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Lebanon's 2022 Parliamentary Election

A Look into Political Parties' Online Behavior Vis-à-vis Alternative Candidates



Nov 2022

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THE SAMIR KASSIR FOUNDATION



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Lebanon and Syria



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THE SAMIR KASSIR FOUNDATION

The Samir Kassir Foundation is a Lebanese non-profit organization, which aims to spread democratic culture in Lebanon and the Arab world, encourage new talents in journalism, and build the movement for a cultural, democratic, and secular renewal. The Foundation's SKeyes Center for Media and Cultural Freedom has become the largest center monitoring violations against journalists and artists in the Arab Levant, as well as a reference for research on journalism and for training media professionals and enhancing their skills.



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Lebanon and Syria

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Editors: Ayman Mhanna and Razan Mersal

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I- Executive Summary

“Lebanon’s 2022 Parliamentary Election: A Look into Political Parties’ Online Behavior Vis-à-vis Alternative Candidates” is a report that monitors and analyzes quantitatively and qualitatively election-related content on social media from April 1 to May 24, 2022.

During this phase, 1,914 data entry points were analyzed out of 30,647 captured. These entry points analyzed were negative content disseminated by users against alternative lists and candidates. This report focuses on a sample of four alternative electoral lists, namely:

- Twahhadna lil Taghyir توحدنا للتغيير (United for Change), in Mount Lebanon’s fourth district (Shouf-Aley).
- Maan Nahwa al Taghyir معاً نحو التغيير (Together towards Change), in South Lebanon’s third district (Nabatiyeh-BintJbeil-Marjayoun-Hasbaya);
- Nahwa al Dawla نحو الدولة (Towards the State), in Mount Lebanon’s second district (Metn); and
- Shamaluna شمالنا (Our North), in North Lebanon’s third district (Besharri-Zghorta-Koura-Batroun).

As for Beirut al Taghyir بيروت التغيير (Beirut Change), in Beirut’s second district; keywords used to scrape the data resulted in insufficient number of data entry points, preventing a holistic analysis. The team had to resort to manual methods to retrieve data, mainly related to media appearance and online reactions, hence the analysis of this electoral list is limited to timestamp analysis.

This study explored three main objectives:

1. Identifying the narratives circulated by traditional political party supporters and their digital behavior;
2. Understanding social media communication techniques and tools of potential misinformation used by established political parties; and
3. Defining archetypes of polarization in the digital sphere.

The main findings can be summarized as follows:

- Compared to traditional political party-affiliated candidates, alternative candidates did not have the same ratio of media appearances. Nevertheless, these few appearances were occasions for traditional political party supporters to circulate negative content, be it trolling, disinformation by taking sound bites out of context, or allegations of hidden affiliation with different coalitions and external powers.
- Trolling was omnipresent throughout the content analyzed. We noticed that trolling was deployed to cover up a lack of political arguments, or through the form of users attacking candidates on their looks or choice of words.
- Traditional political parties “othered” alternative candidates. Othering implied warning, i.e., creating a portrait of an enemy out of the alternative candidate, and/or downplaying, i.e., taking away the ability of the alternative party to make a tangible change, hence power should be kept where it already lies, within the incumbent traditional political party.
- The reference to Lebanon’s civil war was common in the online discourse of traditional political party supporters. The accusation of communism was frequently used against alternative candidates, who were criticized for their alleged leftist tendencies or accused of being affiliated with the Lebanese Communist Party (LCP). This accusation was mainly used against Christian alternative candidates, echoing the civil war antagonism between leftist parties and the mostly conservative Christian population. Another civil war narrative resurfaced in Christian-majority districts, with allegations of affiliation with the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP) and the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP). For example, users from the Lebanese Forces (LF) massively accused Shamaluna candidates of being supported by SSNP and this accusation turned into warning against voting for these candidates. Also, Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) supporters warned against voting for Aley candidate Mark Daou, alleging he is “affiliated with PSP” in an attempt to revive the deeply rooted Michel Aoun-Walid Jumblatt opposition.
- Treason was an allegation used as a marker of patriotism. It was waged against candidates who are opposed to Hezbollah, accusing them of being “Zionists” and “traitors,” and conspiring against Hezbollah to serve an Israeli agenda. On the other end of the spectrum, treason was used by LF supporters users to warn against candidates who were allegedly affiliated with Hezbollah calling them “Dhimmis,” meaning Christians who seek Muslim protection or aiming for Muslims’ votes to actually win.
- The popular protests of October 2019 were one of the pillars of polarization. In addition to the 2005-born polarization between the March 8 and March 14 blocks, and the subsequent positioning vis-à-vis Hezbollah, a new axis of polarization emerged: a “revolutionary” spectrum, evaluating candidates according to their conformity level and proximity to the traditional political establishment, their affiliation with banks and other parties, and their relationship with incumbent public figures.

II- Introduction

A- Context and Background

“Lebanon’s 2022 Parliamentary Election: A Look into Political Parties’ Online Behavior Vis-à-vis Alternative Candidates” is a report issued by InflueAnswers for Digital Analysis in collaboration with the Samir Kassir Foundation and Friedrich Naumann Foundation, following the May 15, 2022 parliamentary election in Lebanon. It is a report using mixed methodology, both quantitative and qualitative, relying mainly on scraping Twitter and news data. The report aims to understand behaviors, narratives, and archetypes of polarization circulated by Lebanese traditional political parties vis-à-vis alternative lists and candidates.

2005 was a year of drastic change in Lebanon. The assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri on February 14 led to a series of popular protests demanding the withdrawal of Syrian troops, directly accused of responsibility for Hariri’s assassination.

The 2005 Cedar Revolution, also known as Independence Intifada, marked the establishment of two political coalitions that differed on their position toward the role of Syria in Lebanon.¹ On March 8, 2005, Hezbollah and Amal Movement, aligned into what came to be known as the March 8 coalition,² staged a demonstration in support of the Syrian regime and troops. On the opposing front, citizens from various Lebanese sects and political leanings took to the streets on March 14, 2005, demonstrating in downtown Beirut and asking for the immediate withdrawal of Syrian forces from Lebanon.

These two political coalitions engaged in tense clashes and heated debates that split the Lebanese into two main camps, March 8 and March 14. While March 8 and March 14 alliances may not capture the entire ideological spectrum in Lebanon, they embody the wider spectrum of political parties that have constituted more than 90% of representatives³ in the Lebanese Parliament. March 8 gathered Hezbollah, Amal Movement, Marada Movement, the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP), and the Lebanese Democratic Party (LDP), in alliance, as of 2006, with the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM). The main March 14 parties were the Future Movement (FM), the Lebanese Forces (LF), the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP), and the Kataeb Party.

The polarization and antagonism between the two political coalitions were reflected on several occasions, where both camps turned media, elections, syndicates, demonstrations, and socio-economic issues into symbolic battlefields.

1- Khatib, L. (2007). Television and public actions in the Beirut Spring. In Sakr, N. (Ed.), Arab media and political renewal: Community, legitimacy and public life (pp.28-43). New York, NY: I.B. Tauris.

2- Nasr, A. (2010). Imagining identities: Television advertising and the reconciliation of the Lebanese conflict. Arab Media & Society. Retrieved from http://www.arabmediasociety.com/articles/downloads/20100330131339_Nasr_-_Lebanon_-_for_.pdf

3- *Idem*

On October 17, 2019, Lebanon saw mass anti-system demonstrations when the government announced new taxes. The countrywide protests devolved into expressions of anger against the entire political establishment, whom protesters blame for the country's dire economic crisis. Following the October 17 decentralized protests, new faces emerged from outside the two coalitions and provided platforms for those long left marginalized, and from these faces, some decided to run for the 2022 election as alternative candidates.

B- Research Objectives

The purpose of this report is to analyze digital behaviors, narratives, archetypes of polarization, and misinformation techniques of traditional Lebanese political parties and their supporters (broken down by party and by electoral district) vis-à-vis alternative candidates and lists. Social listening, data aggregation and analysis allow behaviors to be mapped and capture shaped narratives by partisans, in addition to drawing digital archetypes of polarization driven by offline political coalitions and events. The analysis focuses on three keys elements:

1. Narratives circulated by political party supporters and their digital behavior;
2. Techniques and tools of potential mis- and disinformation; and
3. Archetypes of polarization in the digital sphere.

III- Research Methodology

The study uses mixed method research (MMR) to account for all aspects of behaviors and narratives. This report draws its results from the analysis of quantitative data retrieved from the digital space from April 1 to May 24, 2022, to capture the pre- and post-election digital activity as well as election day digital activity. The analysis then mirrors the outcomes with the thematic content analysis of observations, linking to a thematic and literature review to better understand different contexts of the emergence of each narrative. The quantitative data enables the extraction of trends in behavior and narrative, while further deep profile analysis is conducted using qualitative methods to 'read between the lines' and try to better explore the underlying discourse that cannot be reflected in quantitative data.

Recent trends in research methods have moved beyond an exclusivity of methods, and no matter which method is used at each level, it is essential to integrate micro and macro explanations, as well as quantitative and qualitative techniques to enhance the power of results.⁴

A- Sampling and Data Aggregation

Considering that what can be displayed in digital spaces is vast and diverse and can take countless forms,⁵ the main source of data aggregation was based on keywords captured from the official names of alternative candidates' electoral lists:

- *Twahhadna lil Taghyir* توحدنا للتغيير (United for Change), in Mount Lebanon's fourth district (Shouf-Aley);
- *Maan Nahwa al Taghyir* معاً نحو التغيير (Together towards Change), in South Lebanon's third district (Nabatiyeh-Bint Jbeil-Marjayoun-Hasbaya);
- *Nahwa al Dawla* نحو الدولة (Towards the State), in Mount Lebanon's second district (Metn); and
- *Shamaluna* شمالنا (Our North), in North Lebanon's third district (Besharri-Zghorta-Koura-Batroun).

With the digital social listening tool used in this analysis, instant access to the keywords mentions across social media, news, blogs, videos, forums, and podcasts were given across social platforms.

In the case Beirut Al Taghyir بيروت التغيير (Beirut Change), in Beirut's second district; keywords used to scrape the data resulted in insufficient number of data entry, preventing a holistic analysis. The team had to resort to a manual method to retrieve data, mainly related to media appearance and online reactions, hence the analysis of this electoral list is limited to timestamp analysis.

4- Thaler, K. M. (2017). Mixed methods research in the study of political and social violence and conflict. *Journal of mixed methods research*, 11(1), 59-76.

5- What is Digital Spaces. IGI Global. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.igi-global.com/dictionary/it-is-real-colouring/50086>

The time frame for this study was from April 1 to May 24, 2022, capturing the pre-election phase (mainly lists announcements, media appearances, and offline events), election day, and the post-election phase, including media appearances and reactions.

To meet one of the objectives of this report, which is analyzing users' behaviors, inauthentic accounts, deleted accounts, suspended accounts, and deleted tweets were also taken into consideration for analytical purposes.

The digital tool allowed the aggregation of all users employing any of the predetermined key words, in their text or using the key word as hashtag. It is important to note that following the Cambridge Analytica and Facebook scandal,⁶ both Instagram and Facebook changed their policies and rules and limited access to individual accounts, meaning only public accounts could be tracked on Meta platforms.

B- Data Labeling and Cleaning

For this report, a total of 30,647 data points were aggregated. These entry points do not include retweets and other impressions. As for the purpose of this report, we are not looking into campaigns and users supporting alternative lists and candidates, only users' negative interactions. The data was organized as such:

1. News labeled as neutral was not included in the analysis.
2. Positive sentiments were labeled and were not included in the analysis.
3. Negative sentiments were labeled by tags (tags and themes will be analyzed at a later stage).

After cleaning the data points for analysis, a sample of 1,914 data points were retained for the purpose of this report.

C- Data Visualization

Quantitative data analysis was based on keywords, narratives, themes, user positioning, and identification of inauthentic accounts, deleted tweets, and suspended accounts.

Keywords were the main words taken out of the original text and helped understand the narrative circulated by the user and the text. Narratives were the overall 'story' told by the text. Themes were the aggregation of similar narratives under one umbrella topic. User positioning was identified through a deep profiling method, tracking the activity of the user up to three months prior to the period of study to precisely label the political affiliation of the user.

6- Confessore, N. (2018, April 4). Cambridge Analytica and Facebook: The scandal and the fallout so far. The New York Times. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/04/us/politics/cambridge-analytica-scandal-fallout.html>

It is important to highlight a number of preliminary remarks:

Some users' political affiliation was stated by the users themselves, either in their biography, their banners, and/or their open statements supporting a certain party or by their activity of consistently retweeting one party's statements.

In this exercise, the people who worked on the report did not, at any moment, engage with any user and operated within an ethical framework of do no harm, to preserve the objectivity of the results.

Analyzed data was sent in its final form to the data scientists who used [Tableau software](https://www.tableau.com/)⁷ for data visualization to extract visual charts of the data and to perform a number of meaningful calculations, including:

- 1- Percentage allocated to each theme
- 2- Percentage of users per political party
- 3- Percentage of narratives circulated by users
- 4- Percentage of inauthentic behavior per political party
- 5- Percentage of influencers' accounts per political party
- 6- Distribution of activity peak per time/event

D- Limitations

Interviews done on mainstream channels (shaping public opinion/setting the agenda) throughout the campaigning period were not stored on the news outlets' platforms and removed from their social media.

Private accounts on Instagram and Facebook cannot be monitored due to their privacy policies. Only data collected from Twitter and Reddit as well as news outlets were analyzed.

Keywords used during the data scraping exercise were mainly the names of the electoral lists and not the candidates' names. Data collected for *Beirut al Taghyir* was insufficient and did not provide significant information for analysis, hence the analysis only focused on offline versus online campaigning.

7- <https://www.tableau.com/>

IV- Definitions of Themes

Falling back on the introduction, this report will take 2005 to draw the thematic framework of the analysis, the year that left the Lebanese political landscape dominated by two main camps: the March 8 and the March 14 alliances.

Hence the definitions of these themes:

1- Allegation of affiliation with March 14 and its entities

These are allegations against independent candidates accusing them of being affiliated with FM, LF, PSP, and Kataeb, and/or connected to entities such as media platforms and/or TV channels which were or still are owned by March 14 parties or owned by people affiliated with this alliance.

2- Allegation of affiliation with March 8 and its entities

These are allegations against independent candidates accusing them of being affiliated with Hezbollah, Amal, FPM, and SSNP, in addition to allegations of supporting the Assad regime and Iran, allies of Hezbollah.

3- Treason

Treason is a recurring theme, and allegations are context dependent. For example, in the case of *Maan Nahwa al Taghyir* in South Lebanon's third district or *Twahhadna lil Taghyir* in Mount Lebanon's fourth district (Shouf-Aley), treason is directly related to accusations of being pro-Israel manifested by words such as "zionist," "traitor," or "collaborator." Whereas the analysis around *Nahwa al Dawla* in Mount Lebanon's second district (Metn), treason can be either related to Israel or to the alleged candidate affiliation with Hezbollah. The latter is manifested with the word "Dhimmi," referring to Christians who seek the protection of a Muslim entity, in this case, Hezbollah.

4- Othering

Othering is a phenomenon in which some individuals or groups are defined and labeled as not fitting in within the norms of a social group. It is an effect that influences how people perceive and treat those who are viewed as being part of the in-group versus those who are seen as being part of the out-group.

Othering also involves attributing negative characteristics to people or groups that differentiate them from the perceived normative social group. It is an "us v. them" way of thinking. Under othering, we include smearing, trolling, allegations of unclear political positioning, and downplaying. These allegations contribute to discrediting the candidate, harming their reputation, and contributing to building a negative image around them.

5- Hate by proxy

Alternative candidates were often associated with controversial public figures and organizations. This association came from a media appearance with these figures, open statements from these figures supporting candidates, or just assumptions and/or allegations of support. Users often took a stance against some candidates because of their association with figures such as comedian Shaden Fakih, journalist Dima Sadek, journalist Ghadi Francis, former minister Charbel Nahhas, banker Antoun Sehnaoui, and media magnate Tahsin Khayyat, or organizations such as Al Jadeed television or Kulluna Irada, a political action group.

6- Conformity

Allegations of corruption, unclear sources of fundings, protecting groups of thugs, inciting violent acts, and acting like the establishment, are all narratives used under the theme of conformity.

7- Electoral law disagreement

The theme concerns the narrative around the actual electoral law, which by default forces candidates to form lists together even if they do not share the same political agenda, thus preventing voters from cherry-picking their candidate. Attacks focused on candidates who had on their lists other people with tainted reputation.

8- Mis- and disinformation

This theme refers to all photos, videos, documents, and texts that were either photoshopped, cropped, edited, taken out of context, or talking about an event that did not take place and/or with no credible source.

9- Context specific allegations

These were allegations targeting Jad Ghosn from the *Nahwa al Dawla* list in Metn. These allegations are either related to the Metn context or to Jad Ghosn as a journalist and candidate; they were not observed in other districts. Allegations were composed of accusations of conspiring against the church and being opposed to decentralization.

10- Ties with the West

This theme encompasses allegations against alternative candidates who are accused of affiliation with Western embassies, getting funding support from Western organizations, promoting European and American sanctions against other political leaders, or having close ties with David Schenker, the former United States Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs.

11- Affiliation with banks

This narrative was circulated to accuse alternative candidates of affiliation with the Lebanese banking system and promoting the banks' economic and financial interests.

12- GCC-focused narrative

All accusations of affiliation with or opposition to Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries are assembled in this theme. Narrative such as promoting anti-Saudi sentiments or being affiliated with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

13- Allegation of support for federalism

Specifically in North Lebanon's third district, *Shamaluna* was accused of promoting federalism, be it from its name, or because of allegations of identitarian politics.

14- Leftism

Some alternative candidates were accused of being affiliated with the Lebanese Communist Party or being leftist with their approach to the economy. Some users used this narrative to demonize other candidates, especially in Christian-majority areas, where this type of allegation is rooted in the history of mostly conservative Christian parties opposed to the Communists and the leftists in general during the civil war.

V- Behavior of Political Groups vis-à-vis Alternative Candidates

The following analysis mixes between quantitative data collected, labeled, and visualized and qualitative analysis. The structure of the analysis follows the three main variables: users, narrative, and timestamp.

A- The case of *Maan Nahwa al Taghyir*, South Lebanon III

On April 10, 2022, the *Maan Nahwa al Taghyir* electoral list was publicly announced under the slogan “We liberated the land; we need to liberate the person.” This list was composed of 11 members, the most notable names being Firas Hamdan, Elias Jradeh, and Ali Mourad.

The South III district was long dominated by the Amal-Hezbollah coalition without any significant competition. “The display of power and support as polling stations closed across the country reflected the parties’ confidence that they would keep a tight grip in their [southern stronghold](#).”⁸

The following section tackles the type of narratives circulated by users around candidates from the *Maan Nahwa al Taghyir* list.

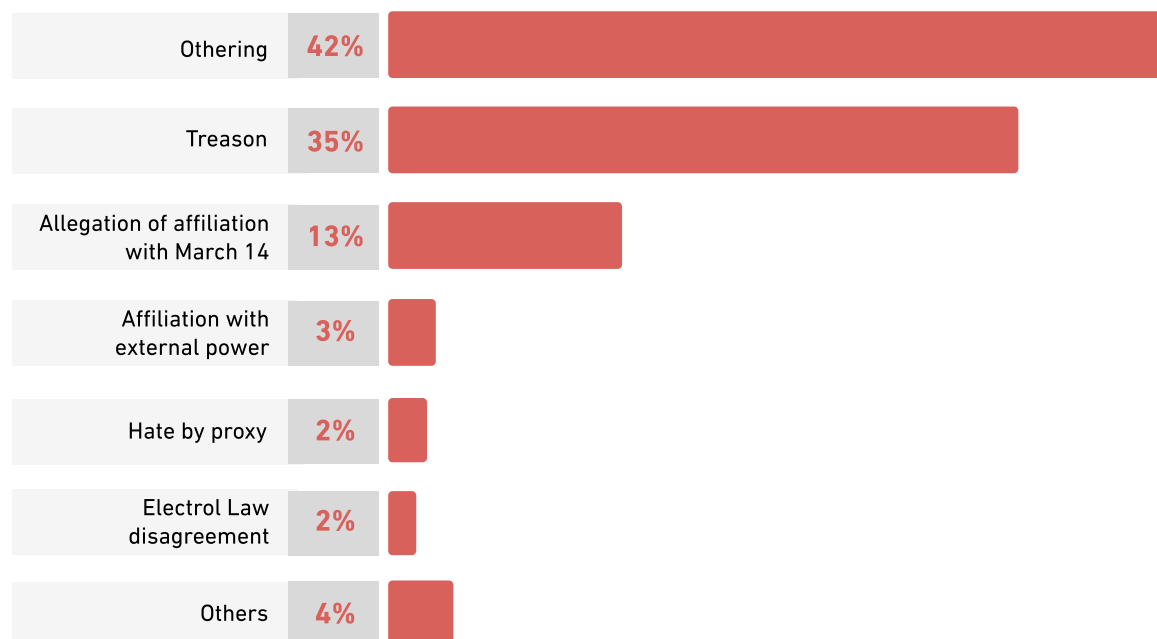


Fig.1 - Distribution of themes

8- Rose, S. (2022). Hezbollah dominates election campaign in southern Lebanon, but opposition holds out hope. The National. Retrieved from <https://www.thenationalnews.com/mena/lebanon/2022/05/15/hezbollah-dominates-south-lebanon-vote-day-but-opposition-hold-out-hope/>

Others include: Affiliation with banks, allegation of affiliation with March 8, conformity, leftism, mis- and disinformation.



Fig.2 - Word cloud aggregated through key words

42% of the narratives were about othering, 35% allegation of treason and 13% allegation of affiliation with March 14 while the other narratives such as affiliation with external powers and electoral list disagreement were present but to a lesser extent.

The theme othering encompasses several narratives, like trolling, warning, and accusing alternative candidates of not having a clear political positioning. Othering also included comparing Marwan Kheireddine, a former minister of State and the chairman of Al Mawarid Bank, running on Hezbollah and Amal's list with the endorsement of PSP leader Walid Jumblatt, to independent candidate Firas Hamdan. The former, being accused of several cases of corruption, was labeled as "better" than the "traitor" Firas Hamdan.

sara
@szein_2020

عفكرة هيدا المرشح عن المقعد الدرزي بالجنوب الثالثة يعني
منافس مروان خير الدين،
للتهاويل منقول: ألف مرة مروان خير الدين ولا نص مرة الواطي
فراس حمدان.
#باقون_نحمي_ونبني

Translate Tweet

MariaMe Fneiche @mariame_fneiche · May 6
مرشح الجنوب ليداهل الجنوب بنتحيوه ما بيقبل يفتح معركة مع إسرائيل قال كرمال مش
مشارك بالقرار !!
الأخ بدو بشارك بقرار الحرب وهوي تاراك مع عملاء إسرائيل وأمريكا ضد المقاومة يلي
جملت العرض والشرف وحررت أرض الجنوب ورجعتنا كرامتنا..
#صوتي_وفي_لدم

فراس حمدان

مرشح على لائحة "معاً نحو التغيير" في الجنوب
الزمان: بعد حادثة بلدة شوبا الشهيرة الصيف الماضي، عقب عملية للمقاومة ضد العدو

"حزب الله مجرم يلبس ثوب المقاومة"

Firas Ismael Hamdan
Aug 6, 2021 · 🌐

بالمباخر إلى حزب الله:
لا يمكن استخدامنا كدروع بشرية من أجل أوليائك،
لا تغفل بفتح معركة مع إسرائيل من أجل تحسين شروط التسوية
الإسرائيلية- الأميركية، وأرواحنا وأرزاقنا هي عرضة للخطر.
لا تغفل بفتح معركة مع إسرائيل ونحن غير مشاركين بقرار هذه
المعركة، لأننا لسنا وقود حيوي لأي معركة أممية تخوضها أنت.
سياسياً أنت ساقط منذ هجومتك على ساحات ١٧ تشرين ومنذ ما
قبل بسبب إعتبارك كحامي لهذه المنظومة (والـ godfather) لها.
ولذلك اليوم سقط أخلاقنا وقانوننا وديننا وأصبحت في مصاف
العصابات المارقة المناهضة للإنسانية.
غشاماً! إرحل عنا ولا نريد حمايتك، نحن نعرف كيف نحمي
أنفسنا !! أنت لست سوى مجرم حزب تليس ثوب المقاومة !!

115
18 comments · 6 shares

11:40 AM · May 6, 2022 · Twitter for Android

3 Retweets 75 Likes

Img. 1

In the article [Lebanese political opposition faces intimidation in Hezbollah-controlled South](#) published in The National,⁹ Ali Mourad talked about being branded as a traitor as part of Hezbollah's election strategy. "When Hezbollah said that the elections was their political July war, that means that everybody against them are traitors," said Mr. Mourad, referring to a speech by a top Hezbollah official in February in which he compared the upcoming parliamentary election to the 2006 war that pitted the group against Israel. This weapon was clearly waged against alternative candidates, especially Firas Hamdan and Ali Mourad, with 35% of the narratives being allegations of treason, and users taking positioning towards Hezbollah as a benchmark for a candidate's loyalty to Lebanon or treason.

A clear example can be given here. The allegation of treason against Firas Hamdan was opposite to the support for Elias Jradeh, who was a candidate on the same list, as Jradeh was an ex-detainee at the Israeli-controlled Khiyam detention center.

9- Rose, Sunniva. "Lebanese Political Opposition Faces Intimidation in Hezbollah-Controlled South." The National, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/mena/2022/04/20/lebanese-political-opposition-faces-intimidation-in-hezbollah-controlled-south/>.

Deleted Tweet/Tweet from Deleted Account



للصراحة ما حدا هاجم الياس جرادي اقله مش الكل الهجوم كان فراس حمدان

Deleted Tweet/Tweet from Deleted Account



قارن خطاب الياس جرادة عن المقاومة بخطاب فراس حمدان عن المقاومة، بتعرف انه خبرية لائحة وحدة بتحمل خطاب واحد هي تفنيصة، حسب الظاهر الياس جرادة رح يكون عالنقيض من فراس حمدان بمجلس النواب.

The allegation of affiliation with March 14 was mainly waged against Firas Hamdan who was frequently accused of affiliation with the Progressive Socialist Party. Another accusation claimed that Walid Jumblatt, head of PSP, was using Hamdan to display power in the South, Hezbollah's stronghold, even though PSP officially supported Kheireddine's candidacy on Hezbollah's list.

Deleted Tweet/Tweet from Deleted Account



جماعة جنبلاط منقسمين وأغلبهم متعاطف مع فراس حمدان

While 90% of the narrative around alternative candidates centered around the themes of othering, allegation of treason and allegation of affiliation with March 14, further investigation revealed that 76% of users were directly affiliated with Hezbollah while 7% were independent (see in the figure below). This goes back to the fact that South III has long been a Hezbollah stronghold.

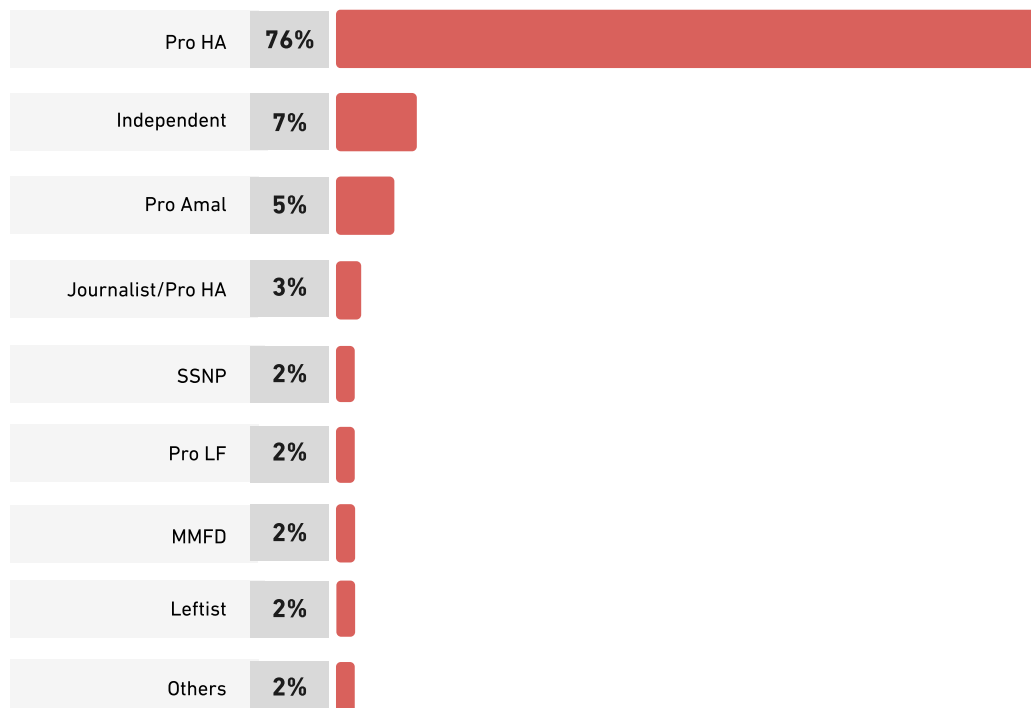


Fig. 3 - Distribution of users per political affiliation

Others Include: Lebanese Communist Party (LCP), Independent against Muwatinoun wa Muwatinat fi Dawla (MMFD), pro-FPM, pro-FM, Nasserist, pro-October 17. The figure below links users' political affiliation with the narrative they are circulating.

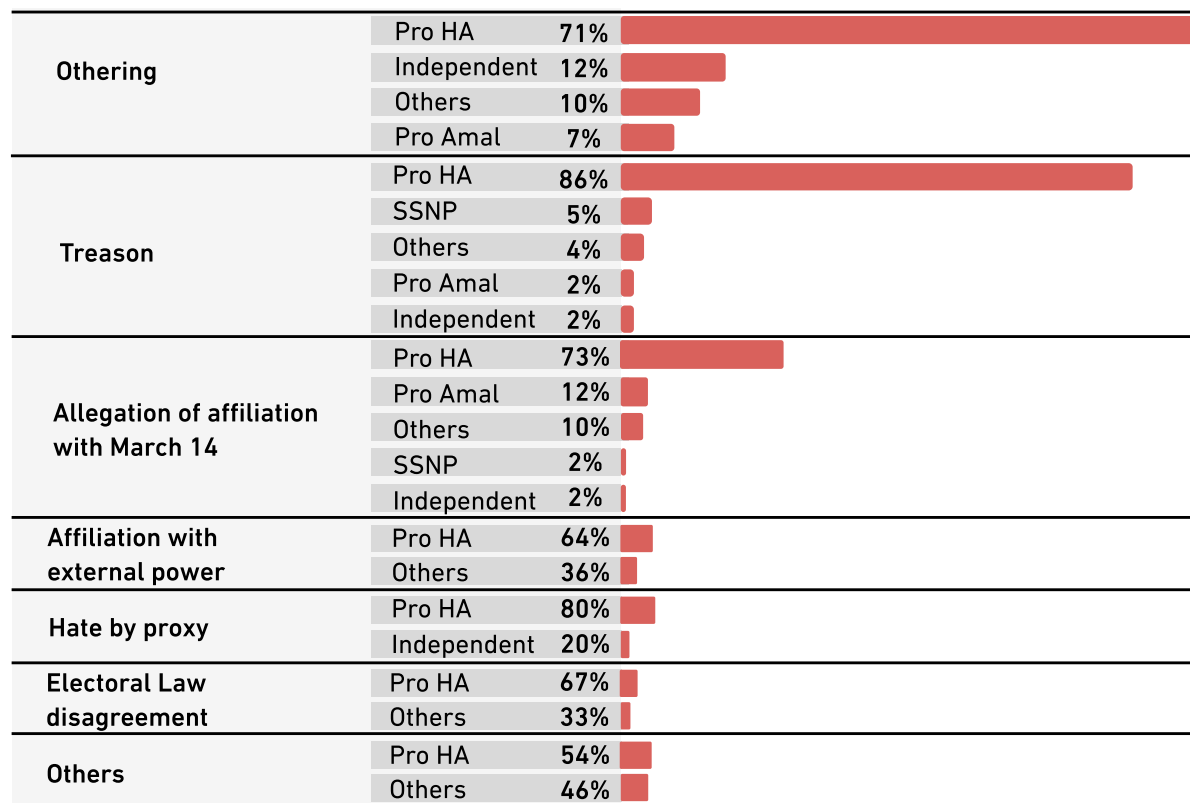


Fig. 4 - Distribution of narratives of users by political affiliation

We can see clearly that the three main themes othering, allegation of treason, and allegation of affiliation with March 14 were mainly circulated by users affiliated with Hezbollah. The same applies for allegations of affiliation with external powers and hate by proxy.

One of the tactics deployed by pro-Hezbollah users, is to take photos out personal Facebook account to confirm allegations.

Photos from Ali Mourad's Facebook page were taken and republished by pro-Hezbollah individuals, showing his support to the Syrian revolution and holding the Kurdistan flag. This aimed to circulate the narrative of allegations of conspiring against Hezbollah and treason, through deduction, i.e, if he is pro-Syrian revolution, then he is a traitor.



Img. 2



Img. 3

It is interesting to highlight that the hate by proxy theme was mainly a narrative built around the association of the candidates with Dima Sadek, Shaden Fakih, and Lokman Slim, three anti-Hezbollah Shiite figures.



Img. 4

Independent users, who were second after Hezbollah affiliated users with 7% of content dissemination, were focusing on three narratives, othering, hate by proxy, and electoral law disagreement. Hate by proxy was mainly targeting candidates associated with MMFD.



Img. 5

And othering was about some independent candidates' unclear political positioning towards Hezbollah.



The figure below depicts inauthentic behavior and the political affiliation of users conducting an inauthentic behavior vis-à-vis the campaign.



Fig.5- Source of inauthentic behavior

Inauthentic behavior was identified through the aggregation of inauthentic accounts (recently created and having less than 10 followers), suspended accounts, deleted accounts, and deleted tweets. This type of behavior is divided among two types of users: Hezbollah affiliated users and independent users.

As for influential accounts, be it from accounts with large following and/or journalists' accounts, we can see that 78% of accounts with large following are held by Hezbollah affiliated users and pro-Hezbollah journalists, as shown by the figure below:

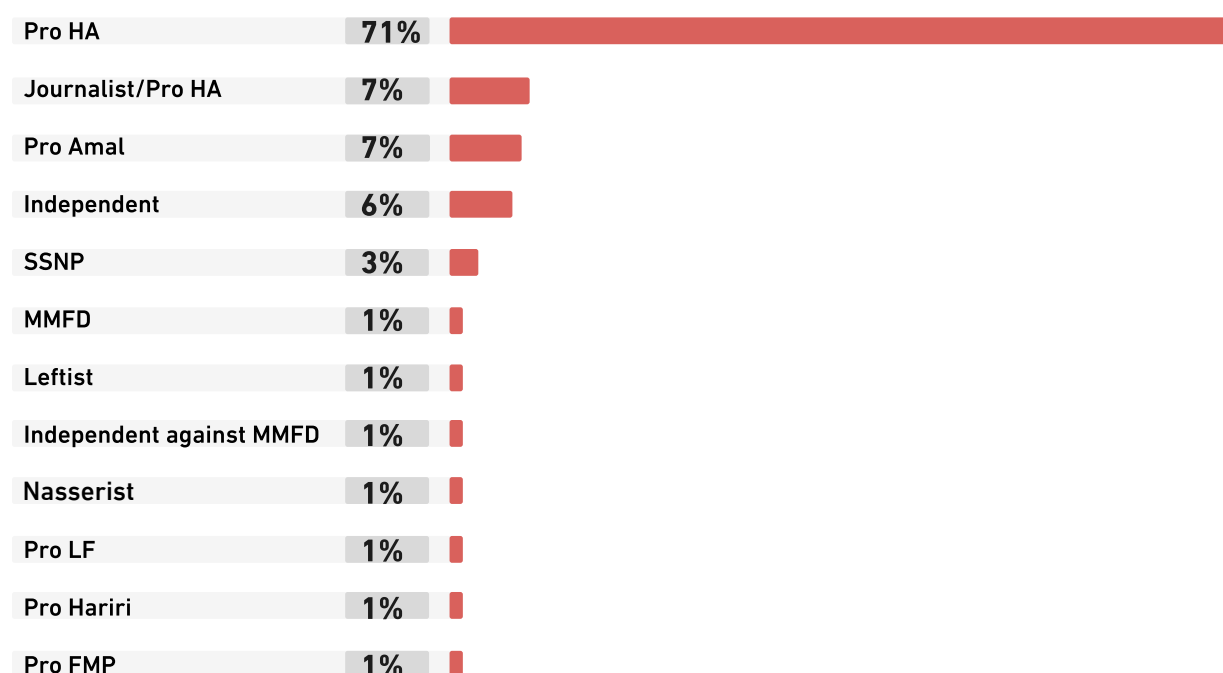


Fig.6- Influential accounts per user's political affiliation

Timestamp

In the section below, offline and online events were mirrored in order to put online activity in context. This process is useful to understand and analyze the spike in users' online activity per political affiliation and link it with what was happening on that day in the media or online.

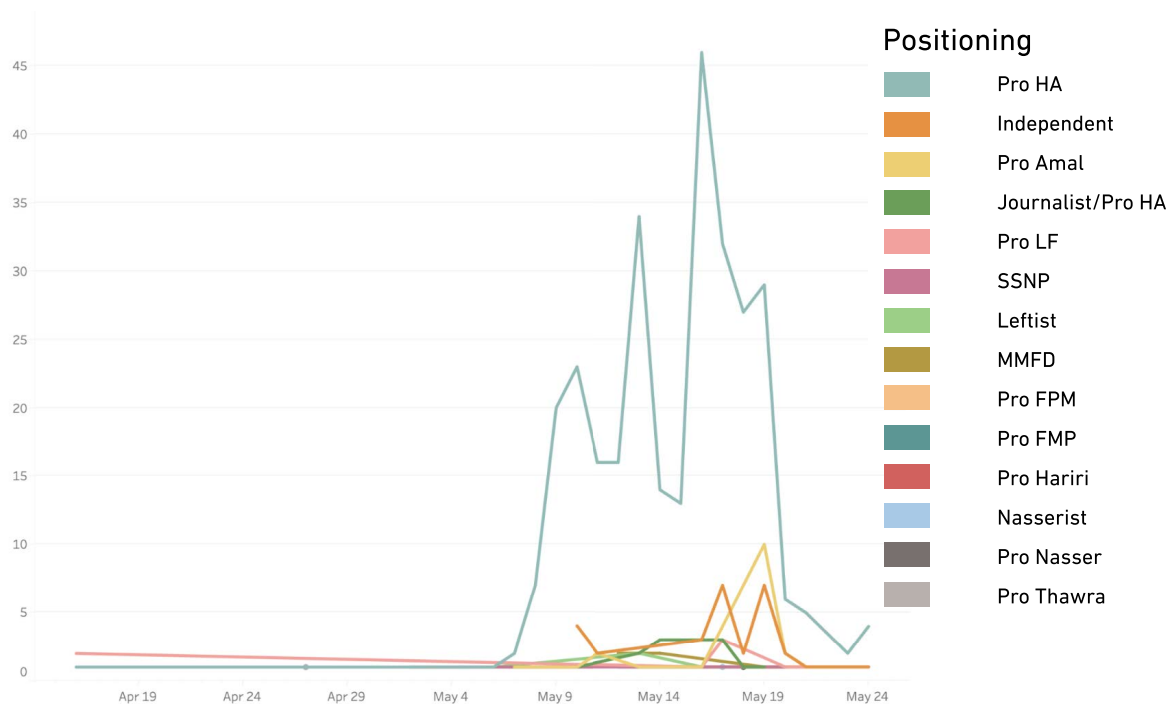


Fig.7- Timestamp online/offline events for Maan Nahwa al Taghyir

On April 10, 2022, the *Maan Nahwa al Taghyir* electoral list in the South III district was announced.



Img. 6

Prior to the launch, pro-Hezbollah individuals dug up old tweets and statements from candidat Firas Hamdan and started circulating accusations of treason against him. Additionally, Hamdan and Ali Mourad were associated with MMFD and other alternative candidates like Jad Ghosn, in an attempt to circulate a narrative of othering against them.



Img. 7 and 8



Img. 9 and 10

Digging up old statements to generate an online campaign against Hamdan was a common tactic. Tweets from 2020 and 2021 were reshared by pro-Hezbollah users to validate accusations of treason against him.



Img. 12, 11 and 13

On May 8, Al Akhbar Journalist Hassan Illaik known for being pro-Hezbollah, published [a video on Al Mahatta](#), under the title: “This candidate is an insult to the people of the South.”

In parallel, pro-Hezbollah individuals launched allegations of treason against both Mourad and Hamdan in an attempt to discredit them a few days before the elections.



Img. 14



Img. 15



Img. 16



Img. 17



Img. 18

On May 10, Megaphone [published a video](#) in which it depicts six tactics used by Hezbollah to discredit any opposition candidate in the south. Soon after, a counter-campaign was indeed launched warning people from voting for alternative candidates, following a narrative of treason.



Img. 22



Img. 23



Img. 24



Img. 25



يحاولون تشويه صورة [#علي_مراد](#) و [#فراس_حمدان](#) المرشحين في دائرة الجنوب الثالثة، في لائحة [#معا_نحو_التغيير](#) ضد ثنائي الهيمنة، بالفعل محاولاتهم لا تنفع معنا وفشلت، المشكلة أنهم عندما ينشرون الأكاذيب، فعليا هم ينشروها لجمهورهم الذي يحتقرونه بأنفه الأكاذيب. هم يخاطبون ناسهم، جيوشهم الالكترونية لن تقتنع بتغريدة منا او بتعليق ع منشور بعكس مزاجهم السياسي. اللعبة واضحة، هم لا يستطيعون التأثير علينا، لكن يؤثرون جيداً بجمهورهم، هل حَسَنَ نص الله قال لنا "فشروا"؟ كلا هو قال لناسه أنه يستطيع أن يقول "فشروا" فكانت الكلمة الأكثر تداولاً على تويتر.

هل قالوا لنا "نحمي ونبني"؟ لا، هم ارادوها شعارا يرسخ في ذهن جمهورهم ف كان شعارا الكترونيًا وجرافيكيا في كل مكان وهاشاتاغ متواصل ع تويتر وفيسبوك.

المعركة مع الجمهور هي في تغيير الذهنية السياسية، اليوم ندعم علي وفراس غدا ندعم غيرهم، نحن ندعم المبدأ، المبدأ الذي يروج له [Firas Hamdan](#) و [Ali Ahmad Mourad](#) في كل عملهم المدني والسياسي وفي عملهم يوميا قبل الانتخابات.

الفرق بيننا وبين الممانعة، أنه عندما قال علي مراد في طرابلس في ٢٠١٩ "انا ابن عيترون انا معكم" قالها لكل اللبنانيين. عندما تلقى فراس رصاصة حماة النظام، تلقاها دفاعا عن البلد كله. الفرق اننا نحن وعلي وفراس نخاطب الجميع، وهم يخاطبون دوائرهم المغفلة أحيائهم المغفلة، عقولهم الغافلة.

Img. 26



Img. 27



Img. 28



Img. 29



Img. 30



Img. 31

Finally, on May 16, *Maan Nahwa al Taghyir* secured two seats in parliament, Elias Jradah for the Greek Orthodox seat and Firas Hamdan for the Druze seat in Hasbaya-Marjayoun. This development marked a precedent in post-war elections, in a district strictly controlled by Hezbollah, Amal, and their allies. Along with the news, a spike in negative content against Hamdan was noticed, pro-Hezbollah users recalled the Chouaya incident and Hamdan's position then. On August 7, 2021, [a truck carrying a multi-barreled rocket launcher](#), used by Hezbollah to target Israel, was intercepted by residents of the village of Chouaya, in the caza of Hasbaya. The video widely circulated on social media shows angry villagers, some in traditional Druze attire, blocking the passage of the truck and accusing Hezbollah of endangering civilian lives by launching rockets near residential areas. In response to the interception of the truck, Hezbollah militants attack Druze farmers in the region.



Img. 32



Img. 33



Img. 34



Img. 35



Img. 36



Img. 37



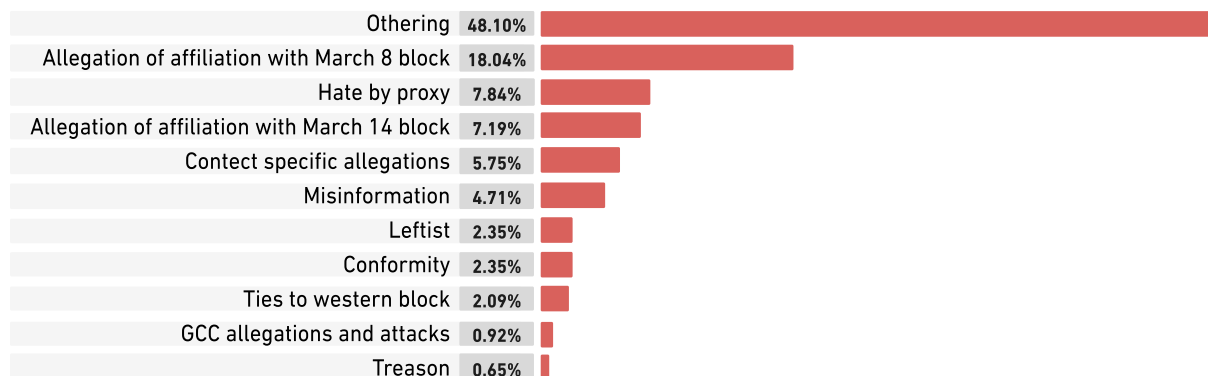
Img. 38

B- The case of *Nahwa al Dawla*, Metn

On May 8, 2022, the *Nahwa al Dawla* electoral list was publicly launched in the second Mount Lebanon district (Metn) under the slogan “We can turn the crisis into an opportunity.” This was the slogan adopted by MMFD across Lebanon. The list included five candidates, the most prominent among them being Jad Ghosn. Ghosn is a journalist, television host, news reporter, and documentary producer. He was a news reporter for OTV and Al Jadeed and is now independently hosting the “Reflections with Jad Ghosn” podcast on YouTube.

The Metn area is a Christian majority district, with Maronite, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, and Armenian Orthodox voters mainly. The Metn electorate has traditionally been divided among traditional forces such as FPM, Kataeb, LF, and Tashnag as well as supporters of the Murr family.

The diversity and strength of traditional forces in the Metn district is reflected in the diversity of themes and allegations against alternative candidates and the diversity of political affiliation of users waging these allegations.



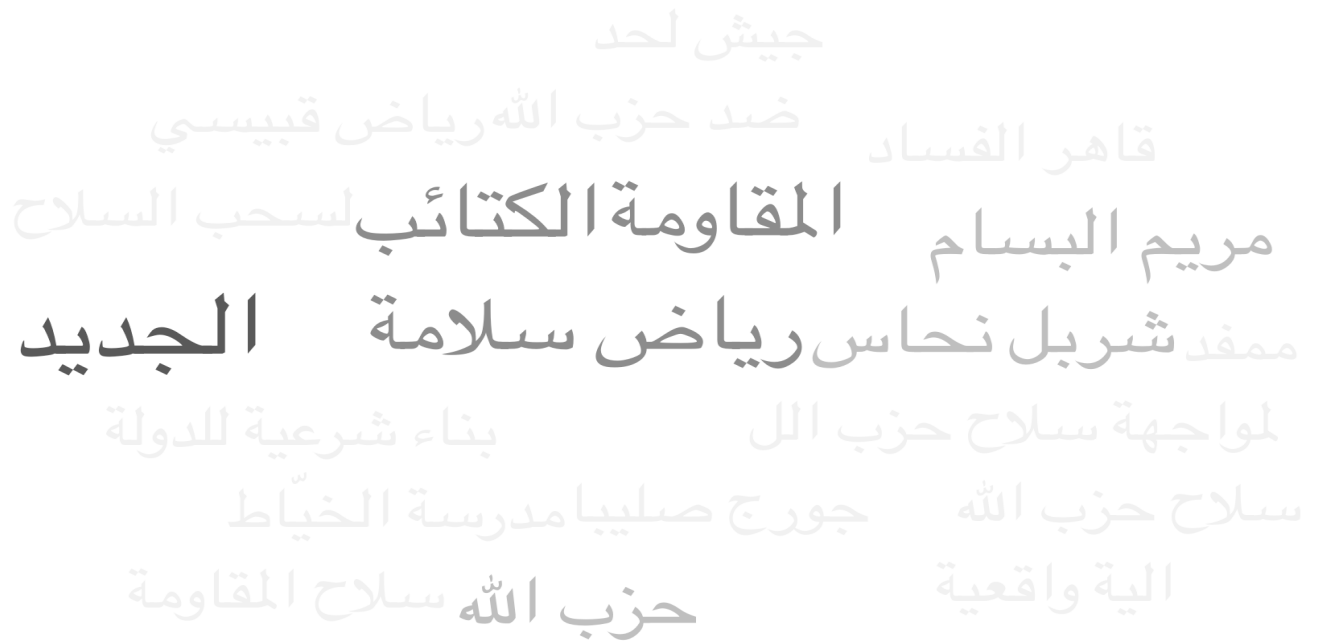



Fig.10- Word cloud for allegations of affiliation with March 14, aggregated through key words

48% of the narratives were about othering, 18% allegation of affiliation with March 8, and 8% hate by proxy. Whereas the other narratives such as allegation of affiliation with March 14 and context specific allegations were present but to a lesser extent.

The theme othering encompasses several narratives, like trolling, warning, accusing alternative candidates of not having a clear political positioning, allegations of racism, having double standards, being opportunists, and being strangers to Metn.

Deleted Tweet/Tweet from Deleted Account	
جاد غصن اخطر من المنظومة الحالية ولن يصل للمجلس ابدا	

Deleted Tweet/Tweet from Deleted Account	
منافق بخطورة نعيم قاسم	

Although all candidates on this list were subject to a smear campaign, Jad Ghosn was the main targeted candidate, followed by Lucien Bou Rjeily, Verena Al Amil, and Shaden Maalouf. The hate by proxy theme is one to highlight, as Ghosn was associated with more than 10 organizations and public figures covering a wide range of political affiliation, ranging from Asaad Abou Khalil, a pro-Hezbollah columnist, and Sami Kleib a journalist with March 8 leanings, to Riad Salameh, governor of Banque du Liban, to Gino Raidy an independent digital influencer producing anti-Hezbollah content, and Ghadi Francis a pro-Hezbollah journalist.



Img. 39



The allegation of affiliation with March 8 theme, ranking second after othering, is inclusive of the following allegations: allegations of affiliation with FPM and Hezbollah. These affiliations were based on several factors: Ghosn's previous work for OTV, a channel linked to FPM, being on the same list with MMFD, headed by Charbel Nahhas, who was a minister of Telecommunications and Labor endorsed by President Michel Aoun's FPM, and Ghosn's positive take on Hezbollah's weapons.



Img. 40 and 41

The political diversity in Metn, highlighted above, was reflected through the variety of allegations against alternative candidates. The users' political affiliations reflect this diversity well. The figure below showcases the different political groups users were affiliated with.

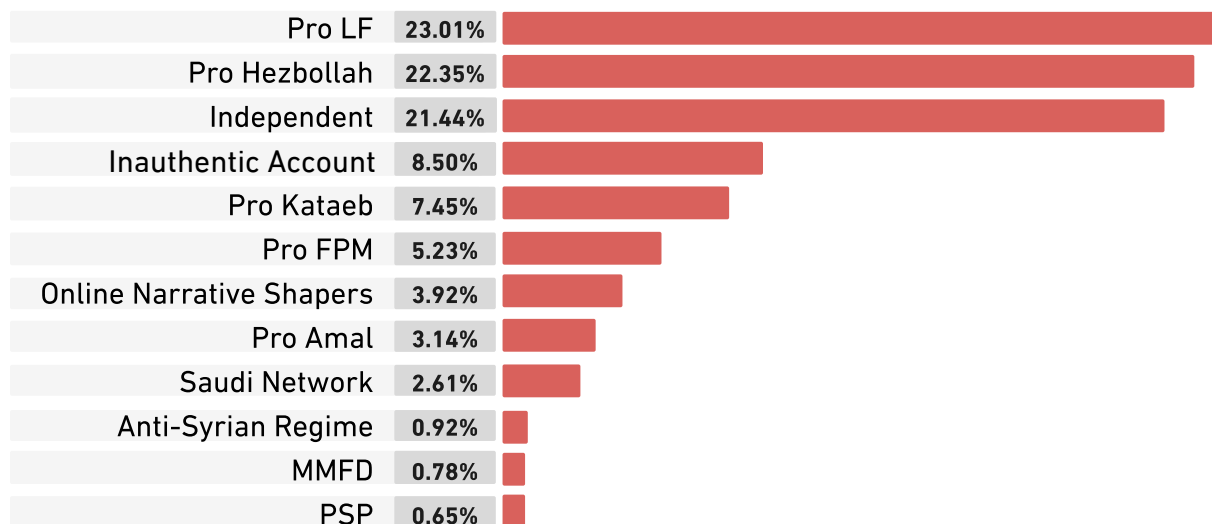


Fig.11- Distribution of users per political affiliation

While 23% of the users are affiliated with the Lebanese Forces, 22% are pro-Hezbollah, 21% are independent, 7% are pro-Kataeb and 5% pro-FPM. The number of inauthentic accounts (deleted and suspended accounts, accounts with less than 10 followers, and deleted tweets) is remarkable with 8.5%, exceeding that of users openly affiliated with established political parties such as Kataeb and FPM.

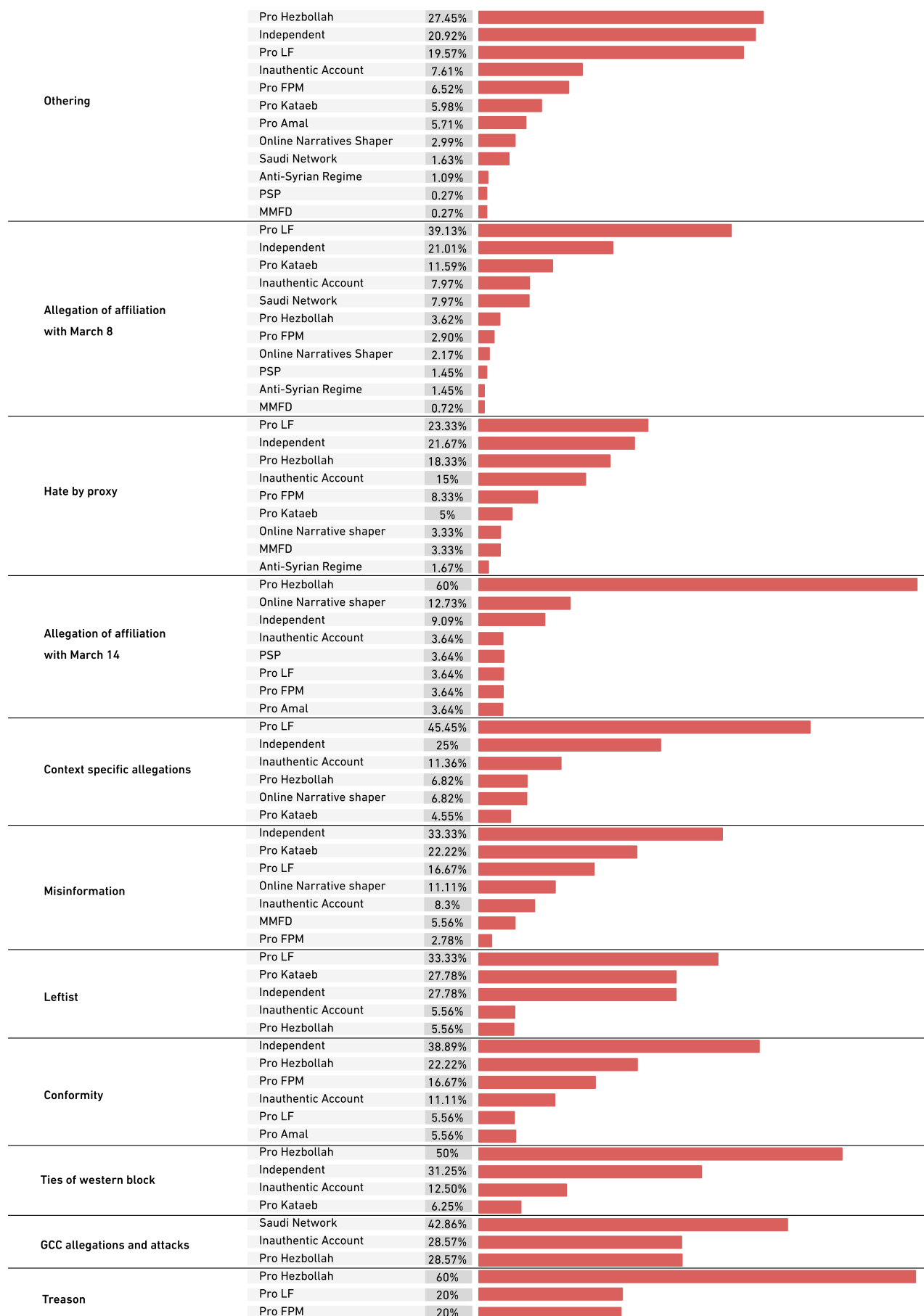


Fig.12- Narrative per users' political affiliation

The three main themes, i.e., othering, allegation of affiliation with March 8, and hate by proxy are being circulated by four main groups of users. While independent and pro-Hezbollah are mainly circulating othering messages, pro-LF and pro-Kataeb users are accusing candidates of being affiliated with the March 8 alliance and circulating messages of hate by proxy.



Img. 42

Users affiliated with political groups and even public figures and candidates deployed several methods and tools to circulate the narratives above, such as videos, media appearances and photos.

[In this video](#), on July 13, 2021, Jad Ghosn published on his own YouTube channel a speech he delivered before a sub-commission at the European Parliament. In the video, Ghosn described the current political and economic situation in Lebanon while conducting a historical review of the current political ruling class track record.



Img. 43

This video resurfaced during the pre-election period, and allegations of calling for sanctions were mainly circulated by pro-Hezbollah users.



Img. 45

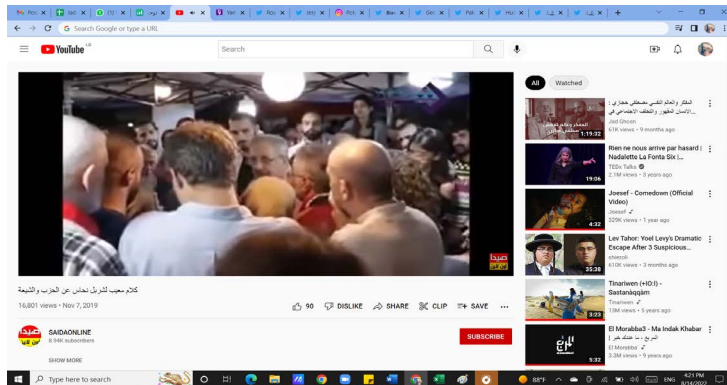


Img. 46



Img. 47

[In this video](#) of former Minister Charbel Nahhas, during the October 17, 2019, protest, Nahhas's word were twisted and taken out of the total context where Nahhas was saying that people of the South are true Lebanese citizens and "we shouldn't be afraid of them."



Img. 49

This video re-emerged during the elections and was used to build a narrative accusing Nahhas of conspiring against Hezbollah, mainly by pro-Hezbollah users.



Img. 50



Img. 51



Img. 52

On May 2nd, [another video](#), generated by a pro-FPM user, contained a collage of several videos featuring Charbel Nahhas and other MMFD members through several media appearances. The collage aimed at discrediting Nahhas and it got retweeted 310 times and received 474 likes.



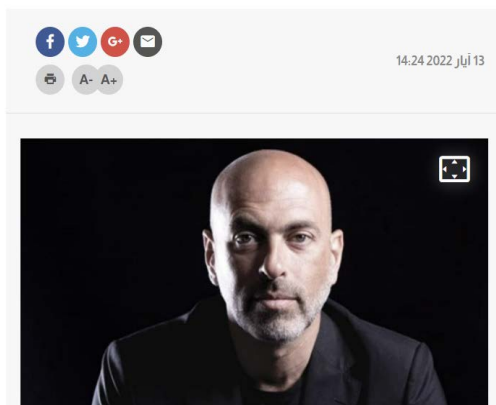
Img. 53



Img.54

[In this article](#), Samir Saliba, a candidate on Kataeb's list in Metn, accused Jad Ghosn and his fellow candidates of conformity and affiliation with Hezbollah. This article was published after Ghosn and Saliba's back-to-back media appearances on MTV program *Beirut Al Yawm*.

سمير صليبا لـ mtv: هؤلاء يدّعون
التغيير... وفي 15 أيار سنطلق لبنان
الجديد



Img. 55

This news was soon picked up by pro-LF and pro-Kataeb users to accuse Ghosn of being affiliated with Hezbollah.



Marie-Lina Hraoui 🇩🇪🇵🇸
@Hraoui17

...

Replying to @libchafc

من ورا الجو "التغييرى" و "الوجوه الجديدة"
المتنى بأكتريتو مع الحياى مع اللامركزية الموسعة الاقتصاد
الحر و ضد سلاح
و ايدولوجية حرب الارهاب
جاد ضحك عل ناخب المتنى
خلين يقرؤ مشروع نحاس قبل ما يتفلسفوا ه ربنا
جاد غصن خسر وما أجمل هذه الخسارة ونحن سنكون
بالمرصاد

5:54 PM · May 16, 2022 · Twitter for Android

6 Likes

Img. 56



3aÄäse
@3amerAase

...

47 دقيقة عن التاريخ الذي لم يرو، لم يذكر بها جاد غصن ولا
كلمة عن حزب الله
ممفد كانوا جزء من السلطة وحلفاء المليشيا أو جزء من الآلة
الإعلامية الفاسدة التي تغطي السلطة والمليشيا
نصف فترة التاريخ الذي يرويه جاد غصن كان تحت سيطرة
وهندسة مباشرة من حزب الله



youtube.com

التاريخ الذي لم يرو للانهيار - كاملاً

To support the
channel: <https://www.patreon.com/jadghosn>
...ن كواليس وخفايا

2:38 AM · May 15, 2022 · Twitter for iPhone

Img. 57

The figure below depicts inauthentic behavior and the political affiliation of users conducting an inauthentic behavior vis-à-vis the campaign

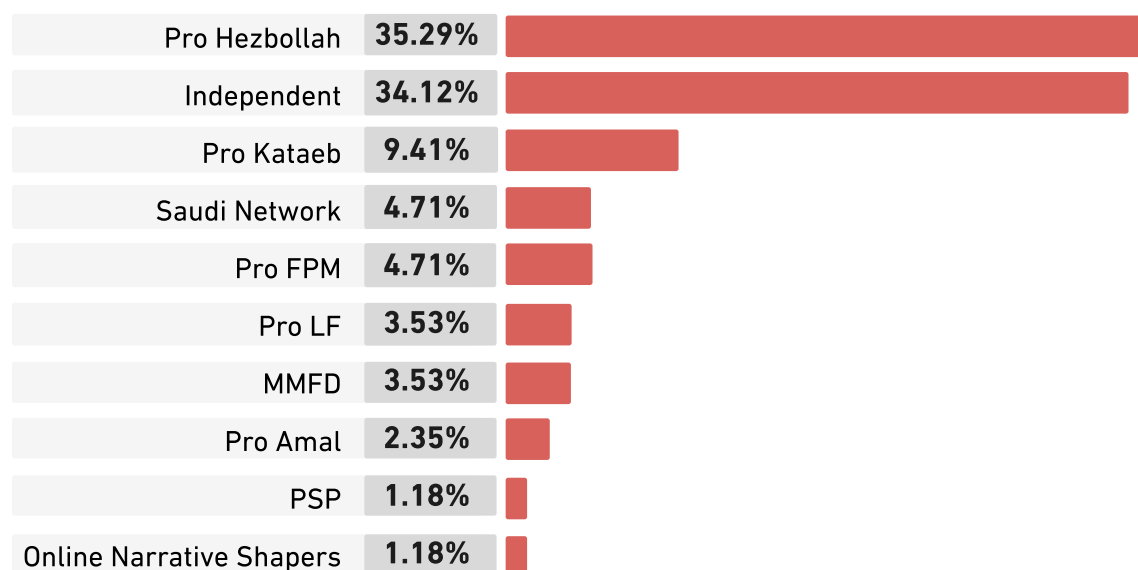


Fig.13- Distribution of inauthentic accounts on political parties

Inauthentic behavior was detected through the aggregation of inauthentic accounts, suspended accounts, deleted accounts, and deleted tweets. This type of behavior is divided into three types of users: Hezbollah affiliated users, independent users, and pro-Kataeb users.

As for influential accounts, be it from accounts with more than a thousand followers and/or journalists' accounts, 30% of them were held by pro-LF users, 21% by online narrative shapers, i.e, academics and influencers, and 21% held by independent accounts.

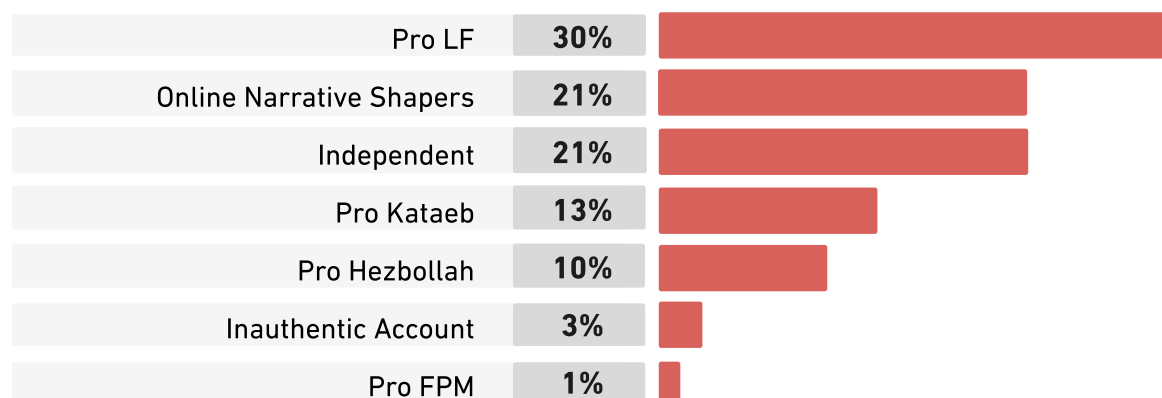


Fig. 14- Influential accounts per user's political affiliation

Timestamp

In the section below, offline and online events were mirrored in order to put online activity in context. This process is useful to understand and analyze the spike in users' online activity per political affiliation and link it with what was happening on that day in the media or online.

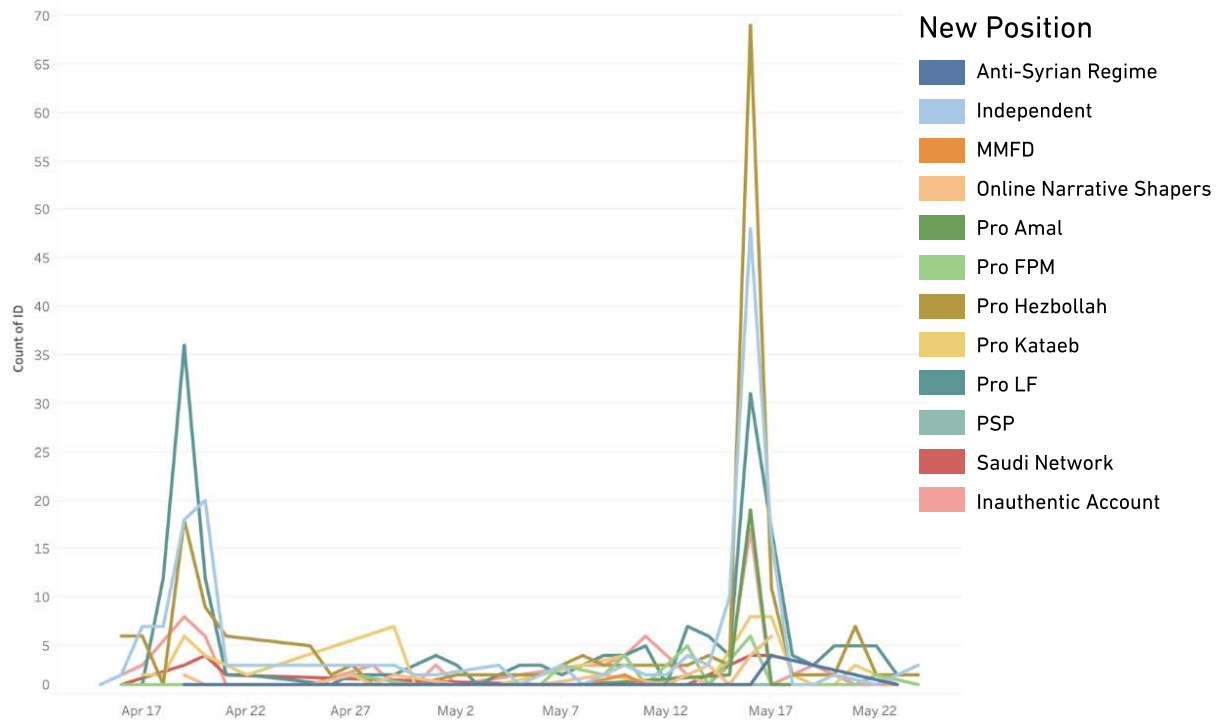


Fig.15- Timestamp online/offline events for Nahwa al Dawla

On April 18, pro-LF users caused a spike in online activity, which came after Jad Ghosn's appearance on Al Jadeed TV, on a program entitled "[Btefroq aa Watan](#) – بتفرق عوطن"¹⁰. In this video Paul Nakouzi, a candidate on the Metn Sovereignists' electoral list, accused Ghosn of conspiring against and insulting the church. This triggered a series of online reactions.



Img. 58

The allegations of conspiring against the church were labeled under context specific allegations, as Nakouzi accused Ghosn of “not being from Metn” or being “foreign to Metn” in a narrative of othering. And as demonstrated through data above, this theme was mainly circulated by pro-LF users with 45.5% of content disseminated by them.

On April 18 as well, journalist Ghadi Francis, who is an active member of the SSNP, and openly pro-Hezbollah, stated her support to Jad Ghosn. Her tweet triggered a series of reactions which were labeled under the hate by proxy theme encompassing association with public figures.

10- <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1059213708349312>



Img. 59, 60, 61

This spike was also led by pro-LF users. As shown in the distribution of theme per users' political affiliation, the overall theme of hate by proxy was also spearheaded by pro-LF users, with a share of 23% of the content of this theme.

On April 19, a pro-Kataeb user published two minutes of a [100-minute long interview](#) of Ghosn by podcast host Ronnie Chatah. On May 6, 2021, Chatah debated with Ghosn Hezbollah's accusation of having killed his father, Mohammad Chatah, in a car bomb attack in Beirut in December 2013. Mohammad Chatah was a former ambassador and Finance minister.



Img. 62

Following these allegations, the narrative of Ghosn being affiliated with Hezbollah spread widely and were connected to the assassinations of journalists Samir Kassir and Gebran Tuéni in 2005 and writer Lokman Slim in 2021. These allegations were labeled under allegations of affiliation with March 8, which, as seen above, took 39% of the online conversation around Ghosn and were mainly circulated by pro-LF users.



Img. 63

Conversely, on April 25, following Michelle Tuéni's [one hour-long interview](#) with Jad Ghosn, pro-Hezbollah users picked up on this interview, instigated by Asaad Abou Khalil, a controversial pro-Hezbollah journalist and academic.



Img. 64



Img. 65

On April 26 and April 29, Lucien Bou Rjeily, another candidate on the list, published two photos, one of the campaign's bus and one of the candidates meeting in a humble place.



Img. 66



Img. 67

Both photos generated trolling content. Lucien Bou Rjeily, a playwright and movie director, has started a public political career during the 2015 garbage crisis and ran for parliament in Beirut during the 2018 election.



Img.68



Img. 69

Trolling content against this electoral list was omnipresent. For example, following the attack on the volunteers campaigning for *Nahwa al Dawla* in Burj Hammoud on the [night of May 12](#), a series of trolling tweets was launched against the candidates, mainly by pro-FPM users.



Img. 70



Img. 71

On May 3, three days before the diaspora election day, Polyblog, a pro-Kataeb alternative media platform published a video under the title [six reasons why not to vote for Jad Ghosn](#). This video circulated even more the narrative concerning the allegations of affiliation with Hezbollah. This video was followed by another 12-minute video hosting a psychologist to answer the question: [How do you perceive Nahhas's attitude towards other opposition figures?](#)



Img. 72



georges azzi
@G_azzi

...

Via poly blog: why NOT to vote for jad Ghosn and how
hezbollah has infiltrated civil society and the
opposition



instagram.com
PolyBlog (@polyblog.lb) • Instagram video

3:02 AM · May 4, 2022 · Twitter for iPhone

2 Quote Tweets 1 Like

Img. 73



Img. 74

This video was soon re-shared by a pro-LF user to circulate warning content against Ghosn, MMFD, and Nahhas.



Img.75

C- The Case of *Shamaluna*, North III

Shamaluna is a political coalition in the four cazas of Besharri, Zghorta, Koura, and Batroun (North Lebanon's third district) with 11 candidates running for parliament: Rabih Chaer and Layal Bou Moussa in Batroun; Kozhaya Sassine and Riad Tawk in Besharri; Shaden Daïf, Michel Douaihy, and Gistelle Semaan in Zghorta; Semaan Bachawati, Jihad Farah, and Fadwa Kallab in Koura.

The coalition faced off against multiple traditional political parties in this district, including the Free Patriotic Movement, the Lebanese Forces, Kataeb, the Marada Movement, the Independence Movement, and SSNP.

Quoting Dr. Rania Koleilat Khatib in her article [Lebanon has too many dictators to be a democracy](#): "Under the *Shamaluna* initiative in northern Lebanon, citizens may register as candidates or as voters. To do so, they may not be affiliated to a political party, and they must be people of integrity. This is the start of a democratic process for candidate selection; it is no longer the leader of a party who dictates the selection of a candidate, it is the people themselves who make a democratic choice."

The absence of affiliation with political parties in a highly politicized area, North III, is reflected by both a panoply of users' political affiliation and allegations towards *Shamaluna*'s candidates.

The following section tackles the type of narratives circulated by users around candidates from this list.

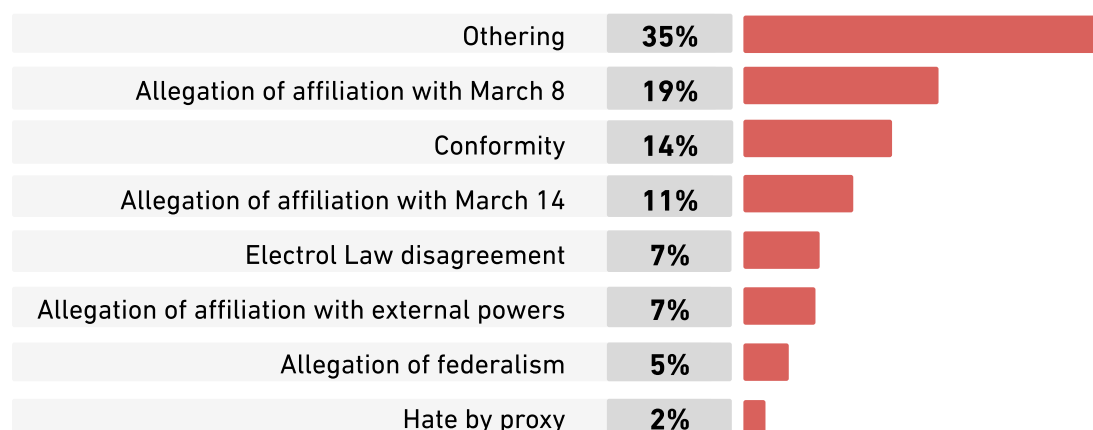


Fig.16- Distribution of themes

لسفارة الأميركية والسعودية
 زوجته موظفة في السفارة الأميركية ودائع لغيرهم سفاراتكم
 قوي التغيير برئاسة السفير السعودي بتمشكون إيران
 كلاب شنكير وكر مخابرات واحد ديما صادق الثائرة
 "القوات اللبنانية، لبنانية وبس لبنانية". الخليج مستوردين
 بجمعيات اميركي كلنا ارادة امر الشمطاء شيا والبوخاري
 ودعمت بوخارية

Fig.17- Word cloud for allegations of affiliation with external power, aggregated through key words

35% of the narratives were about othering, 19% allegation of affiliation with March 8, and 14% conformity, while the other narratives such as allegation of affiliation with March 14 was at 11% and electoral law disagreement and allegation of federalism were present to a lesser extent.



Img. 76



In this electoral list, Layal Bou Moussa was the main target of a misinformation campaign accusing her of receiving SSNP's support through a memo published by the party. Bou Moussa along with Semaan Bachawati were both accused of affiliation with SSNP, following this photo that was spread widely, hence the 19% allocation to the theme allegation of affiliation with March 8.

كل يوم بيعملولي بطاقة حزبية
آخر اشاعة كانت "ليال قومية" وزوروا ورقة ونشروها
أنا بطاقتي الوحيدة هي لبنان والشعب اللبناني ومشروعي
الانتخابي مصلحة لبنان وحقوق
اللبنانيين في مواجهة دولية السلاح
ودويلة الفساد
وإشاعاتك اللي كل يوم بتنشروها، دليل على
خوفك وقلقك من لائحة شمالنا

إلى جميع المنظمات والفروع المستقلة
للموضوع: الانتخابات البرلمانية

محترمة السادة الأعضاء
تحية موجبة لجمعية اتحادية،
نشكركم وبشأن قرار الجمعية الرئيس جابر الاحكام بنحوسم الانتخابات البرلمانية في لبنان، المشتمل
أعضاء الجمعية (الناظر الصغير) وأعضاء المرشحين المقرر (إصدار الصوت الانتخابي)
- عكازة إميل حيدر.
- طرابلس: اللجنة العامة (الانتخابي بترك الحمار الرغاء في الفرج).
- بيروت: اللجنة العامة.
- النابون: ليل بو موسى.
- بئر: ملهم طوق.
- زغرتا: اللجنة معاً للتحالف ولبنان (الانتخابي بترك الحمار الرغاء في الفرج).
- جبيل: محمد الشاذ.
- كسروان: جوزيف زاهد.
- بعلبك: رانيا المسرى.
- الشوف: ونتم وهاب.
- بيروت: بترك الحمار الرغاء في الفرج.
- بيروت: بترك الحمار الرغاء في الفرج.
- بعلبك: بترك الحمار الرغاء في الفرج.
- زغرتا: بترك الحمار الرغاء في الفرج.

LEB ELECTIONS

Fake

16 Retweets 6 Quote Tweets 190 Likes Tip

These allegations will be tackled in the second part of the report under mis- and disinformation techniques and tools.



mia kenaan
@mia_kenaan

...

مذكرة صادرة عن الحزب السوري القومي الاجتماعي يطلب فيها من القوميين منح أصواتهم التفضيلية لكل من:
- ليال بو موسى، مرشحة على لائحة شمالنا في البترون
- جوزفين زغيب، مرشحة على لائحة نعمة افرام في كسروان
ملحم جبران طوق (ويليام) مرشح على لائحة المردة في بشري
واصف الحركة مرشح في بعيدا



9:07 AM · May 6, 2022 · Twitter for Android

4 Retweets 1 Quote Tweet 29 Likes

Img. 78

Although the narrative of allegation of federalism ranked seventh among themes with 5% of the content, it is worth highlighting, as *Shamaluna* starting by its name, "Our north," was accused of identitarian politics, working towards federalism, and dividing regions based on communitarian affiliation. These allegations were mainly circulated by MMFD members.



Img. 79



Img. 80



Img. 81

Users from different political affiliations circulated content against the coalition, as seen in the figure below

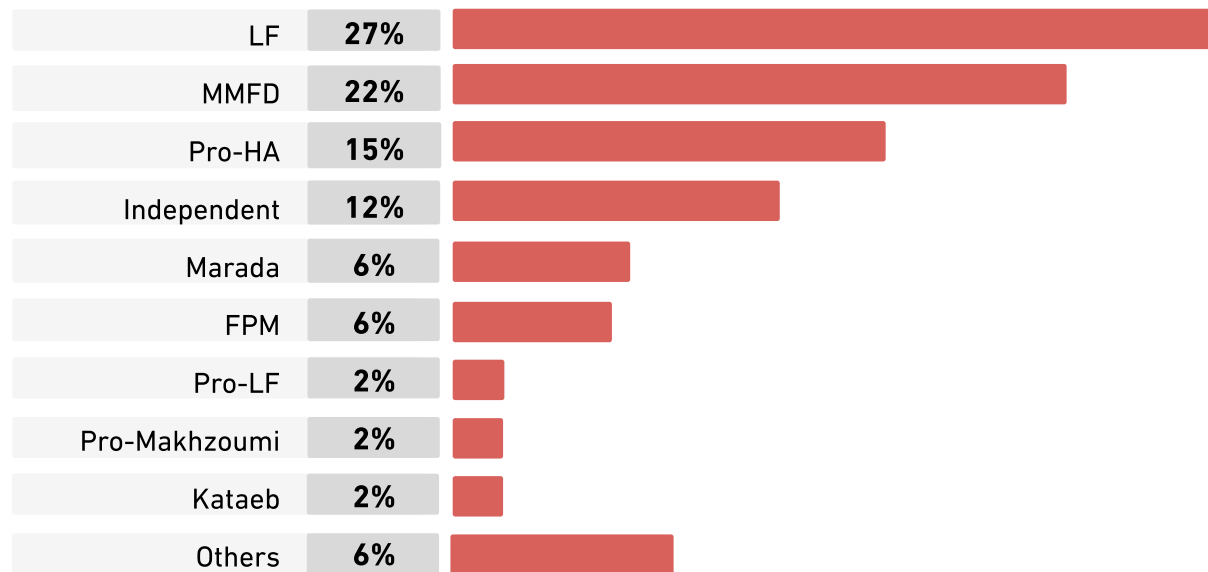


Fig. 18- Distribution of users by political affiliation

Others include federalists, inauthentic account, Journalist, Journalist/Pro-Hezbollah, Pro-Amal, Pro-Hariri, Pro-Michel Mouawad, PSP, and SSNP. 27% of the content analyzed was circulated by pro-LF users, while MMFD affiliated accounts accounted for 22% of the total users, with 15% of users being pro-Hezbollah.

MMFD users' high presence is due to three facts. Firstly, Layal Bou Moussa, a candidate on *Shamaluna's* list, was a founding member of MMFD and then dropped out from the party. Additionally, MMFD along with the LCP were asked by independent users to withdraw from the race to optimize the chances of *Shamaluna*. Finally, Riad Tawk, a candidate on *Shamaluna's* list, attacked Charbel Nahhas, the head of MMFD during a media appearance.

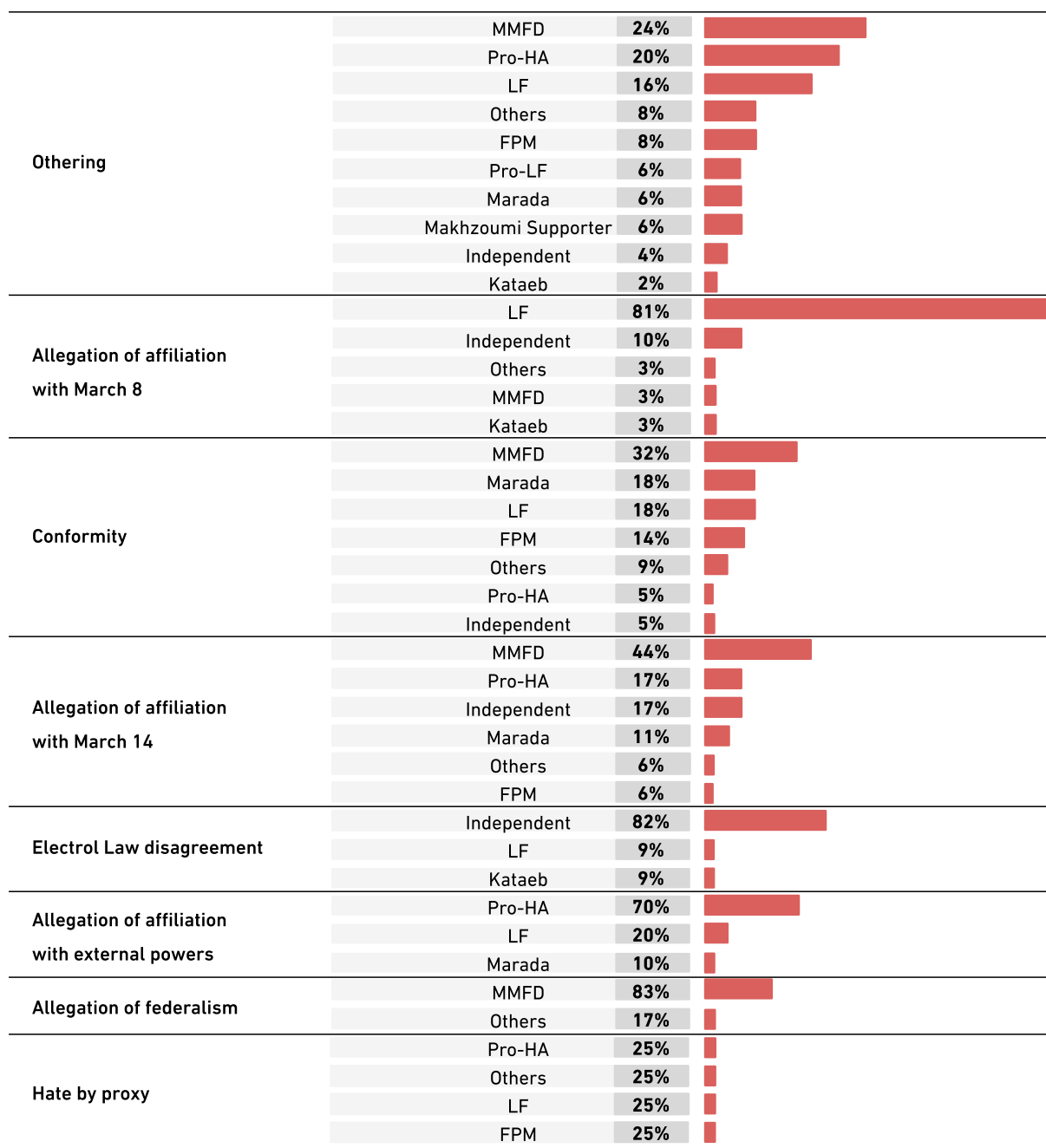


Fig.19- Distribution of narrative per political affiliation

MMFD users mainly circulated narratives of othering, conformity, allegation of affiliation with March 14, and allegation of federalism. Pro-LF users circulated the allegation of affiliation with March 8 due to the memo by the SSNP mentioned above. Pro-Hezbollah users were mainly disseminating hate by proxy, allegation of affiliation with external powers and March 14.



Sally Abdallah
@SallyAb27550172

...

شمالنا هبي مش أكثر من تجميع ناس معها مصري وعندها ميول سياسية معينة مخبايتها بتظهرها بدون قصد بما يسمى بـ "زلة لسان" بس ما بدّ ينزلوا مع لوائح أحزاب السلطة لأنو هئي الموضة نعمل حالنا معارضة.
[#قادرين_نغير](#)



Mery Joe @MeryjoMatar · May 3

أكثر سؤال عم ننسألو من الناس هو ليش ما تحالفنا بالشمال الثالثة مع شمالنا. هالفديو كافي ليوضح إني لو تحالفنا معهن، كتا مكوون عم نكذب على حالنا ويناقي بكل مشروعا. لا، نحن ما متفق مع سمير جعجع، اللي ما عندو مشكلة بنهجروا شباينا كرمال نعيش بـ \$٢٠٠ بالشهر، و لا، ما متفق معه

[Show this thread](#)



12:01 PM · May 4, 2022 · Twitter for Android

1 Retweet 2 Likes

Img. 82



Mo
@MMFIDIAN

...

مرشح كوكتيل [#شمالنا](#) سمعان بشواتي والترويج للنظام التوافقي الطائفي. يعني هيدا إيلي الفرزلي بس عفريز.

صوتك لـ [#قادرين](#) هو صوت للقطيعه مع النظام الطائفي التوافقي، صوت للعلمانية وللمشروع الواضح بعيدا عن الحصص والمحاصصه.



5:19 AM · May 10, 2022 · Twitter for Android

6 Retweets 1 Quote Tweet 33 Likes

Img. 83



Nahid derjani
@DerjaniNahid

...

أذهلني ما سمعته عن لسان مرشح بلائحة شمالنا في دائرة
الشمال الثالثة في اعلان انتخابي وهو يتحدث عن استرجاع
المزاج المسيحي المفقود في هذه الدائرة منذ ٥٠ سنة
اووووف
فهمنا بان اولوياتك هي تجريد الحزب من سلاحه
إنما
هيدا شو؟
منطق دكتور واستاذ جامعي وثوري وتغييرى؟
بئست الدكتره

3:46 AM · May 4, 2022 · Twitter for iPhone

3 Retweets 21 Likes

Img. 84

Supporters of Beirut MP Fouad Makhzoui surprisingly accounted for 28% of inauthentic behavior generated by one account making up the large percentage. Pro-Hezbollah accounts made up 14% of inauthentic behavior.

Makhzoumi Supporter	28.57%	<div></div>
Independent	28.57%	<div></div>
Pro-HA	14.29%	<div></div>
Others	14.29%	<div></div>
MMFD	14.29%	<div></div>

Fig.20- Distribution of inauthentic accounts per political affiliation

As for influential accounts, be it from accounts with large following and/or journalists, 26% were held by pro-LF users, 17% by MMFD users and 17% are held by Marada supporters.

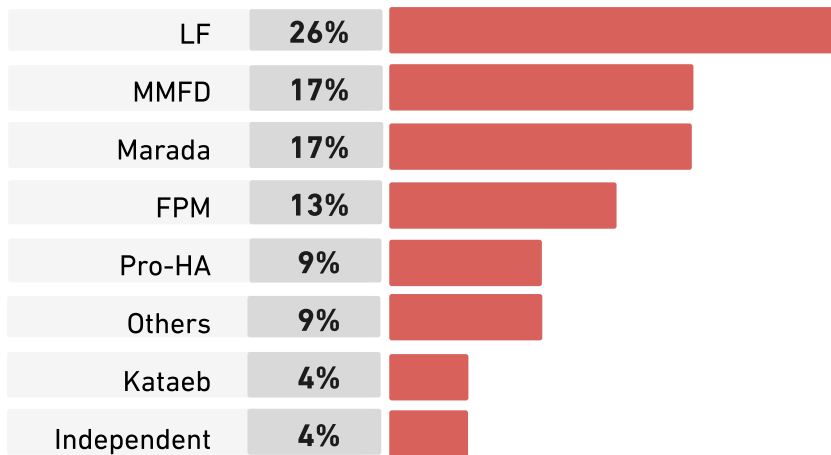


Fig.21- Distribution of influential accounts on political affiliation

Timestamp

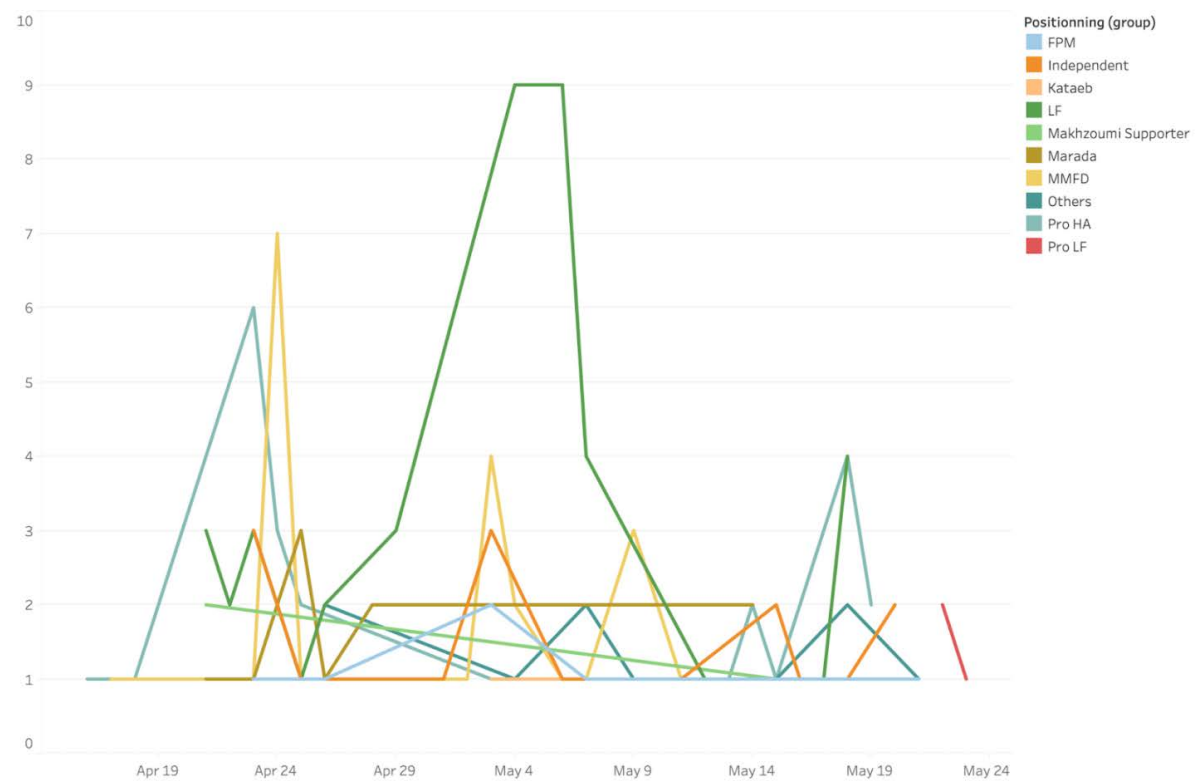
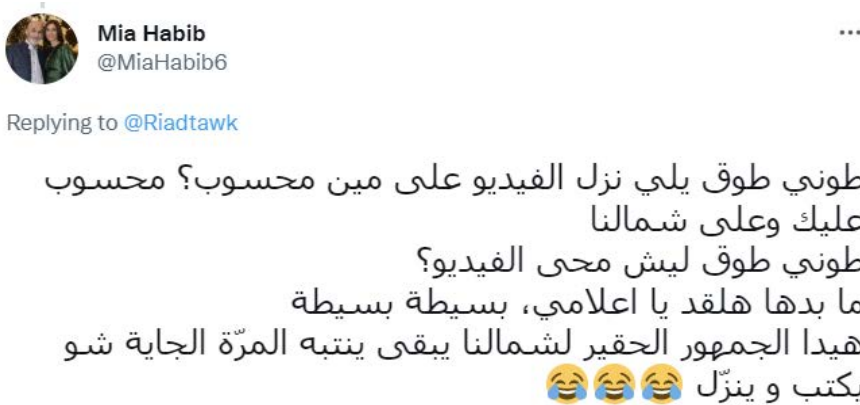


Fig. 22- Timestamp online/offline events for Shamaluna

On April 5, a video montage showing a collage of photos of Riad Tawk on a Hezbollah music theme was circulating on TikTok. The video triggered a reaction from pro-LF users.



Img. 85



Img. 86

On April 14, candidates from the alternative list *Maan lil Taghyir*, in South II, were physically attacked in Sarafand by pro-Hezbollah and pro-Amal groups. Soon this offline event generated sentiments of solidarity from *Shamaluna* candidates and pro-*Shamaluna* users.



Img. 87



Img. 88



Joe Keyrouz (جو كيروز)
@joekeyrouz

#مواجهة_واحدة

@shamaluna · Apr 17

معركة الجنوب، معركتنا جميعًا
#مواجهة_واحدة في كل لبنان

بيان تضامني
مع لائحة "معاً للتغيير"
في دائرة الجنوب الثانية

مما للتغيير

معركة الجنوب، معركتنا جميعاً. نستنكر بشكل قاطع الاعتداء المبرر من قبل عناصر حركة أمل على المشاركين في إطلاق لائحة المعارضة في دائرة صور الزهراني، ونصب الحواجز على الطريق العام ونشر المسلحين لترهيب الناس مذكين بأشجع مظاهر الحرب الأهلية. هذه الاعتداءات على حرية التجمع والعمل السياسي قبل أسابيع من تاريخ الانتخابات النيابية، لنذر بنية أحزاب السلطة وعلى رأسها حزب الله وحركة أمل منع أي نشاط انتخابي ديمقراطي في مناطق نفوذها.

إننا، اليوم، كمترشحين ومرشحات على لوائح التغيير في كل لبنان، نعلن تضامناً الكامل مع المناضلين والمناضلات في الجنوب، ونعتبر أن معركة الكرامة والتغيير هي معركة كل واحد منا من الناظورة إلى العريضة.

أخيراً، ندعو الأجهزة الأمنية والقضائية إلى محاسبة الفاعلين وتأمين سلامة المرشحين والناخبين خلال الحملة الانتخابية وفي يوم الاقتراع، كما نطلب من المؤسسات والهيئات الدولية المعنية بمراقبة الانتخابات الانتقال فوراً إلى الصنفد وفتح تحقيق في ملاسات هذه الحادثة.

دائرة الشمال الأولى: وهاء، جميل، لويس، الرامي، خالد، علوش، بدي، الأسعد، محمد، بدي، جنان، حمدان، إدغار، شاهر.

دائرة الشمال الثانية: رامي، فتح، كميل، موني، مالك، موني، جند ناصر، هند، النور، زكي، حسيك.

دائرة الشمال الثالثة: ليل، بو موسى، ربيع، الشاعر، سمعان، الشواني، جواد، فري، فري، ناصيف، كات، راض، طوق، فريدا، ساسين، شادن، الضعيف، جيسال، سمعان، ميشال، الدوهي.

دائرة البقاع الأولى: جواد، النور، عبد عازي، حمزة، مهدي، عامر، النور، إيمان، أمهاني.

دائرة البقاع الثانية: بهاء، الدين، دلال، سالي، شامية، ياسين، ياسين، مكي، عوز، حاتم، الشن.

دائرة جبل لبنان الرابعة: نداء، صليبا، مارك، فو، شكري، حداد، صغود، أبو شل.

دائرة بيروت الأولى: بوليت، باغويان، زياد، عيسى، زياد، أبي، شاك، شال، فاخوري، دينا، اوهاني، سينا، زايو، بديت، شلمان، ماني، تاجان.

دائرة بيروت الثانية: ايمن، طارق، وضاح، الصافي، محمود، فقيه، نهاد، فوضه، رشدي، شاني، علي، عباس، سماح، خلواني، فاطمة، مشرف، هاني، الأحمدي.

دائرة الجنوب الثالثة: علي، مراد، إريس، جواد، خليل، زيب، محمد، سعدان، فراس، حمدان.

دائرة الجنوب الثانية: حاتم، خلوي، سارة، سويدان، محمد، أوب، علي، خليفة.

5:44 AM · Apr 17, 2022 · Twitter for Android

Img. 89



@shamaluna · Apr 17

معركة الجنوب، معركتنا جميعًا
#مواجهة_واحدة في كل لبنان

بيان تضامني
مع لائحة "معاً للتغيير"
في دائرة الجنوب الثانية

مما للتغيير

معركة الجنوب، معركتنا جميعاً. نستنكر بشكل قاطع الاعتداء المبرر من قبل عناصر حركة أمل على المشاركين في إطلاق لائحة المعارضة في دائرة صور الزهراني، ونصب الحواجز على الطريق العام ونشر المسلحين لترهيب الناس مذكين بأشجع مظاهر الحرب الأهلية. هذه الاعتداءات على حرية التجمع والعمل السياسي قبل أسابيع من تاريخ الانتخابات النيابية، لنذر بنية أحزاب السلطة وعلى رأسها حزب الله وحركة أمل منع أي نشاط انتخابي ديمقراطي في مناطق نفوذها.

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أخيراً، ندعو الأجهزة الأمنية والقضائية إلى محاسبة الفاعلين وتأمين سلامة المرشحين والناخبين خلال الحملة الانتخابية وفي يوم الاقتراع، كما نطلب من المؤسسات والهيئات الدولية المعنية بمراقبة الانتخابات الانتقال فوراً إلى الصنفد وفتح تحقيق في ملاسات هذه الحادثة.

دائرة الشمال الأولى: وهاء، جميل، لويس، الرامي، خالد، علوش، بدي، الأسعد، محمد، بدي، جنان، حمدان، إدغار، شاهر.

دائرة الشمال الثانية: رامي، فتح، كميل، موني، مالك، موني، جند ناصر، هند، النور، زكي، حسيك.

دائرة الشمال الثالثة: ليل، بو موسى، ربيع، الشاعر، سمعان، الشواني، جواد، فري، فري، ناصيف، كات، راض، طوق، فريدا، ساسين، شادن، الضعيف، جيسال، سمعان، ميشال، الدوهي.

دائرة البقاع الأولى: جواد، النور، عبد عازي، حمزة، مهدي، عامر، النور، إيمان، أمهاني.

دائرة البقاع الثانية: بهاء، الدين، دلال، سالي، شامية، ياسين، ياسين، مكي، عوز، حاتم، الشن.

دائرة جبل لبنان الرابعة: نداء، صليبا، مارك، فو، شكري، حداد، صغود، أبو شل.

دائرة بيروت الأولى: بوليت، باغويان، زياد، عيسى، زياد، أبي، شاك، شال، فاخوري، دينا، اوهاني، سينا، زايو، بديت، شلمان، ماني، تاجان.

دائرة بيروت الثانية: ايمن، طارق، وضاح، الصافي، محمود، فقيه، نهاد، فوضه، رشدي، شاني، علي، عباس، سماح، خلواني، فاطمة، مشرف، هاني، الأحمدي.

دائرة الجنوب الثالثة: علي، مراد، إريس، جواد، خليل، زيب، محمد، سعدان، فراس، حمدان.

دائرة الجنوب الثانية: حاتم، خلوي، سارة، سويدان، محمد، أوب، علي، خليفة.

1 22 43



Souheil Al Hajj
@Bagheera77

Replying to @shamaluna

#سهلنا_والجبل + #شمالنا + #معاً للتغيير وُلدنا أحراراً
وسنبقى ، نحن لسنا عبيداً لأمرء الحرب ولا للزعامات الفارغة

Img. 90

On April 18, Loyal Bou Moussa was hosted by Albert Kostanian as part of his Twenty30 show on LBCI. Her stance on Hezbollah triggered a series of negative reactions mainly by pro-Hezbollah users.



Img. 91



Img. 92

On April 21 and 22, the online conversation spiked as a result of two different events. The first one being a speech by Hezbollah's deputy-Secretary General [Naim Kassem](#), during which he accused Independence Movement MP Michel Moawad and Kataeb of being long affiliated with the establishment and not alternative forces.



Img. 93

This speech was soon picked up by pro-Kataeb and Moawad supporters to throw allegations of affiliation with Hezbollah on *Shamaluna* candidates.



Img. 94



Img. 95



Img. 96

The second event was Michel Douaihy, a candidate on the *Shamaluna* list, inviting Moawad and Marada Movement MP Tony Frangieh to a public debate. Candidate Gistelle Semaan and other alternative candidates joined the conversation, while online users had mixed reactions to the invitation.



Img. 97



Img. 98

On the night of April 21, Layal Bou Moussa and Riad Tawk were both hosted on MTV's *Sar El Wa2et* (It's About Time) talk show, for a short segment, during which Tawk stated: "We agree with Geagea on several points." This sentence alone was enough to trigger a wave of online attacks and a series of allegations of affiliation with LF by pro-Hezbollah, pro-FPM and pro-MMFD users.



Img. 99



Img. 100



Img. 101



Img. 102

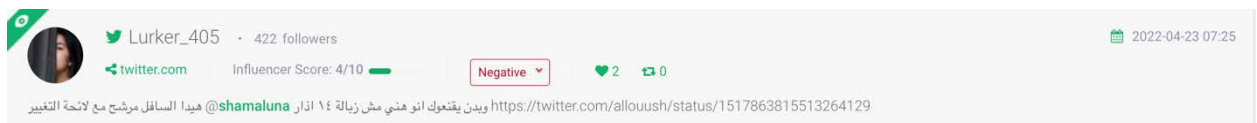
On April 23, the day of *Shamaluna's* public launch, the abovementioned interview of Tawk and Bou Moussa on *Sar el Wa2et* still dominated the online narrative with trolling, allegations, and othering from pro-Hezbollah, pro-FPM, pro-LF, and pro-MMFD individuals.



Img. 103



Img. 104



Img. 105



Img. 106



Img. 107



#قادرين | الياس خليل
@lyesbkhalil

More

مش صدفة يقول ميشال معوض لـ "شمالنا": "معركتنا
مش ضدك". twitter.com/GoddFella/stat...

Translate Tweet



0:19 49 views

This Tweet is from an account that no longer exists. [Learn more](#)

11:08 PM · May 2, 2022 · Twitter for iPhone

Img. 111

← inread



مينا
@meia_j_hk

...

"نحو الوطن" يلي مصنفين حالهم "تغييرين" هني ورا حملة
لائحة "شمالنا" التي تضم ليال بو موسى وهيدا القوتجي
يلي تفلسف مبارح بحلقة مارسال غانم.
#صار_الوقت تشوفوهم على حقيقتهم!
الرابط لصفحة نحو وطن 1
١/٣

Translate Tweet



1,586 views

0:05 / 0:06

11:53 AM · May 4, 2022 · Twitter for Android

14 Retweets 82 Likes Tip

Img. 112



Sally Abdallah
@SallyAb2750172

...

شمالنا هي مش أكثر من تجميع ناس معها مصري وعندها
ميول سياسية معينة مخبايتها بتظهرها بدون قصد بما يسمى
ب"زلة لسان" بس ما بدّ ينزلوا مع لوائح أحزاب السلطة لأنو
هلي الموضة نعمل حالنا معارضة.
[#قادرين_نغير](#)

[Translate Tweet](#)



Mery Joe @MeryjoMatar · May 3

أكثر سؤال عم ننسألو من الناس هو ليش ما تحالفنا بالشمال مع شمالنا.
هالفديو كافي ليوضح إنو لو تحالفنا معهن، كّنّا منكون عم نكذب على حالنا ونناق بكل
مشروعنا.
لا، نحن ما منتفق مع سمير جعجع، اللي ما عندو مشكلة يتهجروا شبابتا كرمال نعيش ب
\$٢٠٠ بالشهر، و لا، ما منتفق معه

[Show this thread](#)



10:01 PM · May 4, 2022 · Twitter for Android

Img. 113



Mery Joe
@MeryjoMatar

...

أكثر سؤال عم ننسألو من الناس هو ليش ما تحالفنا بالشمال
التالته مع شمالنا.
هالفديو كافي ليوضح إنو لو تحالفنا معهن، كّنّا منكون عم
نكذب على حالنا ونناق بكل مشروعنا.
لا، نحن ما منتفق مع سمير جعجع، اللي ما عندو مشكلة
يتهجروا شبابتا كرمال نعيش ب \$٢٠٠ بالشهر، و لا، ما منتفق
معه

[Translate Tweet](#)



10:26 PM · May 3, 2022 · Twitter for iPhone

60 Retweets 22 Quote Tweets 243 Likes

Img. 114



La Nation Libanaise
@NationLibanaise

Le #canadadry de l'opposition.
@shamaluna une coalition qui n'a ni queue ni tête, ni programme ni orientation, juste ce qu'il faut comme moyens financiers pour "organiser" une campagne électorale.

Voilà-t-il pas qu'ils aillent ratisser large [انتخابات_2022](#)
#MMFD #toufoukan 1/3

[Translate Tweet](#)



Mery Joe @MeryjoMatar · May 3

أكثر سؤال عم نسيألو من الناس هو ليش ما تحالفنا بالشمال الثالثة مع شمالنا. هالفيديو كافي ليوضح إنو لو تحالفنا معهن، كنا مكنون عم نكذب على حالنا وناق بك منشرونا.
لا، نحن ما متفق مع سمير جعجع، اللي ما عندو مشكلة يتهجروا شباينا كرمال نعيش ب \$200 بالشهر، و لا، ما متفق معه

[Show this thread](#)



12:34 PM · May 4, 2022 · Twitter for Android

4 Retweets 1 Quote Tweet 16 Likes

Img. 115

Lastly, from May 5 to 9, the peak in pro-LF users' activity was due to a video circulating about Semaan Bachawati, with allegations of affiliation with SSNP. This allegation was not exclusive to Bachawati but was backed up with documents and articles accusing Loyal Bou Moussa of being affiliated with SSNP as well. This section will be discussed further in the mis- and disinformation part as all videos and documents that were spread were actually fake.

< Tweet



Lara Hadad
@LH_88eph

مبارح بحلقة #صار_الوقت #رياض_طوق آخذ عخاطره من هجوم القوات عليه وشبهه هالشي وقت د. جعجع بعد خروجه من السجن طالب بمناظرة مع حسن، الفرق وقتها ما خونه الحكيم ورجع طالب بمناظرته اما انتم تخونونا وبدكن تكبو المنظومة برا ويتحسبوننا ممن ويتحالف "شمالنا" بترشحو سوري قومي على لانتحتن بالكوره

[Translate Tweet](#)



2:40 PM · May 4, 2022 · Twitter for Android

7 Retweets 1 Quote Tweet 28 Likes Tip

Img. 116



Img. 117



Img. 118



Img. 119



Img. 120

D- The Case of *Twahhadna Lil Taghiyr*, Mount Lebanon IV

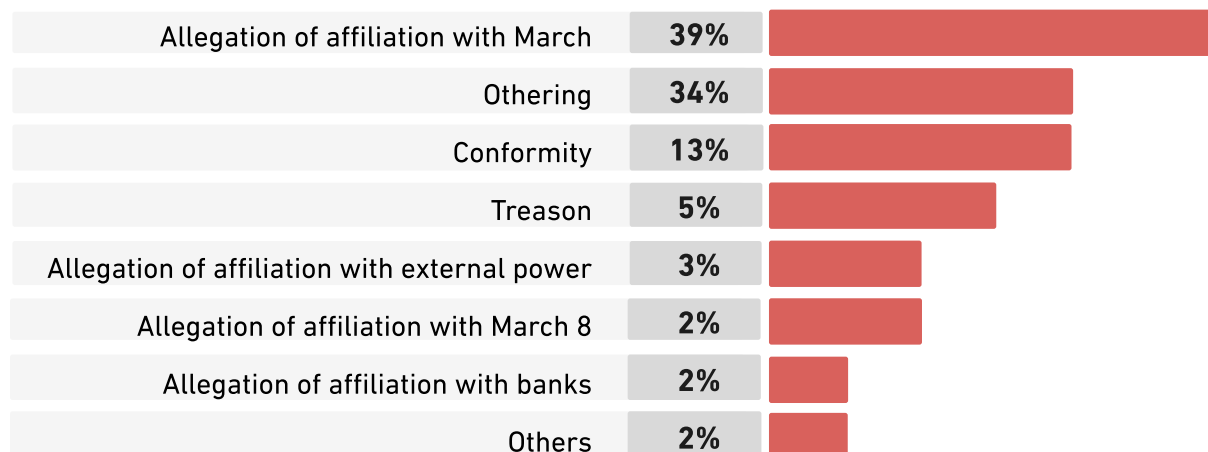
United for Change, *Twahhadna lil Taghiyr*, was composed of candidates from a variety of parties and backgrounds, mainly pulling from groups that took part in the protest movements of 2015 and 2019. Prominent candidates on the list included political activist Mark Daou, academic Najat Saliba, lawyer Halima Kaakour, and television host Ghada Eid. Daou and Saliba belong to the Taqaddom party founded in November 2019 by several civil society activists.

As shown by the data analyzed, most of the content was generated around Mark Daou, who managed to unseat veteran MP Talal Arslan, heir of a powerful dynasty in the district.

Daou was heavily accused of being actually supported by Walid Jumblatt's PSP. An accusation explained by academic Makram Rabah in an interview with Global Voices:¹¹ "Mark Daou's victory in Aley district, however, still constitutes a triumph for the October 17 uprising. (...) Druze citizens, including pro-Jumblatt ones, were heavily involved in the uprising," says Dr. Rabah, the most notable example being Alaa Abou Fakher, one of the uprising's first victims who lost his life when an army officer shot him dead as he attempted to block a road in the coastal town of Khaldeh, south of Beirut.

11- The fall of the house of arslan: How a Lebanese political newcomer ousted a dynasty. Global Voices. (2022). Retrieved from <https://globalvoices.org/2022/06/12/the-fall-of-the-house-of-arslan-how-a-lebanese-political-newcomer-ousted-a-dynasty/>

Certain of Jumblatt's victory, pro-Jumblatt voters may have also mobilized to oust Talal Arslan by voting for Mark Daou. "While I don't think that it was an orchestrated movement by the pro-Jumblatt camp, Jumblatt did not exactly frame the pro-reform opposition as enemies, which ultimately helped them campaign and reach voters," explains Dr. Rabah.



Others include electoral law disagreement, hate by proxy, misinformation

Fig.24- Word cloud for allegations of affiliation with March 14, aggregated through key words

يضيف ماء ذاكرتهم اساليب السلطة اشتراهن
نعم التغيير بس تغييرين بقوة شوية حمرة وبودرة. ، مارك ضومعكن
منظومة_الفساد أين له كل هذا المال شقفة اقطاعي زغير برنامج زعماء الطوائف خرق انتخابي
بتشتغل بالمحروقات عندو ٢٠ محطة بنزين سنحاسب الفاسد مارك تحميل الخسائر للمصارف
worse ouweit ممول من جماعات إسرائيلية وأمريكية أحزاب المنظومة أصحاب المؤثرات والكارتالات ش تغيير
ارباح اوجيرو وبنك انترا ومرفأ بيروت vote for the establishment, banks الكتياب والعونية والقوات
صاحب شركة محروقات يملك 20 محطة بيع اصول الدولة خدو فريش و صوتو لا مارك من موله ليتنقل بطائرة خاصة
بدولة الإمارات الديمقراطية انيك من السياسي تزويد وقود لقوى الأمن mauvais Exemple يصيرو بالاحزاب
لأصول الدولة Argent eshterakeye بتحالف مع فاسدة. يسكر محطات البنزين اصحاب المصارف
كلب سلطة لائحة تغيير زعماء الطوائف معوهلقد مصاري ضد عودة النازحين وليد جنبلاط
ناخب مافيا المصارف

Fig.25- Word cloud for allegations of conformity, aggregated through key words

39% of the content was around allegation of affiliation with March 14, 34% othering, 13% conformity, and 5% treason.

The highest percentage being the allegation of affiliation with March 14, is due, as mentioned in the introduction of this section, to the allegation against Mark Daou of receiving support from PSP, as well as Daou and Saliba's proximity with the Kataeb party.



مارك ضومعكن اشتراكي الهوى و الهوية تنسيق تحت الطاولة مع
جنبلاط
وضاح صادق مستقبلي الهوى من فنانز فؤاد السنيورة و نهجه
المالي
ملحم خلف املبي الهوى نبهني الهوية
نجاه صليب لالاند
بوليت ياغوبيان الله بيعرف راسها من اجريها
الباس جرادة أسدي الهوية و الانتماء
مبروك للتورة

2:06 AM · May 22, 2022 · Twitter for Android

3 Retweets 19 Likes

Img. 121



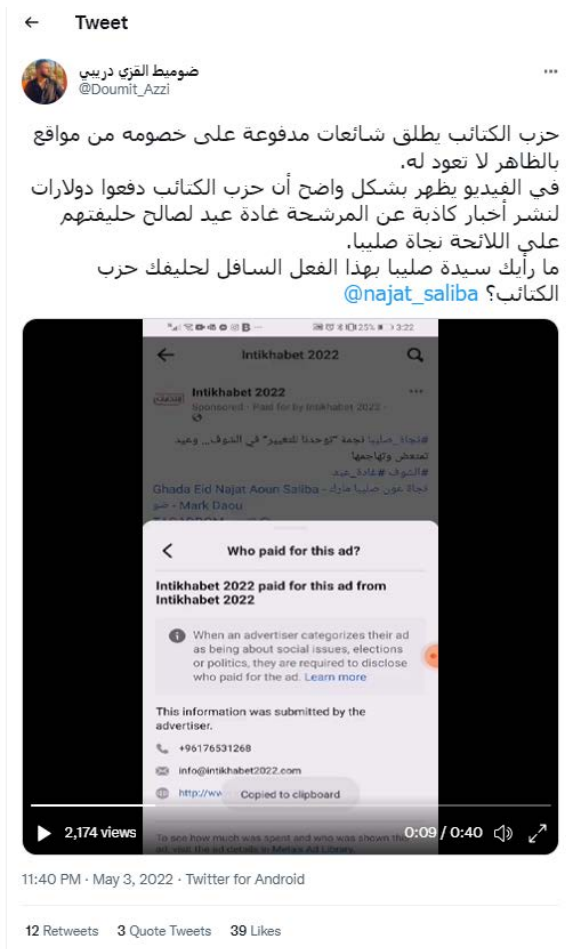
Hussein D
@DrHDarwish

مسرحية انتخاب النائب مارك ضومعكن من قبل الحزب الاشتراكي
اقل ما يمكن أن يُقال فيها انها عملية احتيال في وضح النهار.

12:36 PM · May 24, 2022 · Twitter for Android

Img. 122

The electoral list was directly accused of receiving funds from the Kataeb party, which allegedly paid for their digital campaign, as showcased in this [tweet below circulated by an influencer](#).



Img. 123

The othering theme was mainly targeting both Mark Daou and Najat Saliba, following their media appearances. For instance, following her appearance on MTV, Najat Saliba was the target of a trolling campaign, attacking her looks and her words in addition to general smearing.



Img. 124



Img. 125

The conformity theme was shaped mainly around Daou, as Daou's family owns gas stations across Mount Lebanon. It also included allegations of Daou's partnership with the Jumblatt-owned petrol company Cogeco as well as allegations against Daou of affiliation with the banking sector.



Users from different political affiliations were circulating content against the list, as seen in this figure below

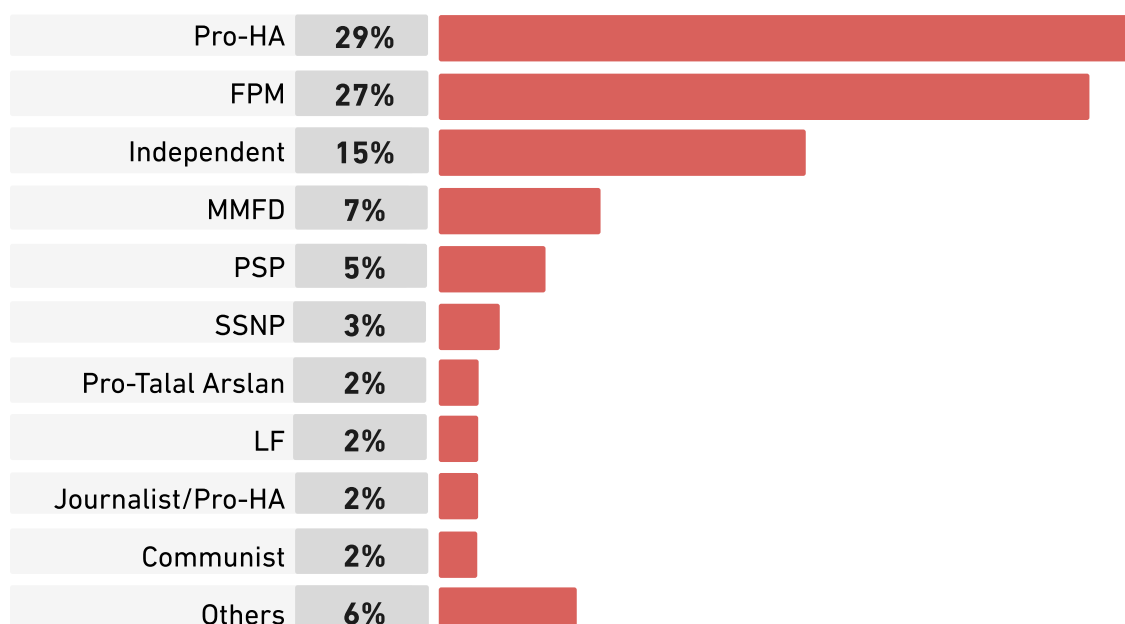
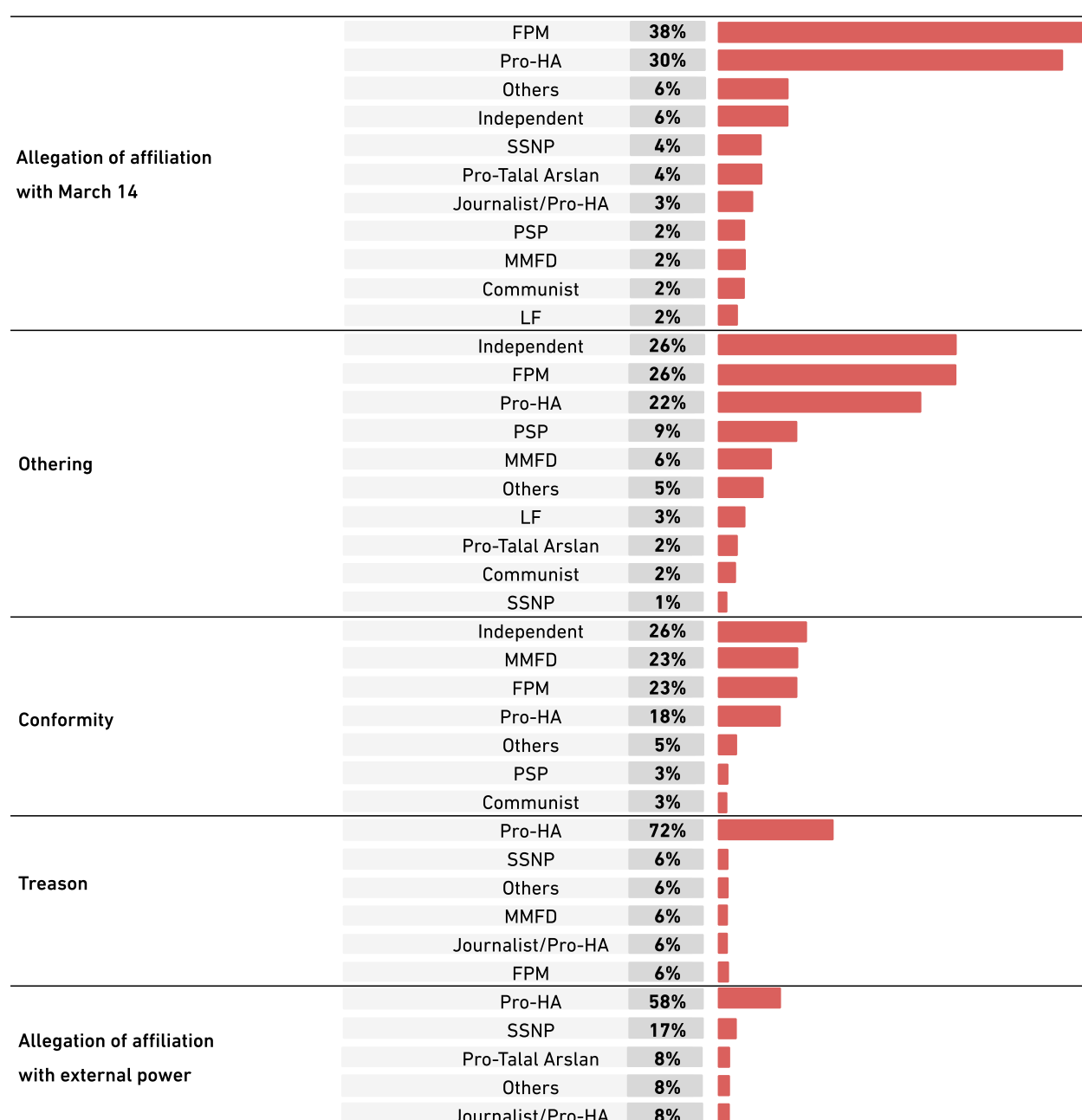


Fig. 26- Distribution of users per political affiliation

Positions which have less than 2% are grouped in others, including suspended accounts, inauthentic accounts, influencers, journalists, Journalist/Pro PSP, Media Platform, News, PNO, Pro Amal, Kataeb, and Pro Wiam Wahhab. 29% of the content analyzed was circulated by pro-Hezbollah users, while pro-FPM affiliated accounts accounted for 27% of the total users, and 15% of users being independent.

The pro-Hezbollah users' high presence is due to the fact that Daou is presumably supported by Jumblatt, in addition to accusations about his affiliation with external powers. As for FPM supporters' campaign against Daou, it refers to the civil war era, which opposed on several occasions Aoun and Jumblatt, the alleged supporter of Daou.

As seen below, pro-FPM users mainly circulated narratives of affiliation with March 14, specifically PSP, while independent users were leading the content of othering and conformity, and Pro-Hezbollah users circulated 72% of the treason narrative.



Allegation of affiliation with March 8	Independent	38%	
	PSP	25%	
	LF	25%	
	FPM	13%	
Allegation of affiliation with banks	MMFD	75%	
	Pro-HA	25%	
Others	Pro-HA	50%	
	Others	33%	
	Independent	17%	

Fig.27- Distribution of narratives on users' political affiliation



Img. 126



Img. 127

Politically affiliated users circulated these allegations by the mean of videos and media appearances. [In a thread composed of four videos](#), a pro-Hezbollah user with more than 10,000 followers, created a series of collages stating that he is bringing proof against Mark Daou. The thread is called Statement 38, Statement 39...

These allegations are as such: allegation of affiliation with March 14, allegation of affiliation with external powers and NGOs, questions about funding, etc. This also reinforced what was mentioned above in the narrative and the fact that 29% of the content analyzed was circulated by pro-Hezbollah users, mainly the one alleging affiliation with external powers.



Img. 128

[In a 30-second](#) video taken out of a long interview of Mark Daou with Ghadi Francis, a pro-Hezbollah user claimed that Mark Daou is affiliated with the Lebanese Forces. Mark Daou was clearly talking about how the alternative candidates in addition to the Lebanese Forces can affect the quorum of parliament sessions. Daoud never said "I am Lebanese Forces." On May 21, this out-of-context clip generated 73 retweets and 571 likes.



Img.129

Inauthentic behavior was led by pro-Hezbollah users, accounting for 48% of suspended, deleted accounts, accounts recently created, and accounts with less than 10 followers. Seconded by others which according to the previous graph are local news outlets, pro-Amal, Kataeb, and pro-Wiam Wahhab.

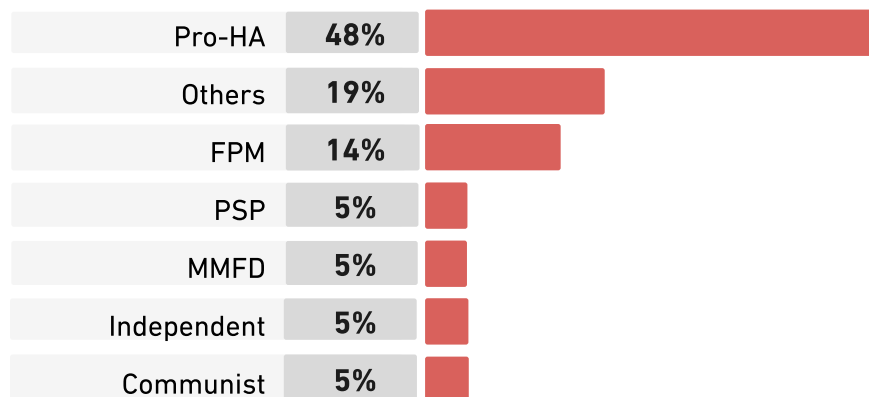


Fig.28- Distribution of inauthentic accounts per political affiliation

Others include: Journalist/Pro PSP, Local newspaper/Jabal, Media Platform, News, Popular Nasserist Organization, Pro-Amal, Kataeb, Pro-Wiam Wahhab.

As for influential accounts, as seen below, they mirror the findings in the distribution of users per political affiliation. With 35% being pro-FPM, 24% pro-Hezbollah and 11% being independent.

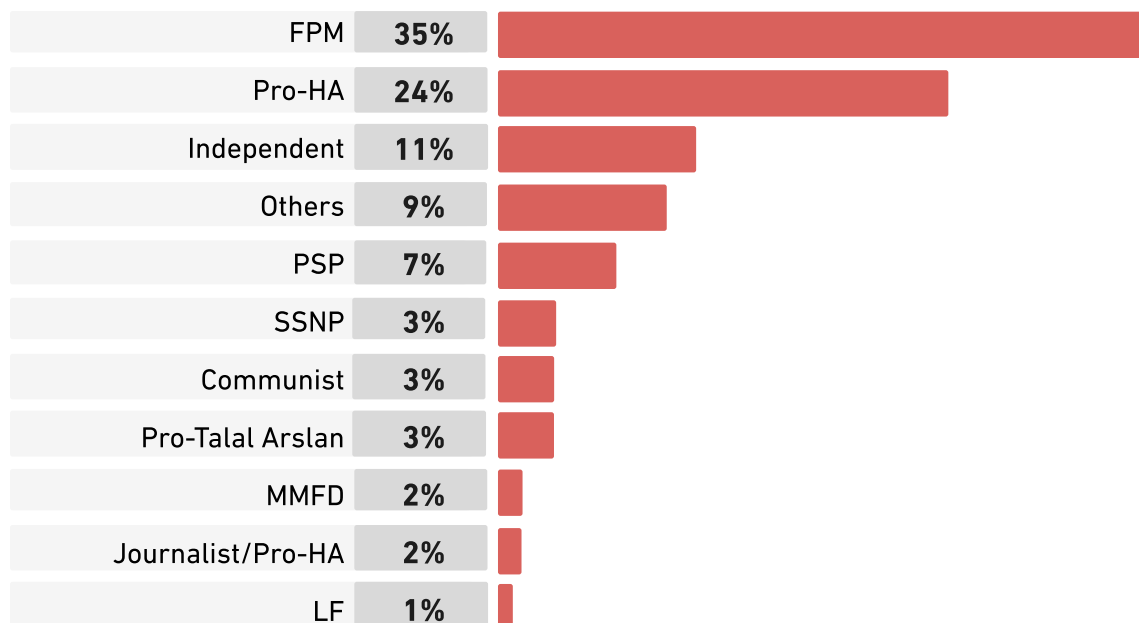


Fig.29- Distribution of accounts with large following per political affiliation

Others include: Journalist/Pro PSP, Media Platform, News, Popular Nasserist Organization, Pro Amal, Kataeb, Pro Wiam Wahhab

Timestamp

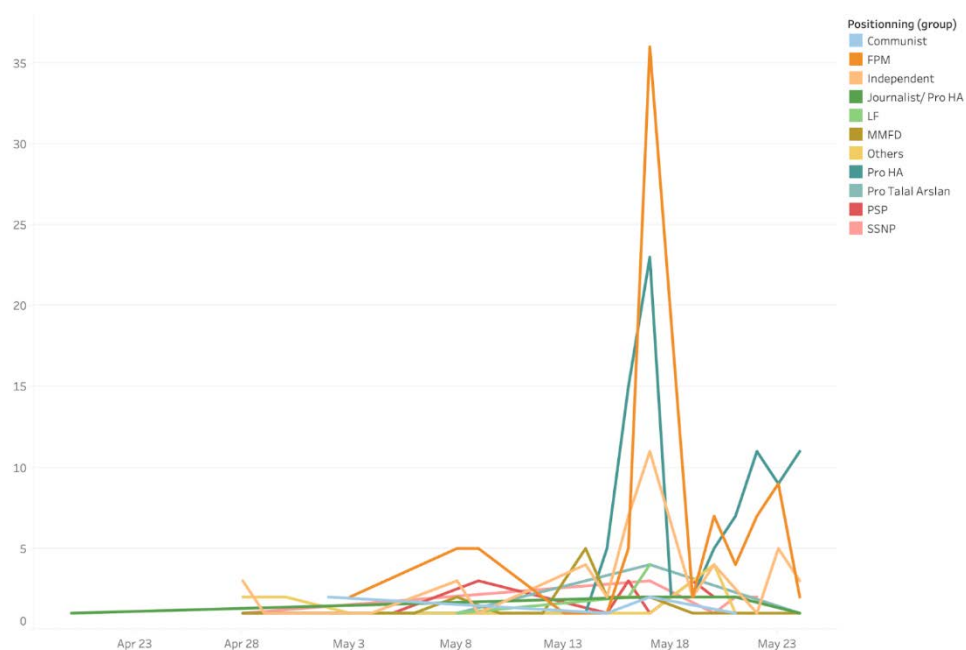


Fig.30- Timestamp online/offline events for Twahhadna lil Taghyir

On April 10, Mark Daou was hosted by Al Mayadeen TV, and during his interview, he was asked by Ghassan Saoud, a pro-FPM journalist, about his previous comments on Ghada Eid. Daou's response triggered a series of comments by mainly pro-Hezbollah and pro-FPM users.



Img. 130



Img. 131



Img. 132



Img. 133

On April 18, the *Twahhadana lil Taghyir* electoral list was publicly [launched](#), triggering a series of online reactions.



Img. 134



Img. 135



Img. 136

On the night of April 18, Mark Daou and Najat Saliba were hosted by *Sar El Wa2et* on MTV. Their media appearance triggered negative reactions such as allegations of corruption, supporting refugees, allegations of support from PSP, and trolling Saliba's looks.



Img. 137



Img. 138



Img. 139

On April 28, Mark Daou made a media appearance on *Btefroq 3a Watan*, on Al Jadeed TV. His appearance triggered reactions of trolling, warning, allegations of federalism, and corruption.



Img. 140



Img. 141



Img. 142



Mohamad Ali
@Mohamad_ali_moh

...

Replying to @ALJADEEDNEWS and @samarabukhalil

ضو وقوى التغيير ؟ اسمها لائحة "توحدنا للتغيير". ضو انضم
لللائحة واحد من اصل ١٣ مرشح. مين ضو يعني ؟ شو تجار يا
جديد.

12:16 PM · Apr 28, 2022 · Twitter for Android

Img. 143

On May 8, on the diaspora election day, candidates from this list, including Daou, Saliba, Kaakour, and Eid visited polling stations in the UAE. Photos of these candidates spiked a series of allegations of corruption, conformity, and accusations of breaking the electoral law, in addition to a photo of Daou with PSP volunteers, reaffirming the allegations of support from PSP to Daou.



Tweet



Roro
@Roro17485907

...

Replying to @LauryHaytayan

Madame laury que fais mr mark daou ds la vie pour
avoir autant d'argent pour voyager ds les 4 coins du
monde connaissant les prix du ticket ainsi que Mme
aoun ? Si un candidat a fait la même chose qu'elle
sera ta réaction vs donnez le mauvais exemple du
sawra L'argent fait tout

[Translate Tweet](#)

7:17 PM · May 8, 2022 from Lebanon · Twitter for Android

Img. 144

DANZZ
@Dany_Freha

حليمة فغفور مرشحة لائحة توحدنا للتغيير بـ 40 ألف صوت
وعاليه عم تحكي العالم وتحتهم لاعطاء اصواتن اليست
هذه مخالفة واضحة
يرجى التحقق من الموضوع
@EUinLebanon
@eueomlebanon22
@LADELEB
@SCE_Leb
@EUAmbLebanon
@HolvenyiGyorgy
@RonyAlAssaad
@UNDP_Lebanon
@boell_meo

Translate Tweet



12:22 PM · May 8, 2022 · Twitter Web App

44 Retweets 1 Quote Tweet 74 Likes Tip

Img. 145

Roula
@roulash9

هيدا الشب مقبول حد القلم؟
خرق انتخابي من قبل المرشح مارك صو!
#انتخابات_المغتربين
#انتخابات_لبنان

Translate Tweet



12:19 PM · May 8, 2022 · Twitter for Android

6 Retweets 1 Quote Tweet 18 Likes Tip

Img. 146



Img. 147

On April 14, pro-Hezbollah users posted a [one minute video](#) taken out of a long interview on Al Jadeed. This video specifically focused on the position of Mark Daou regarding the Syrian regime and sparked negative reactions from pro-Hezbollah users. It is important to note that these users published a disinformation-focused video about Daou, which will be discussed later.



Img. 148



Img. 149

Lastly, on May 14, one day prior to the elections and during the electoral silence period, MMFD published a video attacking Mark Daou with allegations of affiliations with the banking sector.



Img. 150

This video triggered a lot of criticism, be it against MMFD for breaking the electoral silence period for campaigning one day prior to the elections or against Daou himself.



Img. 151



Img. 152



Img. 153

E- The Case of *Beirut Al Taghyir*, Beirut II

Beirut al Taghyir is one of the few lists that managed to unite different opposition groups, including the National Bloc, Tahalof Watani, the Popular Observatory of Corruption, and the Mada Network of secular students' clubs among others. Prominent candidates on the list included political activist Ibrahim Mneimneh, the former head of the Beirut Bar Association Melhem Khalaf, and Waddah Sadek, a communication strategist and businessman.

In the case *Beirut al Taghyir*, in Beirut's second district, keywords used to scrape the data resulted in insufficient number of data entries, preventing a holistic analysis. The team had to resort to a manual method to retrieve data, mainly related to media appearances and online reactions, hence the analysis of this electoral list being limited to a timestamp analysis.

As shown by the data analyzed, most of the content was generated around Waddah Sadek being affiliated with former Prime Minister Saad Hariri and supported by former US State Department official David Schenker, Melhem Khalaf's proximity with the establishment and specifically Speaker Nabih Berri, and content generated after candidates from the list showed support for civil marriage.

Sheikh Hassan Merheb, deputy inspector general of Dar al Fatwa, the highest Sunni authority in Lebanon, violently attacked the three new Sunni MPs in Beirut II and the Shouf, respectively Ibrahim Mneimneh, Waddah Sadek, and Halima Kaakour. During their participation in Marcel Ghanem's talk show on MTV, they raised their hands to mark their approval when they were asked about civil marriage, which is still not authorized in Lebanon.¹²

The following section tackles the online reactions to offline events related to *Beirut al Taghyir*

Timestamp

On May 2, a screenshot from a Zoom meeting with former US Undersecretary of State David Shencker and Waddah Sadek, a candidate on *Beirut al Taghyir* list in Beirut II, was circulating among independents and pro-Hezbollah individuals. Trolling and allegations of affiliation with an external power were dominating the conversation.

12- [Quand le mariage civil devient une arme contre les députés de la contestation](#)



Img. 154



Img. 155

On May 4, *Beirut Madinati*, an alternative electoral list which was running in both Beirut I and II, decided to withdraw from the race in Beirut II and invited its supporters to vote for *Beirut al Taghyir*. This development triggered a series of both negative and positive reactions. Among the negatives are allegations of conformity to discredit the *Beirut al Taghyir* list.



Img. 156



Img. 157



Img. 158

On May 5, the former head of the Beirut Bar Association Melhem Khalaf, a candidate on *Beirut al Taghyir* list, was hosted on the *Btefroq 3a Watan* show on Al Jadeed, where he was asked about his relationship with Speaker of Parliament and Amal Movement leader Nabih Berri. Soon, his answer was picked up by individuals from different political standpoints, with a trolling [video](#).

The allegation of Khalaf having a special relationship with Berri was constantly circulating, especially after the 2019 Beirut Bar Association election.



Img. 159



Img. 160

From May 9 to 13, pro-MMFD individuals were targeting Khalaf and Sadek with allegations of intending to sell state assets as part of the financial recovery plan proposed by banks.



Img. 161



Img. 162



Img. 163



#قادرين | الياس خليل
@lyesbkhalil

عن اي "معارضة موحدة" نتكلم؟

٣ مرشحين عنفس اللايحة #بيروت_التغيير ب
#بيروت_الثانية. اتنين مع بيع املاك الشعب ليعيدوا إنتاج
سلطة نظام طوائف جديد، و واحد ضد.

طيب عأي أساس لازم نقترح للوائح اعضائها مختلفين
جذرياً عالرؤية المالية/الاقتصادية ببلد منهار وشعبه يهاجر؟!
#انتخابات_2022

Translate Tweet



8:00 PM · May 12, 2022 · Twitter for iPhone

19 Retweets 7 Quote Tweets 69 Likes

Img. 164



إحمد العطار
@ahmad_attar_

بيروت تقاوم اختارت التحالف مع ملحم خلف ووضّاح، مع من
يريد بيع املاك الدولة، بدل التحالف مع مواطنون
يجب أن تسال بيروت تقاوم عن أولوياتها. #قادرين
#بيروت_التغيير

Translate Tweet

رانيا محيو الخليلي @RaniaMehioKH · May 12

نبذة عن لائحة #بيروت_التغيير
عن رئيسها نقيب المحامين ملحم خلف
وأحد المرشحين فيها عن المقعد السنّي وضاح الصادق

مجموعات تعارضة يُقترح أنها

من السلطة السياسية قبلها بعدة
كانت شركة الصادق للإعلاميات،
«ITIS» منظم بالتعاون مع جمعية
«Bene» حفل رأس السنة في وسط
بيروت يومها تهاجست الجمعية
التي ترأسها إحدى المقربين من
الرئيس سعد الحريري مليون دولار
من بلدية بيروت، والتبرعت فصحبة
حول الموضوع لما تضمنه من هدر
لأموال سكان العاصمة نحو 400
الف دولار من هذه الأموال ذهبت إلى
شركة الصادق وزميله عزت فريطم
(مستقل) قبل ذلك بهجمات تيار
الاستقلال، قبل ذلك بهجمات تيار
كلف الحريري والصادق وفريطم
تنظيم حفل رأس السنة (2018) في
ساعة مجلس النواب في أيار 2017،
نقلت شركة «Bene» بالتعاون مع
الصادق وفريطم ويدعم مالي من
بلدية بيروت ووزارة الحريري،
عرضاً لسيارات الفورمولا على
واجهة بيروت البحرية المصطنع
يخبر أن الصادق استفاد من
السلطة السياسية الحاكمة وأموال
الناس التي تصرف على مهرجانات
سياسية ونشاطات ترفيهية بغية
إيجار مسوغ قانوني لهدر الأموال.

مجموعات تعارضة يُقترح أنها
تعمل اجندات تعريبية وخطاباً
تقدمياً على مستوى الحريات
الحرية.
• رداً على سؤال في مقابلة صحافية
عما إذا كان سيصوّت لليمه بري
للونى رئاسة مجلس النواب مرة
جديدة، أجاب نقيب المحامين السابق
المرشح الحالي على لائحة «بيروت
التغيير» ملحم خلف: «في القيد
أنا مع التغيير. لكل حادث حديث»
إجابة اعتبرها كثيرون غير حاسمة من
«تغيير» بواجهة السلطة.
• في 29 آذار، غرد المرشح على لائحة
«بيروت التغيير» وضاح الصادق
«اليمين» شعباً سلطة ومعارضة»
بما يحتاج إلى حكم دكتاتوري.
وفي قانون الثاني 2020، بعد ليلة
المصارف الشهيرة في المحر، هاجم
الصادق المخططين ووصفهم
بالقناطين والمندسين في 10 كانون
الأول 2019، نزلت مجموعة «أنا
خط أحمر» بقيادة الصادق نشاطاً
لحشد شركات القطاع الخاص على
الحصص الخيرية، بحجة أن
أموال هذا القطاع لتدفقة على
شكل ضرائب للدولة لتم سرقتها

الاقتصاد بشكل كلي، وخطورته
الظري أنه يتم بهزل من أي رؤية
للاقتصاد الوطني.
• في تغريدة للمرشحة عن لائحة
«لوطني» سيمثيا زرايبر تعود إلى
عام 2016، ونشرها ناشطون قبل
أسابيع، دعت زرايبر إلى «إعادة
الشعب السوري شو ما كان جنسه
أو نوعه ما إجا من إلا كبتى على
أيمان».
حائزة بيروت الثانية
• في فيديو مسجل يقول رئيس
حركة «مواطنون ومواطنات» شربل
حماس: «قبل 48 ساعة من تسجيل
النوائح، وصلنا إلى اتفاق مع لائحة
«بيروت نقاوم» وبدأية تنسيق مع
«بيروت مدينتي» تدخلت بولا
يعقوبيان وملحم خلف ومعهما
وضاح الصادق بتمويل سني من
منصة «قلنا إرادة» وفرطوا مسعى
الانتقاء».
• قبل انسحابها من الاستحقاق
الانتخابي، وجهت المرشحة عن
لائحة «بيروت مدينتي» نافذة
خليل حملات إقصاء بسبب هوية
أصلها الجندرية التصويب التي من

7:11 AM · May 13, 2022 from Lebanon · Twitter for iPhone

2 Retweets 1 Quote Tweet 23 Likes

Img. 165

On May 10, another candidate on the list, Ibrahim Mneimneh, was hosted on the Twenty30 show with Albert Kostanian, where he addressed Beirut voters warning them of the dangers of not voting. His statement was in response to the Future Movement's election boycott campaign. Soon, pro-Future Movement users countered his statement, reaffirming their support to former Prime Minister Saad Hariri by boycotting the polls.



Img. 166



Img. 167



Img. 168

On May 18, allegations of affiliation with Hariri and allegations of conformity, mainly corruption, were spread by different users from different political affiliations against *Beirut al Taghyir* candidates.



Img. 169



Img. 170



Img. 171



Img. 172

On May 21, in his Friday sermon, Sunni cleric Sheikh Hassan Merheb incited violence against alternative MPs who endorsed civil marriage. This soon sparked online controversy around newly elected MPs on the *Beirut al Taghyir* list.



Img. 173



Img. 174



Img. 175



Img. 176

VI- Mis- and Disinformation in the 2022 Election

Social media mis- and disinformation is a significant and rampant global problem. In Lebanon specifically, activists feared the political establishment will spread disinformation to retain power, in a country where the convoluted media landscape is already rife with political agendas.

While engagement on social media platforms is used in certain cases to inform, support, organize, and mobilize, it is often used as a tool for propaganda, surveillance, harassment, and incitement of violence or hate speech. It is undeniable that social media platforms reached new audiences and equipped them with knowledge, space, and tools for emergence, but also these spaces were also used as echo chambers to reinforce and reaffirm existing power relations.¹³

This section highlights how social media platforms were used intentionally to disinform public opinion about alternative candidates. The aim was to discredit alternative candidates, break social trust, breed apathy, raise tensions, and incite hate speech and violence.

During the pre- and post-election period, rumors and deliberate lies were circulated heavily, allowing both new and old disinformation to spread quickly, and without the same geographic, regulatory, and moral constraints imposed by offline traditional media and face-to-face interactions.¹⁴

Disinformation and electronic armies have been deployed by the Lebanese ruling class on several occasions, and their implications in the elections is not a new phenomenon. In an analysis written by [Justin Salhani for the New Arab](#), Dr. Zahera Harb, Director of the International Journalism and Media and Globalization programmes at City University of London, said that “During the October 2019 protests and then later the Beirut explosion in August 2020, we saw an expansion and an influx in the amount of disinformation, a few weeks into the protests of October 2019, the ruling class was trying to delegitimize what people on the streets were doing. We started hearing stories about collaboration with foreign governments, money coming in, the demonisation of anything that is referenced to as a non-government organization and putting them all in one basket.”

13- Larry Diamond, 'Liberation technologies', *Journal of Democracy* 21, 3 (2010), pp. 69–83; Wilberforce S. Dzisah, 'Social media and elections in Ghana: Enhancing democratic participation', *African Journalism Studies* 39, 1, 27–47; Elena Gadjanova, Gabrielle Lynch, Jason Reifler and Ghadaifi Saibu, 'Social media, cyber battallions and political mobilization in Ghana', 2019, Retrieved from https://www.elenagadjanova.com/uploads/2/1/3/8/21385412/social_media_cyber_battalions_and_political_mobilisation_in_ghana_report_final.pdf

14- Michelle Osborn, 'Fuelling the flames: Rumour and politics in Kibera', *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 2, 2 (2008), pp. 315–327; Gadjanova et al., 'Social media'; Cheeseman et al., 'Social Media Disruption'.

The same tactics, techniques, and tools were deployed to delegitimize, discredit, and demonize alternative candidates in an attempt to disorient public opinion as well as maintain and display power. Below are some flagrant examples of videos, photos, and statements with high engagement.

A- Videos

Videos were a powerful support for mis- and disinformation, be it edited videos, videos taken out of context or twisted and reshaped narratives through videos.

[In this video](#), allegations of affiliation with SSNP were heavily circulating by pro-LF users against Semaan Bachawati, although Bachawati published on his channel a [video](#) to deny these accusations. Pro-LF users continued to circulate the fake video. Allegations of affiliation with SSNP were orchestrated by pro-LF users, and this was also highlighted with the fake memo against Loyal Bou Moussa, previously mentioned.



Img. 177



Img. 178



Img. 179



Img. 180



Img. 181

Pro-Marada supporters shared a picture where *Shamaluna* candidate Gistelle Semaan is inviting MP Tony Frangieh for an open debate. This photo was used to launch an orchestrated attack on Semaan by pro-Marada users. Semaan went [on an interview with Michelle Tuéni](#) to respond to the campaign. The photo was deleted by the source.

بيان تضامني

9/5/2022

يتعرض مرشحو شمالنا - بمن فيهم رياض طوق، قزحيا ساسين، سيمون بشواتي، فدوى كلاب، ليال بو موسى وريبع الشاعر- منذ انخراطهم في المنافسة البرلمانية، إلى هجمات واقتراءات من كل أطراف المنظومة. واليوم تتعرض المرشحة جيسال سمعان إلى حملة ممنهجة مشابهة لسابقاتها.

إن هذا الهجوم يدل على الانفلاس السياسي للمنظومة ونهجها الذي يرفض المنافسة الديمقراطية ويلجأ بلغة الانحطاط الاخلاقي والذكورية وانعدام الحجة إلى تزوين كل من يجزؤ على التعبير عن رأيه الحر.

إن ائتلاف الأقضية الأربعة - شمالنا، يدعو الجميع إلى الالتزام بأخلاقيات المعركة السياسية، ومواجهة مرشحي شمالنا بالسياسة والمنافسة الشريفة، خاصة أن جميع مرشحيه قد عبروا عن جهوزيتهم للمناظرات العلنية.

إن شمالنا لن ينحز إلى نهج المنظومة السائد، إيماناً منه بنهجه السياسي الجديد القائم على حق جميع الناس بالانخراط في الحياة السياسية الشريفة.

shamaluna.lb · Following

Lebanon لبنان

بيان تضامني مع مرشحي شمالنا

خمسواً جيسال سمعان، في رجة الحملة التي يتعرضون لها

#شمالنا_الوطنية

Edited · 13w See translation

ghinwaghantouss 🇲🇵🇲🇵

13w Reply

♥️ 💬 🚩

Liked by sam.elkhoury and 341 others

MAY 9

Img. 182

Mansour Bou Dagher @daghermansour · May 2

18 أو 21؟
يسار أو يمين؟
8 أو 14...؟

ووقت تسألوا بنت زغرنا عن الكبة النّبة والكبة بالصينيّة احذروا شو الجواب من مرشحة **#الكتلة_الوطنية** بدائرة الشمال 3 - قضاء زغرنا **جيسال ريمون سمعان**

Translate Tweet

National Bloc @nationalbloc.lb · May 2

"وحدة من تنين"، بين المزج والجذّ، تعرّفوا على جيسال سمعان، مرشّحة **#الكتلة_الوطنية** في دائرة الشمال 3 - قضاء زغرنا.

#واجه_حاسب_صوت
@GistelleSemaan

8
أو
14

0:59 163 views

Img. 183



Img. 184

[In another video](#), a voice-note of an unknown person claimed that South III candidate Ali Mourad is receiving funds from former Prime Minister Fouad Siniora. The association with Siniora, a controversial figure, and questioning over funding were both circulated among pro-Hezbollah users.



Img. 185



Img. 186

B- Photos

A photo collage was taken from Jad Ghosn's public Instagram account from his days as a television reporter. A pro-LF user used these photos to circulate allegations of Ghosn's affiliation with the Syrian regime and March 8. These photos published on May 11, were retweeted 111 times and liked 557 times. This narrative by pro-LF users aimed to discredit Ghosn and warn against voting for him.



Img. 187



Img. 188

Allegations of treason were widespread when considering Firas Hamdan's case. This allegation was mainly circulated by pro-Hezbollah users in South III. This allegation was supported by a photoshopped image of Hamdan on an Israeli general's body and was heavily circulated and shared.



Img. 189



Img. 190



Img. 191

Following his win, Hamdan appeared on Al Jadeed where he jokingly said: “You are talking to an Israeli general now.”

فراس حمدان متهماً لـ "الجديد": من يتحدث معك الآن "جنرال
اسرائيلي" وليس نائباً في البرلمان وما تعرضنا له عملية تصفية
معنوية استطعنا صدها في صناديق الاقتراع

مخيمات | الأربعاء 18 أيار 2022 11:33

203 مشاهدة



Img. 192

Allegations of affiliation with SSNP against Mark Daou were circulated by pro-PSP supporters through an image of Daou with the SSNP logo.



Img. 193



Img. 194

Allegations of affiliation with SSNP against Layal Bou Moussa started on May 6, with this photo of a memo allegedly circulated by SSNP. The memo was soon debunked as fake news.



Img. 195



Img. 198

C- Statement of Wrong Facts and Events

Following a fake news spread by [VDL News about former minister and Hezbollah-ally Wiam Wahhab's support to Mark Daou](#), Al Nadim News recirculated this fake news [in this article](#). However, it did not get significant traction and engagement among users.



Img. 199

وهاب يدخل الى عاليه لدعم مارك ضو في وجه حليفه
ارسلان!
vdlnews.com/news/193301
#عاجل



12:22 AM - Apr 30, 2022 - Twitter Web App

1 Retweet

Img. 200

Fake news about cases of corruption among *Shamaluna* candidates was [published](#) by some news outlets and picked up by pro-LF users.

Elias Bejjani
@phoeniciaelias

خاص بالوثيقة: فاسدون على لائحتي "سهلنا والجيل"
و"شمالنا"! هل تبديل مواقف الوزراء من "الصندوق" بعد الانتخابات؟!
مفاجأة "شيعية" بانتخابات المغتربين الأحد؟
سلامة والتدقيق في حساباته... ابحتوا عن المكان الصح
معركة التغيير بوجه "الحزب" بدأت
via eliasbejjaninews.com/archives/10854...
@phoeniciaelias

Translate Tweet



eliasbejjaninews.com

نشرة أخبار المنسقية العامة للمؤسسات اللبنانية الكندية باللغة العربية لיום 08 أيار / 2022/ جمع وأعداد...
نشرة أخبار المنسقية العامة للمؤسسات اللبنانية الكندية باللغة العربية لיום 08 أيار / 2022/ جمع وأعداد الياس
بجاني اضبط هنا لقراءة نشرة أخبار العامة المفصلة، اللبنانية والعربية لיום 08 أيار / 2022/ عناوين...

1:17 AM - May 8, 2022 - Twitter Web App

Img. 201

خاص بالوثيقة: فاسدون على لائحتي "سهلنا" والجبل "و"شمالنا!"

May 7, 2022 12:45 PM



في معلومات خاصة بموقع IMLebanon أن رئيس لائحة "سهلنا والجبل" في البقاع الغربي- راشيا ياسين ياسين المنادي بالثورة والتغيير ومحاربة الفساد سبق وحُكم عليه في الولايات المتحدة مع شقيقه بجرم التهريب الضريبي ما اضطره إلى دفع غرامة بقيمة 3 مليون دولار، إضافة إلى أنه كان ملاحقاً أيضاً بجرائم تمويل منظمات إرهابية.

Img. 202



Nathalie

@Nathali25437459

...

IMLebanon | خاص بالوثيقة: فاسدون على لائحتي "سهلنا" والجبل "و"شمالنا!"

[Translate Tweet](#)



imlebanon.org

! "خاص بالوثيقة: فاسدون على لائحتي "سهلنا والجبل" و"شمالنا" | IMLebanon

في معلومات خاصة بموقع IMLebanon أن رئيس لائحة "سهلنا والجبل" في البقاع الغربي- راشيا ياسين ياسين المنادي بالثورة والتغيير ومحاربة الفساد سبق وحُكم عليه في الولايات المتحدة مع شقيقه بجرم التهريب...

9:32 PM · May 7, 2022 · Twitter for iPhone

Img. 203



Img. 204

In this article, allegations of a meeting with Hezbollah were waged against *Shamaluna* candidates. The allegations of affiliation with Hezbollah were soon reinforced by a [second article](#). These allegations were picked up by pro-LF users to attack *Shamaluna*.



Img. 205



مرشح شمالنا يستثني لائحة "الحزب"!

في لبنان · 2022-04-25 · 338 قراءة

Img. 206



Img. 207



Img. 208

On May 13, [VDL News published](#) a brief in which Mneimneh was accused of promoting homosexuality, this news was soon reshared in an [article](#) by Nabd news, a video was circulated via WhatsApp among Beirut II residents.





Img. 209

بالفيديو- ابراهيم منمينة يدعم المثلية الجنسية... مرشح عن الطائفة ضد مبادئها وعقائدها؟

الجمعة 13 مايو / أيار 2022



لم تمر المقابلة التي أجراها المرشح في لائحة بيروت التغيير في دائرة بيروت الثانية إبراهيم منمينة عبر شاشة MTV مرور الكرام، خاصة بعد الإجابة التي أطلقها حول المثلية الجنسية

وفي التفاصيل، فإن منمينة شارك في برنامج اسمه "برنامجك"، طرح خلالها سؤال عليه وكان: "هل أنت مع الغاء جميع قوانين التي تجرم المثلية الجنسية"، والإجابة كانت ما شكل صدمة حقيقية لدى السنة في بيروت، فهو قال بوضوح أنه موافق كليا

Img. 210

Following this article which reported on an MTV appearance of Meinmeih, a series of WhatsApp video collage started circulating on users level, mixing trolling, Mneimeih's intervention.

Retrospectively, the accusation of promoting homosexuality was spreading following the launching of electoral lists in Beirut II, where candidates expressed their views on secularism, civil marriage and equality, some users mixed all these topics together to accuse candidates of promoting homosexuality though secularism, also with a series of video collage circulating via whatsapp.



Img. 211

On May 14, [Diasporaon website](#) published an article stating that Beirut II candidate Waddah Saddek was using Beirutis' stolen funds to run for elections.



Img. 212

On May 18, another news platform, [Tyrosc.com](https://tyrosc.com), published an article about a meeting held between Nabih Berri and candidate Melhem Khalaf to conclude a deal about the upcoming election of the Parliament deputy-speaker.



Img. 213

VI. Archetypes of Polarization

The issue of polarization online has been gaining attention in recent years amid the changing political landscapes of many parts of the world. In Lebanon, several studies observed the existence of echo chambers in the digital realm, instigating public opinion shaping. Here, the opinion model is shaped by the political affiliation of users.

This section of the report will look into identity-based polarization better called as the affective polarization. Meaning the increasing dislike, distrust, and animosity towards those from other parties or groups; more specifically, from political party supporters vis-à-vis alternative candidates. As defined by Build Up, a social enterprise working at the intersection of peacebuilding and technology, “Affective polarization is a dynamic process intertwined with conflict escalation, by which a self-reinforcing spiral cooperates to separate ideologies or identity groups into increasingly distanced and aggregated adversaries.”¹⁵

Archetypes are models or patterns of behavior, images, or characters that serve as helpful tools to conceive and build a certain narrative.

This section will explore affective polarization, as an offline dynamic, and demonstrate how it found new roots online. As conflict dynamics intersect with the architecture and affordances of social media platforms, recurring patterns and existing fault lines arise to be exacerbated and amplified with the tripartite propellants of identity construction, incentives, and scaled discourse that social media provides.¹⁶

From 2005, the date that instigated the deep political division from which emerged the March 8 and March 14 coalitions, to October 2019, the popular uprising, three main pillars are dividing the country.

One being the rally behind the two coalitions, pro-March 8 and pro-March 14 and subsequently, the second being positioning towards Hezbollah. The third being the positioning towards the popular uprising (pro-establishment v. pro-*Thawra*), i.e., alternative parties.

For the sake of research, themes enlisted below, which were highlighted across all case studies, were grouped under these pillars. These themes created polarized conversations circulated by polarized crowds with herd behavior. These themes are omnipresent in all case studies; hence the analysis is inclusive of regions, except some specificities related to the context.

1- 2005 division: allegations of affiliation with March 8, allegations of affiliation with March 14 and of their respective entities

2- October 2019: Othering, conformity, affiliation with banks, hate by proxy, ties with Western powers

3- Positioning vis-a-vis Israel and Hezbollah: Treason

15- Build Up. (2022). Archetypes of polarization on social media. Medium. Retrieved from <https://howtobuildup.medium.com/archetypes-of-polarization-on-social-media-d56d4374fb25>

16- Idem

As shown by data, in South III, themes of othering, treason, and allegations of affiliation with March 14 were generated by pro-Hezbollah users and independents. While quantitative data shows that both groups do meet on themes like othering and hate by proxy, they diverge on narratives related to treason and allegations of affiliation with March 14. Labeled as independents were users who showed disagreement with established political parties and support to popular protests, hence their content related to othering and warning against the conformity of some alternative candidates. Contrary to this behavior, pro-Hezbollah users will spread content of hate by proxy and othering for candidates affiliated with public figures, who are known to be pro-popular protests, or Shiite figures against Hezbollah, such as Shaden Fakhri, Lokman Slim, and Dima Sadek.

In Mount Lebanon II (Metn), themes of othering, treason, allegations of affiliation with March 8, and allegations of affiliation with March 14 were generated by three main groups, pro-Hezbollah, independents, and pro-LF users. Quantitative data shows that the narrative of treason was circulated by pro-LF and pro-Hezbollah users. Pro-LF users lead on the narrative of affiliation with March 8 and pro-Hezbollah users lead on the affiliation with March 14, while both independents and pro-Hezbollah generated a narrative of othering.

The definition of treason also diverges between pro-LF and pro-Hezbollah users, as pro-LF users consider whoever is affiliated with Hezbollah as a traitor. Meanwhile, Hezbollah uses words such as “Zionist” and “traitor” against all those who hold an anti-Hezbollah position.

In North III, two main networks were circulating polarizing themes, MMFD users and pro-LF users. The allegation of affiliation with March 8, which was mainly circulated by pro-LF users, is worthy of attention, as this narrative was focusing on an allegation of affiliation with SSNP in particular. SSNP, historically present in Koura, was long opposed to Lebanese Forces, and this political opposition is rooted in their respective ideologies, the former lobbying for including Lebanon in a greater Syria and the latter a proponent of Lebanese nationalism. Pro-LF users capitalized on this allegation to discredit and demonize candidates. As for the high activity of MMFD users, it is due to the fact that MMFD was running against *Shamaluna*, hence accusing *Shamaluna* candidates of practicing identity politics and speaking exclusively to a Christian crowd in a specific area, while MMFD’s ideology is presented as nationwide and secular.

In Mount Lebanon IV (Shouf-Aley), three main networks were disseminating polarizing themes: pro-FPM users, pro-Hezbollah users, and independent users. The allegation of affiliation with March 14, which was mainly circulated by pro-FPM users, is worthy of attention, as this narrative was focusing specifically on allegations of affiliation with PSP.

In conclusion, two types of polarization narratives were identified across all regions included in our case studies: crowd polarization and conversation polarization. Each crowd replicated the offline behavior of the political party it belongs to or supports, in an attempt to reinforce and reaffirm political positioning and display political power.

With the absence of sufficient data related to *Beirut al Taghyir* crowd polarization and conversation polarization were not captured and narratives could not be categorized by users and themes.

Conclusion

“Lebanon’s 2022 Parliamentary Election: A Look into Political Parties’ Online Behavior Vis-à-vis Alternative Candidates” draws its originality from the use of mixed methodology, digital tools, and from the richness of the experiences in terms of number and diversity of data entry points, in both qualitative and quantitative dimensions.

The purpose of this report was to analyze digital behaviors, narratives, archetypes of polarization, and disinformation techniques of Lebanese political parties and their supporters vis-à-vis alternative candidates and lists. The analysis focused on three key elements:

1. Narratives circulated by political party supporters and their digital behaviors
2. Techniques and tools of disinformation
3. Archetypes of polarization in the digital sphere

The report covered five alternative lists spread all over Lebanon, *Maan Nahwa al Tayghir* (South III), *Nahwa al Dawla* (Mount Lebanon II), *Beirut al Taghyir* (Beirut II), *Shamaluna* (North III), and *Twahhadna lil Taghyir* (Mount Lebanon IV).

Overall, from April 1 to May 31, 2022, the timeframe of this report, 14 themes were circulated on social media platforms: allegation of affiliation with March 14 and its entities, allegation of affiliation with March 8 and its entities, treason, othering, hate by proxy, conformity, electoral law disagreement, mis- and disinformation, context specific allegations, ties with the West, affiliation with banks, affiliation with GCC, allegations of federalism, and leftism.

These themes were disseminated by users affiliated with political parties in addition to independent users, who were also visible and active. Although all parties from the Future Movement to SSNP, from PSP to Talal Arslan and Wiam Wahhab’s parties, from Kataeb to Marada, were involved in the online campaign, the users behind the most controversial content were mainly affiliated with FPM, Hezbollah, LF, and MMFD.

Disinformation tools were divided into three types: videos, photos, and articles. They were composed of all information that was taken out of context, edited, reshaped, reworded in order to spread rumors, demonize and discredit the alternative candidate, display power, and/or push for the political parties’ narrative and ideology.

Inauthentic behavior was also highlighted with a relatively high number of deleted tweets and accounts, suspended accounts, and recently created accounts.

Polarization was drawn around three main events: 2005 and the political dichotomy that left the country with two main coalitions (March 14 v. March 8), the popular protests of 2019 that divided the country between pro- and anti-“*Thawra*,” and positioning vis-à-vis Hezbollah. What was concluded is that the offline carriers of political positioning and ideologies echoed the online narrative shapers.

In conclusion, in a highly polarized political scene, a panoply of tools and tactics were deployed in order to display power, discredit alternative candidates, and minimize their chances of victory.

Nahwa al Dawla - Metn

Theme	Narrative
Allegation of affiliation with March 14 and its entities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Association with Kataeb - Conspiring against Hezbollah
Allegation of affiliation with March 8 and its entities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Affiliation with FPM - Affiliation with Hezbollah - Supporting Assad Regime - Supporting Iran
Hate by proxy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Association with Tahsin Khayat - Association with Ghadi Francis - Association with Charbel Nahhas - Association with Gino Raidy - Association with Riyadh Salameh - Association with Verena el Amil - Association with Shaden Maalouf - Association with Assaad abou Khalil - Association with Road Blocking - Association with Albert Constanian - Association with Sami Kleb - Association with Lucine Bou Rjeily - Association with the establishment
Allegation for conformity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Speculations - Association with violence/thugs - Allegation of corruption - Allegation of fundings - Allegation of fake accounts
Othering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trolling - Warning - Not having a clear political positioning - Allegations of racism - Having double standards - Being opportunists - Being stranger to Metn - Calling for boycotting Ghosn
Context specific allegations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Being anti-Church - Assassinations - Pro-Sanctions

GCC affiliations or attacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attacking KSA - Sky news position - Anti-saudi narrative - Pro-Saudi narrative - Pro-UAE narrative
Treason	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Normalization
Ties with western blocks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Affiliation with embassies - Allegation of funding - Pro-Sanctions
Leftist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Association with Melenchon - Communist - Affiliation with LCP

Twahhadna lil Teghyir - Shouf Aley

Theme	Narrative
Allegation of affiliation with March 14 and its entities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Affiliation with Kataeb - Affiliation with PSP - Affiliation with LF
Allegation of affiliation with March 8 and its entities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Affiliation with SSNP - Affiliation with Hezbollah
Hate by proxy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Association with Kulluna Irada - Association with Ghadi Francis
Allegation for conformity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Affiliation with banks - Affiliation with establishment - Corruption - Affiliation with gas companies - Partnering with Jumlat
Othering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trolling - Warning - Not having a clear political positioning - Smearing - Downplaying - Discrediting
Treason	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Normalization - Traitor
Ties with western blocks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Affiliation with embassies - Allegation of funding - Affiliation with Shencker

Shamaluna - North III

Theme	Narrative
Allegation of affiliation with March 14 and its entities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Association with Kataeb - Association with LF - Conspiring against Hezbollah
Allegation of affiliation with March 8 and its entities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Affiliation with SSNP - Affiliation with Hezbollah - Affiliation with FMP
Hate by proxy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Association with Nehmat Frem - Association with MMFD - Association with Dima Sadek - Association with Ziyad Baroud - Association with Kulluna Irada
Allegation for conformity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Secularism - Identitarian politics - Questions about funding
Othering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trolling - Warning - Not having a clear political positioning - Discrediting - Downplaying
Allegation of federalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Secularism - Identitarian politics
Treason	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dhimmis
Ties with western blocks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Affiliation with US embassy

Maan Nahwa al Taghyir - South III

Theme	Narrative
Allegation of affiliation with March 14 and its entities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Association with Kataeb - Association with PSP - Conspiring against Hezbollah - Association with LF
Allegation of affiliation with March 8 and its entities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Affiliation with Hezbollah
Hate by proxy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Association with Paula Yacoubian - Association with MMFD - Association with Dima Sadek - Association with Shaden Fakih - Association with Lokman Slim - Association with Marcel Ghanem - Association with Kulluna Irada - Association with Charbel Nahas
Allegation for conformity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Corruption - Affiliation with banks
Othering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trolling - Warning - Not having a clear political positioning - Discrediting - Downplaying
Treason	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Zionist - Traitor - Chouaya incident
Ties with western blocks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Affiliation with US embassy - Affiliation with embassies - Association with Shencker
Leftist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Affiliation with LCP - Communist

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