



# The Ghosts of Martyrs Square: An Eyewitness Account of Lebanon's Life Struggle

*Michael Young*

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NOT SINCE THOMAS FRIEDMAN'S *FROM BEIRUT TO JERUSALEM* IN 1989 HAS A JOURNALIST OFFERED SUCH A POIGNANT AND PASSIONATE PORTRAIT OF LEBANON—A UNIQUELY PLURALIST ARAB COUNTRY STRUGGLING TO DEFEND ITS VIABILITY IN A TURBULENT AND TREACHEROUS MIDDLE EAST.

Michael Young, who was taken to Lebanon at age seven by his Lebanese mother after the death of his American father and who has worked most of his career as a journalist there for American publications, brings to life a country in the crossfire of invasions, war, domestic division, incessant sectarian scheming, and often living in fear of its neighbors. Young knows or has known many of the players, politicians, writers, and religious leaders.

A country riven by domestic tensions that have often resulted in assassinations, under the considerable sway of Hezbollah (in alliance with Iran and Syria), frequently set upon by Israel and Syria, nearly destroyed by civil war, Lebanon remains an exception among Arab countries because it is a place where liberal instincts and tolerance struggle to stay alive.

An important and enduring symbol, Lebanon was once the outstanding example of an (almost) democratic society in an inhospitable, dangerous region—a laboratory both for modernity and violence, as a Lebanese intellectual who was later assassinated once put it.

Young relates the growing tension between a domineering Syria and a Lebanese opposition in which charismatic leader and politician Rafiq al-Hariri was assassinated and the Independence Intifada—the Cedar Revolution—broke out. His searing account of his country's confrontation with its domestic and regional demons is one of hope found and possibly lost.

In this stunning narrative, Young tells us what *might* have been his country's history, and what it *may* yet be.

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