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The Lebanese Conflict and the Taif Accord

by

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**THE LEBANESE CONFLICT AND THE TAIF
ACCORD**

To
Ramez and Najwa,
For all their love and support throughout my life...

Acknowledgements

This study was by far the greatest intellectual challenge to me; the topic I chose is very personal and yet I had to be extremely objective while writing this thesis, The Lebanese conflict and its aftermath, the Taif Accord, is an extremely sensitive issue specially that until this day the Lebanese people can still be easily divided on matters related to the 1975 war. There is overwhelming support for the Taif Accord, but at certain critical junctions in time this support seems to be more rhetorical than real.

I would like to thank several people for helping me throughout this long journey.

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Finally I would like to dedicate this thesis to my generation, we who had to endure the consequences of the Lebanese war, hoping that we can sincerely say that we learned the lessons of the past.

ABSTRACT

Lebanon is now ruled by a system which has been outlined at Taif which supposedly brought an end to the war.

In this thesis an attempt is made to determine the roots of the measures which were established at Taif to terminate the war. The modern history of Lebanon in the 19th and early 20th century has been reviewed with the intent to examine the roots of sectarianism and the struggle for sovereignty with outsiders afar or near. Syria or as it was known under the Ottomans, the vilayat of Damascus, has been no stranger to the struggle for Lebanese sovereignty.

During the war of 1975-89 various attempts for mediation, reconciliation and settlement were reviewed as perhaps the forerunners of Taif with each attempt yielding one or another of the features of Taif. In Chapter IV, the making of the grand settlement at Taif was examined. The power factors on the international and domestic level which contributed to the making of Taif were considered and examined in as much as they determined the major features of Taif. Taif cannot be understood without reference to the conflict in Lebanon and thus in this regard they have been studied jointly.

In Chapter V, the Taif Accord has been analyzed fully in theory and practice. It revealed that the Syrian hegemony is still persistent and that this hegemony has been belatedly challenged by a seemingly developing Christian-Muslim front.

The recent joining of Walid Jumblat, the prominent Druze leader, and the hovering of Hariri over the wings of the opposition have both given the opposition to Syria a national character: A feature which proved effective in Lebanese history against outsiders.

Taif like its predecessor, the National Pact of 1943, turned out to be a confessionally consociational built Pact. Considering the confessional nature of the Lebanese society and its mosaics no other system seems to be viable. Some adjustments in the balance and internal equilibrium between sects have been achieved at Taif to reflect the changing demographic features in the country. This change is certainly due and is acknowledged in principal by the Christians whose role in the system has been modified. But the cry is that under the hegemony of Syria and Arab auspices the Christians have been marginalized. Recently, in the interest of solidarity with other Muslim wings in the opposition, the Christians have temporarily glossed over some of their complaints of Taif. The question is would such complaints surface again after the recapturing of sovereignty? The chances are they probably would in a modest manner. This is not, however, to discredit Taif which apparently is a viable formula for the system of Lebanon. An association by fiat is not everlasting, an association in freedom lasts but in a changing manner. This is in anticipation the destiny of Taif in Lebanon. Externally Syrian influence may be maintained if it is based on association in freedom; Syrian occupation, however, is less likely to last.

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Chapter I

Introduction

After the end of the trauma of war, post- conflict societies are often faced with the hard task of how to construct a stable form of domestic power sharing and governance.

Adversaries often exhausted by conflict may at some point decide to stop the fight in exchange for peace, which is often based on the necessity to stop battles rather than on conviction.

The war that erupted in Lebanon in 1975 came to a halt only in 1990, one year after the signing of a political Accord in Taif, Saudi Arabia. Out of a population of 3 million, approximately 150,000 were killed, 200,000 wounded, 700,000 displaced, and 400,000 emigrated.¹

The society became increasingly divided communally, with local militias and foreign armies holding political and military influence. The country's once vibrant economy was also ravaged, with heavy losses in tourism, banking, manufacturing, and agricultural sectors. In addition, the infrastructures of electricity, roads, and telecommunications were

¹ Statistical data .15 Dec.2004 < <http://www.al-bab.com> >

devastated. It has taken many a year to rebuild the overstructures and the infrastructures devastated by the war but the cost has been exorbitant: over thirty billion dollars in debt and it is still climbing. It remains to be seen how the Lebanese are going to recover these debts.

The Lebanese war is very complex and has many dimensions so it is not considered, as some have claimed, to be a pure civil war as many non Lebanese nationals were involved, indeed armies of neighboring countries took part in much of the fighting.

There were many simplistic references to Christians and Muslims in the accounts of the war suggesting as if it was a pure war of religion, but in fact it was much more complex with many other elements included: social, ideological, cultural, domestic and external factors.

Many Lebanese and Foreign writers have tried for years to investigate the causes behind the Lebanese war that erupted in 1975.

While some blamed solely external or regional forces, such as the PLO and Israel for the war, others looked more deeply into the roots of the war and realized that the constant factor was internal and took the

shape of a Communal Conflict, and that the variables were the external or the regional factors.

A certain dynamic developed between the internal and external factors.

In other words, Lebanon contained the seeds of the conflict within its sociopolitical and economic structure; and the external forces that had their own goals, helped these domestic seeds to grow and emerge to the surface.

In order to clearly understand both the nature and the root causes of the conflict that erupted in 1975 in Lebanon, one must fully understand the social and historical structure of the Lebanese society and the elements that shaped the Lebanese sociopolitical model.

Nineteen Seventy Five was a random choice for the commencement of the war which lasted for 15 years and in the opinion of many scholars could have been terminated years before the Taif Accord of 1989.

In the conflict resolution vocabulary, the Conflict had to reach a stalemate before being resolved.

Throughout the years, the war was like a chameleon that kept on changing colors, it took various forms.

The dimensions of the war comprised of a Lebanese-Palestinian war, a Lebanese-Lebanese, a Palestinian-Syrian, a Palestinian-Israeli, a Lebanese-Syrian, a Syrian-Israeli, and a Lebanese-Israeli war. Add to these dimensions Libyans, Egyptians, Iraqis, Americans and Russians and "*the resulting chaotic soup of over seventy groups fighting in Lebanon would confuse the most ordered of minds.*"²

Throughout the years, there has been a national effort to erase and forget all traces of the war. The physical detritus of the war is everywhere, yet in the view of many analysts a selective amnesia has obscured memories of the war and discouraged the Lebanese from drawing lessons of it.

Although Lebanon is one of the most open Arab societies, talk of the war is regarded as a taboo. For example, in most history courses at the universities, the course's material stops at the beginning of the war, thus war for the young generation goes unmentioned, its causes unexamined and its outcome unnoticed.

Even language itself has been altered to avoid a direct confrontation with the past. When they mention the civil war at all, many Lebanese

² Michael Hudson, The Problem of Authoritative Power in Lebanese Politics (London: Center for Lebanese Studies & I.B Tauris, 1998) 17.

refer to it as *"the events,"* or, calming themselves with the notion that foreigners were mainly to be blamed, it was *"the war of the others."*

The risk in Lebanon's indifference and denial to its recent history, is that it may intensify the danger of repeating the past. Sectarian hatreds among rival groups of Muslims and Christians, which gave rise to the war and provided much of its fuel, are at least as great now as they were before the war's outbreak in 1975, many analysts said.

"This wound has not healed," said Farid El Khazen, a political scientist at the American University of Beirut. *"The idea is that we should forget the war, turn the page and move on. It's a scandal."*³

"Responsibility, crimes, the disappeared, none of this was dealt with," said Elias Khoury, a Lebanese novelist, playwright and journalist. *"The most tragic thing about the Lebanese civil war is that it is not a tragedy in the consciousness of the Lebanese."*⁴

The document of National Understanding adopted by the Lebanese deputies at Taif, Saudi Arabia was the result of the dramatic escalation of events in Lebanon.

³ Farid El Khazen. Personal Interview. 10 October 2004.

⁴ Televised Interview 12 March 2004, LBCI.

The constitutional stalemate reached in the wake of President Amin Gemayel's departure on September 23, 1988, the co-existence of two separate governments and the resumption of hostilities and bombardments on March 14, 1989, placed more pressure on the mediators to renew attempts to end the violence and resolve the conflict.⁵

The Constitutional amendments as requested at Taif were approved by Parliament on August 21, 1990, and signed into law by President Elias Hrawi on September 21.

The Conflict had three main aspects: reform of the political system, the National Identity of Lebanon and Lebanon's sovereignty.

The Taif Accord dealt separately with these three issues, and this is what differentiated it from several unsuccessful attempts to resolve the conflict.

The Accord proposed a set of constitutional changes that represent a fundamental change in the official structure of government from a system dominated by the president to a more collegial form of government presumably dominated by the Council of Ministers.

⁵ Robert Fisk Pity the Nation: Lebanon at War, (Oxford: Oxford University press, 2001) 93

The Taif Accord sets an equal representation between Christians and Muslims in the Lebanese parliament and redistributes the powers of the branches of government; but it left two sets of issues open to future discussion.

One was a plan to dismantle the sectarian structure of Lebanese politics, which has long been organized around parties belonging to one or another religious faction.

Not only are Lebanese politics still marked by sectarianism, but the antagonism among the various sectarian interests is greater than ever before. None of the nation's major politicians is regarded as a truly national figure. Rather, each represents mainly the interests of his own clan whether Christian Maronites, Sunni Muslims, Shiite Muslims or Druze.

The Taif agreement also foresaw the withdrawal of tens of thousands of Syrian troops from Lebanese territory. But 14 years later, Syrian troops remain. Syrian presence has left Lebanon a sovereign state in name only, but it has also kept a grip on disputes among the country's competing sectarian factions.

Taif is often criticized for failing to provide the Lebanese society with a safe cocoon; the Accord's role was reduced to a mere conflict settlement to end the violence disregarding the long term goal of state-building through a healthy process of democratic governance.

The intention in this paper is neither to analyze the causes nor to superficially narrate the events of the war, instead this paper deals with the resolution of the conflict among the various factions and in that same regard it provides an analysis and evaluation of the Taif Accord.

The main objective of this study is to evaluate the Taif Accord as a Conflict Resolution mechanism; the study will cover the following:

The first Chapter will serve as an introduction.

In the second chapter, the start is in a historical background going back to the 16th century and to the creation of the Lebanese Republic in order to shed light on the roots of the Lebanese existential problem, by identifying the nature of the Lebanese society, and discussing the essence of the National pact of 1943, the post-independence era and the circumstances that led to the war in 1975.

In the third chapter, the main conflict resolution attempts that were undertaken before Taif are summarized and the causes why they failed are introduced in the context of the war from 1975 until 1989.

In the fourth chapter, the start is by focusing on the local and international environment that led to the Taif Accord followed by a discussion of the making of the Taif Accord, by describing the conflict resolution process focusing on who was involved in it and how was it reached, why did it take 15 years to resolve the conflict, and what was the first reaction to Taif in Lebanon.

In the fifth chapter, an attempt is made to interpret the most controversial clauses of the Taif Accord thus differentiating between theory and practice, to see how it altered the whole Lebanese structure.

This chapter starts by a description of the Taif's clauses followed by what one may call the prescription.

In this chapter, the essence of the Accord is analyzed in an attempt to figure out if it can be considered as a Nation-building mechanism or solely a Conflict Resolution device thus examining whether it increased or decreased confessionalism.

In the last chapter, the Taif Accord is evaluated and an attempt is made to seek an alternative, the Consociational Model.

Chapter II

Historical Background: From the Emirate to the War

The sociopolitical legacy of the Lebanese Society

Throughout history Lebanon has been the home of a multitude of people who have collectively contributed to the present Lebanese characteristics and culture. Not one group, however old or new, can claim a monopoly over Lebanese heritage, nor totally replace the others.

Today's Lebanese Culture is truly the product of thousands of years of cultural interaction, assimilation and adaptation of all the people who came to settle in Lebanon.

Lebanon is indeed an extremely unique model, it is a country that embodies within its 10452km², almost 18 communities, and it has been considered for a long time the asylum of all persecuted religious, political and social groups.

A brief survey of Lebanese history from the 16th to the 20th century is made in this chapter for a better understanding of Taif and its very foundations.

The Emirate: 1516-1842

Between the 16th and 19th centuries, present day Lebanon was not born yet, almost the whole region was under the Ottoman Empire; Mount Lebanon was a semiautonomous Emirate within the Ottoman Empire ruled by a succession of native Emirs. The main political institutional structure was feudal, based on Druze and Maronite feudal privileges dating back several centuries.

In the 16th and 17th century the Maan dynasty ruled the Emirate. Of the Maan dynasty Emirs, Fakherddine II (1590-1633) consolidated the Emirate and successfully challenged the Ottoman Empire for sometime by extending his territory to southern Palestine in the south and northern Syria in the north. The Maans in general and in particular Fakherddine II successfully crossed the sectarian bar in the Mountain. This success was not without the assistance of the feudal system which superseded sectarianism. With the weakening of the feudal system later on in the 18th century under the Shehabs, sectarianism which was indigenous to the Emirate, surfaced again. But the everlasting contribution of the Maans and later on the Shehabs was that the distinct system of the Emirate allowed people of the Emirate

to develop a distinct identity within the Empire which later unfolded in the emergence of small Lebanon in the 19th century and greater Lebanon in the 20th century.

Around the middle of the 19th century, the ruling Shehab Emirs for several reasons among them power considerations became Maronite. Emir Bashir Shehab II in an attempt to consolidate his power engaged the feudal Sheiks in a power struggle. The feudal sheiks were for the most part Druze who resisted the rising Maronite power and the struggle, therefore, quickly acquired a sectarian color.

This marked the beginning of a confessionally-based conflict; In addition this conflict coincided with a period of foreign penetration of the Ottoman Empire; with Egypt supporting Bashir II and France, Britain and Russia getting more involved. It was obvious here that foreign power intervention juxtaposed on a sectarian matrix of power struggle which escalated sectarian conflict in Lebanon, and thus the emirate fell apart. Conflicts can be easily turned confessional in Lebanon and foreign reliance and intervention can contribute to the escalation of that same conflict.⁶

⁶ Kamal Salibi The Modern History of Lebanon. (New York: Carvan Books, 1977) 17.

The Double Qaimmaqamiyyah (DQ) system 1842–1861

The DQ system institutionalized the idea of confessionally identified territory and boundaries. During this period, Mount Lebanon was divided along Confessional lines into two administrative districts.

The first district was south of the Beirut–Damascus line, the other one was north of it. The Northern district, or Qaimmaqamiyyah, was predominantly Maronite and governed by a native Maronite Qaimmaqam, while the Southern district was predominantly Druze and governed by a native Druze Qaimmaqam, both appointed by the Ottoman authorities.

The period between 1842 and 1861 was characterized by confusion and anarchy; during that period the Ottomans appeared to be appeasing the situation, while they secretly hoped and worked for the promotion of sectarian tension and subsequently anarchy in anticipation that the DQ system would eventually fail and direct Ottoman rule which they desired would be installed.⁷

⁷ Kamal Salibi The Modern History of Lebanon. (New York: Carvan Books, 1977) 21–24

After the confessional incidents of the 1840's and the fall of the Emirate, the Ottomans sent in 1845 their Foreign minister to Lebanon to undertake reforms to the system, he established the Administrative Council known as the Reglement of Shakib Pasha, which had advisory power to the Qaimmaqam, in this council the six major sects were represented equally regardless of their number with the exception of the Shiites because the Sunni Ottomans didn't recognize the legitimacy of the Shiite Shari'a. Lebanon had never witnessed such system before. The Council comprised two Maronites, two Sunnis, two Greek Orthodox, two Catholics, two Druze and one Shiite.

In 1860, The DQ system collapsed, its failure was not due to the nature of the Administrative Council where all sects were represented, and which tended to be based on equal representation of all sects, but rather to the structural deficiency of the system where Druze Qaimmaqams were supposed to rule districts which were not

exclusively Druze and Maronite Qaimmaqams were also expected to rule districts which were partly populated by Druze.

In addition Feudalism was used as a trigger; Lebanon was in rapid transition, Feudalism was in its last stages, and the Ottomans knew how to take advantage of the situation. Feudal Sheiks were in conflict with both the Qaimmaqam and the commoners who were beginning to assert themselves on the political scene.

By the late 1850's class conflict took another dimension. The conflict first started in the Northern Qaimmaqamiyyah between the Feudal Sheikhs and the Commoners who were both Maronite; when the conflict spread to the Southern Qaimmaqamiyyah where the Sheikhs were Druze and most of the Commoners who revolted were Maronite, since the Druze commoners were never able to assert themselves against the Druze Feudal Sheikhs, then the conflict escalated tremendously and acquired a confessional color. The ottomans, who were always posed to play havoc in the district, promoted the conflict beyond reasonable bounds.

In 1859, Tanius Shahine's revolt against feudal privileges in the North as it spread south, demonstrated that social and class conflicts could easily be turned into confessional conflicts.⁸

The Mutasarrifiyyah: 1861– WWI

After the fall of the DQ system, the autonomous province of Mount Lebanon was established in 1861. It can be said that the Druze gained the war but lost peace, the Druze were now a minority in the Mutasarrifiyyah system.

The sanjak of Mount Lebanon or Mutasarrifiyyah unified the areas of the two previous Qaimmaqamiyyahs under the authority of a non-native Ottoman Christian governor appointed by the Ottoman authorities. The Governor was assisted by an Administrative Council, that was established in 1861 and which consisted of twelve members elected by popular ballot.

The Council represented the six main confessional communities in the province and consisted of four Maronites, two Greek Orthodox, one

⁸ Kamal Salibi The Modern History of Lebanon. (New York: Carvan Books, 1977) 34–39

Greek Catholic among the Christians and three Druzes, one Sunni, and one Shiite among the Muslims.

This form of Governance was based on proportional representation and a quota system; it was more accurately representative of the Lebanese sects than the Reglement of Shakib Pasha of 1845 that can be described as Consociational and based on equal representation.

The Mutasarrifiyya system was not very fair, as some have argued, the Greek Orthodox outnumbered the Druze or at least were on the same level with them and yet they were represented by two seats in the Council while the Druze had three seats. Unfair as it may have been in some respects, the system worked and for 50 years proved to be successful in providing for stability; this reaffirmed the superiority of the unified multiconfessional model and power-sharing formula.⁹

⁹ Kamal Salibi The Modern History of Lebanon. (New York: Carvan Books, 1977) 40-44

The French Mandate: 1920-1943

In the post WWI settlement, France was given Mandate authority over the territories of present-day Lebanon and Syria. The French were aware of the confessional nature of the Lebanese society and they built on it.

By 1919 the Maronites in Lebanon under Patriarch Howayek lobbied in France for the establishment of Greater Lebanon basing their arguments on the historical territory of the Emirate.

The French government declared the establishment of Greater Lebanon on September 1, 1920. This was in consent to Maronite demands to expand the boundaries of Mount Lebanon territorially to the original boundaries of the Emirate under Bashir II, to include seaports and plains which were formerly detached from the Emirate and attached to the vilayat of Damascus.

The country's new boundaries, today's boundaries, which included 10452 Km², added the coastal cities of Tripoli, Beirut, Sidon, and Tyre and the plains of Akkar and the Biqaa' excluding Zahle and its environs to the territories of Mount Lebanon.

The newly attached territories were predominantly Sunni Muslim and Greek Orthodox and had weak historical links with the political system and history of the predominantly Christian Mount Lebanon. They had been part of the Sunni Ottoman socio-political order and had close links with the towns and villages of the Syrian interior although at times they did fall under the authority of the Emirs that governed Mount Lebanon. The establishment of the new boundaries was not welcomed by the Sunnis who constituted the majority of the newly incorporated populations and initially refused to participate in the system under the mandate thus introducing a host of social, political, and cultural contradictions.

The new state was declared a Republic in 1926 on the basis of a constitution drafted by a committee headed by Michel Chiha, assisted by French jurists and based on the constitution of the French third Republic.

The French established the constitution of 1926 that was the most democratic form of governance Lebanon has had so far, it was also based on quota system but on a larger scale, it guaranteed

proportional representation for all sects and reduced the friction among the sects now that the representation issue was settled.

It also established a system based on three interconnected powers: the executive branch headed by the President; the legislative branch represented by the elected Parliament; and the judicial branch which had its own hierarchy topped by a High Court. The Lebanese undertook a modern state-building project with the French.

Demands for independence from French authority unified Christian and Muslim groups and provided consensus on the eve of Independence in 1943.

Several elements of the 1920–1943 experience were of relevance to understanding modern Lebanese politics; Lebanon's very existence and its relations with its Arab neighbors would be a source of interconfessional contention. Interconfessional unity was possible toward common goals such as independence but apparently with a difference between the two groups in motives.¹⁰ & ¹¹

¹⁰ Historical data.15 Dec.2004 <<http://www.al-bab.com>>

¹¹ Kamal Salibi The Historical Perspective in Lebanon : A History of Conflict and Consensus (London : Center for Lebanese Studies and I.B Tauris & CO, 1988) 78

Christians and in particular Maronites wanted to assert independence from France while Muslims in particular Sunnis wanted independence as detachment from France and a gravitational pull towards closer association with its Arab Muslim neighbors.

The National Pact 1943

The politics of the independence era were shaped by the so-called National Pact. It was a verbal agreement between Maronite leader, President Bishara Al-Khoury and Sunni leader, Prime Minister Riad Al-Solh on the eve of independence. The Maronites agreed to forgo French protection in return for a Sunni commitment to forgo demands for Arab or Islamic unity;

The National Pact of 1943 (*Al-Mithaq Al -Watani*) was the mechanism that shaped the post independence confessional politics as a result of the process of change that occurred during the mandate both within Lebanon and in its regional order. It embodied Lebanon's fragile unity: internal unity within Lebanon and Lebanese unity vis a vis the outside

world, mainly Syria ,then the major actor in Lebanon's regional order, and France ,then the major colonial power in the Levant.

Deplored in times of crisis and praised in times of stability and prosperity, the National Pact reflected sectarian differences in post 1943 Lebanon. The National Pact was essentially an arrangement that emerged at an opportune time and was facilitated by the occurrence of developments both within Lebanon and in the region.

The 1943 National Pact is Lebanon's communal approach to Real-Politik. It marked the culmination of the post 1920 rapprochement process between the Maronite and Sunni political elite. The Pact is an example of political pragmatism: the lowest common denominator shared by the independence leaders. For lack of better alternatives, it was the only available political formula for Lebanon's problematic national identity. The National Pact has been the country's most controversial national agreement deplored by some, praised by others, though until 1975 rejected by very few.

In the National Pact, many issues were settled by the two leaders: Bishara Al -Khoury and Riad Al -Solh. First, it was agreed that Lebanon would become an independent, sovereign, state *"With an Arab Face."*

Second, they agreed that Lebanon would not seek unity with Syria and the Arab World nor have special ties to France in particular or the West in general. In the following years, this formula constituted a tacit consent that Lebanon would alienate itself from inter-Arab conflict.

In effect, this aspect led many observers to call the Pact the *"double negation agreement."*¹²

Third, the National Pact established a confessional formula where representation in the Parliament would be shared according to a ratio of 6/5 slightly favoring Christians.

Furthermore, the offices of President, Prime Minister and Speaker of the House were assigned to the Maronite, Sunni and Shiite sects respectively.¹³

Political and high ranking offices were distributed according to the numerical weight of each of the component communities.

¹² Farid El Khazen The Communal Pact of National Identities: the Making and Politics of the 1943 National Pact (Oxford: the Center for Lebanese studies, 1991) 12

¹³ Ibid, 13-15

This confessional formula of representation, assigned the primary role to the Maronite sect. The constitution gave the Maronite president executive authority while not providing a mechanism for presidential accountability, especially since the parliament could question the cabinet, but not the president. Moreover, in addition to the presidency, other key positions in government were held by Maronites. Members of this sect were to occupy major positions in key ministries, in the army and in the courts. Such positions included the commander in chief of the army, the highest judicial position –President of the Court of Cassation–, the positions of the Director General of both internal security and intelligence and that of Governor of the Central Bank.¹⁴

This formula worked for almost 30 years, but the National Pact proved to be weak and unreliable, it was not a nation– building mechanism instead it was a conflict resolution device; its main weakness was that it was a short–term agreement, it did not anticipate future changes ,it only moved the conflict to a latent stage.

¹⁴ Farid El Khazen The Communal Pact of National Identities: the Making and Politics of the 1943 National Pact (Oxford: the Center for Lebanese studies,1991) 15–17

One could ask here, did the National Pact increase or decrease confessionalism?

The National Pact was supposed to be a transitory phase towards nation – building which would guarantee the participation of all sects. However, even though it accommodated the various sects it did not make provisions for development thus leading to a freeze of the system.

Theoretically the National Pact was supposed to be the ideal remedy for a multicommunal society, such as Lebanon, but many obstacles stood in the way of this path.

The National pact was criticized by many for not anticipating provisions for all the changes. Instead of working on consolidating Nation –building the newly born Lebanese state was preoccupied with dealing with one crisis following another.

From Independence to Civil War: 1943–1975

The post independence era was marked by many events that shook the fragile status quo established by the National Pact; this particular

distribution of power faced challenges in the following years because of changes in the internal and regional balance of forces.

The Lebanese system enjoyed relative stability and an impressive average rate of economic growth during the 1950s and most of the 1960s. Lebanon was not yet directly involved in or affected by the Arab-Israeli conflict and it benefited economically from its financial and commercial roles as an intermediary between the Arab states and the international market. However, the rapid economic growth resulted in uneven social, sectarian and regional development. In the late 1960s, especially after the 1967 war, internal and regional changes began to affect Lebanon. Internally, socio-political polarization among the Lebanese increased.¹⁵ There was a growing migration of the rural population to Beirut, moving into poverty belts around the city, and suffering from rising inflation and cost of living. Socio-political tensions fueled rural uprisings and workers' strikes, and the emergency of a militant student protest movement.¹⁶

¹⁵ Al-Jazeera Documentary Films. The wars of Lebanon, 2000.

¹⁶ Claude Dubar & Samir Nasr Social Classes in Lebanon (Beirut: Arab Research Institute, 1982)106

The Lebanese state ever since its creation, was characterized by an inter-communal friction, from the late 1950's and early 1960's, the two main confessional blocks showed signs of antagonism. This was due to three main synchronized reasons.

The presence on the Lebanese territories of an organized Palestinian armed resistance movement that aligned itself to the Muslim block was of great harm to the fragile balance of the Lebanese state.

In 1948, the Palestinian flow was well received by both Christians and Muslims who viewed them as their Arab brothers but gradually for various regional and religious reasons the Palestinians challenged the Lebanese order and sovereignty which put them at odds with Christians but surprisingly on good terms with the Muslims. The Muslims seemed to have partially parted company with their commitment under the National Pact and for reasons of power sympathized with the Palestinians sometimes tacitly, and at others actively, especially after the June 1967 war and the 1970 eviction of the PLO from Jordan.^{17&18}

¹⁷ Jillian Becker The PLO: The Rise and Fall of the Palestine Liberation Organization (New York: St Martin's Press, 1984) 97

¹⁸ Rex Brynen Sanctuary and Survival: the PLO in Lebanon (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990) 19-21

In addition, during the 1950's and the 1960's Arab Nationalism was spread in addition to many coups d'états in the surrounding regions of Lebanon. The growth of Arab Nationalism has apparently taken a toll of the national Pact coupled as it was by the demographic changes within the Lebanon since independence. The Shiites under Imam Mussa Sadr were now demanding a larger share in the power structure of the state; such demands were also coupled with a sense of deprivation among the Muslims in general.¹⁹

For a period of time ,Lebanon was able to contain its internal disparities and face the regional dangers but later on and for all these reasons some Lebanese largely Christians and in particular Maronites feared for the order of the National Pact, fears that the 1943 National Pact was no longer able to appease.

The conflict was now related to divergent interests in existing power-sharing formula. This in turn led to the formation of two camps or blocs. On one hand, the reformists, largely Muslim who wanted a

¹⁹ Farid El-Khazen The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon: 1967-1976. (Cambridge : Centre for Lebanese Studies,2000) 61-62

change in the power sharing structure resulting in a bigger share for them, also referred to as Liberation National Movement (LNM) or leftist parties, and on the other hand, the status quo coalition, largely Christian that strived to keep their "*privileged status*" or the existing balance of power untouched also known as the Lebanese Front or rightist parties.

The Lebanese conflict involved three main issues, which all in essence had sectarian dimensions: the reform of the political system, the National Identity of Lebanon and Lebanon's sovereignty.²⁰

The challenge to the National Pact and its power sharing formula from the Muslim side was aggravated by assaults launched on Lebanon from various Arab quarters.

In 1949 Syria under Husni Al-Zaim supported a revolution in Lebanon by the Syrian Social Nationalist Party briefly only to renege on its commitments to Antoun Saade, the leader of the party and deliver him for summary trial and execution by the Lebanese authorities.

²⁰Latif Abul-Husn The Lebanese Conflict: Looking Inward (Boulder :Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998) 10

In 1951 upon consideration of the Middle East Command Organization, Egypt under king Farouq then exerted pressure on the Lebanese street which had sectarian connotations.

In 1955 upon the establishment of the Baghdad pact, Muslims were roused against the pact and against the West which reached its peak in 1956 upon the Suez war.

In 1957 the subscription of Lebanon to the Eisenhower Doctrine which was largely sympathized by Christians and opposed for the most part by Muslims, increased sectarian tension. The success of the pro-West largely Christian forces in the elections of 1957 did not make matter easier to resolve.

The Arabs Nationalist assaults on Lebanon between 1955 and 1958 which were led at the time by the renown Egyptian president, Jamal Abdul Nasser, increased tension in Lebanon beyond reasonable bounds and led to the 1958 crisis. Upon the creation of a Union between Egypt and Syria (UAR), the Arab nationalists who captured the Muslim street were now impatient with the sovereignty of Lebanon when Arab union had reached the door steps of Lebanon. Conversely, the Lebanese nationalists for the most part Christians feared for the

independence of the country and reacted negatively to Nasser and the UAR.

Such challenges to the sovereignty of Lebanon which were essentially Arab nationalist had a sectarian by product which was translated by largely Muslim demands for a change in the power sharing formula as it was established by the National Pact of 1943. Truly there were secular forces on both sides that crossed the sectarian bar but there was no question as to where the bulk of the sects lay.

The Christians feared for the sovereignty of the state and for the loss of their guarantees, so called privileges by their opponents and as such they were largely branded as status quo forces.²¹

The Muslims on the whole were seekers of change, radicals as they were described by some sources (as Kamal Salibi & Farid El Khazen) and reformists as they were described by others (as Latif Abul_Husn).

The explosion of the crisis in 1958 and thereafter its termination by the intervention of the United States, did not resolve the issues in conflict in as much as it put the lid on the fire.

²¹ Kamal Salibi Crossroads to Civil War: Lebanon 1958-1976 (New York: Caravan Books, 1976) 101-103

In 1969, after the Cairo Agreement, extraterritorial concessions were given to the Palestinians, the Muslim leadership, under the lead by Rashid Karame insisted on the agreement and side tracked Christian opposition by refusing to submit the agreement to discussion in the parliament.²²

As it was, the Agreement was mentioned in a passing manner in the policy platform of the Government on the basis of which it was given confidence. Karame considered that this was sufficient in conformity with the Lebanese constitution which demanded that all agreements ought to be submitted and approved by parliament. The contention of Karame was obviously wrong.

Unresolved these questions continued to simmer under the ashes only to surface again in 1975 when the Palestinians had taken the lead instead of Nasser in inspiring the Arab Nationalists largely Muslim forces to challenge the status quo in Lebanon all over again.²³

²² Michael Hudson Political Changes in Lebanon 1943-1963. (Michigan: Ann Harbor, 2000) 111-112

²³ Farid El-Khazen The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon: 1967-1976 (Cambridge: Centre for Lebanese Studies, 2000) 45

In the next chapter a discussion is made of how various attempts to resolve the conflict were made and failed only to leave the question live to 1989 to be resolved at Taif, but were they? This is to be seen by the end of this thesis.

Chapter III

War & Mediation Efforts before Taif

After the breakout of the war in 1975, many Mediation attempts were undertaken, demands for ending the war were neglected and efforts to reduce the conflict to a manageable level were in vain. Some of the initiatives were external and indirect; they took the form of mediation efforts and third party diplomacy, through International organizations, heads of state, envoys and conference diplomacy, while others were local and direct among the combating factions.

The main obstacle to negotiations was the disagreement on who should be involved in the negotiations, while the Status Quo Coalition strived for an internationalization of the conflict thus leading to western support on their part, the Reformists aimed at keeping the negotiations within the sphere of the Arab League expecting in turn Arab-Muslim support.

Despite these conflicting approaches, several individual and collective initiatives were undertaken, but they all failed because they neglected

the basic causes, which were discussed in the previous chapter, and only dealt with marginal issues.

The most noteworthy reconciliation efforts were:

- President Suleiman Frangie's proposals on constitutional reform (the Constitutional Document of February 1976);
- The Riyadh Conference of October 1976
- President Sarkis' 14 points National Entente Program of March 5, 1980;
- The National Dialogue Conference in Geneva and Lausanne of October 1983 and April 1984;
- The Tripartite Agreement of December 1985; and the Taif Accord of October 1989.

The reason behind the failure of the above mentioned five attempts for reconciliation was the conflict environment of the warring factions in addition to particular weaknesses in each proposed solution.

In the first phase of the war (April 1975-June 1976), the capital was divided into rival Christian and Muslim sectors, the state was

paralyzed, the army was split in two and the polarization into two broad camps and around two different political programs intensified the political crisis of the system.

The 1975–1976 period is referred to as the civil war period keeping in mind that it wasn't until the end of 1976 that the conflict was regionalized acquiring a new dimension.

Kamal Jumblat formed and led a party that was described as self-proclaimed, democratic, progressive and non-sectarian, which later allied itself with the Palestinians. This front grouped several nationalist and leftist political parties and organizations that formed the Lebanese National Movement (LNM) in 1976, which is referred to as the "Reformist block."

The conservative forces led by the predominantly Christian Kata'ib (Phalange) Party formed another block called the Lebanese Front, which is also referred to as the "Status Quo Coalition."

The LNM advanced a comprehensive political reform plan which called for the total abolition of political confessionalism and the implementation of wide democratic reforms of the political, electoral

and administrative systems.²⁴ The Lebanese Front rejected these reforms and advocated an alternative, although less articulated plan that varied from maintaining the status quo to political decentralization and federalism.²⁵

The presence of the Palestinian resistance movement in Lebanon and the support it enjoyed from wide segments of the Lebanese population complicated the conflict further. The vulnerable political system could not resist the pressure and internal compromise became harder to achieve.

During the first two years of the war, 1975–1976, the balance of forces favored the LNM and their Palestinian allies. They tried to advance their plan but were unable to impose it, especially after the Syrian military Intervention in 1976.²⁶

On June 1st, 1976, Syrian troops entered Lebanon. Such entry was condoned by the President of the Republic and presumably the Lebanese Front who was worried about the safety of the Christian

²⁴ Documents of the Lebanese National Movement (Beirut :Center for strategic Studies and Research Documentation,2001) 5–15

²⁵ I Younis, "Basic Documents of the Lebanese Crisis" Arab Research Institute Publications 5 (1985):13–33

²⁶ Documents of the Lebanese National Movement (Beirut :Center for strategic Studies and Research Documentation,2001) 26–34

border towns beleaguered as they were by assaults which were supported from across the Syrian border.

The Syrian government had apparently decided to change horses in midstream by shifting support from their former allies, the LNM, to the Lebanese Front. This radical shift was intended to acquire on the international level the tacit support of the United States which was in fact essential for the entry of Syrian army to Lebanon. The Syrian army presumably intervened to put an end to the fighting and prevent a victory by one side over the other.

Syrian influence in Lebanon had always been considerable, but the military intervention of 1976 gave it a direct material presence and the Riyadh Conference gave it legitimacy from the Arab League.²⁷

The Constitutional Document

The idea for a negotiated political settlement to end conflict through Syrian mediation had been on the mind of the Syrian leadership since November 1975. Damascus was using a 'carrot-and-stick' approach

²⁷ Samir Khalaf Civil and Uncivil Violence in Lebanon: A History of the Internationalization of Human Conflict (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002) 56

with the Maronite leadership. Syrian support for Palestinian, Leftist and Muslim forces was intended to keep the Maronite leadership under pressure to reach a settlement that favored Syrian interests.

Thus the constitutional Document was prepared by President Suleiman Frangie and supported by Syria; it included "*some elements of compromise and aimed at a limited political reform package.*"²⁸

The Constitutional Document was a convenient balancing act. It stipulated a more balanced confessional representation in government offices and provided a formula to contain the internal dimension of conflict.

It addressed grievances without undermining the confessional foundations of the political system. One such grievance was Lebanon's Arabism. The document proclaimed Lebanon's Arabism but stated that Lebanon is a sovereign, free and independent country. The constitutional document was composed of seventeen points that embodied some of the essential demands of the leftists' parties.

²⁸Latif Abul-Husn The Lebanese Conflict: Looking Inward (Boulder :Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998) 104

Of the seventeen points stated in the Constitutional Document, five dealt with Muslim grievances, aimed at curtailing presidential power.

First of all it was stated that seats in the parliament would be distributed on a fifty-fifty basis between Muslims and Christians, and proportionately within each sect; this new formula obviously clashed with the 6 to 5 ratio favoring the Christians that had been established since 1943 and agreed upon in the National Pact.

Moreover, the prime minister would be appointed upon the recommendation of at least 51 percent of the deputies consulted by the president, and then the prime minister should hold parliamentary consultations and appoint the ministers in agreement with the president;

Obviously this point weakened the president who was now bound by the consultations of the deputies in the appointment of the prime minister. There was a controversy, however, on this point between Muslim and Christian leaders. Muslims maintained that consultations should acquire a statistical nature while Christian leaders such as the deputy from Northern Lebanon, Boutros Harb, argued that consultations should constitute a guideline for the president and that

the prerogative of appointing the prime minister would remain essentially at the discretion of the president. Viewed in its narrow statistical approach, consultations would have no meaning but that the president is a ballot box.

But whatever was meant by consultations, there is no question that the arguments were angling at the powers of the president who was the leading Christian Maronite figure in the political system.

Still however all decrees and draft laws were to be signed by the president and the prime minister. This did not apply to the decrees appointing the prime minister, accepting his resignation, or dismissing his government. The prime minister should enjoy all the powers customarily exercised by him;

The document also demanded that the distribution of administrative posts on confessional basis be abolished, although the principle of confessional equality should be maintained at the level of senior posts temporarily;

Finally the naturalization laws were to be amended. These amendments were expected to facilitate the naturalization of

Palestinians and some Muslim communities who were living on the fringes of Lebanon such as the Arabs of Wadi Khaled.

All told, there is no question that the trend was in favor of concessions to the Muslims and reducing the prerogatives of the Christians in the Lebanese political system. At that point however, the Constitutional Document did not acquire a definitive nature in this respect.

The final concessions and elimination of privileges had to wait until the 1989 Taif Conference.

The Constitutional Document was not approved but it served as an early indication that a shift in power from the Christian to the Muslim was eminent.

By contrast, only one provision addressed Christian demands. It affirmed the distribution of the three presidential posts, which allocated the presidency of the republic to a Maronite, the presidency of the Chamber of Deputies to a Shiite and the premiership to a Sunni.

This document inspired from the National Pact didn't get much support from the radical reformist camp but it did give the conservative status quo camp some concessions.

"The Lebanese National Movement saw in the document nothing more than a travesty of their hopes and the status quo coalition rejected it, claiming that it covered its Syrian origins with a Lebanese façade." ²⁹

This is one reason why the document failed; the other reason was an attempted coup d'etat on March 11, 1976 by Colonel Aziz Al Ahdab, ³⁰ the commander of the Beirut army garrison, who requested the resignation of the president and appointed himself military governor of Lebanon. Under the circumstances president Frangie was forced to abandon his initiative and concentrate on the evolving situation.³¹

By 1977 the LNM forces were in retreat and their ability to influence political events declined, especially after the assassination of Kamal Jumblat in 1977 and the reversion of Syria who was now seeking direct influence in Lebanon rather than its former indirect involvement through the LNM.

Elias Sarkis was elected to succeed Suleiman Frangie in September 1976. He tried to maintain an uneasy peace, but the state had already lost most of its control over its land and people.

²⁹Latif Abul-Husn The Lebanese Conflict: Looking Inward (Boulder :Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998) 104

³⁰ For more information see Al_Ahdab, Aziz, Al Balagh Raqam Wahad, Tripoli: Dar Al Bilad Press,2000

³¹ Abul-Husn, 104

Attempts to find a negotiated settlement to the war led by international and Arab representatives all failed. Syria seemingly was unable to find a durable solution to the Lebanese problem as it was itself part of the problem.

Relations between Syria and the Christian militias deteriorated between 1976 and 1978 because the honeymoon of entry to Lebanon seemed to have been consumed.

But in fact, the treaty of Camp David left Syria frustrated after it was left out in the Arab-Israelis negotiations.

Israel itself intervened directly in 1978 and occupied half of south Lebanon *"leaving behind a proxy militia along a strip of land north of the Israeli-Lebanese border."*³²

The Lebanese conflict had become regionalized, with heavy Palestinian, Syrian, and Israeli components. Other states, through their

³² Noam Chomski The Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel and the Palestinians. (Boston: Southend Press, 1983)56

intelligence agencies, such as Iraq, Libya, the Soviet Union, and the United States, were also involved ³³

The Lebanese conflict by 1978 has now acquired full fledged international dimensions.

The Riyadh Conference

Under these circumstances, one of the first initiatives to resolve the Lebanese conflict, referred to as civil war at the time, came from the Arab league.

The Riyadh Conference of October 1976 was followed by an Arab League meeting in Cairo also in October 1976 which formally ended the Lebanese Civil War that took place between 1975 and 1976.

The conference did not address the underlying political and demographic problems that were still at that point far from being eliminated, it only dealt with the security situation and stopped the full scale warfare.

³³ Documents of the Lebanese National movement (Beirut: Center for Strategic Studies and Research Documentation ,2001) 42-51

The resulting multilateral agreement mandated a cease-fire and, at the Lebanese government's request, authorized the creation of the Arab Deterrent Force (ADF) to impose and supervise the cease-fire.

In theory the ADF, funded by the Arab League, was to be a pan-Arab peacekeeping force under the supreme command of the Lebanese president. In reality, by January 1977 the ADF consisted of 30,000 men, of whom 27,000 were Syrians. The remainders were *"token contingents from Saudi Arabia, the Arab Gulf States, Sudan and Libya; intended as they were to give the Syrian troops presence in Lebanon an aura of Arab legitimacy."*³⁴

President Sarkis for various difficulties some of which involved inability to rely on the Lebanese army, difficulties which were not unrelated to the Syrian presence, had no alternative but to renew for the ADF several times.

Syria was in actual command of its troops in Lebanon even though nominally this command was for the President of Lebanon.

³⁴ Elie Chalala "Syrian Policy in Lebanon, 1976-1984: Moderate Goals and Pragmatic Means" Journal of Arab Affairs, Spring 1985: 66.

The strongest opposition to the ADF was voiced by Maronite leaders who objected to the presence of Syrian troops in Maronite territory. President Sarkis held intensive meetings with the leaders of the Lebanese Front, President Frangie, Pierre Gemayel of the Katai'b Party, Kamil Chamoun of the National Liberal Party, and Father Charbel Kassis of the Maronite Order of Monks and gradually persuaded them to agree to the new arrangement.

As to the LNM, trodden as they were after this huge shift in power, derived consolation from the entry of "Arab" troops into Maronite territory.³⁵

Thus, after more than one and one-half years of devastation, relative calm returned to Lebanon. Although the exact cost of the war will never be known, deaths may have approached 44,000, with about 180,000 wounded, many thousands were displaced, left homeless or had migrated. Much of the once-magnificent city of Beirut was

³⁵ Samir Khalaf Civil and Uncivil Violence in Lebanon: A History of the Internationalization of Human Conflict(New York: Columbia University Press, 2002) 78

reduced to ruins and divided into Muslim and Christian sectors, separated by the so-called Green Line.³⁶

The National Entente Program

The Lebanese had to wait until 1980, for an efficient proposal to see the light and attempt again to end the war. On March 5, 1980 President Sarkis announced his 14 Points of the National Entente Program for the resolution of the conflict.

As mentioned earlier, during those four years the conflict developed and took another dimension due to the active involvement of foreign forces in the crisis. Two issues were on top of the priorities of the opponents, as Dr Latif Abul-Husn pointed out: *"the country's sovereignty, and the settlement of the Palestinian refugees in host countries, including Lebanon."*³⁷ These were the main issues for the Status Quo Coalition.

³⁶ Elie Chalala, "Syrian Policy in Lebanon, 1976-1984: Moderate Goals and Pragmatic Means" Journal of Arab Affairs, Spring 1985:68-71.

³⁷Latif Abul-Husn, The Lebanese Conflict: Looking Inward (Boulder :Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998) 107

Sarkis' 14 points Program referred to these two issues, as well as issues of national identity and political reform.

In order to appease the status Quo coalition, the National Entente Program confirmed the sovereignty and unity of Lebanon and rejected the much-debated issue of the permanent settlement of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. The program also dealt with some of the basic demands of the reformist camp; it confirmed Lebanon's Arab identity and acknowledged a special relationship between Lebanon and Syria.³⁸

The Sarkis 14 points Program were accepted, in principle, by both parties, but the Maronites continued to have some reservations. But still, despite the support of the opposing sides, the program did not have the momentum to convince the parties to start negotiating, and failed to convince them not to resume the fighting. This attempt, like its precedents, was killed because it did not have enough Syrian

³⁸ Elie Chalala, "Syrian Policy in Lebanon, 1976-1984: Moderate Goals and Pragmatic Means" Journal of Arab Affairs, Spring 1985:74

support which is indicative that no settlement in Lebanon was possible without external support, primarily that of Syria.

The Israeli invasion of 1982, which reached all the way to Beirut, was another turning point in the war. The armed Palestinian presence in the South and Beirut was eradicated, thus changing the internal alliance system established at the beginning of the war. The leader of the Lebanese Forces militia, Bashir Gemayel, was elected to succeed Elias Sarkis, but he was assassinated before assuming office. The Parliament met again and elected his older brother, Amine Gemayel, to the presidency.³⁹

The United States had deployed Marines to Lebanon in the late summer of 1982 as part of a negotiated deal in which a multinational force would guarantee the evacuation of Palestinian fighters from the Israeli-besieged Beirut. Developments related to the assassination of President-elect Bashir Gemayel and the infamous massacres at the Sabra and Shatila Palestinian refugee camps led to the redeployment of multinational and U.S. Marine troops.

³⁹ Thomas Friedman, From Beirut to Jerusalem. (London: Collins, 1990) 82-83

President Amine Gemayel made it his first task to seek the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanon. This led to the conclusion, on May 17, 1983, of an Israeli-Lebanese withdrawal Agreement, negotiated under American auspices.⁴⁰

Syria declared its opposition to the Agreement which was approved by the Lebanese Parliament but never ratified by the president; Militant Islamic groups with support from Iran also opposed the Agreement and the Western military presence in Lebanon. They led a campaign against the multinational presence which included the bombing of the American embassy twice, the US Marines barracks, and several other western installations. Meanwhile, a guerrilla campaign against Israeli forces was conducted in the South.

Here again an attempt for national reconciliation under Israeli auspices did not materialize and the problem remained after the withdrawal of Israel to be dealt with under the auspices of Syria.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Noam Chomski, The Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel and the Palestinians, (Boston: Southend Press, 1983) 65.

⁴¹ Elie Salem, Violence and Diplomacy in Lebanon: the Troubled Years 1982-1988, (London: IB Tauris, 1995) 77

National Dialogue Conference

Under these circumstances and with the sponsorship of Syria and Saudi Arabia, a National Dialogue Conference took place in an attempt to find a solution to the conflict; Representatives from both blocks were present. The meetings took place in two stages, first in Geneva in October 1983, and later in Lausanne, Switzerland in April 1984.

The foreign minister of Syria, Abdul Halim Khaddam, attended the meeting, in addition to the Saudi minister of state, Ibrahim Al-Mass'oud. The reason behind their participation was to bring together the positions of the parties, without taking part in the negotiations, except through Corridor Diplomacy.

This was an innovative way of negotiations, where the factions took the initiative.

The conference was under the Chairmanship of President Amine Gemayel. In his opening address, in Geneva, President Gemayel highlighted the general issues that were relevant to that stage of the conflict: *"to save Lebanon, its people must be unified, its sovereignty*

*recovered, and the bond between Lebanon and the Arab world strengthened."*⁴²

In Lausanne, the same themes were repeated, but the meetings were unsuccessful, by the end of the sessions fighting was resumed and the intentions were as bitter as ever. Yet, some preliminary steps in the first phase of the conference were undertaken toward reconciliation and communal confidence building, such as the confirmation of Lebanon's Arab identity ⁴³ and the annulment of the May 17, 1983, Security Draft Agreement with Israel, because it was viewed as a contention point that aggravated the conflict and stood in the way of reconciliation.

As to the second phase of the conference, it undertook a preliminary step towards confidence building between the two factions, and it established a committee to draw up a new constitution. However, these resolutions, rather than demonstrating their effectiveness as conflict resolution mechanism, could not influence the course of the conflict, or its continuing escalation. Gemayel's attempt to chart a new

⁴² ⁴² I Younis, "Basic Documents of the Lebanese Crisis" Arab Research Institute Publications 5 (1985):89

⁴³ Younis, 235

course for the country domestically and internationally collapsed in February of 1984 when the Army split once again and the cabinet was forced to resign. A new cabinet, led by Rashid Karame, and including leading politicians and militia heads, attempted to find a new compromise solution to the crisis, but failed. ⁴⁴

Tripartite Agreement

Two years later, another attempt to resolve the conflict was made. Syria sponsored another agreement among Lebanon's factions aimed at ending the ongoing war by negotiations between the warring factions.

In December 1985 the leaders of the three strongest militias ,Elias Hobeika, chairman of the executive committee of the Lebanese Forces; Nabih Berri, president of Amal Movement; and Walid Jumblat, the Druze leader and head of the Socialist Progressive Party's militia, signed a settlement to the conflict in Damascus.

⁴⁴ Elie Salem, Violence and Diplomacy in Lebanon: the Troubled Years 1982-1988, (London: IB Tauris, 1995) 91

Although this agreement resembled many previous failed Syrian initiatives to restore order in Lebanon, it was more comprehensive.

It provided for an immediate cease-fire and an official proclamation of the end of the state of war within one year. The militias would be disarmed and then disbanded, and sole responsibility for security would be transferred to the reconstituted and religiously integrated Lebanese Army, supported by Syrian forces.

The agreement also included a section on Lebanon's relations with Syria, which it described as "*distinctive and complementary*." It envisaged a "*strategic integration*" of the two countries in the spheres of military affairs, national security, and foreign relations.

The Agreement also mandated fundamental, but not sweeping, political reform; The Tripartite Agreement aimed first of all at the abolition of the confessional system which was to be replaced by majority rule, minority representation and a change in the power-sharing structure for a more equitable distribution of offices in the government between the two main communal blocs. It also aimed at an increase of parliamentary representation, the establishment of a

senate and a constitutional court, decentralization of the administration, and confirmation of Lebanon's Arab identity.

The Accord differed considerably from other documents inasmuch as the signatories were the actual combatants in the war, rather than civilian politicians. This factor engendered optimism in some quarters but great fear in others where it was viewed as an attempt to reconstruct Greater Syria.

The agreement didn't get much support among the Lebanese; it was opposed by many sections of the Maronite community, including the elite of the Lebanese Forces, the Order of the Monks, and the Maronite president of Lebanon who refused to endorse the agreement in addition to the Sunni community, which was prominent in politics but had little military strength after its militia, the Murabitoun, had been crushed earlier in the year.

Yet it was received relatively well by the Shiites, and fairly accepted by the Druze leadership, but it fell apart soon after it was signed.

Apparently the tripartite Agreement did not fare well on the issue of national sovereignty or on the issue of conflict resolution between the sects. The fingerprints of Syria were very clear in this attempt.⁴⁵

As a result of the collapse of the agreement, violence intensified and the central government marginal control over the country deteriorated further.

People became highly frustrated and demanded the termination and resolution of the conflict. The state was unable to contribute authoritatively to the settlement because most of its mechanisms for conflict management were paralyzed.⁴⁶

The state drifted once again into paralysis, and economic circumstances worsened. Meanwhile the Lebanese and Syrian governments pursued talks to find an alternative to the Tripartite Agreement. Most of the points agreed upon during these talks were incorporated in the Taif Agreement few years later.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Elie Chalala, "Syrian Policy in Lebanon, 1976-1984: Moderate Goals and Pragmatic Means" Journal of Arab Affairs, Spring(1985): 62

⁴⁶Latif Abul-Husn, The Lebanese Conflict: Looking Inward. (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998) 105

⁴⁷Elie Salem, A Decade of Challenges: Lebanon 1982-1992 Beirut Review Spring(1992):31-37.

Yet, all these failed attempts enhanced action by third-party mediators. The League of Arab States managed, after difficult work, to develop a strategy for the termination of the fighting. By then the conflict had escalated and shifted from its original roots. The expansion of the conflict meant new problems that needed solutions.

The failed attempts to resolve the conflict indicated that there were sectarian grievances but there were also external dimensions to these grievances which complicated the problem. External sources were eager to arouse and exaggerate such grievances when they were in their interests and to gloss over the whole issue when their interests dictated peace and tranquility in the country.

Apparently during the war years and up to Taif 1989 there was for the most part little interest in appeasement in Lebanon.

Chapter IV

The Making of the Taif Accord

The Road to Taif

In 1988, for the first time since independence, a President's term ended without the election of a successor. When President Gemayl's term ended in September 1988, earlier attempts to arrange for presidential elections in Parliament had failed. As a last minute resort, on September 22, 1988, Gemayel appointed Army Commander, General Michel Aoun, as a Prime Minister at the head of a military cabinet composed of six-member confessionally-balanced higher Military Council. Although technically constitutional, Aoun's appointment ran against the tacit agreement since 1943 that the Prime Minister would be a Sunni Muslim.

The Muslim members of the Military Council promptly resigned and Prime Minister Al-Hoss rejected the constitutionality of Aoun's cabinet and insisted that his cabinet was the only constitutional one. For the first time, the state had literally split into two separate parts.^{48 & 49}

⁴⁸ Karim Pakradouni, The Curse of a Country: From the Lebanese War to the Gulf War. (Beirut : Transorient Publications ,1991) 187-229

It was soon plunged into a constitutional crisis, with each government claiming legitimate authority. The conflict took a new turn and showed a new face, although the actors remained the same.

The status quo coalition initially supported Aoun, and the reformist camp supported the government of Salim Al-Hoss, but the relationship between the coalition and Aoun soon became problematic. As the Christian camp became highly divided, the focus of the conflict shifted from the original issues to a struggle for power.⁵⁰

General Aoun had two goals at the time; first, consolidating his power over the Christians thus eliminating the Lebanese Forces militia; and second liberating Lebanon from what he called the Syrian occupation; this crisis led the country to a more intensive civil war.⁵¹

As a reaction to the devastation of the "War of Liberation" and the intra-confessional battles, public intolerance for the continuation of the civil war and support for a quick settlement grew rapidly.

⁴⁹ A Laurent, *A War Between Brothers: The Army-Lebanese Forces Showdown in East Beirut*. *Beirut Review* Spring 1991: 88.

⁵⁰ Latif Abul-Husn, *The Lebanese Conflict: Looking Inward*. (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998) 107

⁵¹ Laurent, 89

Indeed, during the years of civil war there had been many indications that the majority of ordinary citizens and many social, cultural, and popular organizations were against the separation of citizens, regions and cities.

The marginalization of the militias and the rebuilding of the Lebanese state were viewed as the only rational way out of the civil war system. There was also general acceptance that none of the warring factions could decisively win the war.

The International Environment

These internal changes coincided with developments on the regional and international levels that also favored a political settlement in Lebanon thus paving the way for the Taif Accord in 1989.

Looking from a broader scope, one might notice that the whole Middle Eastern region, if not the whole world, was going through radical changes; Lebanon receptive as it was, could not escape these effects.⁵² First of all, the Lebanese conflict had always been linked in significant ways to the Arab- Israeli conflict. Israel had already lost interest in Lebanon after 1984-85 and was preoccupied with the rising

⁵² Deputy Elie Ferzli, Personal Interview. 5 May 2004.

Palestinian "Intifada" which had erupted in December, 1987, in the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. As for the Palestinians in Lebanon, the mass departure of Palestinian troops from Beirut in August of 1982 dramatically weakened their influence. The remaining Palestinian armed forces were isolated in a few refugee camps in South Lebanon.

The U.S. was interested in curtailing the crisis in Lebanon so as not to disrupt the Arab-Israeli peace process. After the development of the Gulf crisis in 1990, the U.S. had the added concern of containing Iraq and gaining Syrian support for the Gulf war coalition.

In contrast to the Israelis and the Palestinians, Syrian influence in Lebanon increased steadily after a period of contention between Syria and the Lebanese Front, in 1987 Syria re expanded its presence. Part of this re-expansion of Syrian power was with Arab and Western consent.

In addition in 1989, Iraq, free from the pressure of the war with Iran, intervened in support of General Aoun and the Lebanese Forces and against Syria. This could have led to an escalating regional conflict

between Iraq and Syria; therefore, the Arab states urgently dealt with the Lebanese issue ⁵³

As for the U.S., it had several interests in Lebanon; the defining moment for the Americans came with the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, and the emergence of a U.S. commitment to shape a regional and international coalition in order to push Iraq back.

After 1989, however, the regional and international situation changed rapidly. The Gulf War ended with an abject Iraqi defeat and an American victory, while the Soviet Union collapsed as a unified superpower. Both events had a bearing on U.S.-Syrian relations, and hence on Lebanon.

The end of the Cold War and the break up of the Soviet Union strengthened American influence in the region and allowed it to pursue its policy objectives with fewer global obstacles.

In addition on another front the Gulf War and the Syrian-American alliance had their impact on the resolution of the Lebanese conflict.

At the end of the 1980s, as superpower bipolarity faded and the U.S. became the dominant world power, the administration of President

⁵³ Elie Chalala, "Syrian Policy in Lebanon, 1976-1984: Moderate Goals and Pragmatic Means" *Journal of Arab Affairs*, Spring 1985: 82

George Bush sought to reinforce the Western position in the Middle East, to guarantee secure access to the Persian Gulf oil reservoir.

Two important goals were critical to reduce instability in the Eastern Mediterranean, quieting the Arab-Israeli conflict, and restricting the influence of the Islamic regime in Iran. Also, the U.S. wished to assist conservative authoritarian regimes, friendly to the West, to maintain their status.

One of the important new features of Middle Eastern politics after the Cold War and before September 11, 2001 attack on New York, was Syria's enhanced importance for the U.S. even while Syria's strategic position deteriorated.

On one hand, Syria's partnership with Iran allowed it to be a *"go-between with Tehran for the West and the Gulf oil states"*⁵⁴; Syria had become the major Arab state confronting Israel; and Syria was seen as the key to quieting Lebanon.

Syria thus appeared to be critical to post-Cold War American plans for a Western-oriented order in the Middle East. On the other hand, Damascus had effectively lost Soviet patronage by 1989, meaning it

⁵⁴ Adeed Dawisha, *Syria and the Lebanese Crisis* (London: Macmillan Press, 1980)50

had no superpower backing and little hope of weapons replacement in case of war with Israel, and the Syrian economy was deteriorating by its military burden. The situation seemed to increase the prospects for drawing Syria into a cooperative relationship with the West and fitting American expectations; a shrewd politician like Hafiz Al-Assad could use this to improve Syria's bargaining position.

In return, Syria expected from the U.S. and Israel a package of regional rewards before it shifted its posture. The package would include "*full Israeli withdrawal from the Golan, acknowledgement of a Syrian free hand with the Lebanese regime, an appropriate financial payoff, and widened access to Western aid and technology.*"⁵⁵ On its side the U.S. indicated friendly intentions.

In 1989–1990, a degree of U.S.–Syrian collaboration was established as the best means, according to the Bush administration, of putting a lid on Lebanon's turbulent affairs. ⁵⁶General Aoun's 1989 campaign against the Syrians seemed to dismantle the whole American plan for Lebanon. The U.S. worked with Syria and Saudi Arabia to have General

⁵⁵ Elie Chalala, "Syrian Policy in Lebanon, 1976–1984: Moderate Goals and Pragmatic Means" *Journal of Arab Affairs*, Spring 1985: 85

⁵⁶ Adeed Dawisha, *Syria and the Lebanese Crisis* (London: Macmillan Press, 1980) 52

Aoun removed in favor of a new Taif Lebanese regime that didn't necessarily have to satisfy all the Lebanese people's aspirations but that could at least ensure that Lebanon ceased to be a distraction.

General Aoun had opposed Syrian and American policy in Lebanon, but the U.S. had not been willing to sanction a Syrian military strike against him. However, as the U.S. sought Syrian support and participation in the Gulf coalition, it had to make up its mind regarding the unresolved confrontation in Lebanon. It decided in favor of Syria and gave a tacit green light, even though denied publicly, for a Syrian move against Aoun.

Iraq's August 2nd, 1990 seizure of Kuwait, the Iraqi-American confrontation, and the infusion of Western forces into the Persian Gulf transformed Middle Eastern political calculations. The U.S. now needed or, more accurately, imagined itself as needing, the broadest possible Arab military participation, and *"Syria suddenly found itself the object of the most flattering Western attentions."*⁵⁷

"Assad tested the winds of the world for a week or so, calculated that the Iraqi enemy was headed for catastrophe, and offered himself as a

⁵⁷ Adeed Dawisha, Syria and the Lebanese Crisis(London: Macmillan Press, 1980)53-55

*partner in the American-led coalition."*⁵⁸ By mid-August, as the daily al-Safir noted, it was obvious that *"Gulf events have removed foreign barriers standing against the Hrawi government asking Syria to strike at the unnatural situation in East Beirut."*⁵⁹

Who Was Involved in the Taif Accord?

The document of National Understanding adopted by the Lebanese deputies at Taif, Saudi Arabia, was the result of the dramatic escalation of events in Lebanon. The constitutional stalemate reached in the wake of President Amin Gemayel's departure on September 23, 1988, the co-existence of two separate governments, and the resumption of hostilities and bombardments on March 14, 1989, placed more pressure on the mediators to renew attempts to end the violence and resolve the conflict.

Many parties such as France, the Vatican, and the secretary-general of the United Nations offered their good offices to stop the fighting, but only the League of Arab states succeeded.

⁵⁸ Adeed Dawisha, Syria and the Lebanese Crisis (London: Macmillan Press, 1980) 57-59

⁵⁹ Ibid 56

In the first stage, a six member ministerial committee was established in January 1989; it was headed by Kuwait and composed of the foreign ministers of Algeria, Jordan, Sudan, Tunisia, and the United Arab Emirates.

For three months the committee held exploratory discussions with the two prime ministers of the rival governments, leaders of the warring factions, and religious figures and then presented its report to the league.

In the second stage, after the termination of the committee's report, King Hassan II of Morocco initiated an Arab League summit in Casablanca on May 23rd– 26th, 1989 to discuss its contents and develop a strategy for resolving the conflict.

At the Casablanca Arab summit in May, it was agreed to set up a Tripartite Committee to mediate in the conflict which included King Fahd Bin Abdul-Aziz of Saudi Arabia, King Hasan II of Morocco, and President Chazli Benjedid of Algeria. The Tripartite Committee had two goals to achieve: an immediate cease-fire that would then be followed by peace deliberations between all warring factions under the auspices of the Arab League.

At this conference it was obvious that it was now decided that the Lebanese crisis should be terminated. It constituted the first step towards the resolution of the conflict.

The League's assistant secretary-general, Lakhdar Al-Ibrahimi, was appointed envoy and mediator who was in charge of shuttling between the various factions in order to implement a cease-fire. This cease-fire, like all the others, was brief.

Based on the findings of the six-member ministerial committee who had consulted Lebanese leaders on both sides of the conflict and following extensive consultations with several sources: the United States, the former Soviet Union, Syria, other Arab States, the PLO, Western European leaders, the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, and the Secretary-General of the UN, the foreign ministers of the Tripartite committee drafted a peace plan for resolving the conflict in Lebanon.

The plan's provisions called for *"an immediate cease-fire, the formation of the Lebanese security committee, headed by Lakhdar Al-Ibrahimi, to supervise the cease-fire, the lifting of the Syrian-backed land and sea blockade of East Beirut, the reopening of Beirut*

*International Airport, the implementation of an embargo on arms shipments to the warring factions and a summoning of the Lebanese parliament to meet outside Lebanon and discuss the "Document of National Reconciliation" drawn up by the Tripartite Committee in compliance with the Casablanca directives."*⁶⁰

The Casablanca committee issued a report in July 1989, stating that its efforts had reached a "dead end" and blamed Syrian intransigence for the blockage. After further discussions, the committee arranged for a seven-point cease-fire in September, bringing an end to the War of Liberation, followed by a meeting of Lebanese parliamentarians at Taif, Saudi Arabia unenthusiastically approved by General Aoun.

The Conflict Resolution Process

The Lebanese deputies met on September 30, 1989, in Taif, Saudi Arabia, at the request of the Tripartite Committee to discuss the draft of the "Document of National Reconciliation". The meeting was attended by sixty-two deputies out of the seventy-three deputies of the parliament elected in 1972.

⁶⁰ Albert Mansour, The Coup Against the Taif Agreement. (Beirut, Dar Al Jadid, 1993) 11-12

After three weeks of intense and often broken negotiations, a draft document was agreed upon on October 22, 1989; the members of the parliament approved the document with minor amendments. The issue of Lebanon's sovereignty consumed most of the time and efforts of the attendees, as well as the skill of the mediators.

Fifty-eight of the sixty-two deputies voted in favor of the new *"national charter that would divide political power equally between Muslims and the long-dominant Christians and take other steps to eliminate many of the causes of fifteen years of civil war."*⁶¹

Third Party mediation proved to be successful here; it was able to bring the agreement. What was also important in this agreement was that it was accomplished through the participation of parliamentarians and not the warring factions because the parliament was the only institution in force amidst the state's paralysis.

The Christian deputies had promised General Aoun, before their departure to al-Taif, that they would *"trade concessions on political reform for the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon, or at least*

⁶¹ Latif Abul-Husn, The Lebanese Conflict: Looking Inward (Boulder, Colorado :Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998)110-111

secure a confirmed timetable for Syrian withdrawal." ⁶²This didn't happen as it was agreed.

While the makers of the Taif Agreement were looking forward to the implementation of the provisions of the Taif Accord in a spirit of cooperation and understanding, the environment in Lebanon was as heated as it never was, but gradually *"tension subsided, hostilities ceased, and cooperation replaced confrontation between the majority of the factions."* ⁶³

The Reaction to Taif in Lebanon

Aoun rejected the Taif Agreement, claiming that it gave too much away to Syria. The Parliament ignored his opposition and went ahead with the election of a new president to implement the agreement. Deputy Rene Mouawad was elected as President in November 1989 but was mysteriously assassinated two weeks later. Parliament met again and elected Deputy Elias Hrawi. President Hrawi assumed office with Salim Al-Hoss as his Prime Minister, but the stand off with General Aoun's cabinet in East Beirut continued.

⁶²Latif Abul-Husn, The Lebanese Conflict: Looking Inward. (Boulder, Colorado :Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998)110-111

⁶³ Ibid 111

In late January of 1990, severe battles erupted between General Aoun's army units and the Lebanese Forces militia. The battles dragged on for months, left many thousands dead, and devastated large areas, Aoun refused all attempts of mediation and conciliation. By the summer, both sides had fought each other to exhaustion.

In October, the Hrawi government asked for and received Syrian military backing to move against Aoun and his supporters. Syrian and Lebanese Army units loyal to the Hrawi-Hoss government moved in and defeated Aoun's forces on October 13. Aoun sought asylum at the French Embassy and later was received in France.

Meanwhile, the institutions of the state and the armed forces were reunified and the government moved to implement the Taif Agreement.⁶⁴

Ever since, The U.S. accepted that *"Lebanon enters the Syrian orbit but insisted that it be at most a satellite and not an annexed part of Syria."*⁶⁵

⁶⁴ A Laurent, "A war Between Brothers: The Army-Lebanese Forces showdown in East Beirut", Beirut Review Spring 1991: 88

⁶⁵ Adeed Dawisha, Syria and the Lebanese Crisis. (London: Macmillan Press, 1980) 57-59

Washington seems to have accepted that Lebanon's days as an "eccentric" state playing an independent role as "window to the Arab world" and link between East and West are over.⁶⁶

Lebanon then was regarded as *"the sick man of the Middle East"*, and the U.S. would rather entrust the Arabs with its care: from the American perspective, *"the Syrians have the muscle to keep the place in order, and the Saudis and Kuwaitis have the funds to help it revive. As far as Washington is concerned, they are welcome to take up the task."*⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Adeed Dawisha, Syria and the Lebanese Crisis. (London: Macmillan Press, 1980) 69

⁶⁷ Ibid, 70

Chapter V

The Taif Accord: Theory and Practice

What is the Taif Accord?

In substance, the Taif Document is nothing new. Many of the reforms agreed upon at Taif had been mentioned in previous documents, such as the Constitutional Document in 1976, proposals presented in 1983 in Geneva and in 1984 in Lausanne, the national unity governmental declaration of Prime Minister Karame in 1984, and the Tripartite Agreement in 1985. Those reforms were also discussed between Syria and President Gemayel in 1987-1988, and the meetings between Syrian officials and the American Ambassador to Syria April Glaspi and special American envoy Richard Murphy in 1987-1988. But of all the documents prepared by the institutional authorities or discussed amongst the protagonists of the conflict, only the Tripartite Agreement signed on December 28th, 1985 between the three principal militias in Lebanon had a similar wide scope.

It was fundamentally the same principle of inter-connection between the internal and external problems of Lebanon which was behind the two accords.

The Taif accord was a multifunctional agreement; not only it was the document that provided the basis for ending the conflict and the restoration of Lebanese sovereignty, but it was also a document which dealt with various domestic issues such as political reforms and governance.

The Taif Agreement constituted a compromise among the Lebanese deputies, political groups and political parties, militias and leaders. It dealt with many essential points pertaining to the structure of the political system and to the sovereignty of the Lebanese state. Indeed, these two issues were interrelated. The mechanism for regaining state sovereignty was preceded by an affirmation of the identity and unity of Lebanon. It was also preceded by internal political, administrative and other reforms. ⁶⁸The essence of this compromise was in accepting the

⁶⁸ "The new Constitution of Lebanon and the Taif Agreement," Translated and Annotated by Paul Salem, The Beirut Review Spring 1991: 119-121

Taif Agreement as a package deal. It constituted the right formula to end the war internally; however, it required the acceptance of incomplete sovereignty over a considerable period of time.⁶⁹

The Lebanese could not wait any longer for the regional conflict to be resolved; at the same time, they could not totally separate the internal aspects of the conflict from its regional dimensions. Consequently, the best solution was to preserve Lebanon as an entity and to introduce a new political and practical formula that would stop the war. This formula would also allow the Lebanese to regain a minimal degree of stability in order to rebuild their institutions, resuscitate their economy, and reinforce their capacity to face changing regional and international conditions.⁷⁰

In fact, what is most remarkable about this Document of National Understanding is its comprehensiveness.

Most of the Agreement dealt with textual changes in the Constitution and internal reforms, the rest dealt with matters such as extending

⁶⁹ A Norton, Lebanon After Taif. Is Civil War Over? Middle East Journal 45.3(1991): 466

⁷⁰ Ibid, 467

Lebanese sovereignty over all of its territory, ridding Lebanon of Israeli occupation, and managing future relations between Lebanon and Syria.

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The constitution was amended to reflect the changes in power, prerogatives and procedures agreed upon at Taif.

After Taif, a new cabinet was appointed, described as a Cabinet of national Unity, under the premiership of Omar Karame, the brother of assassinated PM Rashid Karame. The cabinet, following the provisions of Taif, declared the dissolution of militias and began the deployment of the Army over large parts of Lebanese territory and appointed 40 new deputies to Parliament in order to fill seats that had fallen vacant since the last elections in 1972 and also to fill the 9 new seats decreed by Taif. Relations with Syria were consolidated with the signing of a treaty of Brotherhood, Cooperation and Coordination between the two countries and the conclusion of a Pact of Defense and Security.

⁷¹ "The new Constitution of Lebanon and the Taif Agreement," Translated and Annotated by Paul Salem, The Beirut Review Spring 1991: 119-121

Indeed, 1991 was the first year of peace for most of Lebanon since 1975, although clashes between Israeli and anti-Israeli forces continued in the South. For the first time since the beginning of the war, there was an internal basis for peace, based on the Taif agreement, and a regional and international climate for that peace, based on the end of the superpower Cold War and the beginning of peace talks between Arabs and Israelis.

Clauses and Interpretation

General principles

In the Preamble of the Constitution, introduced in 1990, the Taif Document aims to regroup the various proposals concerning the Lebanese national identity as well as the nature of the Lebanese political system. The importance of this new preamble is that it sets down basic principles and goals upon which the Lebanese state is founded.

These are very important proposals since they reaffirm, after so many years of warfare, the major conditions which Lebanon as a state should fulfill to regain its unity.

It is necessary to distinguish between the issues that the Agreement resolved decisively and those on which it was less precise and decisive.

First of all, the Taif Document begins by reaffirming that *"Lebanon is a sovereign, free and independent country"*⁷².

The formula which is used here is the same one around which consensus was reached during the meeting of the conference of National dialogue held in Geneva (the Declaration of the 4th of November, 1983). The formula was then adopted in the Ministerial Declaration of the Government of National Unity formed by Rashid Karame on the 31st of May, 1984 and the inter-militia Accord or the Tripartite Agreement of Damascus signed on the 28th of December, 1985;

Lebanon then was defined to be a *"final homeland for all its citizens"*.

This fact goes back to the terminology of the National Pact from which much was borrowed and which implies that Lebanon is a permanent non-transitory state.

⁷² This is the reference to the text in the preamble of the constitution, hereafter other alphabetical references to the preamble follow

Point "a" also confirmed the unity of Lebanon. By unity is meant unity of the *"territory, population, and institutions"*. The Taif text uses the same formula found in the resolutions of the inter-Lebanese conference in Geneva in which Lebanon's unity, allegiance and identity were reaffirmed. The Document is committed to the maintenance of the unitary character of Lebanon, excluding any notion of partition or federalism. The unity of institutions finally, is based on the rejection of a formula for political decentralization while acknowledging the view of administrative decentralization.

Second, the Agreement was decisive in determining the Arab identity of Lebanon; *"Lebanon is Arab in its identity and its association"* "b". This point ended the notion of Lebanon's Arab face agreed upon in the National Pact.

This insistence on defining Lebanon's identity seemed to separate the Lebanese into two different value systems leading to two types of national orientations. In any case, on the level of consensus-building, the debate over Lebanon's identity has a precise political dimension in the communal interaction.

Third, point "c" defined the nation's political system as a *"Democratic parliamentary Republic based on respect for public liberties"*. Public liberties, among others, are defined within this context in terms of "social justice"

Fourth, "e" stated that *"the political system is established on the principle of separation, balance, and cooperation among the various branches of government."*

Fifth, point "f" stated that *"the economic system is a free economy that ensures individual initiative and the right to private property."*

Sixth, point "g" emphasized the necessity for a balanced and *"even development among regions"* which is critical for the unity of the state and for ensuring a form of social equity.

This introduces the principle of freedoms with social characteristics such as social and economic rights that are not specified but can be deduced from the necessity to ensure *"social justice"* mentioned in point "c".

The theme of regional development "g" within the context of territorial unity "i" is extremely important.

The Taif Accord emphasized the unity of the territory. This has two consequences. The first is that the only possible form of decentralization is that which helps the development of the regions. This option foresees a comprehensive solution to problems that are both communal and regional. The implicit logic of clause 'g' is that only regional development can maintain the *"unity of the state and 'the stability of the system'"*. In other words, those who signed the Taif Accord accept the argument that unequal development threatens the break-up of Lebanon and destabilizes its political regime.⁷³

Seventh, point "h" stated that *"the abolition of political confessionalism constitutes a basic national goal to be achieved according to a gradual plan"*

A final theme which seems fundamental and gives the Taif Document its true orientation is that it recognizes that confessionalism is a regulating principle of political society by claiming that power cannot be legal if it contravenes the Pact of Co-existence or the desire to live together referred to in Arabic as *Al Aysh Al-Mushtarak*.

⁷³Joseph Maila, The Document of National Understanding: A commentary, (Center for Lebanese studies, Oxford, 1992) 5-16

"There shall be no constitutional legitimacy for any authority which contradicts the pact of communal coexistence" "j"

Clause 'j' is a general provision reaffirming interconfessional amity and expressing official commitment to *Al-Aysh Al-Mushtarak* between Christians and Muslims.

The selection of this particular phrase, which may be translated as communal coexistence, but more accurately as common living or shared living was supposed to end the debate over the nature of relations between Lebanon's religious groups.⁷⁴

Political Reforms

The Taif Agreement introduced thirty-one important constitutional amendments; the reforms did not fundamentally alter the political structure, which is still based on political sectarianism.

Relations between the various authorities have been at the centre of the political debate about reforms in addition to the representation in Parliament and the posts in the various institutions of the government.

⁷⁴ "The new Constitution of Lebanon and the Taif Agreement," Translated and Annotated by Paul Salem, The Beirut Review Spring 1991:124

The Taif Accord specified the methods by which the redistribution of power between the legislative and executive authorities as well as within the executive itself would take place. Analyzing the political reforms adopted by the document consists of understanding them both from a legal perspective and from the perspective of inter-communal relations which the reforms have recognized.

What is not apparent from the text of the Constitution and the new amendments is the spirit and practice derived from the National Pact of 1943. In addition to the well-known understanding regarding the reservation of the Presidency for a Maronite and the Prime Ministership for a Sunni, the National Pact gave birth to a practice of power-sharing between the President and Prime Minister in which it became a custom for the two to govern jointly, setting policy together and implementing it through the Council of Ministers. Thus, in practice, the Prime Minister could oppose the policy preferences of the President and push them toward some mutually acceptable compromise. The principal imbalance in the National Pact system was derived from the fact the President had the authority to dismiss the prime minister and select another. Under the system as practiced under The National Pact, the

president of the republic was de facto and de jure, a domineering figure with the prime minister coming in as a poor partner. At Taif this imbalance between the president and the prime minister was rectified. Taif wrote the practices of cooperation and power-sharing normally to be practiced in the Government into law.

The power sharing formula was changed; After Taif, the representation between Christians and Muslims was equalized, and the executive authority was shifted from the Maronite President to the Council of Ministers as a whole.

But the Council of Ministers in Lebanon was not highly institutionalized. The ministers are in fact the appointees of the president and the Prime Minister and in the absence of effective political parties they are highly vulnerable to them. So in fact as it turned out in practice contrary to theory, the executive power was shared between the president, the Prime Minister and the president of the Chamber of deputies, "the Troika", with the president coming in fact as a poor third. The president of the chamber shared power because he was empowered to act as a boss rather than a chairman to the chamber of deputies; and thus it was that what was intended in

theory as a power sharing formula to be vested in a multiconfessional institution, the council of ministers, turned out in practice to be imbalanced power sharing by three heads, the Troika, with all the pertinent jams arising from the bickering among them often creating paralysis in the process of governing.

Taif introduced the application of a new fifty-fifty formula to the distribution of public posts between Christians and Muslims, Article 24,'a' *"equal representation between Christians and Muslims"*.

This seemingly equal representation formula turned out in the absence of an appropriate electoral formula, an imbalanced measure where most of the Christian deputies turned out in fact to be vulnerable to their Muslim constituents and as such Christian representation was in fact slighted compared to Muslim representation.

The role of the president has been defined in Article 49 as *"The symbol of the nation's unity"*

The new confessional formula was based on reducing the prerogatives of the President of the Republic and transferring the executive authority to the Council of Ministers as a collegial body. According to Article 17 of the amended constitution, *"Executive power shall be*

entrusted to the Council of Ministers, and the Council shall exercise it in accordance with conditions laid down in this constitution." The original deleted article stated that *"Executive power shall be entrusted to the President of the Republic who shall exercise it assisted by the Ministers in accordance with conditions laid down in this constitution."*⁷⁵

The President would retain a largely ceremonial role with only marginal executive power. The Council of Ministers, a confessionally balanced body, would hold collective executive power under the chairmanship of the Sunni Muslim Prime Minister. The President could chair the meetings of the Council of Ministers, without the right to vote, if he chose to attend. This measure seemingly suggests that he is more of a ceremonial figure rather than an effective part of the executive power. Now the President is legally obligated to coordinate policy with the Prime Minister and legally obligated to execute policies decided and voted upon in the Council of Ministers. He has lost his formal autonomy and became, instead, a poor member of a team.

⁷⁵ "The new Constitution of Lebanon and the Taif Agreement" Translated and Annotated by Paul Salem, The Beirut Review Spring 1991:127

The Accord proposed a set of constitutional changes that represent a fundamental change in the official structure of government from a system dominated by the president to a more collegial form of government dominated by the Council of Ministers with the President in fact turning out to be the poorer colleague. Articles 18, 52, 53

In addition, According to Article 44 of the Constitution, the Shiite president of Parliament's term of office was extended from one to four years leading to increasing his power considerably. This traditionally Shiite post has been strengthened in a manner to balance the Maronite's President six-year term and the Sunni Prime Minister's improved position. This improvement in the powers of the president of the chamber enabled him to play a prominent role in the appointment of the prime minister

The role of Parliament as a whole was also strengthened by closing an important loophole in the old system in which the executive branch could pass important legislation without Parliament's approval during periods when Parliament was not in session. Parliament itself was expanded from 99 to 108, to accommodate 9 new Muslim deputies, making Christian - Muslim representation in Parliament equal.

Thereafter, it was expanded to 128 members. Indeed, the confessional nature of the political system was reinforced at Taif, although the agreement insists that a committee must be formed and work must commence on a gradual plan to eliminate confessionalism from the system.^{76& 77} .

Other parts of the Taif agreement called for militias to be disbanded and the Army to regain control of all Lebanese territory with the assistance of the Syrian Army. Syria was to assist the Lebanese authorities in implementing the agreement for a period of two years, after which its forces were to redeploy in the Biqaa Valley. Further Syrian withdrawals were to be subject to further negotiations between the governments of Lebanon and Syria. The practice ,however, turned out to be different from theory, neither all militias were disbanded nor did the Lebanese army regain control of all Lebanese territories , nor did the Syrian forces redeploy to the Biqaa valley. The implementation of Taif in this respect is still a mirage.

⁷⁶ Albert Mansour, The Coup Against the Taif Agreement, (Beirut: Dar al-jadid, 1993) 79-92

⁷⁷ M Khalil, Confessionalism and the Constitutional System in Lebanon, (Beirut: Al-Dar al-jami'iyya, 1992)161 -171

On one level, the Taif Agreement constituted an effective deal that provided the basic mechanism for ending the conflict, it succeeded in establishing a workable and effective conflict resolution mechanism through a Consociational system and a power sharing formula where no monopoly exists .

On another level, the Agreement is, perhaps, not the best arrangement for launching the process of rebuilding a more stable political system in Lebanon. The distinction between these two levels is highly significant and sheds new light on the nature of the Taif Agreement. In effect, the Taif Agreement emerges as a process rather than a final and inflexible settlement. Since the Agreement embodies an unstable and contradictory formula, one must realize that preserving it in its initial form would lead to further conflict in the future. Therefore, there is a need *"for a creative interpretation of the basic document making the formula flexible enough to permit its own transformation."*⁷⁸

The Taif Agreement left two sets of issues open to future discussion. The first set concerns the process of re- establishment of

⁷⁸ Ghassan Salameh, "Beyond Lebanese political Reform: Reconciliation with Basic Values". Beirut Review Fall 1991:49

complete sovereignty in Lebanon. This issue is related to the resolution of the regional conflict through peace negotiations between Israel on the one hand and Syria and Lebanon on the other hand; in this respect the Syrian issue remained vague and controversial.

Taif and the Syrian Role in Lebanon

The Syrian issue remains vague and controversial, in the last part of the Taif Accord a section dealing with the nature of the relation between the two countries states:

"Syrian armed forces shall (with Lebanese gratitude) help the legitimate Lebanese Forces to extend the Lebanese state's authority during a specified time period not to exceed two years beginning after the ratification of the Document of National Reconciliation, the election of the President of the Republic, the formation of the Government of National Reconciliation, and the incorporation of the political reforms into the Constitution. At the end of this period, the Government of Syria and the Lebanese Government of National Reconciliation shall agree on the redeployment of Syrian forces in the Biqaa, at the entrance to the western Biqaa in Dahr al-Baydar, and down to the

Hammana-Mdayrij-Ayn Dara line, and, if necessary, to other locations to be agreed upon by a joint Lebanese-Syrian military committee. The two governments shall also agree on the size and duration of the development of the Syrian forces in the locations mentioned above and the specification of the relationship between these forces and the Lebanese authorities in the areas of their deployment. The Higher Tripartite Arab Committee is ready to help the two states in reaching this agreement if they so desire”⁷⁹

This part stipulates that the Syrian Army will “help” the Lebanese government to achieve all of the above within a two-year period which begins at the same time as the time-limit for the dissolution of militias. After that, Syrian forces are to redeploy to the Biqaa Valley area; there is no commitment to any further Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon, but simply references to future negotiations between the Syrian and Lebanese governments regarding the size and duration of Syrian deployment in eastern Lebanon after the two-Year period. Furthermore, although it is not explicitly stated, any postponement of

⁷⁹ “The new Constitution of Lebanon and the Taif Agreement,” Translated and Annotated by Paul Salem, *The Beirut Review* Spring 1991:189-191

the six-month militia deadline will probably also justify postponements of the Syrian redeployment deadline.⁸⁰

Syria so far has not managed to fulfill its commitments for withdrawal.

The pretext is still that security requirements dictate Syria's presence.

The Lebanese government under the influence of Syria is still advocating the necessity of Syria's presence in Lebanon contrary to the

dictates of Taif. Recently it took offense from Security Council

Resolution 1559 which calls for the withdrawal of Syrian forces and the

establishment of Lebanese sovereignty. The Lebanese army has not

been redeployed in the South as a measure of asserting sovereignty

over this area and the institution of freedom which is a manifestation

of the democratic system has not been observed.

Walid Jumblat, a leading political figure in the country, has maintained

that freedom has been compromised by the intervention of the

Lebanese security forces which are domineered by the Syrian security

⁸⁰ "The new Constitution of Lebanon and the Taif Agreement," Translated and Annotated by Paul Salem, The Beirut Review Spring 1991:168-169

forces .The intervention of Syria reduced the democratic system in the country and compromised the sovereignty of the state.⁸¹

The position of Jumblat has been detested and protested by many Lebanese, some of which are highly placed in the government. ⁸² So far it seems that the Lebanese governments after Taif have lost the ability to request its implementation on matters pertaining to the withdrawal of Syria and the assertion of Lebanese sovereignty. The redemption of Taif on this score does not seem possible so far without significant assistance from abroad. With Security Council Resolution 1559, such assistance commenced. It remains to be seen how far the UN and in particular the US and France would proceed in its implementation. Syria and its supporters in Lebanon give the impression that international support for the implementation of Resolution 1559 would falter the way it did in the implementation of other Security Council resolutions regarding the Middle East. The opposition, however, seems to suggest that international support is serious and on such matters the Lebanese are not alone anymore.

⁸¹ Press Statements of M.P Walid Jumblat on various occasions during the month of December 2004

Time would reveal which of the two contentions is right. The indications so far point out that some kind of a change is about to take place but it is not known how far it would go.

The question to be asked is Syria's indefinite occupation of Lebanon tenable? If it is not, then why should they procrastinate their withdrawal until it would seem that they had to withdraw under pressure and as such generate in the process resentment and antagonism.

International condonement to Syria's occupation of Lebanon which Syria has hoped for is no longer possible after September 11; some kind of a change of policy is requested on the part of Syria in the interest of both Syria and Lebanon. The danger, however, is that authoritarian regimes do not have the flexibility to change their policy dramatically. Fundamental changes of the sort may spell out the end of the regime the way it did in the Soviet Union after the Perestroika and the Glasnosts.

Syria's role in Lebanon is not, however, limited to matters of withdrawal and sovereignty. The problem goes much deeper to Syria's

reservation about Lebanon's territorial limits and the full recognition of the sovereignty of that state. Syria so far refuses to have any diplomatic ambassadorial representation in Lebanon. As to territorial reservations , to cite only one significant example on the level, Syria was obliged to voice reservations over the paragraph of resolution 2625 (XXV) of the General Assembly of the United Nations on October 24,1970 relating to *"friendly relations between states"* which specified that no state *"should violate the existing international frontiers"*.⁸³ Contrary to this obligation, Syria pointed out that as far as it was concerned, such a commitment could not be *"applied and legal force could not be given to agreements through which certain sections of Syrian territory were given, by the mandatory powers of the time, to other states without Syria's consent"*.⁸⁴Such accords remained illegal. Even though Syria presumably made such reservations for the loss of the Sanjak of Alexandretta yet it was suspected that Syria also had in mind the annexation of the four Qadas to Lebanon under the French Mandate.

⁸³ Samir Khalaf, Civil and Uncivil Violence in Lebanon: A History of the Internationalization of Human Conflict ,(New York :Columbia University Press, 2002)178-179

⁸⁴Ibid, 200

The fact that both countries belong to the same regional organization, and the fact that Syria has not formally and legally although not politically and by way of propaganda put into question the issue of its borders, leads one to suppose that it has indirectly managed to recognize Lebanon within its present territorial limits. This ambiguity allows Syria to play upon all the nuances of a relationship characterized by an indirect recognition of Lebanon by Damascus. Over and above the legal arguments, one can always foresee the possibility of seeing Syrian political regimes, during certain irredentist phases; question intermittently the existence of the frontiers.⁸⁵

The second set of issues relevant to the nature of internal political reforms and their implementation, are the issues of confessionalism and their elimination.

Taif and Confessionalism

The Taif Document determines the nature of Lebanese society as a society of communities joined by their desire to live together. The major question which the war in Lebanon generated was whether

⁸⁵Albert Mansour, The Coup Against the Taif Agreement, (Beirut: Dar Al Jadid, 1993) 121

Lebanon was heading towards the confirmation of the communal system or towards its abolition? , Taif responded by going back to the options of 1943. In fact, the Pact of Co-existence is implicitly a reorganization of the National Pact in all of its elements: Arabness, independence and inter-communal solidarity. All these elements were adopted by the Document, even if, the abolition of confessionalism was foreseen by the national Pact which started in 1943 as an oral agreement and was transformed later into a formal constitutional written document. The Taif Accord authorized the return to the confessional formula.

The agreement signed at Taif is not different from the National Pact of 1943 if one considers the essence of the compromise in both pacts. In many ways, *"the main hallmarks of pre-war Lebanon have been retained in a milder and more palatable form."*⁸⁶ The philosophy of confessional representation, reconciliation and understanding between the different confessional communities remained the same. In this

⁸⁶ Chibli Mallat, "A new constitution for Lebanon: examining the ways to institutional normalization". Paper presented at the Carter Center Consultation on Lebanon, held at the Carter Presidential Center, Atlanta, Georgia, 27-28 November 1990: 17. 22 Jan 2004< www.mallat.com /www.cartercenter.org>

way, the National Accord Agreement may be seen as a developed form of the National Pact which does not cancel but adds to the Pact.⁸⁷

In fact, as Kamal Salibi stated, *"there are no major differences in essence between the National Pact of 1943 and Taif. Moreover, the philosophy behind Taif Agreement and the way it was achieved was Lebanese. It was a Lebanese formula similar to the formula that was born in 1943."*⁸⁸

The new distribution of power was an expression of a balanced confessional formula and the elimination of confessionalism was transferred to a rather distant future. In the transitional phase, and according to Article 95 of the Lebanese Constitution, *"confessional parity is to predominate."* Just like the old formula of 1943, this confessional formula leaves the door open to the renewal of conflict, and increases the possibilities of its occurrence. Such a situation does not allow for the revival of a stable political system, which is urgently needed to fulfill such very essential tasks as the reconstruction of the

⁸⁷ Elie Salem, National Reconciliation Document Between Beirut, Damascus and Al-Taif, Al-Safir 12 August 1992:13

⁸⁸ Salibi, Kamal, Interview in Mulhaq Al-Nahar 18 July 1992:6:

country's infrastructure, the revitalization of the economy, and the rebuilding and development of public and private institutions.⁸⁹

This view, however, which is held by self styled secularists, contradicts with the recent observations that in a pluralist society, nation building can only take place in a Consociational manner. Majoritarian systems without regard to any guarantees or checks between the different communities in a pluralist country produce the very thing which is sought to be avoided: instability, the lack of freedom and the inability to build viable public or private institutions.

Lebanon is perhaps the very example needed in this regard. Before the war, Lebanon witnessed under the "discredited" confessional system of the National Pact better development in every respect than its "self styled" secularist neighbors in the Arab world. It was due to this better score in development and to its open system built on the delicate but viable checks and balances that its neighbors launched against it repeated assaults until the system crumbled down and its achievements lay in ruins. At Taif all involved Lebanese and

⁸⁹ Samuel Barnes, The contribution of Democracy to Rebuild Post-Conflict Societies. The American Journal of International Law, 95.1(Jan 2001):89.

Arabs, likewise, could not help but reconstruct the confessional system with some adjustment to suite the new circumstances. It remains to be seen, however, whether Taif will be allowed to function by some of those who contributed to its very foundation.

There are other important tasks which have not been fulfilled since Taif in 1989: Lebanon till the present day has not regained its full sovereignty, the displaced have not been fully repatriated and the process of national reconciliation has not been achieved. Without the fulfillment of these tasks, national reconstruction cannot be fully achieved.

The Taif Agreement Implicitly ratifies the National Pact of 1943 and emphasizes confessional compromise and inter-communal cooperation.⁹⁰ The changes aimed at creating a new and more equitable confessional or a Consociational formula.

⁹⁰ A Norton, "Lebanon After Taif. Is the Civil War Over?" Middle East Journal 45.3 (1991) 461.

Although the Agreement stated that the abolition of confessionalism was a national goal, no specific deadline or time table was provided for its actualization ⁹¹

Confessional balance and confessional representation predominate in the new constitution; moreover, confessionalism is reproduced and further institutionalized. It is worth mentioning here that, since 1943, political confessionalism has been considered as a temporary arrangement that should be eradicated as soon as possible, but it has continued to predominate. In Lebanon, transforming the provisional decisions into permanent ones has become a tradition, reaffirmed most recently with the Taif Agreement.

In the eyes of the secular ideologues the preservation of the temporary confessional provisions which has been repeated by the Taif agreement and its aftermath contradict with the establishment of a strong political system capable of adjustment to cope with the needed changes in a developing society.

The political reforms proposed by Taif Agreement were marked by a strong contradiction evident in the gap between sectarian thought or

⁹¹ AL-Nahar Newspaper , December 16, 1992: 3

philosophy and the democratic aspiration for a modern, secular, non-confessional, and stable political system in Lebanon.⁹²

The endurance of confessionalism over the years may, however, indicate that it cannot be disregarded and its preservation does not necessarily contradict with the establishment of a developed democratic system. A Consociational democracy provides for the accommodation of confessionalism in a developed political system. The abolishment of confessionalism by fiat would do more harm than good in a democracy.

⁹² Ghassan Salameh, "Beyond Lebanese political reform: reconciliation with basic values." Beirut Review Fall 1991:57

Chapter VI

Conclusion

More than fourteen years after signing the Taif Agreement, many improvements have been realized. The war has ended, and most Lebanese, except for the south, have enjoyed a long forgotten peace since late 1990. State institutions have reestablished their authority, the army is seemingly united and gaining strength, and the deterioration in economic conditions has slowed down, although a lot has to be done to face a serious financial deficit and economic stagnation. The Taif Agreement was and is still being implemented within a different balance of internal forces as well as a different balance of regional Arab forces than originally intended. This is reflected in the increase of Syrian influence and the non-application of the clause dealing with the Syrian redeployment.

Syria seems to be adamant on staying in Lebanon .Recently it has resisted withdrawal or redeployment requested in the Security Council decision1559.

This imbalance has led some of those who participated in and supported the agreement to join the opposition and declare that what is being implemented is not the Taif Agreement .In the first two years of the implementation of the Agreement⁹³, it was obvious that the Lebanese agreed on the necessity of state revival, but they disagreed on the model that they should adopt.

Many different interpretations of the way to implement the Agreement have emerged. Moreover, the insistence of the President of the Republic to exercise many of the prerogatives that the Agreement has already canceled represents an attempt to maintain some common unwritten practices in order to revitalize the old, pre-war system, thus curtailing the intent of the Taif Agreement through different practice. For instance, one may mention the insistence of the President of the Republic on attending, and thus presiding, over every meeting of the Council of Ministers in order to assert that he still has control over the executive power.⁹⁴

But in fact there was no explicit request at Taif for the president not to preside over all meetings.

⁹³ Albert Mansour, The Coup Against the Taif Agreement, (Beirut :Dar Al Jadid, 1993)18-23

⁹⁴ Ibid,31

At the state level, the Agreement produced a three-man show or "*Troika*" consisting of the three heads: the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister, and the President of the Chamber of deputies. In practice, the understanding among these three heads as individuals has come to mean that the three institutions have lost their importance. This contradicts the fundamental purpose of the Agreement which was to replace the rule of individuals by the rule of institutions. Yet, the most alarming consequence of the implementation of the Agreement has been the intensification of confessional conflicts and divisions leading to the paralysis of the political and administrative institutions.

"The state of Taif" has not yet been able to establish a clear and relatively stable formula to rule, govern, and exercise authority. In addition to the previously mentioned problems, one can note the lack of new socio-political forces and leaderships that can implement the Agreement fully, leading the nation towards a more democratic system.

Lebanon witnessed a severe war which extended from 1975 till 1989. This war had its internal and external reasons. Truly the Lebanese were divided among themselves confessionally, politically and in other ways to make the war possible. But what is true also was that Arab and other external forces have played on the Lebanese contradictions to crumble the system of the National Pact of 1943 and create of Lebanon a war theatre.

Outsiders who intervened in Lebanon have in self protection insisted that Lebanese wars and crisis were absolutely internal while some Lebanese perhaps, likewise, in self defense tended to stress the external rather than the internal factors of these crisis and wars. Such was the case in the 1958 crisis and, likewise, was the case in the war of 1975.

The Taif agreement in 1989 came out to acknowledge implicitly the logic of the outsiders that the factors which contributed to the war were internal. This was to be expected because the Taif agreement was godfathered by the very external forces which had indulged in the war of Lebanon.

At Taif there was no reference made to other powers' role in Lebanon except to that of Syria with "gratitude" for its role and sacrifice for bringing about peace to Lebanon and helping in its reconstruction. A phased withdrawal of the Syrian forces was expected to commence in two years time after the implementation of Taif in 1989 to Bq'a. So far no such withdrawal has taken place and Lebanon is still far from recapturing its full sovereignty.

Recently with the exceptional extension of the term of president Lahoud for three years, the issue of the UN Security Council Resolution 1559, a significant murmur in detest of the domineering position of Syria , the loss of freedom , the lack of national reconciliation and the lack of full sovereignty has surfaced backed by a significant part of public opinion . It remains to be seen how effective the opposition is in this respect. One thing can be asserted, however, is that the opposition is here to stay. Some accommodation to its requests is due.

On the domestic level, some changes were made ostensibly to reflect the confessional demographic change which has taken place in Lebanon. The distribution of senior posts in the administration and seats in parliament which were formerly done on 6 to 5 basis(six

Christians to five Muslims) have been changed to five to five. Apparently no protest has been made against this measure. The identification of Lebanon's national identity as fully Arab in contrast to an identity with "Arab face" has, likewise, been fully accepted by everybody.

The redistribution of powers among the various sects and the reforms pertaining to development have not so far been accepted without exception.

Some Christians complain that they have been marginalized. The powers of the presidency which is reserved for the Maronite sect have been seriously compromised at Taif. The President can delay a bill but cannot stop it. He is also incapable of stopping a decree which he is supposed to sign within the space of two weeks. The Prime Minister and the minister concerned with the bill can, however, shelve it indefinitely. The President is still the commander in chief of the armed forces which, however, are directed by the council of Ministers; a measure which makes of the post a ceremonial one in fact.

The President is not at liberty to nominate a Prime Minister upon the formation of the government; rather he is obliged to abide by the

parliamentary consultations done for that purpose. This measure motivated some politicians and public observers to comment sarcastically that the president is "*a ballot box*". The president is allowed to chair a council of ministers' meeting "*if he chose to attend the meeting*" meaning that he is not expected to attend all meetings. If he chose to attend and chair, he is not entitled to vote. These and many other measures suggest that the president has been stripped of much of his executive powers and that he is more of a ceremonial figure, "*a national symbol*" in a flattering manner. But the national symbol is supposed to represent the Christians in general and the Maronites in particular in the national equation. It is here that the fault in the power structure after Taif lies. It serves no purpose to say that the Executive Power at Taif has been placed in the Council of Ministers, an institution rather than a person. The fact is that the council of Ministers, considering its power holdings, is not institutionalized. Nor to that matter is the legislature which has been allowed to be bossed by the president of the chamber from the Shiite sect. Evidently with the lack of institutionalization at this high level, the country turned out to be ruled by a troika: the Prime Minister, the

President of the chamber of deputies and the President of the Republic, with the latter coming in as a poor third.

These built in faults at Taif among other matters of malpractices and discrimination such as in the biased electoral laws of 1992 and 1996 have moved many sectors of Christian public opinion to complain of marginalization.

The Muslims in general have until very recently remained as spectators to the Christians' ordeal after Taif. Most of them have condoned the weakening of the presidency arising from Taif. Syrian hegemony has turned in their favor on the internal balance and without regard to the requirements of Consociational equilibrium condoned Syria's presence in Lebanon.

Only recently, the fault line appeared in the post Taif situation. Walid Jumblat, a prominent Druze leader, has moved to detest Syrian control of Lebanon. He held that the Syrian government should in conformity with Taif implement a military withdrawal, cease to interfere in domestic affairs, allow for the practice of civic freedoms and observe the sovereignty of the state. In this move he was well received by the sizable disgruntled Christians who were eager to meet

him halfway, gloss over the faults of Taif and uphold the system as it stands.

Apparently this alliance between Jumblat backed up by the majority of the Druze and the sizable Christian leadership in opposition have made an impression on some Sunni and Shiite public figures who attended the public conference of the opposition held at the Bristol hotel on December 13, 2004. In addition to those Muslim leaders who attended the Bristol conference, the Hariri block deputies seem to be hovering on the wings of the opposition. As a matter of fact, two members of the Hariri block, Ghattas Khoury and Ahmed Fatfat, actually attended the meeting.

The Novel thing about the opposition movement in the fall of 2004 is that it has recruited Druze and some Muslim support for the first time since Taif and thus has been able to flex its muscles against the government and Syrian control. In the process Taif has been consolidated, though this solidarity could be open to conjecture after Syria's withdrawal. It is a derived and not a genuine solidarity; But so far the record of the Lebanese is that if left alone they could patch up their differences and adjust the system to suite their circumstances.

They are no strangers to democracy. In fact they have more experience in that regard than any other people in the Arab world.

Lebanon is a pluralist country with a wide spectrum of different sects which dictates that the only viable system is a Consociational democracy with an intricate web of checks and balances between the sects. A simple majoritarian system without regard to the compounded nature of the socio-political matrix is not apt to survive democratically.

External occupation though it may be "brotherly" does not seem to be everlasting; external influence however is possible.

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