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JEAN-JACQUES THIBON

al-Ḥarīrī, Rafīq

Rafīq Bahā' al-Dīn **al-Ḥarīrī** (Rafic Hariri) was a Lebanese-Saudi entrepreneur turned politician, who was born, the eldest of three, in Sidon (Ṣaydā) on 1 November 1944. Following his fruit-grower father's near bankruptcy, he attended school with the help of the Maqāshid (Makassed) Benevolent Association (a Sunnī philanthropic organisation) and, as an adolescent, sympathised with Arab nationalism. As an accountancy student at the Arab University in Beirut, he married Niḍāl al-Bustānī, an Iraqi colleague with whom he three sons, Bahā' al-Dīn (b. 1967), Sa'd al-Dīn (b. 1970), and Ḥusām al-Dīn (1972-90).

In search of a livelihood, al-Ḥarīrī travelled to Saudi Arabia in 1965 and tested various business sectors before establishing a construction firm in Jidda. Following initial hardships, al-Ḥarīrī made a fortune after 1976, when King Khālīd (r. 1975-82) commissioned him to complete a hotel in Ṭā'if by the summer of 1977, on very short notice. This feat earned al-Ḥarīrī additional contracts and bolstered his reputation. During these years of entrepreneurial success, al-Ḥarīrī befriended Jacques Chirac as mayor of Paris, obtained Saudi citizenship in 1978, and remarried in 1976, with Nāzīk 'Awda, a Palestinian Lebanese. The couple had three children, Ayman (b. 1979), Fahd (b. 1981), and Hind (b. 1984).

In 1979, the self-made billionaire established in Sidon the philanthropic Islamic Foundation for Culture and Higher Education (later called the Hariri Foundation), through which, aided by his sister Bahiyya (b. 1952), he sponsored educational, infrastructural, and social activities. Al-Ḥarīrī's welfare patronage in Sidon gained him influence at the national Lebanese level from 1982 onwards. King Fahd of Saudi Arabia (r. 1982-2005) backed al-Ḥarīrī as mediator in the Lebanese civil war of 1975-90. Having facilitated the Ṭā'if Agreement of 1990, which ended the civil war, and invested in his relations with the Syrian president, Ḥāfīz al-Asad (r. 1971-2000), al-Ḥarīrī gained unprecedented prominence after becoming Lebanese prime minister in October 1992. From 1992 to 2004, he presided over five cabinets, interrupted only between December 1998 and October 2000.

Al-Ḥarīrī's neoliberal reconstruction policies envisioned Beirut as a cosmopolitan hub connecting Lebanese and Western capital to Gulf investors. This required stability, limited state intervention, and