignation at the disposal of the president and all the Lebanese. Positions come and go but what is important is the dignity and safety of the country. I too say: "No one is greater than his country", May God protect Lebanon, may God protect Lebanon, long live Lebanon.

Appendix H

Transcribed Interviews

Dr. Joseph Ajami, political communication expert.

Nour Salame (NS): What role do celebrities engaging in politics play in democratic systems?

Joseph Ajami (JA): The first thing that comes to mind is that in a democracy or democratic system, anybody has the right to vote and to be voted for and the right to market himself and has the right to promote their names, ideas, images like anybody else. So in that sense, definitely, like any other group in society, they have the right to do that and consequently they foster the idea that democracy accommodates everybody and welcomes everybody and democracy can lead to great competition among politicians and celebrities; competition for public opinion, for public approval, for votes, likes and shares on social media, competition for getting an edge over the others. Definitely all of this fosters democracy. Of course, there is competition either among politicians or among celebrities who, for example Fadi El Khatib, wants to utilize his status in society in order to gain more publicity and more promotion.

We can relate this to Libertarian theory which allows for competing ideas, even the false ideas. It is an open market, a marketplace of ideas; it is open for everybody. We don't have the Libertarian but we do have many things that allows anybody, any name, any artist, any sports figure to compete and to present their ideas and themselves to the general public. So Fadi El Khatib is capitalizing on his fame coming from his athletic prowess. I think the same applies for the politicians but the thing is that the politician is already known and has a celebrity status, particularly Gebran Bassil and Saad El Hariri who are already celebrities: Hariri capitalizes on his last name and Bassil on his status as a leader of a party, being the son-in-law of the President of the Republic, etc. So I am not sure how exactly political figures can win bigger status or bigger celebrity status, but as for Khatib, he can take advantage of it unlike Bassil and Hariri who already by profession are politicians and leaders, and they both assume power as a prime minister/leader of huge political bloc and as a minister/leader of a party. But Fadi to be able to enter the political world, he surely needs the media and definitely social media as a forum to make this transition: from being a celebrity in the sports world to being a celebrity in the political world. No doubt the media will help him, will foster his chances, will enhance his opportunities and will make him even a bigger name and that what actually happened to the extent that at one point and even now, his name was being thrown around as a potential government minister. This means that he already put himself in a position to be thought of as a potential government minister in any new government. Another question that must be asked is how much is he seeking or working on this new status outside the sports world. So how much is he really working on it I don't know but I am sure that he is doing that. For example, he first just finished his role as a sports figure so he retired from basketball, he has the time and the status and the name to pursue a political career and he currently has at his disposal a great place in the social media as well as the media in general to promote his new status as a possible politician. In short, already his name is there in the sports world but now the power or the challenging thing about it is to make this transition from being a celebrity in the sports world to becoming a celebrity in the political world. This transition is made easier because of the fact that he is famous already in his domain.

I can give the example of Jessica Azar, my former student, who was and continues to be somehow a celebrity: she has a status in the media world, she has her own program, she was an anchor woman for a major TV station in Lebanon, regardless how I feel about MTV, and she tried to make that transition, and she even did not make a transition, I discuss her case in my Media Ethics course, imagine that she remained a part of MTV newscast two weeks before election time at times when she was a candidate for the Greek Orthodox seat in Metn. So in this case, it was easier for her, just as it is easy for Fadi El Khatib to enter politics, since a part of the status, name or image that the potential politician creates, is name recognition. So they overcame this phase which is called "name recognition". I also remember Jimmy Carter when he first came to the seen in 1976 in the United States election campaign, he was the former governor of a small state in America called Georgia and he was a peanut farmer he was not a celebrity as in national figure. Then he gave one interview to the Playboy magazine, before social media age, and he was known for being a family man and had a closely knit family; he used his mother Lilian, wife Rosaline, and brother Billy as a part of his campaign, and he came from a very religious family, Southern Baptists, and regardless, in his interview with Playboy magazine, which is not a girlish or sex magazine as some believe, it is a literary magazine but uses nudity. So he made a claim saying: "yes I love my wife but I do lust after beautiful women!" but imagine that one interview jumped him into prominence. Indeed, overnight he became a celebrity, he became a household name in the US knowing that Playboy magazine sold 7 million copies and all of a sudden he became a public figure and next he did become the President of the US. So even in those days, the media can make or break a campaign, can make a celebrity, can create a celebrity no doubt and now more than ever because overnight you can become a social media sensation, you can have millions of followers, you can become a very important blogger, you can become a celebrity in a nutshell.

NS: What are the advantages and disadvantages of a celebrity participating in the political life?

JA: Advantages:

1. The ability of capitalizing on fame. For example, Jessica Azar was already known and she capitalized on the fact that she was very well known to many people especially in Metn and especially that she is affiliated to the Lebanese Forces, and especially that she works at MTV. So there are many elements that must be addressed beyond the person him/herself. These are extraneous elements like where do you work, the kind of sports that you do so for example if you were a golf player the approach would be different than when you are a basketball player, same goes to when you are a chess player it is different than when you are a soccer or American football player. Hence there are many other things that must be taken into consideration.
2. An already established name recognition which means that people know who is that person. Of course with social media you can promote your political platform, political agenda, you can capitalize on your political affiliation just like what Jessica Azar did since she belongs to the Lebanese Forces and so on.
3. They have followers which means that people do love them, example Fadi El Khatib, and this is a part of celebrity status that you have followers; you have people who follow you, you have people who idolize you and look up to you, and [the celebrity] has already established trust and credibility as being a sports figure in the case of Khatib or anchorwoman/journalist in Azar's

case. Credibility is so important: this means that people think highly of you and this is an added advantage no doubt. In the same context we must pay attention to the concepts of fame and infamy. Infamy is the state of being famous for the wrong reason, a criminal for example, like Abou Bakr Al Baghdadi and Ahmad Al Asir, they are famous but they in fact are infamous. Unlike them, celebrities have what we call the fame and their fame is positive unlike infamy which is negative and this helps them a lot: an already established image, the number of followers, people looking up to them, and their trustworthiness in their field of work. Not only Fadi El Khatib but same applies on Bassil and Hariri as they already have huge names hence they don't need name recognition; that is a big advantage. Think of it as follows, it would be a long road to hoe for a person coming out of nowhere to establish him/herself as a potential candidate or politician, i.e. they have a lot of work to do. But today it is made easier thanks to a large extent to social media. Today anything you say, anything you utter will go viral in no time at all, will be seen, read, or heard by millions of people. I have told this story long time ago during Obama's term: Obama and I have the same number of followers on Twitter; he has 17 and I too have 17, but he had 17 million while I had only 17 persons. So this is funny in a way that how much time do I need to collect this number at times when he already has them! That if we don't want to talk about Donald Trump who has 60 or 70 million followers. So you can say that a regular person requires passing through many phases to reach his goal whereas the celebrity is able to skip many of these phases; there's no need that he passes through them all but can dismiss like 3 or 4 stages. Truly, he already has everything: the name, the glory in his field, just like Fadi El Khatib who is probably the most celebrated name in the history of basketball game in Lebanon, and the others (Bassil and Hariri) have a history; whether a minister or leader or candidate or current deputy (Bassil), and Hariri is the son or heir of a politician and belongs to an empire called "Hariri Empire".

Disadvantages:

1. If the celebrity makes a mistake, a lousy mistake, or as we say "if he makes a misstep", the media can ruin his potential. As an example, Gary Hart was the leading candidate in the Presidential primaries in America in the 1980s up until a young, beautiful model called Donna Rice sat on his lap on his yacht at time when he was the leading candidate at the two primaries. Definitely, a sleazy magazine called National Enquirer put that picture on its cover which is sold as tabloid in all supermarkets and everywhere in America. It was found that this lady was his mistress, he was having an affair with her while he was married and had two daughters. To show you how media can make or break a celebrity, [Hart] even challenged the media as he told them "if you can find something on me, do whatever you want". So somebody took him up on that and he followed him that night and at 2:30AM, he saw Gary Hart going into Rice's apartment and in less than one week he resigned and quit the presidential campaign. So today, you can't do something wrong especially that you have social status people always look up to you to perform a certain level of excellence. For example, if Fadi El Khatib scores only 10 points in a game, people will consider that he had a bad night. The point is that he or a celebrity is always under scrutiny and people have high expectations of that person. Therefore, any little fall or snafu or misstep may ruin the credibility of his person. Also for example, imagine what they did to Gebran Bassil during the so-called revolution, it is definitely a misnomer, too bad it's not a revolution. He became the butt of the jokes and he became targeted by insults and by chants to the extent that one immoral reporter said that "this song, the "Hela Hela Ho" became a national anthem". Every person who is against him kept on repeating this song and he even 'entered the

collective memory' of the Lebanese which is another disadvantage: every time you think of the Hela Hela Ho or any time you think of Gebran Bassil, you automatically think about his mother or about the song that people sang in the streets. As for Saad El Hariri, he is eventually the son of Rafik El Hariri and has to maintain that level of political power and credibility just like his father which I think is the biggest lie in Lebanon's history particularly when they say that Rafik built Beirut but that's what they put in people's minds and these people do believe that Rafik El Hariri built Beirut. He in fact built it but how and at what costs, and how he made Lebanon one of his private companies and how he used to buy the public or the government's properties and then sell them to the government to make money that is a different story.

The most important disadvantage in short is that it is a status and a burden at once. It is a blessing since you don't want name recognition as people recognize you, recognize your status and image, you don't need someone to introduce as you are already a household name but you shoulder plenty of responsibility being a celebrity: being the heir of Rafik El Hariri, or being the son-in-law of the President, or being a leader of a political party means that you have a lot of responsibility and all eyes are on you; everybody is looking for you to fall down and make a mistake and the biggest disadvantage is that this mistake can be magnified because you are a celebrity.

NS: What objectives do politicians who do propaganda have?

JA: One of the objectives of propaganda is name recognition; to make a name for themselves, that is number one. Another thing is, you know from the tools of propaganda we have what we call bandwagon, so when you become that famous you want everybody to jump on the bandwagon; i.e. you want more fans, more support, more approval rate, etc. So the main objectives of propaganda is to make a name but name alone is not enough since it might have a negative connotation just like what we have discussed in infamy vs fame. But after creating a name for yourself, which is the first step in propaganda, you start doing things under different names because as you know we say in propaganda that when something is done for propaganda purposes it seizes to be called propaganda. This means that propaganda seeps through your mind without even feeling it that's why [the politician] starts resorting to similar things like public relations in order to prevent its becoming obvious brainwashing, one of propaganda's tools. One example is what the Americans in Lebanon are currently doing. You can see the advertisements especially on LBCI where they show the ambassador distributing face masks or presenting an olive press in Akkar etc. as if they really care about this country and its people. Here, we can see the fine line between public diplomacy, propaganda, and public relations. You and I won't believe whatever she is doing but according to regular people, this is not propaganda, there is good work and good will, it's public policy but in fact this is public relations not to call it propaganda. Eventually the goal of this [propaganda] is to market yourself, ideas, and image. If you did not have an image you must create one. If you had a slightly tainted image, you try to ameliorate or improve, change or alter that image, or you should create an image from zero. For example, once Michel Aoun became president, they dubbed him the "Father of All" and look what happened now, poor him, it actually burdened him because they gave him a very big responsibility. So the objectives of propaganda are: creating a name (name recognition), creating a good image, generate publicity, no doubt this is a chief part in this work, and it is also free publicity it costs nothing, and definitely in other developed countries they spend money on political advertising, in one of the phases, to promote themselves and promote their political

agenda. Of course you need the charisma and money because eventually being a celebrity, a public figure, or a politician involves many things so name alone is not enough you have to add some deeds, town meetings with people, join the people... in order to plant in the people's mind the idea that you are a good guy; hence, a trustworthy guy, worthy of your votes.

NS: So based on what you're saying and what you have mentioned about the American ambassador to Lebanon, propaganda is working on people and not that they are not believing it or they know that this is propaganda?

JA: For many it is working because you must pay attention that in propaganda, you use the common men and women; the man on the street, i.e. you target the people resemble "Average Joe" as they say in America. So they interviewed some people like a farmer, a teacher, an oil merchant, and an olive planter, and all of this is definitely edited and structured, that's why the viewers believe that because the ones who are talking are people just like me and you, in addition to the fact that [in the ad] they mentioned their names, and the name of the village, and they showed us the process. All of this is part of propaganda. Other people doubt everything and will directly say this is propaganda, we won't go into the conspiracy theory, but it's the easiest thing to say that "this is propaganda" or that "Americans are bad", etc. But in general, propaganda works because people think it is public policy, which is good will, whereas in fact it is propaganda.

NS: What makes a politician a target of gossip or fake news?

JA: First, he is an easy target because he gives them "food for fodder" or "food for thought"; they give us the chance to discuss many things in this country, every day they give you a reason [something to discuss] whether the media or the politicians. Because of their status, politicians and celebrities, and part of the territory of being a famous person is that you are targeted. No one will target someone who has no followers or power or political position, etc. By the mere fact that the politicians and celebrities who have already established themselves in their own fields being politics or sports, they automatically make themselves a target for gossip, gossip columnists, or media in general because, as mentioned in the disadvantages, you bear a huge responsibility on your shoulder and people expect you to perform in a certain way or level and if you go below that level you will become an easy target, you will become a prey for the media. And media as you know thrive on bad news and celebrity status. Take for instance the paparazzi, they follow celebrities not any regular person and that is the case everywhere; we follow their news. For example, long time ago when Rafik El Hariri threw a tissue paper as he was walking out of a meeting, LBCI aired this shot 32 times whereas it would air it only once had any other regular person threw a tissue paper. Another thing, psychologically speaking, people are fascinated with news about celebrities; they need to know about their children, their hair style, their rituals, habits, what they eat, the diet they are following, etc. because it's supply and demand. Celebrities are under a "red spotlight" because of their status and because people need to know anything and everything about them. Also, sometimes the politicians or celebrities give some interviews away from being a politician or a sports figure, which means that they want to project another image of themselves to the public; image of a family man, a man who goes to church probably every Sunday, he plays with his grandchildren, goes out to nature, goes hunting... because they know that this is supply and demand and that the public likes to know the

tinest things about them and specially about politicians being celebrities and assuming so much responsibility. Do not forget that usually people love juicy stories and any story about a celebrity makes news or even becomes national news. Also, gossip has been a major part of journalism for a long time. Indeed, many newspapers in America have gossip columns just like some of our websites or programs that follow the news of celebrities and so on. Another thing is the theory of agenda setting: the media today does not teach us how to think but gives us content to make us think and talk about, thus gossip is part of that and people find it fascinating.

NS: What makes politicians targets of character assassination?

JA: That is a political game no doubt and it goes beyond entertainment and gossip. It falls deep into what we call political agenda of his opponents as they try to find any gap or any little misstep or mistake, or any statement that he makes to capitalize on it and try to ruin his political career. In my opinion, this is all politics and part of it goes back to the fact that he is a celebrity and, in Gebran Bassil' case for example, he is of great interest for all people whether we like it or not. But he is mostly targeted because of politics. If we want to analyze the case psychologically, it would be partly because of envy: no one works for 18 hours like this man, no one is as ambitious as him, no one is that controversial, no one was that worth the traveler when he was Minister of Foreign Affairs, of course that made him a target. Another thing, other than gossip and envy, is that he holds so much power or at least he is perceived so. For instance, people are accusing him of being the shadow President of Lebanon in place of his father-in-law but on the other hands, President Aoun himself said in an interview for Al Joumhouriya newspaper that no, "Gebran Bassil is my student, I don't work for him" but of course he consults with him. So it is character assassination because he holds so much power, because he has political ambitions, because his father-in-law is the President of the Republic, because he has the largest political bloc in the parliament, because he is controversial, so surely, his opponents are waiting for any misstep to capitalize on it and to try to ruin his image. Definitely, here comes propaganda too: they propagate the idea that "yes he wants to become a president at any expense, at any cost, even if he has to ruin the country", they take advantage of a small idea which makes him a target of assassination. And these opponents are succeeding to a large extent. For example, they put in the people's mind, independents or opponents because those who are with him support him to the extreme, that he is currently standing in the way of forming a new government. So they are giving him too much power in an attempt to make him fall from this pedestal that he is on. They are using all kinds of tools like fake news, they present an image of him being so much ambitious and a dictator who is even obliterating opposition within his own party, etc. and they are succeeding to a certain extent. For example, they now made a big deal that some people left the FPM because of Gebran Bassil. All of this is giving them content like what we said "food for fodder" to foster the theory of political assassination because they want to terminate him politically since others do have the ambition of becoming president too: [Sleiman] Franjeh has this ambitious, [Samir] Gegaea has this ambition too, and almost every Maronite in this country do have an ambition of becoming the president.

NS: What are some impression management, staging and scripting techniques that politicians adopt during their speeches?

JA: Impression management equals selling themselves. It is all related to creating an image, or enhancing an image, or altering an image which is the job of media consultants who have a role in managing the images, political campaigns, and candidates. You know they tell them what to wear, when to smile, what to do, when to cry, when to have teary eyes, when to be joyful, and so on. Their role is huge when it comes to promoting these people and selling their images. Definitely, the principle tool today is to address the public; i.e. make speeches whether via TV interviews, or live online addressing the fans just like Obama who was the first president in US's history to use effectively, efficiently and adequately social media and was the first US president whom social media greatly contributed to his campaign because he created this engagement on social media and used it for fundraising, he raised 600 million dollars for his campaign online, he used fan groups for debates and came up with a slogan. A very important thing that they include in their speeches in an attempt to sell their programs and images is the creation of one or two slogans, preferably one slogan that must be consistent and 'enter' the people's minds. Take into consideration Coca Cola which created hundreds of different ads but the slogan remained as is for many, many years "smile and the world will smile with you". Burger King as well: "have it your way", etc. Same slogan, different campaign, different ads. Same goes to any candidate or celebrity who wishes to create a name for himself, enhance his name, or project a certain image must come up as part of his political discourse with a slogan. To give you an example, Obama created two slogans: "yes we can" because he was black so even though they only consisted 13% of all Americans, yes they can, and he was able to do it because he did the grassroots campaign which is another important thing: appealing to grassroots i.e. the common man in his speech. This can be summarized in one sentence: You have to speak the people's language. Tailor your message according to what the people need in order to appeal to the largest, widest, broadest audience possible. How you do it? Talk their language. I have always said when I used to teach creativity and copywriting: nowadays, no one has the energy to read long texts or a one-full-page ad except in only one case, if they felt that they are personally addressed in this full page. So this is the special thing about speech making: that you find the commonalities between you and the people, you speak their language, you create and promote a slogan for the campaign, you come up with things that are doable, manageable so that you don't seem a dreamer and selling them words, and you include in your speech things that people can relate to them and things that resonate with your public. If you do otherwise, and appear as if you're living on a 'very high bridge' you have to descend towards these people, you have to go to these people and make speeches: go to the Husseinieh, to the churches, etc. Do like what Saad El Hariri did once although people made fun of him that time but he took off his jacket during his speech. You have to also removed the 'velvet gloves' and talk to the people. Another example is the American Independent Ross Perot who gathered nearly 20% of the votes because he came up with grassroots campaigns which means that he talked the people's language.

NS: Can you list some of the impressions that the politician aims at conveying to the people?

JA: The most important thing is that they deliver something they are contented with i.e. your true beliefs. They have to project honesty and credibility without seeming like a dreamer. So don't promise them paradise or heaven. They have to appear realistic, pragmatic, yes a dreamer but in a positive sense I mean that, according to Fadi El Khatib, "yes we want to overcome the problem in this country and the politicians failed to do so and I am considered new blood so I can help you". This thing, "new blood", can't be said by Saad El Hariri. That's why in here, there have to

be some differentiation. Same goes to Gebran Bassil who is a spitting image of Michel Aoun. But someone new can definitely say it since he is new blood, new generation of politician, new slogan but doable, new ways to talk to the people; go down to their level, come down from your Ivory Tower just like what the Father of Public Relations Ivy Lee used to say: "bring those people down from their Ivory Tower to the level of the people", and definitely they have to have a flawless political program which means that they are not only coming to unseat somebody else, or that they are only coming to become celebrity or for money, no, but they are here because they have a different political agenda and program and definitely they have to use their own personality: let your real personality shine! Smile, use your nonverbal communication properly, dress appropriately so if you want to go to a corn farm don't wear a suit! The point is: find a common ground between you, as a speaker, politician, or a potential decision-makers and your people.

NS: How did the revolution affect the participation and engagement of celebrities in politics?

JA: This revolution was like a golden opportunity to exploit. It was an opportunity for many people even those who do not believe in it or who do not even go to the streets, and it happened so often in Lebanon that's why we saw many celebrities from different fields; the musicians, actors, reporters, and even the media outlets themselves who did not hide the fact that they were supporting the so-called revolution starting from MTV, NewTV, and even the first two, three days Manar TV and NBN. So this provided them with a great opportunity to express their views up to jumping on that bandwagon because even politics and revolutions are fashion! It is trendy so you don't want to be left alone or feel as if you're sitting in the confinement of your home and doing nothing. So it provided them with an open forum in addition to social media which played a big role in helping them express their views even when sitting at home since few of them went down to the streets and the others were just theorizing from their homes. Add to the fact that it was accessible, easy, cheap but even free, the chance was there, the political status of the country gave them good content that they were able to exploit, all in all, they took advantage of this opportunity to enhance their status and make them look that they are citizens in this country as well not only celebrities; caring citizens, citizens who want to see a better future for their country, who want to get rid of corruption and of the so-called political system/regime. It was really a window to go through and express their anger, indignation, and pain. No doubt some of them were very honest and sincere but others were simply riding the wave as we've discussed regarding bandwagon. Who needed more than a typical historic event, like the revolution or even the port blast that destroyed quarter Beirut, to join the so-called revolution. But some people because of their political affiliation like the Shia who discovered that the revolution might be able to target Hezbollah among other targets, withdrew from it. But some other citizens, and the artists [celebrities] are regular citizens as well and they need a better country, found that the revolution was that perfect window. Pay attention to the fact that public figures do know that they have many followers and anything they say will go viral, will be read by millions of people; they are influencers! They influence people and will make them think: if this famous person is protesting against the regime why shouldn't I follow suit? Take Fadi El Khatib for example, if he is tweeting about the revolution, you will say "wow", so he gives you incentives to join, like, share and subscribe to his ideas. So they are aware of this, that they have so many followers, that many people look up to them as influencers and this is a great opportunity to make a nudge or dent in people's opinions, behavior, and political ideology. They also know that some people are

open to both ideas, an independent person for example will change his mind this way or that way. That is similar to political campaigns in which they do not target strong Republicans in America or people affiliated to the Kataeb party in Lebanon since no power on earth will be able to change his mind, so these campaigns target the undecided or independent voters that can be swayed this way or that way by a political speech or by a political statement of by a post on Facebook, or tweet and now all politicians in the world, major ones or not, use social media even the Pope, the President, Prime Minister and so on, they have their tweets, their websites, fan clubs, etc.

NS: How did the revolution affect how people perceive a politician's speech. If it did affect, were politicians forced to modify the techniques they use to maintain the same influence on people?

JA: The answer is related to how credible is this celebrity. So it's just like when you give somebody the right to discuss a topic because you think he is an expert, you are a politician, you are a successful businessman, successful sports figure because when a benchwarmer in the NBA talks it would be different than when a starter in the All Star game talks. Same goes to if you are perceived as a good guy or a bad guy. Now some of them work on their image and change it to gain more followers and fans but in the case of others, their image is planted in our heads; when you think of a certain politician, something automatically comes to your mind. Hence, it is harder for these people to change; whether their image was positive even if it's great, or if it was negative it will be more difficult for us to change our perception towards these people. The challenging and tough task is when you know that you have to make some changes in your speech-making, or political program. Here, they should listen to what the majority believes in and talk their language. It is okay if you change your political stand, and it is better if you are daring enough and brave enough to admit that if people need this then I want this too and I am not shy about changing my opinion about a subject. It is not easy to change your views and your entire political discourse and narrative but it should be done, not can be done, but should, because you would be doing polling at that time; you be measuring the pulse of the public opinion. In public relations we talk about evaluation mid-campaign. Hence they must not wait till the end because some changes must be done if things are not working as planned or matching your goal. You have to change. I am not saying that you have to change your entire views or affiliations, but you can change your tactics if you can't change your entire strategy. You can change the way you address your people, or the channel of communication. For example, not everyone is on social media so you will have to appear on TV. Other people don't read newspapers, etc. That's when mid-road evaluation must take place. You have to change to prevent being perceived as very stubborn, conservative, and that you're not open to new ideas, etc. You shouldn't change the basics, you have to sell your image, programs, and beliefs, you show your people that you are honest, and sincere, and you show flexibility as well, you even talk with your opponents sometimes not only your supporters to gain people's trust.

NS: But because of the revolution, people started waiting for the politicians to make the tiniest mistake in order to criticize them and their speeches, so do you think that politicians were forced to change the way or techniques that they used to adopt in their speeches or their approach remained as is?

JA: They changed little things but in my opinion, they increased their utilization of social media because they know how prevalent it is today and how omnipresent it is; it is present everywhere, and is inescapable, particularly among the younger audience and this is something important because, for example, imagine the number of youngsters who would be at the age of 21 next elections hence will be able to vote unlike the last elections. And according to studies, social media appeals more to people between 16-35 than people between 35-50, etc. So they had to change their tactics and check what works, evaluate, and see the feedback mid-process: check people's comments, how many people shared, if you've gather enough fans or enough money in case of a fundraising, if people are really reading whatever you have written or said, how many people tuned in, downloaded or uploaded a video that you've made... So post this revolution they realized that social media is so trendy and is prevalent hence exploited it more than ever which is healthy and fine as long as you stay away from character assassination or fake news. Thus show people that you are honest, and efficient with the new media. They also enhance the use of whatever currently works and they added to it social media especially when they want to appeal to younger audiences. Pay attention to the fact that Fadi El Khatib is only in his late 30s hence must have a huge appeal to the sports fans and the younger generations so they must ensure the increased use of these platforms but during all of these phases, they can't get rid of their political consultants or media consultants and image makers which is not shameful! For example, the most challenging task today is to change the image of Gebran Bassil or to promote a new guy like Fadi El Khatib. It is definitely doable. Same goes to Saad El Hariri. And even more, yesterday President Aoun said during the interview that "Saad El Hariri has changed, he is not the same person anymore." He even asked him "what happened to you?" and he told him "I have changed". But this change must not be acute and 180 degrees since a total change in one's character will damage the image. They can't change that much because people are expecting certain things from them, or from you Saad El Hariri, you can't change 180 degrees. You have talked for so long about being moderate and today you say: "we have stopped the count" as in you are reminding the Christians of the favor that you're no longer counting how much Christians count in Lebanon and you're giving them half the cabinet regardless. This is a horrible change, you used to talk about moderation, that is moderation in your opinion? This is a major PR task for all of them. Fadi El Khatib needs a little bit of name recognition among non-sports fans, and that he is able not to only have basketball skills, but leadership skills as well and that he knows the hardships in this country and has a vision for the country, and the others [Bassil and Hariri] their task of selling themselves are is that tough because their already have name recognition and a political ideology, etc.

Summary of MP Gebran Bassil's Interview

NB: The researcher was not able to record the interview hence a summary not a transcript about the main points covered. Also, the interviewer was not able to follow with the deputy the same order of questions because he did not agree on the categorization.

All viewpoints are merely the interviewee's responses and they do not necessarily reflect the researcher's point of view.

Upon introducing the topic to the interviewee, defining third-type political celebrity, and mentioning that, accordingly, he is the case study, MP Gebran Bassil contended "I disagree". He considered that it is not true that "by no will of his own that he became a target of gossip and fake news". Rather, his character and political performance played a role in him being a target. He claimed that he used to work a lot when he was a minister, and spend long hours, sometimes till to 2:00 in the morning, at the office. "For many politicians in Lebanon, that is a problem, because they're there, but they don't work. I am their antipode, and they hate this 'model' in politics." He added that he is dissimilar to other politicians as he entered the political realm with different purposes and goals which might represent some things they are not. Add to that, many Lebanese favor the official who talks not the one who works. He gave the example of the electricity issue as he deemed it is the accurate representation of "talking vs. working". "You hear all Lebanese saying "they didn't provide 24-hour electricity". Bassil acknowledged that people are reasonable, but questions why hasn't anyone looked into the detailed plan that all previous ministers have set and worked on, queried the politicians who theorized about the failure of this project, then examined the reasons behind its failure. To further support his refute of the idea that it happened "by no will of his own", the deputy stated that his working to give back the Lebanese Christians' their rights will definitely make him a target because other politicians believe "I am snatching something from them, they don't like it." He added: "same goes to the accuse that I am racist because I want Syrians to return back to the safe regions in their home country." In general, Bassil concluded "it did not make me famous, I don't think so." He reckons that he has been facing this "attack" for 16 years, ever since he started his political career. As an illustration, they spread news about him spending 700 thousand dollars on his convoy to visit Syria, when, in fact, he didn't even go to Syria. On that account, he supposed that opponents succeeded in character assassinating him as he affirmed: "whatever happens in the country, they blame it on us saying we're corrupt". Sadly, people can be swayed. That is basically because "politics in Lebanon is superficial; it is based on gossips". The interviewer thereof informed him than one of the participants in the focus groups considered that character assassinating Gebran Bassil is no longer reaching its goals or doing the impact it is supposed to do because, by theory, smear campaigns can majorly affect the undecided; whereas in Bassil's case, what we commonly hear is "okay, he is corrupt, but he's not the only one, why are you solely attacking him that much?" "That's the point" Bassil replied. "I am not corrupt and I refuse to be one of them [the corrupt politicians], which basically means that they succeeded at, at least, spreading a false image about me; hence, character assassination reached its objectives. It is similar to when someone accuses Samir Geagea of murdering people during the war. You'll find

people telling you: “okay he killed, but he’s not the only one”, it’s the same concept with only one difference; he’s not the only one but he really killed back then whereas I didn’t! Proof is, I always ask them to prove their accusations, I even asked the Americans to do so after they sanctioned me; howbeit, they proved nothing. So character assassination succeeded because, although there are no proofs, people still don’t believe it and refuse to see anything positive.”

The interviewer told Bassil that although research indicated that he is provocative, literature provided nothing to justify this accusation except for MP Edy Maalouf’s claim. Accordingly, he was asked why he is considered as such. Gebran Bassil granted that his character cannot be always tolerated by people. He admitted that he is forthright and sometimes utters things that might hurt the other; “maybe I am really provocative, maybe it’s a character-flaw, a defect, perhaps it’s my boldness or my candidness, but that’s not the point in politics. What matters is whether I am corrupt or not, whether I work for the sake of the country or not.” Moreover, others are jealous whenever a person exceeds them in one way or another, so this surpassing provokes them.”

Talking about the scripting/staging techniques, as well as impression management, the interviewee asserted that he never planned what impressions he needs to convey while preparing his speech “which is where I go wrong”. “I know that a politician must appeal to people’s emotions not logic all of the time.” This might have helped him overcome people’s refusal of his words or proposals only because they don’t love him, he assumed. Nonetheless, Bassil ensured “I perfectly know and set my objectives when preparing my speech”. He listed five different goals he mainly uses during different discourses:

- Sometimes it is to explain about a project I am proposing;
- Sometimes it is to defend myself against something negative that is being said about me;
- Other times it is to attack/condemn an opposition;
- Sometimes it is to clarify to the public my point of view towards a certain topic;
- Other times it is to create an impact. “That is especially true when I am addressing the FPM supporters because, particularly post-revolution, I am sympathizing with them, I think they are being attacked or bullied and what I intend at doing is to raise their morale.”

Based on this response, the interviewer asked Bassil whether he changed his discourse approach or style post the revolution in order to be able to make an impact. He replied that he kind-of changed his approach because he added a sixth goal which is “letting people really listen to what I am saying or proposing because they usually refute it only because I am delivering it.” For example, “I now count to ten before saying something especially if it might offend someone. I am also trying to reflect my sympathy with the Lebanese post 17 October.”

One of the questions was aimed at knowing why Gebran Bassil thinks he was one of the targets during the revolution: was it because he is controversial? He is an ambitious politician as mentioned by Dr. Joseph Ajami? Because of his ideology and plans? His relations with Hezbollah? Or was it disguisedly targeted against President Aoun taking into account that he is an image of him? The parliamentarian’s answer was simply: “all of the above, and I would add

another reason: they want to end President Aoun's continuity which we, the FPM, the Aounists, represent."

Finally, the interviewee queried whether he thinks that adopting some propaganda techniques could have helped prevent him being a target of gossip or fake news. Bassil answered, "definitely yes. However, I don't like to adopt typical techniques like the selfie diplomacy and so on because I am authentic. That is who and how I am; I am natural and I don't do this type of effort." Aside from viewing some of these techniques as childish, Gebran Bassil lastly disclosed that he has "weak communication points, and that is one of them, but that's me, eventually."

Ghadi Francis, journalist and political campaigns specialist

NS: What are the advantages and disadvantages of celebrities' engaging in politics?

Ghadi Francis (GF): As for the advantages, first, you normalize people's interest in the public affairs. Unlike regular politicians, when a loved and nice sport public figure engages in politics, he encourages other people who have other ideas to express themselves as well, i.e. removing the 'elitism stereotypes' as in restricting public affairs to the intelligentsia only because countries and public affairs develop when they both become the responsibility of every citizen. So when a paradigm of a real, civil citizen engages in public affairs issues, he would be a good experiment for the society as a whole. Another advantage is that it would benefit him personally because he would have more responsibility; hence, will improve himself and thus will become a better person because when Fadi El Khatib, or any other celebrity, appears on TV to talk about economics for example, he will first educate himself on the topic. Subsequently, this would develop him into a better leader. I mean that if he is working on himself, then he is becoming a better politician or public figure. So from an athlete he will educate himself to be able to talk about public affairs issues. So there are some advantages for him personally and other advantages for public affairs as well. A third advantage is to diversify the narrative in politics, which means that we will no longer have the exact same ideas repeated by everyone.

The disadvantages are, first, that sophistry will increase which is when the person talks about something he is unknowledgeable about especially that in Lebanon, one must be very accurate yet we don't have any standard for accuracy. So in the case of Khatib, he is supposed to be talking about sports, youths, even developmental or business topics because he recently opened a gym since he is knowledgeable about these topics. However, what typically happens in Lebanese politics is that celebrities give the opinions about everything, so rather than help increasing the value or developing public affairs, they would be increasing its superficiality i.e. everyone talks about everything. I am not talking about Fadi El Khatib, I am talking that disadvantage in general: it is that one would be lowering the level of the political speech as well as its profundity and wisdom because anybody with any background, whether this person has a political experience or not, will give his opinion regarding everything whether the electoral law, the judiciary system, administrative structures, etc. The problem in our society is that everyone thinks he has the solution for everything. The perfect thing to do is simply to say: "I don't have a solution for this [particular issue], I only able represent you in this specific part, I can work with you on this part" but unfortunately, we don't have [typical people]. A second disadvantage is that in many cases, all of the celebrity's work and career will shift to serve his political ambitions, so instead of developing himself into a better person and ennoble as a result of working in public affairs, he will become a profiteer who made all of his work a way to reach his political goals. This is a big possibility and happens with many people. So instead of saying: "I want to represent Lebanon in this or that way", he will say: "with whom should I build relationships in order to win the elections". Accordingly, his integrity in his initial job will be decayed. For example, if he is a businessman, he will make specific deals [that will benefit him], or whatever his job is, he will become a tool or means and this is so critical because this is sometimes accompanied with corruption, discretion, bias, personal interest, exploiting people, for example, I would hire someone in my firm only I this person elects in my district. He will change into a politician or

practice politics in his day-to-day life, he'll even marry a woman according to his political interests. In many successful politicians' case, their wives were part of their politics. Everything in his life transforms into "how can this help me politically or work on a political level" which I think is not bad as this is how it is played eventually. However, in the case of celebrity politicians, this is considered a disadvantage. Another con is that sometimes their weighing in on politics will affect their image, they will be damaged as individuals, so, especially in Lebanon since it is a polarized society, when they give a political opinion, a part will be against him and another will support him hence his initial job will be affected: he will enter this chaos!

NS: What objectives do politicians who act like celebrities or do propaganda have? Do their techniques really succeed?

GF: Yes, they succeed but this depends on the quality they are presenting whether we are analyzing Saad El Hariri's case or the concept in general. Propaganda did not really benefit Saad El Hariri for several reasons: because in Lebanon even if he was perceived as funny, the opinion of his opponents will never change nor it will increase his popularity since popularity does not depend on [propaganda] add the fact that he is not a fresh, clean politician. For instance, he has his own baggage which makes it impossible for me, you, and everyone to believe that he will be able to solve Lebanon's crisis even if he keeps on singing "Hala Bel Khamis" till 2036. But yes, he projects a certain character about him so that's the advantage. In general, it is not always good for politicians to act like celebrities because they have to be real with people but when they act like celebrities by being real, like what Justin Trudeau does or 101 Public Relations which is done by the Queen of Britain, or has been done by several politicians throughout history when they used to get people to the court and interact with the common people to help form the image of the leader in people's minds. Today, media became more broad, we currently have social media, Instagram, TVs, which makes them act like a celebrity to a certain extent by posting a lot of pictures, by interacting with all issues, for example they talk about LGBTQ, etc. to be more and more real and available so this is all related to the development of media. The pros of propaganda are that it makes people feel that they are close to them, and they let them remain more in touch with the real world which adjusts and enrich their political choices in case they were clever and doing propaganda for a certain goal or objective. I don't think that it has disadvantages unless when it leads to sophistry. For example, when we're having huge national crises and the politician's approach appears as trifling for fun. For example, when the UAE launched their rocket to Mars, people on social media posted an old video for Saad El Hariri throwing a paper airplane. What he did showed how pathetic Lebanese politics is and how pathetic he is too; hence, his propaganda wasn't for his advantage that time. Although [Hariri's] video is old, had I been a politician, I would never throw a paper airplane for any reason, or ride a bike like he did [in the Serail]. I can approach typical things but while maintaining my 'real character': the politician has to always be real, not only as in spontaneous, but as in reflecting who I really am too. It would have been better for him if he for example shot an Instagram story live from his home in the cinema he has inside or how he plays PlayStation rather than [his team] bringing him a bike to ride in the Serail and film it. Be a celebrity but be a real one: your things, do not act outside, outdoors, do not set a show; do not take off your jacket on stage, no! Taking it off as you're entering your house, go live and say "hi everyone, I just got back from the cabinet meeting and that's how I look right now"; this kind of real. But here, we act even when we're being real!

NS: What makes a celebrity a target of gossip, fake news, and/or character assassination?

GF: He becomes a target if he has something and people want to fight him. This is how the game is done. Even in Hitler's time, Joseph Goebbels used to make posters for Hitler and then character assassinate their enemies, this is how it's done. Today, the techniques changes and the struggles' nature changed too between Hitler and Gebran Bassil and even Ghadi, I sometimes face character assassination, every person might be a target of character assassination when he is harmful for someone, for an agenda, a group, a political party, a nation, anyone, and in this political game, people are being 'fought' by being smothered; by character assassination, by targeting their popularity. How do you target someone else's popularity? Even if you kill them sometimes their political group will not lose political popularity. Today if he (Gebran Bassil) is assassinated in person, his political group would grow, he will be replaced in a way and his political group would grow i.e. the Christians who are affiliated to him. But if I character assassinate him, he will fail, and if he fails there would be another political group that might inherit his popularity. That's concerning Gebran Bassil in particular. Bassil as a person was a target because he is the spearhead or the logo of [President Aoun's] term and he is the logo of his alliance with Hezbollah and politically perceived for the last 3 years as the leader and that he is the head of the 'entire thing' but in fact he is today paying the price because it showed that he does not head the entire thing; he is not really capable of doing a slight change in the Lebanese government, he is not able to appoint someone without the consent of everyone. But he served this 'I am the leader image'; therefore, he was held more responsibility for this role. Had he kept Nabih Berri on the front lines, no one would have attacked him. It is also blamed on the character he adopted for a couple of years now which shows that "I want to prove myself all the time, and I succeeded, and I am the minister of foreign affairs, etc. " On a personal level, I think Gebran has so much self-confidence or self-flattery that makes one not always accept his character, and I constantly criticize him for this, but then when they started character assassinating him, I became fair: I realized that this is all character assassination, okay he believes he is of great importance but he is not the entire system after all. He failed but he is not responsible for this crisis; the crisis started in the 1990s. So Bassil served character assassination through his personality and his TV appearance in which he always makes a mistake and by taking all positions that allows people to be against him. For example, he went to Zgharta, he upset Zgharta residents, he went to Bcharre, he upset Bcharre residents, he went to the Jabal, a problem was created because of that visit, so he created a provocation to all of these people that it became so easy to make these people fight him.

NS: But why is he considered provocative? For instance, when I was writing my justification on why he is considered a third-type celebrity politician, I only found articles saying he is provocative but no one justified why or mentioned at least one statement to explain why he is considered as such, I found nothing except for one claim stated by Edy Maalouf saying: he has a peculiar character that might not be accepted by everyone.

GF: He is provocative for a very clear reason: he did not enter the Lebanese politics in the same way that others did, so he is dealing with totally different brands [the other politicians]. He actually entered this field as a new brand. But one time he needs to deal with them on the basis of "I don't resemble you", other times he wants to deal with them on the basis of "I can play your

exact same game in a better way". So as if he made with them a deal by saying "I am sitting here with you, I am the strongest one among you, but I don't resemble you" or "I am playing this game but I don't resemble you, you are the bad guys and I am the good one" for all them but he couldn't convince anyone.

NS: So he didn't have proper influence?

GF: Influence in popularity is different that influence in politics and that's the fine line between being a celebrity and being a politician. A celebrity is someone you like, you comment on their posts, you follow what they're wearing, you wear what they're wearing, you take the brands, you enjoy their lifestyle, sometimes you enjoy their input or their output, whatever they post, wherever they go; they are people that you watch but they are not people that you choose to lead you in politics. So

NS: Does this mean that you agree with what Gebran Bassil said in the interview that it is not by no will of his own that he became a target, rather he somehow played a role in this mainly because of his character?

GF: Not by no will of his own definitely. This happened because of his political work. It's not that he was sitting at home and suddenly they decided to target him. The one who by no will of his own became a target is his son. But Gebran became a target because of a reason not because for example they didn't like the way he looks. Also not because of his character but because he is a spearhead in a certain political project hence is the target; whether it is named [President Aoun's] term, or Hezbollah, or whatever; "the names vary, but the intended is one: Gebran" ("دوصؤملاو تايمسئلا ددعئ دح او : ناريج")

NS: Are targets of gossip and fake news always targets of character assassination?

GH: No it can be different. I remember when once they spread fake news on Wiam Wahhab, it was for his advantage big time. The fake news was that he was targeted at the Lebanese-Syrian borders by a drone aircraft. Consequently, he created and headed the Arab Unification Party and made a big deal out of it when in fact, it happened that yes there were some bombardments in that area and it happened that he was on his way back from Syria! So this fake news for a few hours transformed him into a national hero and he exploited it to make his campaign. Fake news as in fake is not always bad. Always keep in mind that "bad publicity is the best kind of publicity" but it depends on the purpose of the fake news. For example, if someone spreads fake news about me that I got paid 30 million dollars from the Americans, all Shiites would stop loving me and all Americans (or affiliates) will start loving me, and vice versa if it happened the other way. So, it depends on what the fake news is, whom it serves, why, and how can you make it stick in people's minds. Like I see many fake news about me but its impact is related to your popularity or influence in a specific field.

NS: How can character assassination affect the public? Does it always succeed in reaching its goals?

GH: Throughout history, politicians like Bill Clinton were targeted using sex scandals, same goes to Trump, Princess Diana and her husband, even Hollywood is currently smothered by sex issues and the MeToo movement, so sex is always scandalous. But when the politician is so strong and stable, this scandal won't really affect him and will be able to overcome it. For instance, Trump became the President of the US regardless. This means that, no, it does not always harm the other. The media usually use sex, money, and scandal to attack a politician. Other news published to really attack and harm a politician and always succeed are related to betrayals that are accompanied with trials so they do not remain fake news that's why they hurt the target. However, first, fake news and gossip must build a solid base in order to be able to harm the person. For example, in Gebran Bassil's case, media built a base then attacked everything else, so for instance, try to convince people that Gebran does not own a private jet before defending him in anything else. They created that image of Gebran.

NS: In the case of Gebran Bassil, do you think that had he used some propaganda techniques, he would have been able to prevent character assassination or now solve this problem?

GH: If his team was very, very smart, yes he would be able. But honestly, he once tried to do something like posting a picture of him while grubbing. The first thing I did is that I retweeted this picture and wrote: "The consultant who decided to upload this photo is terrible". That is because not any campaign can be convenient to any person. They must take into account who the person is and the purpose of conveying a certain image. For example, they could have really created an impact if they spread a video showing a person standing in front of Bassil in his office, furiously trying to convince him of something while Bassil very calmly replies "you're totally right". People would have said "wow, look at how humane he is, look at how he deals with his employees". But a picture of you posted on your social media? How will this change the way I perceive you if I initially have a bad image of you?! He tried a lot but the problem is the lack of purposeful communication. His problem is similar to that of President Bashar Al Assad as well as almost all leaders in the Middle East. They hire the most important PR firm in the world yet this firm does not really know about the political arrangements in Lebanon to be able to determine how the Lebanese people actually think. Al Assad hired a British firm and Bassil hired an American one I think, but they both did not succeed. It can help him improve and develop but it will never understand what actual image and perceptions do Lebanese have about him unless it spends a year or two examining and analyzing the Lebanese society, diversity, Gebran's political history, then plan on working with the Lebanese media, Gebran's team, Gebran's wife, his assistant, consultants in sociology, the FPM, etc. to create a very purposeful campaign. That's how they will succeed. A picture on Instagram is useless.

NS: I think the problem is that Lebanese politicians adopt techniques that were already made and succeeded abroad, they think it will work in Lebanon as well. Truth is, it will not. For example, Obama's tactic of taking off his jacket while talking was a success, but when Hariri made it here, people did not understand what he is trying to do or convey, so they made fun of him.

GF: Exactly. Same goes to Bashar Al Assad when he delivered his first speech after his victory over ISIS. His entrance to the People's Assembly of Syria what was the typical entrance of President Vladimir Putin to the State Duma: the same entrance, the same realization, the same camera, the same red rug, the same way of opening the door to him, the very exact same, but

Assad never became Vladimir Putin, he failed. It showed some grandeur, of course, but it wasn't properly adapted Syria; hence, his opponents did not change their minds towards him or believed that he is the true leader that Syria needs. They simply looked at this video, said "it's a nice video, nice directing techniques" but their perception never changed. The campaign must be inspired from the receptors because this politician represents them as well as the objectives and target he has rather than reproducing another person with different aims' campaign.

NS: Why did the so-called revolution that started as "all of them" ended by attacking certain politicians? Are they more controversial than the others?

GF: That's a very deep question. First, put aside the event itself, it is not about the event, it is about the media. Who works propaganda? The media. The smart 'hub' that works in the media and communication which is the West, America, Europe, the activists, NGOs, social media, Google, Facebook and Twitter analytics, the Lebanese Forces, in addition to all the funds, etc. are on one side of the battle, and on the other side we have Mario Aoun, Ibrahim Al Mousaoui, and [people who are not smart in communications]. So we have two extremes hence on traditional and social media we became bombarded by the same narrative and these people already have their baggage to fight. So what you said is not accurate because what we see on TV is not what all people really want. Go to the rural areas and ask people what do they want, they'll not tell you the same. If I do a demonstration right now in Mansourieh and thousands of protestors participate in it to demand for the stepdown of the mayor, no media will cover it, but if only 10 people stand here and say: "all Mansourieh is against Aounists" all media stations will cover it.

NS: So it was all related to the media's agenda?

GF: It is always related to the media agenda. We don't really have journalism in Lebanon, we have mouthpieces. Even media stations admit this. I remember when I had a job interview at Al Jadeed's Tahsin Khayyat because they needed me to cover the Syrian issues, he asked me "what do Syrians talk about us [Al Jadeed]?" I replied: "they say you're affiliated to Qatar" because they used to say that he gets paid from the Qataris, and that he is against the Syrian regime, and so on. He replied: "at Qatar, they say that we support the Resistance whereas in Syria they say that we support Qatar, but we support our own selves". This is true, he follows his interests so he supports whoever funds him because he considers his TV a business. Everyone who works in this field admits that it is a business, even LBCI's Pierre El Daher admits that he sold a share for X and Y, like SBI and LBCI today, he is getting funds from Bahaa Hariri. It's a business; who buy it takes it. The main question is: if Iranians, or Gebran or whomever works the same way using the media, will they succeed? Their problem is that they, up until today, still don't work correctly in the media. I am convinced that the Russians, Iranians, Syrians, and everyone who belongs to their hub have zero knowledge regarding media. They don't rely on media; they rely on war. They build their victories on wars so they are totally unconcerned about the media war.

NS: Then it is not because, Gebran Bassil for example, is more controversial than the others, or because he is an image of President Aoun so they tried to disguisedly attack him through Bassil?

GF: It is because they worked in a smart way to form a source of pressure on Hezbollah's ally and his 'legal protector' because in Lebanon we have Hezbollah and the 'face' of Hezbollah. The issue in Lebanon is a problem between Americans and Hezbollah, point. Who is actually being targeted instead of whom and by whom are just details. Gebran Bassil represents Michel Aoun only post his return from France not Michel Aoun since the 1980s. So Michel Aoun post his return is the one who did the Mar Mikhael Agreement in which he did the big political compromise. So what is happening is that they are targeting the concept of the ruler not on the ruler himself. But definitely he played a role in why he was targeted and I think that had he responded in a different way, like stepping down from the very first day of the revolution by saying "I no longer want to upset people, I have tried and failed; therefore, I withdraw" he would have become the hero and accordingly all propaganda against him would have failed. Why doesn't he play on the emotions of people while maintaining my credibility? He would have easily thrown the ball in their field and won.

NS: What are the impressions, staging, and scripting techniques that celebrity politicians rely on when planning the speeches?

GF: In my opinion, everyone presents his own brand and I think that people who usually appear on camera present different brand of themselves every time they make an appearance, it is not always the same brand. For example, I once appeared on TV delivering a speech, another time singing, then discussing politics in a peaceful way, another time furiously, so every time I send a different impressions and which one succeeded more is dependent on what brand I need to convey in that appearance. There is nothing wrong with a politician presenting his plan in the parliament and delivering a 3-hour speech to show the viewers that he is very competent and knowledgeable about a certain issue and the next day does a 7-minute speech saying: *ول ركد، دحاً* [appearing as threatening to convey a certain message regarding a certain cause]. Hassan Nasrallah said that in 2005 so we now have that impression of him and this impression will not change unless he personally tells us otherwise. He was conveying his ideology hence telling us another part of who he is. Same goes to President Aoun when he gave us an impression of his character when he said "*اي ميطلعنا ببحش نالبل*"; that is his character and his image but he can still use the same statement in another speech discussing something else to reveal something else. They should never convey the same impression every time, they must be as broad as possible and people will like me more and more. As an example, Obama in David Letterman's show is different from Obama who took off his jacket, is different from Obama when he appears with his wife, different from Obama when he's surrounded with people, different from Obama who killed Bin Laden, etc. Every time a different person, every time a different message; I am just a messenger of a whole big picture and I have to play right here and play it right there. I understand that this is part of his character and if it is bad it might not help him, but I can't understand the fact that one would never be able to make a speech that can help boost this image.

NS: You once wrote on Twitter after a speech delivered by Gebran Bassil in 2021 that his tone and style differed a lot post-revolution. You think that the revolution affected the way he addresses people because the way they perceive and interpret his speeches differed as well?

GF: Sure. He changed a lot. He used to address people in a way that makes them feel that he is so powerful and knowledgeable but then he as if was shocked when he saw that almost everyone is fighting him and this shock made him think in another way and my proof is that he contacted me in order to criticize him, discuss what is going wrong and do a rehabilitation. To change, one must destroy all of his ego, admit that he failed and try to change the entire thing rather than staying as is and trying to fix tiny little things every now and then.

NS: Rebranding Gebran Bassil can be a solution?

GF: Yes, nothing is impossible in politics since a politician is never 'assassinated' except when he actually dies or 'kill himself politically'.

NS: But I think it is somehow hard in his case because people's problem with him is to a high extent personal not political, so it's like "we are against this reform because Gebran proposed it" and I discovered that from my focus groups.

GF: I used to think the same and I always told them after every speech that no matter what he will say, it will not do its proper impact. But PR in politics especially with social media is a 'sea of ideas' and he can do a very tiny thing that can help him change the entire scene. He can go live and tell people "today I decided to know why you don't love and I will reply to each and every one of you". Every day you are born a new identity.

NS: Back to the speeches, is there any scripting or staging techniques that they adopt?

GF: Of course, there are a lot. I personally did many: I work with two Iraqi politicians, one of them is Shiite and is the leader of a group that fought ISIS and then he had to deliver a speech after a certain massacre. The "stage" was in the museum of resistance, so I set the stage and manifesto, etc. In the scripting part, the plan was to shed light on grievance, murder, and ideology. He was trained to pause when needed, when to repeat the word twice, when to raise his pitch, volume. I trained him on when to increase his voice, when to raise his hand, when he should shout, when he should stop. The master of typical public speaking is Hassan Nasrallah for example. [The interviewee presented different examples by stating the same sentence twice; once saying it in a very normal manner, once using the techniques she mentioned previously to make a comparison and show how the impact differs between the two]. Saying it calmly with a smile is a total different message than when you say it with a specific tone, higher pitch, and gesture. It's definitely a performance, all of it is a performance!

NS: Did the so-called revolution affect how people perceive and interpret a political speech?

GF: Not a big extent. It actually affected the credibility of the politicians to a certain extent. People would perceive a successful speech with a successful interaction had our politicians been smart because we're currently living in a big gap and people are desperate for someone to answer any of their questions. That's why it is not the fact that I am loved that why, I will be able to influence them. On the other hand, if I tell them something that they really need to listen, yes I will make an impact. If right now someone tells people: "yes we have a solution for the crisis, and the solution is x and y, and people are saying x and y, but Saudis want this and that, and

Iranians want this and that, and the world is lying when it comes to X" whoever this politician was everyone will be talking about his speech.

NS: Success is measured in how much people talked about my speech or how much I was able to influence and convince?

GF: Depending on what goals I set before delivering the speech, so if I fulfill this goal then sure I succeeded. Maybe in one speech I aim to make the other negotiate an issue with me, in another one I want to increase popularity, and in another one I aim at being diplomatic to approach others, and in another one I want to deliver certain message to someone. If I aim at increasing popularity, a speech in which I provide a solution can be a big opportunity and yes people might give me a chance and definitely this speech must be accompanied the second day with a real plan and action so communication will meet communication. It's all a matter of PR. But in short, I think that impact is the main tool of measuring the success of the speech.

NS: What makes a celebrity weighing in on politics different than any regular politician?

GF: He already has something positive to kick off his journey with like for example he resembles people, and that he is civil just like them, and that he is cut from a different cloth... But once he starts talking and theorizing like politicians he will directly fail because he won't be perceived as real anymore, but as someone who is ambitiously seeking a political post.

Fadi EL Khatib, basketballer

NS: In what ways can a celebrity engaging in politics benefit the public?

FK: Before tackling the "benefit the public idea", a celebrity engaging in politics must have a vision regarding the thing he is aiming to do. So as you have mentioned I am in type 1, definitely, I do have an ambition; first an ambition to make improvements in the sector I am knowledgeable about, this sector that I have worked for to improve it and improve all institutions related to it in this country. Add to that, of course when I am there serving this sector, the public's engagement would be higher because they will be realizing that we have major improvements as we will be working for our institutions and ministries in an effective way, we would be doing an effective engagement on the entire country's level not only a certain area. So the public's engagement would be so huge since we would be working as specialists and as people who have competency in the sectors that we are not only knowledgeable about, but the ones that we have mastered, the ones that we have conducted research on and accordingly set plans; hence, we are not only there because we are endorsed by a politician or are politically affiliated. I admit that sometimes, I really loved working in these sectors but other times, I didn't want to because I refuse to be part of this ruling elite that almost everybody knows that it is a total failure.

NS: While many celebrities fear engaging in politics because it affects their fan base, except you, especially that once the revolution started, you received the highest numbers of votes on the MySay application which asked people whom would they like to be the next sports minister. What makes Fadi El Khatib, the celebrity who weighed on politics, to maintain a strong fan base regardless?

FK: Thank God I think I belong to the minorities who are loved and respected at the national level not only on a certain sect's level or religion or political party's level. This definitely helps, this definitely gave me an edge that made people vote for me but I believe that it's not only one's name recognition that makes him/her succeed, nor merely the achievements one does in his field like in sports can make someone competent enough to hold an important position. It is someone's successful administration, one being a successful businessman, one being knowledgeable about what are the positives and negatives regarding politics in the country, what should be improved, what should we be working on for the sake of our sectors which are held by incompetent people, and sometimes more than one ministry is held by only one person. That's a proof that we do not have technocrats to work in these ministries. That's why we were more accepted by the Lebanese citizens because they perceived Fadi as person who have succeeded in sports, in business, in politics, and at the same time, he is speaking the people's language. So definitely that was like an added value for me.

NS: Don't you think that you were also accepted by the people because you weren't 'an extremist' and you did not take advantage of the revolution to fulfill a political goal?

FK: Yes, especially that I was offered a ministry and I refused it so here it becomes clear if I had any political goal or not. I can even run for elections but I don't want to because I want to see this generation handling these responsibilities but of course after preparing the ideal ground; i.e. really, fully changing the entire current ruling class. That way, we would definitely take part in the new government. But at the time being, I don't think that the entire government will be

replaced or changed even if they did an early parliamentary general election, taking into consideration if we'll have new laws or not, etc. So surely I will never ever take advantage of the revolution to reach any political objective. I even joined the uprising and was almost gunshot when I was there, and the person standing next to me was shot in his eye and we did our best to help him. They took a picture of me [while helping him] without me knowing yet I wasn't aware that there were any cameras because we were alone in that place, so we have never planned to exploit the revolution to reach our political goal. I admit that many were there for this reason, especially famous people, and it was later on publicly known that they were holding some meetings for that purpose, and definitely many deputies rode the revolution's wave, but as for us, we are very far from doing so. Aiming at only holding positions will harm us more than benefit us, so our aim is to ameliorate the country not just "sit on a chair".

NS: Other than the current situation in Lebanon, and your ambition to become a sports minister, what made you engage in politics especially that you did not start giving political speeches during the revolution but way before that just like the discourse you delivered in 2018 during your interview with Ghayyath Dibra's Inside Game.

FK: In that interview I foresaw that we will reach this crisis and I told everyone that we will reach a phase in which we won't be able to take our wages, we won't have fuel nor electricity, etc.

NS: Yes, I was going to ask you how were you able to predict all that?

FK: A businessman in Lebanon, particularly the one who works in several sectors, can realize how the situation is deteriorating. He'll see the illogical interests given by banks, he'll see that there is a failed financial management which will lead the country to collapse especially that we have a political system that is supporting this financial management which will also lead to failure. So once you see that banks are giving a 20% interest rate to convince people to deposit their money so that the officials can steal more, you'll realize that this hierarchy is deteriorating because in the entire world, it is no way that they will give you more than 1% or 0.5% interest. All of this indicate that there is something wrong in the system, and that it is deteriorating, hence people must cast light on this issue and whenever someone does, like singer Ragheb Alameh when he did the "Tar El Balad" song, a politician wanted to cut his head off. That's a proof that amid all failures happening to this country, the ruling elite still insists on continuing their corruption, they don't want to fix things, and they want to proof that the financial system in Lebanon is very correct and they kept on defending it to the extent that they kept on saying "everything is good, the Lebanese Lira is stable, the backup in the Central Bank is enough, and so on". So we payed attention to all of these 'messages' and we began seeing the collapse and the banks that were going bankrupt then closing such as the news about a bank that closed, that was also a message to us that there is something fishy going on. In short, I could read all of this, I am not a foreteller, but the one who reads the messages correctly can realize the truth.

NS: What are the disadvantages of being a celebrity engaging in politics?

FK: The most important thing when engaging in politics is to do something from all your heart, something coming out from love, trust, and honesty, rather than doing something to receive more

fame. That's where you must begin and that's where you determine what you want: you really want to be sad for your country that you gave a lot but you're currently seeing collapsing? Because people know, people are not idiots and they are capable of reading the person, they know if someone is being honest or if he has some objectives and ambitions which made him ride the revolution way. If that is the case, then definitely engaging in politics will be perceived negatively. But when this person is honest and candid and talking about something with all his heart because he is feeling the pain, this engagement will never be negative if you're really taking for the sake of your country and shedding light on the things that really must be tackled, specially the little issues that no one is aware of. For instance, we always talk about the politicians whom everyone now knows what kind of politicians are they and we all perceive them as corrupt, but we have to talk about our institution, judicial system, military institutions, the low-ranking employees in the governmental institutions, we must focus on what these people are doing and what type of corruption is there, we must talk about how can we begin fighting corruption from these places, we must focus on how should we build healthy institutions because if politicians resigned or did not resign, I currently care about these institutions that are collapsing while no body is caring about them at times when they are the base of our country. We have to cast light on the tiniest things in Lebanon because we have already casted light on the bigger issues but let us now start from zero.

NS: What makes a celebrity politician distinct from any politician or a regular person weighing in on politics? Or what makes you distinct from any regular sports minister?

FK: A sports minister or any other minister hold their positions because of political purposes or because they are affiliated to political parties and backed up by them, so they're not there because they are competent and I ensure that even the ones that will hold a ministerial position now will not be there because they are competent. Why? Because the one that might become a minister now has never made any achievement in sports/sports institutions, or did not succeed in sports or any other field, that if we don't need to say he is not that competent or knowledgeable in politics. I know the names of the potential ministers suggested by PM Hariri and I advise him not to go with it because he will be dealing with a bigger vicious circle. Even though we refuse to be part of this system, they must search for people who are really qualified and knowledgeable because whoever tells you "I am knowledgeable in the sports field or I once handled a sports institution or a sports federation that was successful", know that it was successful only because of the athletes who were doing these achievements and they exploited our achievements to shine. Many of these officials especially in this field are placed there by a parachute. The specialist there must have the knowledge and understanding of how to develop individual sports, how to spread awareness and increase engagement of all citizens, how to activate small villages and engage them in sports, understand how to market these games, understand how to support and sponsor individual sports that can help us reach the Olympics and how to lobby for foreign support for it as well, he must also know how to get sponsorships from external federations not only internal ones, and how to organize our own federations and restructure the entire sports field and provide it some support and sponsorships along with supporting our talents to be able to participate in international championships which is the very important thing be it in individual or team sports. So this person has to be able to determine his objectives and target upon being assigned. Add to these goals, this person should know how to raise funds for his country through these games. The plan which I have set can raise millions and millions of dollars which is about 50, 60 million

dollars per year. That is definitely while we make many achievements. So we know all of this and we can determine what should be accomplished and how because we spent time thinking, examining, working, and accordingly setting plans, and we know how to get funds for our country and we know how to support our talents and help them reach international, Arab, and Asian championships. That's all the difference.

NS: Although you used to go live on Instagram to deliver your speeches, did you have any objectives in mind you wanted to deliver or planned your speech accordingly?

FK: The good thing in me is that I don't prepare but I talk honestly and straightforwardly. For example, when I am invited to interviews they ask me if I want them to send me the questions ahead, I always tell them no, I don't want to know what you are going to ask me, whenever you ask me the question I will answer on spot. So I had nothing in mind other than fighting corruption. I couldn't care less about to target who, I only needed to fight any corrupt person who led the country to this situation, the one who displaced us and my family and many other families, and forced us to think of immigration and made us lose hope. Even if I am far, I will keep on fighting these people. So no, I had no aims other than fighting corruption and when the revolutionaries starting targeting some political parties over the others, I became against them because they started causing internal fractures in the revolution. The main title must remain fighting corruption because it covers everything: politicians, judges, governmental institutions, military institutions, etc. I consider that I was talking with sincerity and frankness, and I will keep on talking with sincerity and frankness, and talk what I truly think of while I don't have anything planned, and I am not one of the people that ride the wave and people who did this, especially politicians bother me a lot. That's why I don't plan anything, whatever I want to say, I say it directly, and whatever I think of saying, I'll say no matter what.

NS: The theory I am using for my thesis is Impression Management, but I was thinking that if you don't have objectives to convey from your speech then you surely have no impressions in mind too, right?

FK: No, I definitely have messages or goals to convey.

NS: The theory states that when someone wants to deliver a speech, he thinks of a certain impression he wishes people to perceive and plans his speech according to this impression. So I mean that you don't think that "today I want to be perceived as honest" hence put some statements or ideas in your speech that reflect this impression.

FK: No, no, no. Definitely when I have a certain presentation or the TedTalk I did or interviews regarding a certain topic that needs to be discussed, I do structure things because these things are planned and I follow a certain structure because it is for the sake of the country and the topic addressed whether it is environmental topic, health topic, educational, sports, etc. But when it comes to speeches I did in some of my interviews like "Sarade" recently, or Inside Game in 2018, I swear, they weren't planned at all, and I delivered them the way you saw so I did not plan them especially that one cannot prepare a 5-minute-talk and deliver it spontaneously, it does not work. You can see big speakers delivering their speeches while reading from a teleprompter but I never do that except if I was somewhere that requires structuring a speech because we have to talk

about something specific and deliver a certain message or explain something through a PowerPoint.

NS: So do you think that your name recognition is what makes people perceive you positively?

FK: No, it's not that "it's Fadi El Khatib talking then we have to perceive him positively", but I think it is that way because I am honest, because people know that I will be talking about something true not fabricated, and they also know that I will be talking about the current situation we are all living, and they feel at the same time that I am talking in the name of everyone feeling that pain, this gives me some sort of credibility which helped me reach a place where people perceive me as honest, or perceive me as someone who has been offered a governmental position but refused it hence he is not riding the wave for some political aims. I have an ambition? Of course, every person has an ambition no matter what field he/she is in for the sake of his/her country not for personal benefits. Therefore, people view me as honest and love me.

NS: Based on what you have mentioned, I conducted a focus group with 14 young adults, the first group read anonymous speeches of yours while the second group was aware that you are the speaker but regardless, they both agreed on some points you mentioned, but mainly, all of them criticized the fact that you were in Saudi Arabia and interpreted what you said as "he's is in a foreign country, he's getting paid fresh dollars which means that he doesn't care about Lebanon nor feeling our pain", so people perceive you kind of like the politicians as in you're not close to the people nor their worries or hardships.

FK: First, to clarify this issue, I was not living in Saudi Arabia, I simply went there for exactly a day and a half because I was invited by the Saudi sports minister to an event and my presence was essential. I also happened to be there at times where there was no revolution because had the revolution started at that time, I would have rejected the invitation. So the revolution started while I was there and that's why I said "oh how I wish to be with you" because we were really feeling that pain for a long time. Add to that, I didn't receive any fresh money since it was a free invitation. Second, which is the most important thing, even if someone is living abroad and is getting paid fresh dollars, where is the problem with him saying "oh how I wish to be with you" or to join them later on? Should everyone participating in this revolution be unemployed? Or is it prohibited to be working and getting paid fresh dollars if you participate in the revolution? How are they related? Why are they mixing these things? It is as if they're saying: you can't join the uprising because you are an employed person! What a wrong way of thinking! Is everyone taking part in this revolution unemployed and not getting paid or not working abroad? This is not true. Third, they criticize me that I immigrated to another country. I have kids and I am concerned about their safety, about raising them in a healthy environment away from sectarianism and politics which are now found in schools and among friends and brothers. I don't want to raise them that way. Add to that, they don't have safety, nor protection, nor freedom and I've said it last time, I don't want to be passing by with my daughter and suddenly die; we're living in a minefield in this country, not necessarily minefields an in explosions but no one knows what threat one might suddenly face. We tend to perceive things in the wrong way because many of us don't look further than their nose.

NS: Do the patriotic posts you upload on social media complement your patriotic speeches and your taking part in the revolution, or are they're not part of that "strategy"?

FK: Sure, definitely, it is primarily part of our love for that country because our love for Lebanon has no ceiling, and it is the main message we wish to deliver. It is not necessarily that we target the revolution every time we spread these messages. It is enough to upload the Lebanese flag's picture to indicate that we support the Lebanon that we dream of; I've said it last time: we are Lebanon, not them, you are Lebanon, not them, the new generation is Lebanon, not them.

NS: As a celebrity not a celebrity politician, do you use some propaganda techniques to appeal to people more?

FK: Not at all. I wish! I'll tell you something: I was sitting with a PR manager who handles the branded image of some celebrities in the Arab world. She was shocked. She told me: "I know your worth and how famous you are in the Arab world and Lebanon, but when I checked your Instagram account I was surprised because I thought that I will see 2 or 3 million followers, a very organized Instagram profile." I told her: "I don't know, this is how I am, and I upload whatever comes to my mind." So yes, some people resort to propaganda to increase the number of followers and their fan base but no, I don't do this because I am honest and straightforward. I'll even post a picture even if it's blurry; I for instance, I posted a picture with my family at my birthday and my wife was closing her eyes and I did not pay attention to that. However, you can find other celebrities editing pictures or adding some filter. No I don't do propaganda; I don't follow any structure. Had I did this, as she said, I would have had 2, 3, 4 million followers on Instagram. So, I prefer staying as I am, working as I am, remaining honest as I am now, being straightforward, I was and I will remain that way.

NS: In case you become a politician, would you resort to propaganda, like for example adopt the selfie diplomacy like Saad El Hariri, or do you prefer staying authentic?

FK: I'll stay as I am because people loved me as I am; therefore, I'll remain as I am no matter who I become or what posts I handle. What I am so sure about is that, if I hold any responsibility, I will cut off the head of every corrupt person, and I'll do it aggressively. I am one of the people who are not afraid of anything, so when I am in a position in which I have to be responsible and witness something wrong, regardless of what this position is and even if it's none of my business, I cut off the head of the person doing this wrong thing. That is because I don't believe in the saying that says: "the constitution doesn't allow us to criticize something wrong". What kind of claim is this? Are you out of your mind? For example, in the Beirut blast's case, they told us that they knew about the ammonium but it's not their right to remove them or talk about them. How?! Had I been a policeman or even Fadi El Khatib and I knew about this issue, and I wish I knew about it, I would have made anything, even committed massacres or die myself, to remove these products. How come an official, a big official, couldn't do so? So I guarantee that I wouldn't be anything other than myself, I wouldn't be anything other than that strict person, and a person who won't allow corruption in any of our institutions at any cost. I won't be using propaganda nor selfies, definitely no, in both 'techniques' this is not the real me, and thank God, I am loved from the both sides; the entire country, not just one side like the politicians, and I won't allow myself to ruin people's love even if they made me the president of

the republic because it now saddens me that politicians are being shamed along with their kids, but they refuse to give up and insist on remaining in their positions. I believe that if you give any alternative to the Lebanese public right now, all of these politicians will be killed by their own people, but the plan of the external forces is not yet ready, unfortunately our lives is in the hand of the external forces which means that we are not the decision-makers here. Therefore, our politicians are puppets; they are actors in a play in which the producer hands them in a script and they simply perform it. Nothing more, nothing less. That's exactly what situation they are in: there is a foreign producer telling them: here's your script, perform it. In short, I'll remain as I am in case I become a minister because I don't think we'll have any change in Lebanon in the near future.

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