



Lebanon in Strife: Student Preludes to the Civil War (Modern Middle East (Paperback))

Halim Barakat

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In this study, an eminent sociologist of the Arab world analyzes student politics in Lebanon and their relationship to the civil war. This focus is part of a larger concern with upheaval in Arab society and with political and social integration in mosaic societies in general. Professor Barakat provides a clear, thorough, and comprehensive analysis of late twentieth century Lebanese society and the dominant ideological veins within it.

Lebanon in Strife is a comparative study of Lebanese youth with special emphasis on their alienation from society and politics and their place at the vanguard of social change. The study is set in the context of the continual confrontation between forces for change and the established order in Lebanon, viewed from both a local and an international perspective. The author argues that vertical loyalties (based on religious, ethnic, or regional ties) are more significant than horizontal loyalties (based on socioeconomic class) in determining Lebanese student political behavior and attitudes. However, vertical loyalties are explained in socioeconomic terms, for the two forms of cleavages coincide; and the whole society is composed of religious communities arranged in a hierarchy of power and status. The author shows that these ties conflict with and undermine orderly social change and national unity and that they could account for conditions that have led to civil war in Lebanon.

In an epilogue, Professor Barakat relates his analysis of student politics to political developments in Lebanon during the civil war of 1975–1976, including an assessment of the role of Syria and the prospects for a negotiated end to armed struggle in the country.

This is the first empirical study of Lebanese political life viewed from the standpoint of its central force for change, the students. It is an invaluable resource for students of the modern Middle East as well as for specialists in sociology, politics, and history. Lebanon in Strife has special relevance to problems of political change and development in the Third World countries, providing a sociopolitical model for the analysis of student politics in traditional and transitional societies.

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