

Integrating Paul and Elder's Critical Thinking Framework with Critical Discourse Analysis: A Case Study of President Joseph Aoun's Inaugural Speech

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Citation: Hamieh, S. (2025). Integrating Paul and Elder's Critical Thinking Framework with Critical Discourse Analysis: A Case Study of President Joseph Aoun's Inaugural Speech. *Gloria: International Multidisciplinary Studies*, 2(1), 19-39.
<https://gloria-leb.org/CriticalThinking-Criticaldiscourseanalysis.htm>

Abstract

In light of the limited integration of critical thinking frameworks to deepen the comprehension of underlying ideologies and power structures, the researchers observe a noticeable gap in applying comprehensive multi-theoretical approaches to Lebanese political speeches, which are often shaped by complex socio-political contexts and various linguistic features. To address these gaps, the study integrates Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) theories with Paul and Elder's Critical Thinking Framework to analyze President Joseph Aoun's inaugural speech. This research adopts a descriptive case study design that qualitatively analyzes data through interpretational analysis based on multiple CDA models and critical thinking (CT) tools, which involves identifying, categorizing, and evaluating textual elements to develop a comprehensive description and explanation of the speech. The research explores linguistic choices, rhetorical devices, ideological references, and historical intertextuality. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter, this research seeks to address the following questions: 1. How do the discourse techniques and rhetorical devices used by the President influence his message for the audience? 2. What discourse techniques and rhetorical devices did President Joseph Aoun use in his inaugural speech? 3. How can the integration of Paul and Elder's CT theory in CDA objectively reveal the power of structures and ideologies embedded in discourse? The results of the study show that President Joseph Aoun's inaugural speech is carefully crafted using linguistic and rhetorical strategies to reinforce his authority, legitimacy, and national unity. The speech incorporates authoritative language, repetitions, and symbolic references to evoke emotional engagement and solidarity among the Lebanese people. It highlights themes of reform, responsibility, and national resilience, aiming to motivate confidence and unity. The findings also demonstrate that combining CDA with CT offers a more objective and deep understanding of political communication, uncovering underlying power relations and ideological constructs.

ملخص

في ضوء محدودية دمج الأطر النظرية للتفكير الناقد في تعميق فهم الأيديولوجيات والهيكل السلطوية الكامنة، يلاحظ الباحثون وجود فجوة واضحة في تطبيق مقاربات نظرية متعددة شاملة على الخطابات السياسية اللبنانية، التي غالباً ما تتضمن سياسات اجتماعية وسياسية معقدة، وتتسم بسمات لغوية متفرعة. ولمعالجة هذه الفجوة، يدمج هذا البحث نظريات التحليل الناقد للخطاب مع إطار التفكير الناقد لـ"بول وإلدر" لتحليل الخطاب الافتتاحي للرئيس "جوزيف عون".

يعتمد هذا البحث تصميم دراسة حالة وصفية، ويحلل البيانات نوعياً من خلال التحليل التفسيري المستند إلى نماذج متعددة من التحليل الناقد للخطاب وأدوات التفكير الناقد، بما يشمل تحديد العناصر النصية وتصنيفها وتقديرها بهدف تطوير وصف شامل وتفصيّل عميق للخطاب. كما يسلط البحث الضوء على الخيارات اللغوية، والوسائل البلاغية، والإشارات الأيديولوجية، والثناص التارخي. ولتحقيق فهم شامل للموضوع، يسعى هذا البحث للإجابة عن الأسئلة التالية:

1. كيف تؤثر تقنيات الخطاب والوسائل البلاغية التي استخدمها الرئيس في رسالته الموجهة إلى الجمهور؟
2. ما التقنيات الخطابية والوسائل البلاغية التي استخدمها الرئيس "جوزيف عون" في خطابه التنصيبي؟
3. كيف يمكن لدمج نظرية التفكير الناقد لـ"بول وإلدر" ضمن التحليل الناقد للخطاب أن يكشف بصورة موضوعية عن هيكل السلطة والأيديولوجيات المضمنة في الخطاب؟

تُظهر نتائج الدراسة أن خطاب الرئيس "جوزيف عون" صيغ بعناية باستخدام إستراتيجيات لغوية وبلاغية لتعزيز سلطنته وشرعنته وترسيخ وحدة الوطن. ويتضمن الخطاب لغة سلطوية وتكراراً وإشارات رمزية تهدف إلى إثارة التفاعل العاطفي والتضامن بين اللبنانيين. كما يركّز في موضوعات الإصلاح والمسؤولية والصمود الوطني، لتحفيز القلة والوحدة. وتشير النتائج أيضاً إلى أن الجمجمة بين التحليل الناقد للخطاب والتفكير الناقد يتبع فهماً أعمق وأكثر موضوعية للتواصل السياسي، ويكشف عن علاقات السلطة والأطر الأيديولوجية الكامنة.

Introduction

Lebanon, a country with a rich and complex history, has long been marked with conflicts and socio-political challenges. The major problems that the country has faced are a result of its unique political system, which is based on a power-sharing arrangement among various religious and political groups. In recent years, Lebanon has witnessed massive crises such as economic decline and collapses, prevalent social injustice, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the devastating explosion in the Beirut port, which were followed by the breakout of the war, which forced many people to flee their homes and added to the country's ongoing crisis. These events have further exacerbated the existing tensions and have led to widespread psychological, social, economic, and political unrest across the country. As a result, political speeches in Lebanon must not only balance the sentiments of the Lebanese population but also address pressing national issues. Given the critical role these political speeches play, analyzing the inauguration speech of the president of Lebanon Joseph Aoun is significant because it highlights the political and sentimental devices used to meet the audience's expectations and justify the reasons for the spoken discourse.

Theoretical Framework

In this context, critical thinking (CT) serves as cognitive framework which guides the evaluation, and the interpretation of the ideas presented in the speech; however, critical discourse analysis (CDA) serves as an analytic tool to examine different parts of a speech and uncover its hidden implications. Paul (1995) describes CT as a distinct and intentional form of thought in which individuals consistently apply standards and criteria to guide their reasoning. Similarly, Paul and Elder (2006) define it as the art of examining and assessing thinking with the goal of enhancing it. These definitions suggest that CT encompasses a range of higher-order cognitive skills, including the abilities to apply, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information. Therefore, to analyze the speech of the President, it is important to adopt the mindset of a critical thinker. For this reason, key components of Paul and Elder's CT framework can be followed. According to Paul and Elder (2001), CT is the way an individual

effectively uses their thinking to evaluate spoken and written information. CT integration requires a practical application of three aspects: the elements of thought, intellectual standards, and intellectual virtues. To illustrate, "I Thus" is used to maintain first person authority. Paul and Elder (2001) argue that CT reveals embedded meaning, determines the roots of ideologies, and speaks for marginalized voices. On the other hand, CDA is a methodological framework aimed at revealing the ways in which language and discourse serve to reproduce, legitimize, and challenge social power, dominance, and inequality. Wodak and Meyer (2009) emphasize its focus on the way social power relations are embedded within language. Fairclough (1995) highlights its interdisciplinary nature, combining social theory with linguistic analysis to examine language's role in exercising and resisting social control. Van Dijk (2015) underscores the connection between discourse, social structures, and cognition, illustrating its capacity to elucidate the continuation of societal inequalities. Thus, these perspectives highlight CDA's critical function in exposing the power dynamics and ideological processes that are embedded in discourse.

Hence, the characteristics of critical thinkers and CDA practitioners are interrelated and mutually reinforcing. This means that combining CDA with Paul and Elder's CT framework enhances the depth and objectivity of discourse analysis, particularly in revealing power structures and ideologies in political speeches. Moreover, the CT framework provides essential tools for evaluating underlying assumptions, reasoning processes, and biases within discourse (Paul & Elder, 2006), thereby complementing CDA's focus on uncovering power structures and ideological influences embedded in language.

Previous studies on analyzing the inaugural speeches have almost exclusively focused on analyzing the discourse in terms of the CDA theories, such as Van Dijk, Wodak, and Fairclough; however, none of these studies have integrated Paul and Elder Critical Thinking Framework in CDA. This study is significant because it uniquely integrates the Paul and Elder Critical Thinking Framework with CDA. This combination enhances the understanding of CDA and can lead to more comprehensive insights into enriching the analysis of discourse.

Significance of the Study

The importance of this research lies in the fact that it combines two important frameworks in the domain of analysis, namely CDA and Paul and Elder's CT Framework, to offer a thorough understanding of political speech. This study aims to analyze President Joseph Aoun's inaugural speech to reveal power dynamics and ideology and to expose the persuasive techniques political leaders can use to influence their audience. In addition, none of the previous research has integrated Paul and Elder's CT Framework in CDA; thus, none has combined these frameworks to analyze the political speeches of Lebanese presidents. Therefore, the gap can be bridged by offering a new analytical approach to discourse.

Although political speeches are often examined by their employment of rhetorical devices to influence public opinion, this study suggests that incorporating Paul and Elder's critical thinking framework into multiple CDA frameworks including Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model, VanDijk Socio-Cognitive Approach, and Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach can offer a thorough understanding of the way President Joseph Aoun's inaugural speech constructively builds power and shapes ideologies while reflecting Lebanon's socio-political context.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to integrate CDA models with Paul and Elder's Critical Thinking Framework to analyze President Joseph Aoun's inaugural speech. This integration aims to fill the gap in Lebanese political discourse research by offering a comprehensive, multi-theoretical approach that uncovers the linguistic choices, rhetorical devices, power structures, and ideologies embedded in the

speech. The study seeks to deepen the understanding of the way President Aoun uses linguistic, ideological, historical, and critical thinking elements to construct his speech.

Research Questions

In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter, this research seeks to address the following questions:

1. How do the discourse techniques and rhetorical devices used by the President influence his message for the audience?
2. What discourse techniques and rhetorical devices did President Joseph Aoun use in his inaugural speech?
3. How can the integration of Paul and Elder's CT theory in CDA objectively reveal the power of structures and ideologies embedded in discourse?

Literature Review

An in-depth overview of the various models and approaches within CDA is crucial for understanding the analysis of power, ideology, and social context in political discourse. Recognizing that CDA is a comprehensive framework, the review explores the way multiple theories - such as Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model, Van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive Approach, and Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach - are combined to analyze the discourse. In addition, Paul and Elder critical thinking framework is integrated. By synthesizing these diverse perspectives, the review aims to provide a robust foundation for understanding the methodological and theoretical choices underpinning this research, which adopts an integrated approach to critically examine President Joseph Aoun's inaugural speech.

Power and Ideology

A central tenet of CDA is the understanding that language is not neutral but imbued with power and used to influence and persuade. According to Van Dijk (2001), CDA is concerned with social problems, particularly the role of discourse in the production and reproduction of power abuse and hegemony. Thus, CDA analyzes the relationship between language and power. In this sense, Wodak (2001) considers CDA a fundamental tool concerned with analyzing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power, and control as manifested in language. Furthermore, Fairclough (1989) argues that language is used as a tool for exercising power and discrimination. Discourse also reflects and reinforces ideological dominance. Ideologies are defined as "particular ways of representing and constructing society that reproduce unequal relations of power, relations of domination, and exploitation" (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, p. 275). Indeed, political discourse often relies on implicit assumptions and carefully framed narratives that reinforce existing power structures (Fairclough, 2003). Paul and Elder's (2014) model offers a systematic method to deconstruct these elements by analyzing the underlying purpose, assumptions, and implications of political speeches. Through their framework, people can assess how ideological messages are subtly embedded within speeches, reinforcing dominance while maintaining an appearance of neutrality. Consequently, integrating Hyland's interactional metadiscourse framework into CDA and Paul and Elder's CT theory enables individuals to gain a comprehensive understanding of the use of language to negotiate power, promote ideologies, and influence audiences in political discourse.

Discourse as Social Practice

Language is not isolated; it is inherently social and contextual. Discourse, as a form of social practice, is not just about language but is also intertwined with social contexts and practices. Van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach considers discourse as a form of social practice and focuses on social cognition as the mediating factor between text and society. He argues that CDA should account for

social cognitions shared by groups and emphasizes the importance of understanding ideological structures and social relations of power embedded in discourse (Van Dijk, 2003). Wodak (2018) states that discourses are historically and socially embedded; she also regards discourse as a form of social practice and argues that all discourses are historical and must be understood in their context, which includes socio-psychological, political, and ideological components. Similarly, Fairclough (1992) emphasizes that language is a form of social practice tied to social structures. Building on these theories, Paul and Elder's CT framework offers a valuable way to analyze discourse as a social practice. By focusing on the elements of thought and applying intellectual standards, people can dissect the logic and reasoning within communication. This allows individuals to evaluate arguments, identify biases, and assess effectiveness, moving beyond simply what is said to *how*, *why*, and for *whose* benefit, leading to a deeper understanding of discourse (Paul and Elder, 2014).

The Intersection of Micro and Macro Levels

CDA uniquely examines the crucial link between the micro and macro levels of discourse. Analyzing this intersection reveals how individuals, through their language use, both navigate and contribute to broader social forces. Van Dijk (2003) identifies two levels of discourse analysis: macro and micro. Language use, discourse, verbal interaction, and communication constitute the micro level of social order, while the macro level encompasses power, dominance, and inequality between social groups. This multidisciplinary approach uses intertextual and interdiscursive analyses to examine how text and talk contribute to, replicate, and resist social power abuse, dominance, and inequality within the socio-political milieu (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2015; Jahedi et al., 2014; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2012; Van Dijk, 2016). CDA is understood to have originated from diverse "theoretical backgrounds, oriented towards different data and methodologies" (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Paul and Elder's critical thinking framework further bridges these micro and macro levels by providing tools to analyze the reasoning and assumptions embedded in discourse. This micro-level analysis of language use, guided by CT principles, reveals how specific choices contribute to broader social phenomena at the macro level, such as the reinforcement of ideologies or the perpetuation of inequalities (Paul and Elder, 2014).

The Role of History and Context

CDA cannot be understood without critically examining the historical and sociopolitical contexts. Power, ideologies, and social practices are evolving and are context-specific. Hence, history is not a neutral record of the past, but it is considered a dynamic field where knowledge, power, and discourse interact. This means that understanding the historical context behind ideas reveals the mechanisms of control and social conditioning. According to Fairclough and Wodak (1997), discourse is historical, which means that historical and social contexts shape discourse. Wodak (2009) aims to understand how past events, ideologies, and power influence present-day discourse. Furthermore, Wodak (2009) reveals that discourse is synchronically and diachronically connected with other events happening at the same time or before. For instance, identity politics always entails the integration of past experiences, present events, and future visions in many domains of our lives. Similarly, Foucault (1969) emphasizes that ideas are deeply embedded in their historical context. Thus, history is fragmented and shaped by power dynamics, and what is considered true or normal is not universal but shaped by historical and social contexts. Moreover, Paul and Elder's CT theory emphasizes that thought processes are shaped by history and context. They argue that CT is about understanding the historical and contextual factors that influence thinking and how past experiences shape perspectives, fostering a more nuanced understanding of discourse (Paul & Elder, 2014).

According to Wodak (2009), discourse cannot be comprehended without its historical context. As a result, a critical discourse analyst needs to consider the events taking place at a single point in time or even over different periods of time. In addition, Wodak (2019) highlights the importance of

considering context elements such as socio-psychological, political and ideologies whether in the past, current state and future visions.

Lebanon has undergone multiple conflicts, wars, political instability and efforts toward reconciliation and rebuilding such as the latest devastating war with Israel in 2024 and the endeavors in rebuilding the country's economy and peace (Jaafar, 2024).

This study adopts Paul and Elder's framework that leads individuals to be reflective, fair-minded, critical thinkers and improve the quality of their thoughts (Paul & Elder, 2014). This model offered by Paul and Elder aims to reduce sociocentrism which means to interpret the world from the perspective of a particular social group, creating biases, closemindedness and self-deception (Paul & Elder, 2014).

Lebanon depicts sociocentrism because it is a sectarian country at the religious and political levels with different sects and political parties each characterized by its own beliefs (Traboulsi, 2014). Paul and Elder's Critical Thinking Framework applies Socratic questioning and helps in developing the ability to open-mindedly draw conclusions. This framework can be applicable to different frameworks, including CDA, and consists of three major components: elements of thought, intellectual standards, and intellectual virtues. Among intellectual standards, it is essential to employ **clarity** to ensure that the speech is well understood, in addition to fairness in analysis, which helps determine whether the speech is biased or inclusive. Moreover, the analysis needs depth to understand the complex crisis of Lebanon. The analysis also demands applying elements of thought. For instance, it involves defining the purpose of the speech, namely whether it promotes unity, calls for reform, or seeks to ensure political support. Moreover, it examines the point of view the president adopts and the perspective he advocates. Additionally, it identifies the underlying assumptions concerning political stability and the proposed ways of addressing and reforming the Lebanese crisis embedded in the speech. Nonetheless, the concepts that the speech highlights are investigated to comprehend the ideas it holds from sovereignty to unity. Furthermore, the analysis of the Lebanese President's speech requires intellectual traits to ensure fairness, open-mindedness, as well as sound and unbiased reasoning in a sociocentric country. For instance, it demands intellectual humility to acknowledge and accept different viewpoints and courage to challenge dominant and prevailing view in Lebanon.

Feminism

In CDA, Feminism examines the reinforcement of language, power, and ideology in shaping gender inequalities by revealing hidden biases in language. Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) studies the use of inclusive language in discourse to show women's participation in multiple social domains and to reflect power relation within a social context (Wodak, 1997). Thus, FCDA highlights the relationship between social practices and discourse structures, criticizes discourses that implement patriarchal social order, and questions whether men are pictured as a privileged group or not (Lazar, 2005).

Previous Studies

Applying critical discourse analysis on presidents' speech is a common practice worldwide due to its importance. For example, the study of Barak Obama's speech using CDA theories and analysis methods concludes that his speech is not only to deliver information but power which is shown through the use of words that demonstrate power, forcing others to act according to his words (Martica et. al, 2022). Similarly, Raza et. al (2024) present a critical discourse analysis conducted on the inaugural speeches of Joe Biden and President Donald Trump using Van Dijk's 2005 model to identify discursive techniques. Findings show Trump's use of boasting self-portrayal and derogation portrayal of others in order to manipulate the audience perspectives while Biden addresses extremism and highlights democracy values. Both leaders adopt victimization, lexicalization, populism, metaphors,

and modality to shape their narratives and reinforce their leadership images and policy agendas (Raza et. al, 2024).

As for the Middle East, critical analyses of presidential speeches have been conducted on the speeches and interviews of the former Syrian president, Bashar al-Assad, using Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach and corpus linguistics. The results demonstrated the employment of language to affect the text receivers' perceptions. Furthermore, the analysis revealed that the Syrian regime intervenes in the Lebanese internal affairs, though Al-Assad has repeatedly denied such a claim in his discourse (Haidar, 2019). In addition, CDA approach is applied to analyze King Abdullah II's speeches by using two levels of analysis, discourse-as-discursive practice and discourse-as-social-practice. The study has shown that the King has successfully used persuasive strategies to convince the international community of his vision upon political matters using creativity and metaphors, reference, circumlocution, and intertextuality (Almahasees & Mahmoud, 2022).

Methodology

Research Design

This research adopts a descriptive case study design that qualitatively analyzes data, aiming to systematically analyze the linguistic, ideological, and socio-political features of President Joseph Aoun's inaugural speech. The study does not manipulate variables but rather observes and interprets the text in its natural context. As Gall et al. (2014) explain, qualitative research seeks to "discover the nature of the meanings associated with social phenomena," and the case study serves as the principal method for conducting an in-depth examination of a single, bounded instance of discourse (pp. 274–275).

The data are analyzed qualitatively through interpretational analysis, which involves identifying, categorizing, and evaluating textual elements to develop a comprehensive description and explanation of the speech. CDA functions as the primary analytical framework; CDA is a qualitative approach for critically examining, describing, and interpreting discourse (Mullet, 2018) and has evolved into multiple models, including those proposed by Van Dijk, Wodak, and Fairclough (Bukhari & Xiaoyang, 2013). This study draws upon Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model, Van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive Approach, and Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach to analyze textual and contextual dimensions, uncovering embedded power relations, ideological positioning, and rhetorical strategies. In addition, Paul and Elder's Critical Thinking Framework is integrated as a complementary tool to evaluate the elements and standards of thought used in the speech. This methodological approach allows for a nuanced and reflexive interpretation of the speech within its broader socio-political context.

Data Collection

Primary Data Source

The primary data for this study was elicited from the inaugural speech of President Joseph Aoun. First, the speech was selected for its relevance as it addresses a key political, economic, or social issue in Lebanon. Additionally, it holds public significance as it has been widely circulated and discussed in media and public discourse. Furthermore, its availability, including a full transcript and audiovisual recording, ensures comprehensive textual analysis. The speech analyzed in this study was retrieved from a YouTube video: <https://youtu.be/wHKrff5HW9M?si=HWpWJIYOINAImUI>, while an English transcription was obtained from L'Orient Today <https://search.app/u0JcXixTxihZ2ZBP7>. L'Orient Today is an independent Lebanese news platform that provides in-depth analysis and reports on political, economic, and social issues in Lebanon and the broader region.

Data Analysis Procedure

The analysis follows a systematic interpretive approach to qualitative data, thematically examining the speech to identify key discursive patterns and ideological structures. The process begins with data preparation, where the speech is transcribed and segmented into thematic units, followed by an initial reading to identify recurring themes and patterns. Then, thematic coding is applied, including linguistic coding (analyzing word choices and rhetorical strategies), ideological coding (mapping references to power, authority, and identity), and historical coding (examining intertextual links to past events, leaders, or policies). The multi-theoretical interpretation is conducted using several analytical frameworks, including Fairclough's levels of discourse (text, discursive practice, social practice), Van Dijk's cognitive framing and ideological structures, Wodak's historical contextualization, and Paul and Elder's logical reasoning assessment. Finally, in the discussion and interpretation part, thematic insights are synthesized into a cohesive argument, and the broader implications for public discourse and policymaking are examined. This comprehensive interpretive process ensures a structured, in-depth, and contextually informed analysis of the speech.

Discussion and Analysis

This section presents an in-depth analysis of President Joseph Aoun's Speech, applying the selected CDA frameworks and assessing the linguistic, ideological, and socio-political dimensions of the discourse. The discussion integrates insights from Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model, Van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive Approach, Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach, and Paul & Elder's Critical Thinking Framework. The study examines the way Aoun's discourse communicates underlying messages through linguistic choices, ideological references, and historical allusions. As outlined in the methodology, the analysis follows three key dimensions: linguistic coding, ideological coding, and historical coding.

Linguistic Coding: Identifying Word Choices and Rhetorical Strategies

A linguistic analysis of Aoun's speech reveals a deliberate use of authoritative lexical choices that reinforce his leadership persona. Words such as "oath", which was repeated 3 times, "commitment", mentioned 22 times, and "supreme commander" position him as a figure of responsibility and duty. According to Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model, language is a tool of power, and these lexical choices serve to reinforce Aoun's authority and legitimacy as a leader. His use of declarative sentences and active voice further strengthens his image as a decisive leader, emphasizing certainty and control.

Additionally, rhetorical devices such as repetition (see Table 1) are prominent in the speech, particularly in phrases such as "no more mafias, no more leaks, no more immunity," which showcase his determination. The phrase "we shall overcome" appears twice, reinforcing resilience and unity. Fairclough (1992) argues that repetition is a key discursive strategy that reinforces ideological messages by embedding them into public consciousness. Similarly, the repetition of "justice" 5 times reveals his emphasis on governance and accountability.

Metaphors also play a crucial role in shaping the discourse, as seen in expressions such as "Lebanon is the witness of history," which construct a national identity rooted in resilience and endurance. Another notable metaphor is "the pillars of our nation are being rebuilt," symbolizing a vision of reform and renewal. Van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive Approach highlights that metaphors shape how audiences conceptualize social realities, allowing Aoun to frame Lebanon's challenges as a reconstructive process rather than a crisis.

Beyond lexical choices, the speech employs various persuasive techniques that are aligned with Paul and Elder's critical thinking framework. Ethos is established through statements such as "I remain one of you," which seek to align the speaker with the public and enhance his credibility. Emotional

appeals (pathos) are woven throughout the speech, particularly in reference to collective suffering and resilience, as in "if one of us breaks, we are all broken." Similarly, his invocation of national unity is reinforced through the phrase "together we shall overcome, as we always have," reinforcing a sense of shared struggle (Paul & Elder, 2006).

Logical arguments, though present, are sometimes weakened by a lack of specific policy proposals, making some of the reformist claims appear more symbolic than actionable. Fairclough (1995) notes that political discourse often includes vague commitments to reform without concrete implementation plans, which can serve a legitimizing function rather than a transformative one. For instance, while he calls for a "new economic vision," he does not outline a concrete financial recovery plan, leaving his audience with broad aspirations rather than structured solutions.

Furthermore, the president builds credibility by highlighting his duty to uphold the National Pact and exercise the presidential powers of responsibility. He positions himself as a protector of individual and collective freedoms under the rule of law and frames himself as a servant of the nation, promising to fight corruption, uphold justice, and reform public institutions. Moreover, he uses inclusive language, showing emotions of patriotism and nationalism while delivering a sense of determination. This commitment is reinforced when he directly addresses the audience, stating, "Dear Lebanese," and emphasizing unity, "Our unity is the guarantee of our security, our diversity is the richness of our experience." The frequent use of "our", which appeared 41 times, highlights his attempt to create a collective national identity and reinforce a shared responsibility for the future of Lebanon. The excessive use of first-person pronouns as personal references does not only support cohesion of the text but also strengthen the role of self-mention as an interactional marker. Hyland (2005) describes self-mention as the degree of the author's presence in the text measured by the frequency of first-person pronouns. Thus, the Lebanese president applies them frequently to show his role as an agent of change, his embedded political stance, and his authority as a president. Hyland (2005) also identifies that the presence or absence of explicit author reference is a conscious choice. The speaker, therefore, is aware of the words used in his speech to boost his Lebanese identity, his unity with his audience, and to confirm his persona as Lebanon's guardian. As a result, self-mention interactional meta-discourse markers serve as a crucial role in this political speech presenting the importance of personal reference in coding the relationship between the president Joseph Aoun and the Lebanese community. Moreover, Fairclough's concept of interdiscursivity is also relevant, as the speech blends elements of political rhetoric, nationalistic discourse, and reformist language to construct a cohesive narrative.

Table 1: Frequency of Keywords in President Aoun's Discourse

Word	Frequency
Oath	3
Commitment	22
Supreme Commander	1
We Shall Overcome	2
Justice	5
Our	41
We	17
I	15

Ideological Coding: Mapping References to Power, Authority, and Identity

The speech reinforces the state's sovereignty and authority through a strong emphasis on the role of official institutions. Aoun's assertion that the state must have a "monopoly on weapons" subtly critiques non-state actors without explicitly mentioning Hezbollah or other armed factions. This strategic ambiguity aligns with Van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive Approach, which posits that discourse can indirectly frame issues to maintain political alliances while appealing to broader audiences. This strategic ambiguity allows him to position himself as a leader committed to national security while avoiding confrontation with politically sensitive groups. The speech also constructs a binary opposition between law-abiding citizens and corrupt elites, reinforcing the need for reform while simultaneously presenting Aoun's administration as the agent of change. Van Dijk (1998) highlights that such oppositional narratives are central to political discourse as they frame leaders as protectors against an external threat.

From a socio-cognitive perspective, the speech frames Lebanon's failures as the result of past leadership missteps rather than systemic structural issues. According to Van Dijk, shifting blame onto specific political actors rather than addressing deeper systemic problems is a common strategy used to manage public perception and maintain legitimacy. This framing strategically shifts responsibility away from broader institutional deficiencies and toward individual political actors. President Aoun consistently portrays the Lebanese people as resilient yet victimized, emphasizing that corruption and external forces have hindered the nation's progress. This narrative serves to mobilize public support by invoking a shared sense of struggle, but it also risks oversimplifying the complexities of Lebanon's political and economic crises. For instance, when he states, "the system has betrayed its people," he indirectly shifts blame onto prior administrations while presenting his leadership as an alternative force for justice. While themes of justice and reform are strongly present, the lack of concrete policy measures within the speech suggests a primarily rhetorical commitment to these ideals rather than a detailed strategic plan. His phrase, "we will hold them accountable," remains vague regarding the mechanisms or institutions responsible for ensuring accountability.

From a feminist perspective, the president acknowledges Lebanese women only when addressing the Lebanese people at the beginning of the speech, such as in the phrase "Dear Lebanese Women" and when he respectfully addresses his audience with the proper etiquette used in speeches, such as "Ladies and Gentlemen". This limited mention suggests that the representation of women in his speech is not as prominent or inclusive as it could be. This could be seen as an indication that women's contributions and their presence are not adequately acknowledged throughout the entirety of his address.

Furthermore, to reinforce his credibility and authority (ethos), he highlights his integrity by aligning himself with the people, stating, "I remain one of you, and I am proud of my membership in your national school." Fairclough (2003) argues that political leaders often use such identity-based appeals to create solidarity with the public, making their leadership seem more organic and representative. He further positions himself as a reformer, asserting that "there is no longer any question of wasting time or opportunities," while pledging judicial independence and anti-corruption measures to demonstrate his commitment to justice. In addition to building credibility, the President employs emotional appeal (pathos) by using nationalistic and unifying rhetoric, declaring that "if one of us breaks, we are all broken," to emphasize collective strength. He also expresses solidarity with the people through statements such as "my commitment is your commitment" and invokes shared suffering by referencing martyrs and prisoners. Finally, he supports his vision with logical arguments and structural reforms (logos) by outlining clear policy commitments on governance, economy, and security. His proposals include modernization and digital transformation in public administration, as

well as economic recovery strategies focused on transparency, investment, and institutional restructuring.

Table 2: Expressions and Their Connotations in Aoun's Discourse

Expression	Connotation
Monopoly on weapons	Suggests state sovereignty and critiques non-state actors without confrontation, maintaining strategic ambiguity
The system has betrayed its people.	Shifts blame onto previous administrations, reinforcing a narrative of past failure while positioning Aoun as a reformer
We will hold them accountable.	Vague promise of justice and reform, appealing to public frustration but lacking concrete policy details
I remain one of you, and I am proud of my membership in your national school.	Establishes solidarity with the people, using an identity-based appeal to enhance credibility and relatability
There is no longer any question of wasting time or opportunities.	Signals urgency and commitment to reform, reinforcing his role as a proactive leader
If one of us breaks, we are all broken.	Appeals to national unity and collective resilience, evoking emotional solidarity
My commitment is your commitment.	Reinforces alignment with the public's aspirations, emphasizing shared goals and mutual dedication

Historical Coding: Analyzing Intertextual Links to Past Events, Leaders, or Policies

President Aoun's speech is rich in historical references that serve to legitimize his leadership and contextualize current challenges within Lebanon's broader national narrative. Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach emphasizes that political leaders use historical intertextuality to construct their authority by aligning themselves with past figures and national struggles. His mention of Greater Lebanon (1920) is a particularly significant rhetorical move, positioning his presidency as a pivotal moment in the country's history. By drawing parallels between past struggles and present governance efforts, Aoun frames himself as the custodian of Lebanon's national legacy. Additionally, references to Lebanon's history of war, economic crises, and foreign interventions serve to highlight the continuity of hardship, reinforcing the idea that his administration is tasked with overcoming deeply entrenched issues. He invokes the memory of the 1975-1990 civil war, stating, "We have seen devastation before, but we rebuilt," drawing a direct line between past resilience and present perseverance. Wodak (2001) argues that such references function as discursive strategies to promote political continuity and strengthen leadership narratives.

Addressing regional conflicts, he reaffirmed Lebanon's long-standing position on the Israeli occupation, emphasizing the nation's commitment to resisting aggression and preserving sovereignty. Furthermore, he underscored the Palestinian refugee issue, rejecting the prospect of permanent settlement and aligning Lebanon's stance with the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative. Recognizing the complexities of Lebanon-Syria relations, he advocates for diplomatic dialogue to resolve border disputes and the ongoing refugee crisis, demonstrating a strategic approach to regional stability. Through these historical and geopolitical references, the speech not only situates Lebanon within a broader regional context but also seeks to strengthen the legitimacy of Aoun's leadership by demonstrating historical awareness and continuity. Wodak's approach underscores that by invoking

past struggles and victories, leaders create a sense of national identity and justify present policies as part of a historical trajectory.

Analysis Based on Paul and Elder Critical Thinking Framework

President Joseph Aoun's inaugural speech demonstrates a strong connection with Paul and Elder's Critical Thinking Framework, as it systematically incorporates both the elements of thought and the intellectual. The speech shows a clear purpose of promoting national recovery through unity, justice, and institutional reform, while posing the central question of how Lebanon can overcome the multiple problems faced to rebuild a legitimate and equitable state. Drawing on credible information about systemic corruption, economic decline, and governance failures, President Aoun applies foundational concepts such as the rule of law, neutrality, and sovereignty, resting on the assumption that citizens value fairness over sectarian privilege. His inferences establish that institutional reform is a prerequisite for restoring public trust, while the implications underscore the consequences of inaction. From the perspective of a servant-leader committed to ethical governance, the speech emphasizes inclusivity and accountability. Moreover, it meets the intellectual standards of clarity through unambiguous statements, accuracy in acknowledging national crises, relevance by concentrating on pressing issues, depth in addressing root causes, breadth through consideration of domestic and regional challenges, logic in connecting reform to legitimacy, and fairness in rejecting partisan advantage. Therefore, these features show that the speech goes beyond ceremonial language, presenting a clear and thoughtful use of critical thinking aimed at building trust and encouraging collective action for national renewal.

Table 3: Elements of Thought Illustrated in the Speech

Elements of Thought	Definition	Example from the Speech
Purpose	The goal or objective of the reasoning	<i>To outline a national recovery plan based on unity, justice, and institutional reform</i>
Question at Issue	The central problem or issue being addressed	<i>How can Lebanon overcome systemic failure and reestablish a functioning, just state?</i>
Information	Data, facts, and experiences used to support claims	<i>Mentions of corruption, economic collapse, political paralysis, judicial failure, and public distrust</i>
Concepts	Theories, principles, or ideas used in reasoning	<i>Rule of law, neutrality, sovereignty, national interest, democracy, anti-corruption</i>
Assumptions	Beliefs taken for granted or assumed	<i>Citizens want justice and reform; sectarianism is harmful; the state must be neutral and effective.</i>
Implications/Consequences	Outcomes or effects of reasoning	<i>If corruption continues → collapse. If reform succeeds → restored public trust and national unity.</i>
Inferences	Conclusions drawn based on evidence and reasoning	<i>Because the judiciary is politicized, it must be freed from interference to restore justice.</i>
Point of View	The perspective or position from which reasoning occurs	<i>From a servant-leader's perspective focused on citizen welfare and institutional accountability</i>

Table 4: Intellectual Standards Reflected in the Inaugural Address

Standard	Definition	Example from the Speech
Clarity	Easy to understand and free from confusion	<i>"I will be the first servant of Lebanon."</i> → direct and unambiguous statement of role
Accuracy	Free from errors or distortions; true	<i>Acknowledges "failures in governance, justice, and economy" – honest assessment of reality</i>
Relevance	Connected to the matter at hand	<i>Speech sticks to core national issues: reform, justice, unity, security.</i>
Depth	Addresses complexities and underlying causes	<i>Discusses root causes, such as sectarianism, clientelism, and weak institutions</i>
Breadth	Considers multiple perspectives	<i>Mentions domestic challenges, regional relations, refugees, and international diplomacy</i>
Logic	Reasoning follows from evidence and makes sense.	<i>"Restoring trust requires reform → Reform requires judicial independence and accountability."</i>
Significance	Focuses on the most important issues	<i>Prioritizes issues, such as sovereignty, corruption, and state collapse – matters affecting all citizens</i>
Fairness	Reasoning is just, unbiased, and balanced.	<i>"No citizen shall have privilege over another. No sect shall prevail over another." – Equitable reasoning</i>

Finally, Aoun's speech strategically employs linguistic, ideological, historical elements, and critical thinking elements to construct a persuasive discourse aimed at reinforcing his leadership, rallying public support, and framing his administration as a force for reform. However, the effectiveness of these rhetorical strategies is somewhat diminished by the absence of concrete policy commitments, leaving many of his promises open to interpretation.

Challenges and Potential Misunderstanding

Translating this speech from Arabic to English involves navigating complex cultural, political, and emotional layers. Challenges include preserving the deep cultural significance of sovereignty and diaspora identity, accurately conveying political and legal terms within the Lebanese context, maintaining the speaker's rhetorical style and tone, and adapting idiomatic expressions for clarity and impact. Careful, nuanced translation is essential to avoid misunderstandings and to faithfully represent the speaker's commitments and vision.

1. Loss of Rhetorical Force in Repetition: The Arabic uses the phrase "عهدي أن" ("My pledge is that") at the beginning of each paragraph, creating a solemn, oath-like rhythm. In English, the repeated phrase "My commitment is to" or "My commitment is that" may feel more bureaucratic or flat, losing the emotional gravity and rhetorical buildup present in Arabic.
2. Semantic Overlap and Ambiguity: Phrases such as "سيادة لبنان وحرية قراره" are translated as "Lebanon's sovereignty and its freedom of decision." While accurate, "freedom of decision" in English may sound awkward or unclear. In Arabic, "حرية قراره" is a set expression referring to independent policymaking free from foreign influence, a politically charged idea that may not be fully conveyed to English readers.
3. Cultural-Emotional Concepts Difficult to Translate: The Arabic word "غربتهم" (their exile/estrangement) refers to the emotional and cultural disconnection of the diaspora. The English "exile" does not fully reflect this layered concept, which includes both physical distance

and emotional longing. Similarly, "انتماء جديد" ("a new bond of belonging") is more culturally nuanced in Arabic than the English equivalent might suggest.

4. **Idiomatic and Poetic Language:** The Arabic "فكرة عابرة لا حاجة لها" is translated as "a temporary idea for which there will be no need." This sounds somewhat awkward in English. In Arabic, the phrase is poetic and implies that permanent emigration will become an obsolete concept. The English loses that natural fluency and poetic closure.
5. **Administrative Terms May Not Match:** The Arabic "مشروع قانون اللامركزية الإدارية الموسعة" is translated as "a bill for expanded administrative decentralization." While technically correct, this terminology may be unfamiliar to English readers and lacks the clarity or impact it has in Arabic, where the phrase reflects a well-known political reform agenda.
6. **Syntactic Structure and Flow:** Arabic uses long, complex sentences connected by "و" (and), which are stylistically appropriate in formal speeches. Literal translation into English can lead to long, overly complex sentences that strain readability. For example, the sentence starting with "My commitment is to open Lebanon..." combines multiple ideas that could be more clearly expressed in shorter, distinct English sentences.

Analysis and Discussion of Research Questions

The intersection of Paul and Elder's Critical Thinking framework with CDA theories offers a robust lens for examining political discourse. Through this integrated approach, the inaugural speech of President Joseph Aoun is analyzed to uncover the linguistic, rhetorical, and ideological strategies that shape public perception and reinforce leadership authority. The following research questions guide the analysis, each addressing a specific dimension of the discourse and its broader social implications.

Research Question 1:

How do the discourse techniques and rhetorical devices used by the President influence his message for the audience?

The discourse techniques employed by President Joseph Aoun - such as authoritative word choices, declarative sentence structures, and references to national identity - play a key role in shaping the tone and persuasiveness of his message. These elements construct an image of a decisive and responsible leader, reinforcing his credibility and legitimacy. Inclusive language and symbolic expressions appeal to a collective sense of identity and resilience, aiming to evoke emotional engagement and national solidarity. While the speech inspires confidence and unity, it relies heavily on rhetorical strength rather than offering detailed policy plans. As a result, the techniques function primarily to motivate and reassure the public, strengthening the general impact of the speech without necessarily committing to specific actions.

Research Question 2:

How can the integration of Paul and Elder's Critical Thinking theory in Critical Discourse Analysis objectively reveal the power structures and ideologies embedded in discourse?

Integrating Paul and Elder's Critical Thinking (CT) theory into Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) establishes a structured framework that strengthens the objectivity of identifying embedded power structures and ideologies within discourse. Applying CT principles - such as assessing reasoning, uncovering underlying assumptions, and examining the purpose and consequences of speech - enables analysts to critically evaluate the role of language in reinforcing social power relations. This combined approach supports a detailed investigation of linguistic features, rhetorical strategies, and ideological content, allowing political discourse to be examined in terms of its function in constructing and legitimizing authority. As a result, integration promotes a deeper and more impartial interpretation of

dominant ideologies embedded in language and their role in sustaining power dynamics. In a sociocentric and egocentric context such as Lebanon, the application of Paul and Elder helps in maintaining the analyst's objectivity and fair-mindedness in analyzing President Aoun's speech in order to reveal the speech's purpose and embedded messages that are the President's vision for Lebanon, the necessary reforms needed in these difficult socio-economic times in addition to his repeated call for hope, sovereignty and national unity "we shall overcome". Therefore, the speaker infers the urge to adopt neutrality and calls for the state to lead under the Lebanese laws in order to ensure stability and unity. However, the logical argument has fallacy since the president did not present a clear and feasible reform plan. Instead, he relied heavily on emotional appeals and persuasive techniques to manipulate and persuade the audience "We support each other, because if one of us breaks, we are all broken". The president asserts that the power is upheld by the state only, and he promotes for equality; moreover, he is aware of Lebanon's sectarianism and advocates for equality but does not show the way to ensure this equality "No sect should be favored over another".

Research Question 3:

What discourse techniques and rhetorical devices did President Joseph Aoun use in his inaugural speech?

In his inaugural speech, President Joseph Aoun employed a variety of discourse techniques and rhetorical devices to reinforce his authority and promote national unity. He used repetition for emphasis, with phrases such as "no more mafias, no more leaks, no more immunity" and "we shall overcome" underscoring determination and resilience. Strategic lexical choices - such as "oath," "commitment," and "supreme commander" - strengthened his image as a legitimate leader. The speech featured metaphors and symbolic language, framing Lebanon's challenges as part of a broader journey of renewal, as in "Lebanon is the witness of history" and "the pillars of our nation are being rebuilt." Inclusive pronouns such as "our" and direct addresses such as "Dear Lebanese" fostered a collective identity. Emotional appeals referencing patriotism and shared suffering reinforced solidarity, particularly through lines like "together we shall overcome, as we always have." Finally, the blend of political, nationalistic, and reformist rhetoric - delivered through declarative sentences and active voice - constructed a persuasive message aimed at instilling confidence and unity during a time of national crisis.

Conclusion

Summary of the Results

This study has explored President Joseph Aoun's inaugural speech through the lens of CDA and Paul and Elder's Critical Thinking Framework, highlighting the way language constructs power, ideology, and public perception. By examining linguistic choices, rhetorical strategies, ideological references, and historical intertextuality, the analysis reveals how President Aoun positions himself as a legitimate and reform-driven leader, reinforcing themes of national unity, resilience, and governance. The findings suggest that while the speech is persuasive and strategically crafted, its effectiveness is somewhat diminished by the lack of concrete policy commitments and ambiguous reform strategies. Furthermore, this research demonstrates the importance of applying both CDA and CT approaches to political discourse, allowing for a deeper understanding of the way leaders frame narratives to influence public perception. By critically engaging with political language, researchers and analysts can uncover underlying ideologies and power structures that shape public discourse.

Limitations of the Study

In this study, an English translation of the original text is used although the use of the translated version may present certain limitations in capturing the full nuance of the original speech. To illustrate, analyzing the translated text explores the way political discourse is framed for a broader international

audience. Translation can significantly shape the reception of a speech especially when it comes to presenting national issues to the global community. The English translation provides a unique opportunity to examine how the message might be tailored to resonate with or be interpreted by western media and audiences. This approach also highlights the potential influence of translation choices on the way Lebanon's political narrative is constructed and perceived internationally. While an analysis of the original Arabic texts could offer a deeper insight into the local cultural context, the use of the translated version helps to explore the speech's role in shaping global perceptions of Lebanon.

Therefore, despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. One key limitation is the translation of the speech from Arabic to English, which may introduce interpretative bias. Political speeches often contain culturally specific expressions, rhetorical nuances, and linguistic structures that may not have direct equivalents in English. As a result, certain meanings or emphases may be altered, weakened, or unintentionally misrepresented during the translation process. Additionally, subtle connotations and word choices that carry political or ideological significance in Arabic may not fully translate into English, potentially affecting the depth of the discourse analysis.

Recommendations and Implications

Future research should incorporate audience reception studies as focus groups or public opinion surveys to provide a more nuanced understanding of the way political speeches influence different societal groups.

One important limitation of this analysis is that the speech was translated into English, which may have introduced nuances or meanings lost in translation. It is recommended that future analysis consider examining the original Arabic version, a version of this speech in addition to the English translation. This comparison can offer insights into the way certain elements of the speech may be reinterpreted or altered in translation, potentially influencing its impact on different audiences. Therefore, comparing the Arabic and English versions could reveal that the translation might reflect or reshape the image of Lebanon for global audiences particularly through the lens of Western media analyzing the differences in wording. Tone emphasis could also uncover subtle shifts in the way Lebanon is presented to the international community. This comparative study would provide a more nuanced understanding of the political message and its reception both locally and globally, offering valuable insights into the role of language in shaping political narratives across cultures. By addressing the translation issue, researchers can enhance the accuracy and depth of the analysis providing a more comprehensive understanding of the speech's impact and its broader implications.

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Appendix

Political Inaugural Speech of President Joseph Aoun Translated Speech (English)

Mr. Speaker,

Mr. Prime Minister,

Ladies and Gentlemen, MPs and Ministers,

Ladies and Gentlemen, Heads and Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Dear Lebanese Women,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honor for me to have been elected President of the Lebanese Republic by you, gentlemen of the parliament. This title is the greatest of honors and responsibilities. I became the first president after the centenary of the creation of the State of Greater Lebanon, in the midst of a Middle East crisis where alliances have collapsed and systems have fallen, and whose borders could change!

But Lebanon has remained itself, despite wars, explosions, interventions, aggressions, greedy ambitions, and the mismanagement of our crises ... Because Lebanon is the witness of history, because religions are complementary, and because the people are one. Our identity, despite our diversity, is Lebanese. We love creativity as the essential breath of life and we cling to our land as a fundamental space of freedom. Our character is courageous, our strength lies in our ability to adapt. We make dreams and live them, and no matter our differences, in times of crisis, we support each other, because if one of us breaks, we are all broken.

Dear beloved people,

We have reached the moment of truth.

We are going through a crisis of governance that requires a change in the way we conceive of politics, in order to preserve our security and our borders, in our economic policies; in the management of our social affairs; in the definition of our democracy, in the governance of the majority and the rights of minorities; in the way Lebanon presents itself abroad and in our relations with the diaspora; in our philosophy of responsibility and oversight; in the centrality of the state and in the fight against economic injustice, unemployment, poverty and human and environmental desertification.

It is a crisis of governance and rulers, a failure in the application of laws or a poor interpretation and formulation of these laws!

My oath to the Lebanese, wherever they are, and to the whole world to hear:

Today begins a new phase in the history of Lebanon. I have taken an oath before your honorable Assembly and before the Lebanese people, swearing loyalty to the Lebanese Nation and committing myself to be the first servant of the preservation of the National Pact, as well as to apply its principles in a way that serves the higher interest of the nation and to fully exercise my presidential powers as a just arbiter between institutions, whose objective is to protect the sacredness of individual and collective freedoms, which constitute the essence of Lebanon.

These freedoms must be based on the rule of law, on governance that guarantees rights, ensures accountability, and ensures equality among all citizens. Because if we want to build a nation, we must all be under the roof of law and justice, where there will be no more mafias or security islands, no more leaks or money laundering, no more drug trafficking, no more interference in the judicial system, in police stations, no more protections or clientelism, no more immunity for criminals and the corrupt. Justice is the bulwark; it is the only guarantee that every citizen has. This is my commitment!

My commitment is to work with the next government to adopt a new law on the independence of the judiciary, with regard to its judicial, administrative and financial branches, to develop the work of the prosecutor's offices, to make judicial appointments based on criteria of integrity and competence, to strengthen the Judicial Council, to simplify judicial procedures, to reform prisons and to speed up judgments in order to guarantee freedoms and rights, while encouraging investment and fighting corruption.

My commitment is to challenge the validity of any law that violates the principles of the Constitution, and to respect the separation of powers, by exercising my supervisory function honestly and objectively, and having the right to refer to Parliament or the government laws and decrees that do not serve the public interest.

My commitment is to call for swift parliamentary consultations to appoint a prime minister who is a partner in responsibility and not an adversary, so that we exercise our powers in a positive manner, aimed at ensuring the continuity of public services, prioritizing competence over patronage, nation over faction, efficiency over bureaucracy, and transparency over private business, and embracing global developments rather than dwelling on past conflicts.

My commitment to the Parliament and the government is to restructure the public administration, introduce rotation in senior public offices, and appoint regulatory authorities; to restore the dignity of the state and civil servants, restore their status, and attract elites to create a modern, electronic, agile, efficient, impartial, decentralized administration that improves the management of its resources, has no complexes about the private sector, prevents monopolies and is not afraid to be transparent with controllers and users. It will strengthen competition, protect the consumer, avoid waste, activate monitoring mechanisms, and improve planning, budgeting, and public debt management. Because there is no value in a public administration that does not provide quality services to citizens at the best price, as an essential condition for preserving the dignity of the Lebanese, revitalizing the economy, and creating job opportunities.

My commitment is to carry out my duties as the supreme commander of the armed forces and as the chairman of the Higher Defense Council, working to ensure the state's right to hold a monopoly on weapons, and to invest in the army to monitor the borders, maintain their security in the south, define the boundaries in the east, north and at sea, prevent smuggling, fight terrorism and preserve the unity of the Lebanese territory. The army has a defense doctrine that protects the people and fights according to the principles of the Constitution.

My commitment is to ensure that the security forces, in their various missions, play an essential role in maintaining order and enforcing the laws.

My commitment is to ask for an integrated defense policy to be debated, as part of a national security strategy on the diplomatic, economic and military levels, to enable the Lebanese state, I repeat, the Lebanese state, to eradicate the Israeli occupation and repel its aggressions on all Lebanese territories. My commitment is to rebuild what was destroyed by the Israeli aggression in the south, in the Bekaa, in the southern suburbs and throughout Lebanon, in a transparent manner, and to believe that our martyrs are the soul of our determination, that our prisoners are a responsibility that falls on us, and to never make any concessions to the sovereignty and independence of Lebanon. Our unity is the guarantee of our security, our diversity is the richness of our experience. It is time to bet on Lebanon, and to capitalize on our external relations, and not to bet on the foreign to oppose each other.

My commitment is that we all adhere to the principle of rejecting the settlement of the Palestinian brothers, thus preserving their right of return and strengthening the two-state solution, adopted at the Beirut Summit according to the Arab Peace Initiative. I also commit to defending the right of the

Lebanese state to exercise its sovereignty over all its territory, including the Palestinian refugee camps, while preserving their human dignity.

My commitment is to establish the best relations with the brotherly Arab countries, based on the principle that Lebanon belongs to the Arab family, and to build strategic partnerships with the countries of the Levant, the Gulf and North Africa, preventing any conspiracy against their regimes and sovereignty. We will practice a policy of positive neutrality and offer them only the best of what we have, whether in products, industries, or attracting Arab tourists, students and investors to evolve with them, enriching our human relations and building integrated and collaborative economies.

My commitment, in the face of the rapid developments in the regional situation, is to seize a historic opportunity to begin a serious and respectful dialogue with the Syrian state to resolve all the outstanding issues between us, including those concerning respect for the sovereignty and independence of the two countries; border control in both directions; the absence of interference in each other's internal affairs; the file of the missing and the issue of Syrian refugees, which has existential implications for Lebanon. We will work with Syria and the international community to resolve this crisis, far from racist proposals or negative approaches, and we will work with the incoming government and the National Assembly to establish a clear, immediately applicable mechanism that will allow these refugees to return to their country.

My commitment is to open Lebanon to both worlds, East and West, to create alliances and strengthen Lebanon's external relations with friendly countries and the international community, based on mutual respect, to preserve Lebanon's sovereignty and its freedom of decision.

My commitment is that every Lebanese in the diaspora will be proud of Lebanon, just as Lebanon is proud of its expatriates. Their right to vote is a sacred right that transforms their exile into a new bond of belonging to every village and city in Lebanon. Thus, those who wish and have the opportunity will return, and permanent emigration will turn into a temporary idea for which there will be no need.

My commitment is to push, with future governments, to develop electoral laws in order to strengthen opportunities for rotation in power, to guarantee proper representation, transparency and accountability. I will also work towards the adoption of a bill for expanded administrative decentralization to reduce the suffering of citizens and promote sustainable and balanced development.

My commitment is to maintain a free Lebanese economy and protect private property, with banks operating under a regime of governance and transparency, where the law is the only rule, and where no secrets exist except professional secrecy. I pledge not to neglect the protection of citizens' deposits. My commitment is to promote and expand social protection networks, in particular social security and health services, while working to preserve the environment and respecting freedom of the press and expression within constitutional and legal frameworks.

My commitment is to invest in science, again and again in science, in public schools, the Lebanese university and the preservation of the freedom of private education.

My commitment is your commitment, honorable members of parliament, and that of every Lebanese person who wants to build a strong state, a productive economy, stable security, a united nation and a promising future.

There is no longer any question of wasting time or opportunities. I invite you not to think about the upcoming elections, but to think about the future of your children and the dignity of your elders. Our duty is to be statesmen and women, to think about the future of generations to come, and not about our personal interests, to consider that we belong to Lebanon, and not that it belongs to us.

To my brothers in arms: At this moment, I am taking off my military uniform to put on civilian clothes, but I remain one of you and I am proud of my membership in your national school, that of

honor, sacrifice and loyalty. I keep in my heart, my mind and my soul your sacrifices and your heroism. You are the institution on which the country is built, which protects its unity. You have never betrayed the people, and I, in my turn, will not betray you.

To the dear Lebanese, I say: My commitment is yours, and the work is vast, I cannot assume it alone. These are responsibilities that fall to the MPs, the ministers, the justice system, the political parties and the civil society. My commitment is to work with everyone to defend the public interest and the rights of the Lebanese, whether individual or collective and to prove to the world that there is no word "failure" in the Lebanese dictionary. This is the time for your creativity, the time to bend the world by the force of your determination, the time for peace, conscience, work and solidarity among you. No sect should be favored over another, and no citizen should have privilege over another. This is the time for respecting the Constitution, building the state and applying the laws. This is the oath of Lebanon.

Long live Lebanon!

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