

LEBANON: THE STRUGGLE OF A SMALL COUNTRY IN A REGIONAL CONTEXT

Kail C. Ellis

A small country is rarely involved in an international conflict to her advantage. Whatever side such a country may support, her real interest in the conflict remains of secondary importance, and is likely to be sacrificed should higher interests so dictate. Her allies will normally keep her uninformed of their ultimate motives, leaving her to drift into complex situations which she can little understand or control. Finally, as her internal affairs become entangled in the outside conflict, these affairs themselves get out of hand, leaving her at the mercy of whatever forces prevail.¹

THIS OBSERVATION CONCERNED THE LEBANON of the early nineteenth century, but it is relevant to an understanding of contemporary Lebanon. Two destructive civil wars have interrupted Lebanon's struggle to develop a national identity out of its various social, religious, ethnic, and class groups. Although the weakness of its inter-sect political system of government has allowed outside forces to influence its domestic affairs, its location in a turbulent, highly symbolic, and culturally significant part of the world has made entanglements in regional conflicts impossible to avoid. As a result, the Lebanese see themselves as a people helpless in the face of more powerful outside forces, and as innocent of any responsibility for the social and political havoc that has racked their country.

Syria, Israel, and the Palestinians have influenced Lebanon's political system, and each continues to be inextricably involved in Lebanon's internal affairs. Each has fought wars on Lebanon's soil that continue to imperil both the future of the region and Lebanon itself.

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SYRIAN-LEBANESE RELATIONS

From their inception, Syrian-Lebanese relations have been influenced by the carving out of Greater Lebanon's new borders in 1920 from provinces that Arab nationalists regarded as historically belonging to an independent Arab Syria. This separation gave rise to an irredentism that has only recently reached an uneasy reassurance in Syria's President Hafiz al-Asad's reference to *sha' b wahid fi baladayn*, "one people in two countries."

After Syria and Lebanon achieved independence in 1943, both countries gradually came to accept their roles as separate national identities: Syria as the heart of pan-Arab nationalism and Lebanon as independent and sovereign but within the Arab world. This understanding was affirmed by Lebanon's Sunni and Maronite communities in the National Pact of 1943, and by the Alexandria Protocol of 1944. Lebanon's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity were guaranteed by the Arab League Pact of 22 March 1945.

THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT

The history of modern Lebanon is roughly contemporary to that of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and for most of its existence Lebanon has been struggling to contain the effects of that connection.² Lebanon's role in that conflict was determined primarily by its sectarian composition. Dominated by a conservative Christian leadership anxious to maintain its connection with the West, the Lebanese government officially opposed the United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine, but it had neither the desire nor the ability to participate actively in the conflict. Lebanon's position as a charter member of the Arab League required at least a limited military and political role in support of the Palestinians, and it did send a token force, estimated at from 1,000 to 2,000 men, to its border with Palestine.³

Prior to the outbreak of hostilities, Lebanon's position toward the Arab-Israeli conflict was influenced considerably by the minority status of the Christians in the Middle East. Some Maronite Christian leaders, both ecclesiastical and lay, adopted a policy favorable to Zionism in the belief that this would counter pan-Islamic and pan-Arabist movements that saw Lebanon as part of the Syrian Arab hinterland. In July 1947, the Maronite Archbishop of Beirut, Ignatius Mubarak, presented a memorandum to the UN Special Committee on Palestine in which he declared that "to consider Palestine and Lebanon as parts of the Arab world would amount to a denial of history."⁴ He also declared that "Lebanon as well as Palestine should remain as permanent homes for the minorities in the Arab world," and advocated the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine.⁵

Some influential Lebanese perceived Israel as a useful buffer between themselves and the Arab nationalism of their neighbors. This led several members of the government not only to support a Jewish state in Palestine but also to espouse Western-sponsored defense schemes for the Middle East. In

1951, Charles Malik, then Lebanon's Ambassador to Washington and the United Nations, predicted that in the event of war in the Middle East, the Arabs would have to cooperate with Israel,⁶ thus foreshadowing the alliance of the Lebanese forces with Israel during the 1975-76 civil war. The emergence in the mid-1950s of Gamal Abdel Nasser as the champion of pan-Arabism and the Palestinian cause gave Lebanon's Muslim and progressive groups added support and complicated the government's pro-Western leanings, especially its embrace of the Eisenhower Doctrine of 1957.

THE PALESTINIAN REFUGEES

The Arab-Israeli war of 1948 left Lebanon as host to an estimated 141,882 Palestinians, mainly from the Galilee in northern Palestine.⁷ Fifty years later that number has grown to as many as 400,000, with the result that, for Lebanese of all confessions, the future of the Palestinians in their country has become the most pressing issue in any regional peace settlement.

Lebanon, like other Arab countries bordering Israel that found themselves hosting Palestinian refugees, absorbed the few that it could, primarily the professional classes, and distributed the rest among camps scattered throughout the country. Unlike its neighbors, Lebanon had unique concerns with the Palestinians. Its capacity to absorb the Palestinians economically, given its proportionately much smaller population, was very limited. In addition, the overwhelming majority of the Palestinians were Muslims who could not be easily absorbed into the mainstream of the country without upsetting the delicate communal balance that had been worked out in the National Pact of 1943.

For their part, the Palestinians did not wish to be absorbed by any country. Having never abandoned the quest to return to Palestine, they looked initially to the Arab countries to rectify the injustice that had been done to them. The desire for a national identity found expression in Nasser's pan-Arabist ideology, which during the Lebanese civil war of 1958 caused them to side with the opposition. Their impact on that struggle was minimal since they were not yet organized as a group either militarily or politically. This quiescent stage was soon to change, as the Palestinians organized both politically and militarily in response to regional events.

THE PLO IN LEBANON

Lebanon's involvement in the Palestine question entered a new phase with the establishment of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and its military arm, the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA), by the Arab League in 1964. Whereas the other Arab states sharply restricted the movements of the Palestinians and controlled the resistance through government-sponsored guerrilla groups, Lebanon's laissez-faire political system permitted neither the

national consensus nor the authoritarian system necessary to enforce such measures.

The emergence of the Palestinian movement as the standard bearer of Arab resistance after the Arabs' military defeat in the June 1967 war was the next phase of Lebanon's involvement in the Palestine question. The defeat had so discredited the Arab governments and the Arab masses had become so demoralized that Arab public opinion looked to the skirmishes and commando operations of the Palestinians against Israel for some consolation. The rise of the Palestinian resistance, however, contained within it the seeds of division between the Palestinians and the established Arab governments. The Palestinians recognized this danger from the beginning but, determined to pursue the cause of their own national identity and develop the organizations necessary for their political and military operations, largely ignored it.⁸ In Lebanon they established guerrilla bases and began recruiting in the refugee camps.

The Palestinian resistance movement accentuated the deep social and political fissures between the Muslim and Christian confessions in Lebanon. The specter of refugee camps being turned into fortified arsenals and of young Palestinians being trained for commando operations threatened most Christian Lebanese and even some of the more conservative Muslims. When the Lebanese authorities attempted to restrict these activities, the Palestinians took advantage of the social and sectarian cleavages between Christians and Muslims to establish a firm basis of support in the country among Muslims and leftist Lebanese of both confessions.

ISRAEL'S POLICY OF RETALIATION

The first installment on this support was the 28 December 1968 Israeli raid on Beirut International Airport.⁹ Israel claimed that the raid was in retaliation for a Palestinian attack and hijacking of one of its airplanes over Italy in July 1968. In fact, it was a harbinger of a future policy of retaliation against Lebanon. Israel's Prime Minister Levi Eshkol announced that "a state cannot harbor and encourage an armed force operating from its territory against a neighboring state and be considered immune from reaction."¹⁰ The incident precipitated a series of conflicts between the Lebanese authorities, anxious to put an end to Israeli military actions, and the Palestinian resistance.

Lebanon, now deeply embroiled in the Arab-Israeli conflict, sought to resolve the increasing confrontations with Israel and the Palestinians by defining the conditions under which the Palestinians could operate in Lebanon. Not without some alarm, the government noticed that support for the Palestinians by the radical parties and the Muslim Lebanese was increasingly coupled with criticisms of the Lebanese political system and the privileged position of the Christian community. With the Palestinian movement becoming a lever for the Muslim community to effect political change in Lebanon, Christian politicians reacted by criticizing Palestinian activities as an infringement on Lebanese sovereignty. The resulting tensions between Christians and Muslim politicians,

who viewed the Palestinian movement as an essential part of the Arab cause, escalated to armed confrontations between the Army and the Palestinians.

THE 1969 CAIRO AGREEMENT

The Lebanese government had three pressing needs: to find a way to disclaim responsibility for the Palestinians' actions in order to ward off Israeli retaliation; to maintain the fig leaf of Lebanese sovereignty in order to satisfy its domestic critics; and to be seen as an advocate of the Palestinian cause to its opposition parties and Muslim constituencies. In May 1969 the Sunni Prime Minister, Rashid Karami, proposed that commando activity on Lebanese territory could be made compatible with Lebanese sovereignty if there was cooperation (*tansiq*) between the Lebanese Army and the Palestinian Armed Struggle Command.¹¹ Although initially rejected by the Christian politicians, this proposal was eventually incorporated in the Cairo Agreement of October 1969, which gave the Palestinians the right of autonomous administrative control over their refugee camps in Lebanon.

The Palestinians in Lebanon were now officially given the right to use the camps as bases, install weapons, and recruit resident Palestinians for the resistance. In return, the Palestinians promised to control the lawless elements in their ranks, to cooperate with Lebanese authorities to ensure non-interference in Lebanese affairs, and to recognize that the "Lebanese civil and military authorities will continue to exercise their full rights and responsibilities in all Lebanese regions in all circumstances."¹²

The Cairo Agreement did not resolve the basic issue of Lebanese sovereignty that the Christian politicians felt was being compromised by the actions of the Palestinians. This sentiment was forcefully expressed by the Kata'ib leader, Pierre Gemayel, who strongly criticized the Agreement as a betrayal of Lebanon's sovereignty and who viewed the actions of the Palestinians as

not a Lebanese internal crisis but a difference between two independent and sovereign states in which one is openly attempting to interfere in the affairs of the other. The whole problem is clear: it is no longer the actions of the *fida'yyun*; it is our system, our regime, our institutions which are desired under the cover of the Palestinian commandos and the sacred cause of Palestine.¹³

DETERIORATION OF THE SECURITY SITUATION

Israel responded to the Cairo Agreement by intensifying its raids against southern Lebanon. The result was the creation of a Lebanese, primarily Shiite, refugee problem, in addition to the Palestinian refugee problem.

The situation was further complicated by the subsequent expulsion and transfer of the Palestinian leadership to Lebanon after the 1970 Jordanian civil war. The activities of the Palestinian resistance increased, as did Israeli retaliations against Lebanon. Caught between the Palestinians and the Israelis, the Lebanese security forces were severely criticized by the leftist opposition parties and the Palestinians for their inability to protect the country from Israeli reprisals. In the end, Israel's attempt to force the Lebanese government to become actively involved in suppressing the commandos was based on a gross overestimation of the Lebanese government's abilities, and contributed to the breakdown of what authority it actually had.

PRELUDE TO CIVIL WAR

Clashes between Kata'ib militia, the Army, and the Palestinians in 1970 raised the specter of a sectarian civil war. The Palestinians had come to exert considerable influence on Muslim political circles since the ethno-sectarian divisions in the country, already aggravated by economic and social inequalities, had caused the Muslims to look on the commando movement as an ally in the struggle against what they regarded as a Christian-dominated establishment. The traditional Muslim politicians who were invested in the status quo gradually lost their following and even their armed support. Commandos moved into the Muslim sectors of Beirut, took the law into their own hands, and established control over the city.¹⁴

The Israeli raid on Beirut in 1973 was a turning point in the descending spiral of violence. The Israelis' assassination of three Palestinian leaders increased the climate of bitterness, humiliation, mutual fear, and hostility between the Lebanese Army and the Palestinians. Although that crisis was temporarily resolved by reaffirming the Cairo Agreement, the Christian leadership girded for the next round determined, now more than ever, to uphold Lebanese sovereignty and the Christian character of Lebanon. The Palestinians, for their part, did not want to suffer a repeat of the 1970 Jordan debacle that had resulted in their expulsion from that country. Lebanon, which had always had a tradition of arms-bearing, became even more an armed camp when the Kata'ib and Shamun's National Liberal Party established military training camps for their militias. This was justified as a reaction to the Cairo Agreement, which gave the Palestinians freedom to carry arms.¹⁵

ISOLATION STEP BY STEP

To the Palestinians, U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's step-by-step strategy seemed to be based on isolating first Egypt and then Syria from the Arab-Israeli conflict, and on studiously ignoring the Palestinians. When it became clear that the PLO was not going to be accepted by Israel as a party to the peace negotiations after the October 1973 war, the Palestinians determined to consolidate their position in Lebanon.

The Palestinians extended the provisions of the 1969 Cairo Agreement to the Lebanese radical parties and to the various Nasserist movements. These included pro-Iraqi and pro-Syrian Ba'athists, the Lebanese Communist Party, other communist factions, the Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party, and various Muslim nationalist Arab parties, who proceeded to arm themselves under the umbrella of the Palestinian movement. Meanwhile, everyday life in Lebanon became marked by bomb explosions, robberies, kidnappings, and political assassinations. The general breakdown of law and order in Lebanon by its own citizens was abetted by the sometimes undisciplined and lawless behavior of the Palestinian commandos.

THE CIVIL WAR AND SYRIA'S INTERVENTION

Given the intense involvement of the Palestinians in Lebanon's internal affairs, it is not surprising that the incident that touched off the Lebanese civil war in Ayn al-Rummana on 13 April 1975 began with the massacre of twenty-six Palestinians who were returning from a rally in Beirut. Although preceded by the assassination of Pierre Gemayel's bodyguard and the killing of others by persons unknown at a newly dedicated Maronite church, this incident ignited the conflict that was to engulf Lebanon for the next seventeen years.

Although Syria watched the dangerous security situation on its border intently, over a year of bloodletting and destruction passed before it intervened. Its inaction, in part a result of the inherent cautiousness of its Ba'athist leadership and the need for international acceptance of its intervention by Israel, the other Arab countries, and the United States, belied the pressure Syria was undergoing from various sources to stop the killings. Syria intervened against the Palestinians and their allies on 1 June 1976, in what proved to be the end of the first phase of the Lebanese civil war.

Syria's efforts were officially sanctioned by the Arab summit convened in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia in October 1976. An Arab Deterrent Force (ADF), a 30,000-strong peacekeeping body, was created to bring security to Lebanon. Nominally under the control of Lebanon's president, the ADF was composed primarily of Syrian troops, and all military action was determined solely by Syria. The ADF imposed an uneasy peace in Lebanon despite continuing skirmishes between the Lebanese factions and fighting in the south between the Palestinians and Israel.

ISRAEL

Israel, too, watched the developments in Lebanon with concern. To the Likud government, the fighting provided an opportunity to weaken the Palestinian resistance. Consequently, Israel increased its military and political involvement with the Lebanese forces and armed the militia of Saad Haddad, which had been formed to protect Christian villages in the south against the

leftist Lebanese and Palestinian guerrillas. It also allowed recruits from the Maronite militias to be sent to Israel for training and used them as a surrogates in the battle against the Palestinians. In an effort to build a favorable position in the south (despite the devastation it was wreaking on local villages), Israel extended the so-called "Good Fence Policy" it had established in 1974 to allow local Lebanese residents to cross into Israel for medical treatment, jobs, and shopping.

Israel also sought to check Syrian influence in the country. It prevented Syria from extending its pacification efforts southward by establishing its "Red Line," defined as a point somewhere midway between Sidon and Tyre on the coast and the Syrian border. Although this area was controlled by the PLO-leftist coalition, Israel preferred their presence to having Syrian troops on its northern border.

THE 1978 INVASION AND ISRAEL'S "SECURITY ZONE"

Israel's war against the Palestinian guerrillas and its daily incursions in south Lebanon culminated in its March 1978 invasion and occupation of south Lebanon. Israel's actions raised fears that it intended to annex and settle the area, in the manner of the Golan Heights and the West Bank, in order to guarantee its access to the waters of the Litani River. The United Nations Security Council took swift action to counter Israel's invasion. Resolution 425 called for the withdrawal of Israeli forces and the restoration of the authority of the Lebanese state. The Council also created the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) with the ultimate mission of confirming the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanon. Israel finally withdrew its forces in June 1979, but gave the vacated territory to Haddad's militia, now constituted as the Army of Free Lebanon (later the Army of South Lebanon). Its continued occupation of Lebanon through this self-styled "security zone" and its defiance of Resolution 425 have done little to accomplish peace on its northern border.

THE PALESTINIAN STATE WITHIN A STATE

By 1982 the Palestinians had established themselves as the only real military and civil authority in south Lebanon. They had created all the trappings of *state within a state* through their extensive network of social services and other institutions that extended to the people the basic services the Lebanese government had not provided since Israel began its military incursions in 1972. Despite the sympathy with which the Palestinian movement was initially received, the local population soon came to resent the heavy handedness and corruption some PLO officials exhibited, as well as the policing action and the restriction of movement that the commandos exercised over the south in the name of the Palestinian resistance. The Shiites in particular, galvanized by the political and social movement (*Amal*) of Imam Musa al-Sadr, turned away from their alliance with the Lebanese left and the Palestinians to take control of their

own affairs. Israel observed this development and decided to capitalize on it in its campaign against the Palestinians.

INVASION PRELUDES

The withdrawal of Israel from the Sinai in April 1982, as the last phase of the Egyptian-Israeli peace process, increased Syria's isolation in the region and its fear of military vulnerability. The Israeli-Egyptian peace accord had left the Arab world weak and divided. Not only was Syria isolated from Egypt, but Israel had forged an alliance with the Lebanese Forces, and the Palestinians had alienated the Shiites in south Lebanon. Syria sought to compensate for Egypt's defection by reviving its alliance with the Palestinians and the Lebanese opposition. This development, in turn, strengthened those Israelis who believed that, with the pacification of its western border, the time was ripe for a military solution to the Palestinian conflict. In the spring of 1981, Israel clashed with Syria over the deployment of missiles in the Biqa' Valley and engaged the Palestinians in south Lebanon. The Israeli government felt that the time was ripe for it to crush, once and for all, the Palestinian resistance.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE 1982 INVASION

On 6 June 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon and began its three-month siege of Beirut. Intense fighting inflicted severe hardships on West Beirut's 600,000 civilian population, but the PLO was finally forced to withdraw from Beirut. A Multinational Force (MNF) established to oversee the PLO withdrawal on 1 September was anxious to complete its mission, and itself left Beirut on 10 September, leaving the Palestinian civilians unprotected. The assassination of Lebanon's president-elect Bashir Gemayel and a score of other officials on 14 September by a massive bomb in the Kata'ib Party headquarters (reportedly by a young Maronite who had been linked to a pro-Syrian faction of the Syrian Popular Party) proved to have disastrous consequences for the remaining Palestinian civilians.¹⁶ Israeli troops entered West Beirut on 15 September; around six that evening a massacre of several hundred Palestinians by the Lebanese Forces was unleashed in the camps of Sabra and Shatila. It was to take the Palestinians until 1985 to regain control of the camps near Sidon and resume commando activities.

Israel's continued occupation of south Lebanon as its "Security Zone" is regarded by Lebanon as a violation of Resolution 425. For a brief moment, after Israel's second invasion in 1982, it seemed that Lebanon and Israel might liquidate the zone and jointly impose a security regime with the Agreement of 17 May 1983. But that agreement, which the Lebanese saw as a means of effecting the withdrawal of all foreign forces from its territory, Syria saw as a threat to its position in the region. The Agreement was eventually renounced by the government of Lebanon as a result of Syrian pressure.

THE EMERGENCE OF HIZBALLAH

Israel's 1982 invasion accomplished the withdrawal of the PLO from Beirut, but also gave birth to a new resistance movement against Israel. Israel had, with some success, fanned the flames of resentment against the Palestinians among southern Lebanon's majority Shiite population, and they at first they greeted Israel's 1982 invasion with some relief. Their elation quickly soured, however, when the Israelis began to assume the posture of an occupier. The Shiites, motivated by religious fervor and the desire to liberate their homeland from occupation, fiercely resisted the Israelis.

The emergence of Hizballah was assisted with important sources of support and encouragement from Iran and Syria. Iran's revolutionary leaders viewed the Shiites of southern Lebanon, who already had strong historical connections with Iran, as ideal proponents for their brand of political Islam. And Syria, having survived what it considered to be an Israeli-American military and diplomatic onslaught in Lebanon, found the Iranian connection useful in making Israel's occupation of southern Lebanon as costly as possible. A carefully contained war of attrition developed in south Lebanon, and occasionally spilled into northern Israel.

SYRIA REASSERTS ITS ROLE

Israel's 1982 invasion reaffirmed Syria's belief that Lebanon was its first line of defense. Lebanon could never be allowed to separate itself from the conflict with Israel, nor could any single, strongly based local force in Lebanon be allowed to emerge. In pursuit of these goals, Syria blocked the May 1983 Agreement which Israel exacted from Lebanon, and which was designed to formally terminate the state of war between Lebanon and Israel and open the stage for "normal relations with Israel."¹⁷ Next, Syria consolidated its position in the Bīqā', provided arms to the Lebanese groups that opposed the government, principally Amal, and tried to weaken the Lebanese Forces and the Lebanese army units that supported Amin Gemayel. Syria also tried to gain control of the Palestinian movement and drove Yasir Arafat's PLO out of the Bīqā' and Tripoli.

According to the Syrian strategy, Lebanon was to remain weak and, above all, was not to be allowed outside support from the United States, Israel, or their allies. Crucial to this strategy was the removal of the MNF, which had been established to oversee the PLO evacuation from Beirut in 1982, but which later became active in supporting the Lebanese Army in its operations against the Shiite and Druze opposition. This was accomplished when the bombings of the American Embassy and the Marine barracks at Beirut International Airport forced the MNF's "redeployment." Next, Syria intervened to stop the fighting between the rival Amal and Hizballah Shiite factions, thereby consolidating its position in West Beirut. By 1987, Syria had reestablished control over the

Palestinian camps on the edges of the city. With its forces, numbering some 35,000 troops, holding sway over more than 60 percent of Lebanese territory, Syria was once again the dominant force in Lebanon.¹⁸

THE AOUN INTERREGNUM

The end of the discredited Gemayel presidency in September 1988 presented another challenge for Syria. The Lebanese political factions, Syria, and the United States had failed to agree on the election of an acceptable successor. Consequently, in the closing hours of his term, Amin Gemayel created a constitutional crisis by appointing General Michel Aoun as interim prime minister. Aoun's appointment was not recognized by the Lebanese opposition or Syria. Complicating matters, the incumbent Sunni prime minister, Salim al-Hoss, refused to step down and in turn claimed executive power. Lebanon's internal divisions were now mirrored in these two legal authorities.

Initially, General Aoun attempted to broaden his base of support among the Christian and Muslim populations. He appealed to their common sense of Lebanese identity and blamed outside forces for their misery. His goals of national unity, rule of law, sovereignty, and the withdrawal of all foreign forces (Syrian) from Lebanon were greeted enthusiastically by the Christian community, and received the cautious support of the Muslims. When provocations by the Lebanese Forces caused the Syrians to shell East Beirut, however, Aoun countered by shelling West Beirut. In the process, he lost any support he might have gained from the Muslim community.

THE DOCUMENT OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION

Although Aoun was a threat to Syria's aims in Lebanon, he was unable to muster the necessary support to unify the country or evict the Syrians. As Lebanon's security situation degenerated, Syria stepped in once more. Under the aegis of the Arab League, Syria, with support from Saudi Arabia, summoned the 70 surviving members of Lebanon's Parliament (which had not had an election since the beginning of the civil war) to Ta'if, the Saudi summer capital, to deal with Aoun and the constitutional crisis. With Syrian encouragement, the parliamentarians amended the constitutional system and developed the Document of National Reconciliation, initially approved by the Lebanese Parliament in 1989 and approved with the Amendments on 21 September 1990.¹⁹

In addition to guaranteeing the presidency to the Christians and ensuring the sharing of executive power among the prime minister and the speaker of parliament, Ta'if equalized Muslim-Christian representation in parliament. Since this arrangement generally extended to high-ranking posts in government and in the public sector, Ta'if enshrined the unwritten confessional arrangement of the 1943 National Pact. The Agreement was signed on 22

October. On the same day, the deputies elected René Moawad President of the Republic.

The actions of the parliamentarians were not without consequences. Those who signed the document and the newly elected president were subject to numerous death threats and assassination attempts. President Moawad was himself assassinated two weeks later during a celebration of Lebanon's Independence Day, 22 November. The parliamentarians acted swiftly in the face of this new threat, and two days later Elias Hrawi, a Maronite from Zahle with close ties to Syria, was elected to succeed him.

THE DENOUEMENT

General Aoun refused to recognize the Hrawi government or the Ta'if Accord, which left indefinite Syria's continued presence in Lebanon. Seeking to capitalize on the conflict between the Ba'athist regimes in Iraq and Syria, Aoun sought Iraq's support to drive the Syrians from Lebanon. To prepare for the confrontation, Aoun had to consolidate his position with his Christian constituency. He attempted to wrest control of the small Christian area between Beirut and Jebail, but in the process inaugurated a Christian civil war in January 1990. The conflict lasted until July of that year and ended without a clear-cut victory for Aoun. The war did, however, have disastrous human and political consequences for the Christian community, which suffered 1,000 dead, 5,000 injured, and \$1.2 billion in property damages.²⁰

Meanwhile, Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on 1 August 1990 provided Syria with the opportunity to remove Aoun by force. Syria had prepared by allying itself with the United States coalition against Iraq, its long-time enemy, and in October 1990 was given permission to move against Aoun and resolve the Lebanese crisis. The presidential palace in Ba'abda was attacked and Aoun was forced into exile. With Aoun's removal, constitutional authority was reestablished, and the militias, with the exception of Hizballah (which was engaged in the resistance to Israeli occupation in the south), were dismantled. The Lebanese Army, with Syria's assistance, proceeded to collect the assault weapons of the militias and the Palestinians, and was deployed throughout the country. Syria's suzerainty in Lebanon was once again firmly established.

GRAPES OF WRATH

The reestablishment of constitutional authority in 1990 allowed Lebanon to experience a slow and painful recovery. This gradual resumption of political and economic life that took place under the auspices of the Ta'if Accord was again interrupted in April 1996, when Israel launched its third military attack on Lebanon. The ostensible justification for Israel's "Operation Grapes of Wrath" was the need to secure its northern border against attack from Hizballah forces. Israel was reeling from attacks from Islamist groups opposed to the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations, and the Tel Aviv government was under

strong pressure to take action. The invasion was intended to be a strong message against terrorism, one that was needed to secure a victory for the Labor government. Its immediate effect, however, was the bombing and destruction of villages, the killing of civilians, and the creation of 400,000 internal refugees. The operation also carried another message to Lebanon. The bombing of electric power plants near Beirut was an implicit warning to the Lebanese authorities that their economic recovery and the rebuilding of the country's infrastructure were at stake if they did not control Hizballah.

Israel's 1996 action served only to reemphasize the weakness of the Lebanese government and strengthen Syria's political role in the country. Hizballah would not be disarmed as long as UNIFIL or its troops were prevented from entering Israel's "Security Zone." Syrian Defense Minister Mustafa Tlass, in an interview with the Beirut weekly *Monday Morning*, stated Syria's position succinctly:

We support the forces of the Arab resistance which are confronting the enemy in armed struggle, especially the Lebanese resistance. . . . It is an important means by which the material strength and morale of the enemy can be weakened.²¹

Lebanon still seeks the withdrawal of all foreign troops from its territory, in accord with UN Security Council Resolution 425, but it cannot accomplish this in the face of Israeli intransigence. Lebanon's Foreign Minister Faris Buwayez wants the United States to assist in an Israeli withdrawal.²² But Israel's withdrawal from the south is hostage to progress in the Syrian-Israeli peace negotiations. According to Buwayez, Lebanon is not asking for an immediate withdrawal, but for "a decision" to withdraw which would take place under conditions to be decided by a commission composed of Lebanese and Israelis.

IMPLICATIONS OF TA'IF FOR LEBANON

The Ta'if Accord formalized Syria's influence in Lebanon²³ and provided for the development of additional treaties. The Treaty of Brotherhood, Cooperation, and Coordination, signed on 22 May 1991, is a prime example of the new relationship.²⁴ The Treaty established a mixed Higher Council to promote intergovernmental cooperation on economic, defense, culture and energy issues. The membership of the Higher Council gave it the status of a supra-authority that can negotiate, sign, and enforce bilateral agreements.²⁵ The Treaty also defined the framework for Syrian and Lebanese relations, as its provisions illustrate. Article I provides for:

The highest levels of cooperation and coordination in all fields, including political, economic, security, educational, scientific, and others, with the aim of promoting the mutual

interests of the two sisterly states within the framework of their respective sovereignty and independence.

Article IV sets the time-line for Syria's redeployment of its troops, that is,

after the political reforms have been approved and endorsed in a constitutional manner in line with the provisions of the Lebanese National [Reconciliation] Pact, and after the deadlines fixed in the Pact have expired.

Article V states the principles that should govern the foreign politics of both countries, that is, the commitment to the charter of the Arab League, the Treaty for Arab Defense and Economic Cooperation, and all other agreements signed within the League's framework. Article VI develops the structure, that is, the Syrian-Lebanese Higher Council, that would provide any future confederal relationship between the two countries with a central authority. Article III establishes the interconnectedness of Syria and Lebanon's security, and has caused the greatest concern among some Lebanese observers. The article provides that

Lebanon shall not become a transit way or a base for any power, state, or organization which seeks to undermine Syria's security, while Syria, keen to preserve Lebanon's security, unity, and independence, shall not allow any action that would constitute a threat to Lebanon's security.

Another statement in Article III says that "Syria's security requires that Lebanon should not be a source of threat to Syria's security and vice versa under any" circumstances is significant, given Lebanon's recent history and its relations with Israel. This article effectively gives Syria the right, after its own evaluation of an impending threat from "any power, state, or organization which seeks to undermine Syria's security," to preserve Lebanon's security, but there is no mention of the possibility that Syria might become such a transit-way or base.²⁶ It also raises the question of the operation of Syrian security forces within Lebanon, and the independent authority these forces exercise over both Lebanese and Palestinian nationals.

ECONOMIC RELATIONS

The Treaty of Brotherhood, Cooperation, and Coordination's multiple and binding agreements in virtually all social and economic fields have raised questions about the future of Lebanese-Syrian relations. What effect, for example, will contact with Lebanon have on Syrian society as Syria attempts to liberalize its domestic economy? Conversely, to what degree will Lebanon be

able to manage its social and economic cooperation with Syria without becoming subcontracted to the Syrian economy?

One manifestation of this concern is the Labor Agreement, signed on 18 October 1994, which sought to legalize the status of Syrian laborers in Lebanon. Given that an estimated 900,000 Syrians work in Lebanon and that Syrian workers at home earn approximately two thousand Syrian lira (\$50) per month—and are willing to work for much less than Lebanese workers, who average approximately \$200 per month—how much can Lebanon absorb in terms of potential unemployment and social dislocation?²⁷ Added to this is the enormous expense that Syria's presence entails for Lebanon, and the millions of dollars that leave Lebanon every day and are added to the Syrian economy. As these statistics indicate, Lebanon is an economic outlet where the Syrian private sector can invest and prosper, while the Syrian public sector remains under the control of the present regime.²⁸

THE FUTURE OF SYRIAN-LEBANESE RELATIONS

Any future regional peace settlement will remain a challenge to Syrian-Lebanese cooperation. The suspension of the Israeli-Syrian peace talks has affected the Lebanese-Israeli track, and Lebanon will not conduct independent negotiations with Israel. Syria will continue to consolidate its position in Lebanon, as it did on 19 October 1995, when it judged that the extension for two years of President Hrawi's term was necessary in order to strengthen its negotiating position vis-à-vis Israel.

In addition, an eventual peace agreement between Syria and Israel might have adverse economic and political effects on Syria. The regional balance of power would shift with Syria's diminished status as a confrontation state with the result that Syria might not be able to retain its suzerainty over Lebanon. Recent studies conducted by the World Bank and other institutions predict that the main communications lines in the Middle East will start from or lead to Israel, not Lebanon.²⁹ Syria would also note the advantage to Israel, which no doubt, would also benefit economically from the opening up of Arab markets and foreign capital investment in Israel, especially in the promised \$11.6 billion economic support provided by the 13 September 1993 agreement with the Palestinians.³⁰

Given these conditions, Syria will continue to exercise political predominance in Lebanon for the foreseeable future. Although some might point with dismay to the fundamental unequal relationship between the two countries, rational and direct cooperation will require the continuance of their present relationship as long as both countries are confronted with the exigencies of regional challenges.

THE FUTURE OF ISRAEL-LEBANESE RELATIONS

Israel is unlikely to withdraw unilaterally from southern Lebanon absent a special security regime. Nevertheless, some observers have speculated on the conditions under which a withdrawal might take place.³¹ Israel, for example, might link its withdrawal from Lebanon to that of Syria, but it would not want to risk leaving behind a Lebanese force that was incapable of reliably enforcing security in the area. To obviate such a situation, Israel might insist on the deployment of a neutral "peacekeeping force" in southern Lebanon. Yet Israel has rejected such options in the past, for example, UNIFIL.

Alternatively, Israel could try to deal with the government of Lebanon exclusively, holding it strictly accountable for any security breaches—a policy it tried to implement during its combat with the PLO in the south, and more recently with Hizballah. This idea has not borne any results in the past, given the weakness of the governmental authority. Finally, Israel could encourage a direct Syrian security role in the south that might convert Syrian suzerainty in Lebanon from a liability to an asset. This would have the effect of encouraging the view that Syria and Israel had somehow struck a deal whereby Syria would remain in Lebanon while conceding to Israel its position on the Golan Heights. Again, this scenario seems unlikely. Israel has had such opportunities in the past but has always chosen not to allow Syria to assume a role in southern Lebanon, preferring skirmishes with guerrilla forces to having Syrian troops along its northern border.

Another proposal was put forward in the summer of 1996 by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. He floated a "Lebanon first" option whereby Israel would negotiate with Syria the terms for an Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon, provided that the proposed Israeli withdrawal would not be linked to the future of the Golan Heights. Netanyahu's proposal had a number of conditions linked to it, such as incorporating members of the SLA into the Lebanese Army and disarming Hizballah as a precondition for withdrawal. Such preconditions have been rejected by Lebanon and Syria many times before. Even more unacceptable for Syria was Netanyahu's expectation that Syria would willingly cooperate in helping Israel disengage from southern Lebanon but not from the Golan Heights. Netanyahu's "Lebanon first" option was a non-starter, and the lack of progress in the Palestinian-Israeli peace talks has put that proposal to rest.

Syria and Israel were on the verge of an agreement in 1996 until the suspension of the Washington talks after the terrorist bombings in Israel. Peace might still be attained in southern Lebanon if negotiations between Israel and Syria resume. There were hopes that the Monitoring Group co-chaired by the United States and France after Operation Grapes of Wrath would encourage Syria and Israel to interact directly to solve the issues between them. Such talks might be useful as confidence building measures, but would not address the basic issue of an overall settlement of the conflict. Recent events show that an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan and southern Lebanon are inextricably linked and, as

the May 1983 Agreement demonstrated, any peace agreement will have to reflect that the ultimate governing authority in Lebanon resides in Damascus.

THE PALESTINIANS AND LEBANON

On 13 September 1993 the PLO and Israel signed a "Declaration of Principles," the Oslo Agreement, on Palestinian self-rule in Jericho and the Gaza Strip. The Agreement had no effect on the status of the Palestinians in Lebanon, however. Indeed, the fitful progress of the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations has had negative ramifications on Lebanon. In September 1995, for example, the Libyan government decided to show its disapproval of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process by expelling 30,000 Palestinian migrant workers, about half of whom were from Lebanon. This action renewed fears that Lebanon will have to pay the price of permanently settling the Palestinians after any Israeli-Palestinian peace settlement.

Conversely, the Palestinian presence in post-civil war Lebanon has served as a rare, if negative, unifying element in the Lebanese national political identity. With few exceptions, Lebanese of all factions agree that the Palestinians should not be resettled permanently in Lebanon. This principle is enshrined in the preamble of the new constitution of Lebanon, which states:

Lebanese territory is one for all Lebanese. There shall be no segregation of the people on the basis of any type of belonging, and no fragmentation, partition, or colonization.³²

Prime Minister Salim al-Hoss has expressed his concern that there is no mention of the Palestinians of 1948 in the Israel-PLO accord. Hoss believes that the resettlement of Palestinians in Lebanon would upset the sectarian balance in the country. He has pointed out that the Ta'if Accord said "no" to fragmentation, division, and implantation. "Implantation" (colonization), he said, refers to the Palestinians in Lebanon.³³

Lebanon's Foreign Minister, Faris Buwayez, advocates the following measures to resolve the Palestinian issue in Lebanon. (1) The Palestinians from the areas covered by the Israeli-PLO agreement should be given the right of return to Gaza and Jericho. The United Nations decided this twenty years ago in UN Resolution 194. (2) The Palestinians should be given the right of family unification. "Wherever the majority of a given family is located, whether in Israel, the West Bank, Egypt, the US, etc., the members of that family should be allowed to rejoin the family." (3) Finally, the Palestinians should be given the right to immigrate to their country of choice. Countries like Canada, according to Buwayez, are accepting numerous immigrants and so should allow the Palestinians to immigrate. According to Buwayez, the "implementation of these measures would solve 30 percent of the Palestinian problem in Lebanon."³⁴

Palestinians living in Lebanon not only face physical danger, but also suffer the afflictions of poverty, unemployment, and political disenfranchisement. Although a few have been granted Lebanese citizenship, most Palestinians feel marginalized by a peace process that holds out no hope of repatriation.³⁵ As a result, Palestinians cling to their refugee status because it legitimizes their right of return to Palestine. In the interim, some Palestinians are now seeking to redefine themselves as a legal minority in Lebanon in the hope that this will protect them from further displacement and redefine their place in Lebanese society.³⁶

CONCLUSION

Although Lebanon's involvement in regional crises was not the underlying cause of its civil unrest, it has played an important part in sparking the problems Lebanon has endured since its independence. Lebanon was unable to isolate itself from the chronic Palestinian-Israeli crisis, nor could it find any effective way to deal with the presence of Palestinian refugees. Today, Lebanon is struggling to recover from the effects of the many conflicts and wars that have plagued the country for seventeen years and produced thousands of its own internal refugees. While Lebanon's energies will be occupied with these problems, the future of the Palestinians in Lebanon will continue to be a source of uncertainly and contention.

The uneasy balances within its own constitutional arrangement forced the Lebanese to live with the escalating cycles of Palestinian-Israeli violence. The intense polarization that the Palestinian issue caused among dissatisfied elements during the civil war has given way to a broad national consensus—at least on the surface—that the Palestinian problem should not be settled at Lebanon's expense. This consensus has been reached despite the continued non-resolution of the underlying causes of the Lebanese conflict—social disparity, political representation, and confessionalism.

Lebanon's association with Syria has not been fully defined, and its future relationship with Israel awaits the resumption of the peace negotiations. The broader Arab-Israeli conflict and the slowness of the regional peace process will continue to complicate Lebanon's relations with its neighbors, Syria and Israel, as well as the fate of the Palestinians living in Lebanon. The occupation of south Lebanon by Israel and the continued presence of armed elements over which it has no control, namely the Hizballah resistance movement and the South Lebanon Army, ensures that Lebanon, its eventual recovery, and its future independence, will continue to be hostage to regional events.

NOTES

1. Kamal Salibi, *The Modern History of Lebanon* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1965), 18.

2. Ghassan Salamé, "Lebanon: How 'National' Is Independence?" *Beirut Review* 6 (Fall 1993): 1-5.

3. Fred J. Kouri, *The Arab Israeli Dilemma* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1968), 70.

4. Roy Alan, "Lebanon: Israel's Friendliest Neighbor," *Commentary* 13 (June 1952): 551.

5. Labib Zumiyya Yamak, "Party Politics in the Lebanese Political System," in Leonard Binder, ed., *Politics in Lebanon* (New York: Wiley, 1966), 151. Mubarak's letter was also reported in the Beirut daily *al-Diyar* on 27 September 1946, with the result that he was reportedly reprimanded for his position by the Maronite Patriarch, relieved of his ecclesiastical duties, and exiled to a monastery. See William W. Haddad, "Christian Arab Attitudes Toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict," *Muslim World* 67(April 1977): 130 and Laura Zitrain Eisenberg, *Lebanon in the Early Zionist Imagination, 1900-1948* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994), 142-43.

6. Albion Ross, "Dr. Malik Presses Arab-Turkish Tie," *New York Times*, 11 June 1951.

7. Hussein Sirriyyeh, "The Palestinian Armed Presence in Lebanon Since 1967," in Roger Owen, ed., *Essays on the Crisis in Lebanon* (London: Ithaca Press, 1976), 77. Estimates on current numbers vary. The Palestinian Refugee Research Net (23 March 1999; <www.arts.mcgill.ca/MEPP/PRRN/proverview.html>) cites 346,164 UNWRA registered Palestinian refugees in Lebanon as of June 1995. The often cited figure of 400,000 would include an estimated 50,000 non-registered refugees.

8. Michael Hudson, "The Palestinian Arab Resistance Movement: Its Significance in the Middle East Crisis," *Middle East Journal* 23 (Summer 1969): 291.

9. Israel blew up thirteen Arab civilian airliners and a petrol storage tank and the damage caused by the raid was estimated at \$43.1 million. John B. Wolf, "Shadow on Lebanon," *Current History* 58 (January 1970): 25.

10. The Israeli raid was also viewed as a warning to the governments of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait that continued contributions of large sums of money to the commando movement might in the future subject their property to Israeli reprisal. *Ibid.*

11. Kamal S. Salibi, *Crossroads to Civil War: Lebanon, 1958-1976* (New York: Caravan Books, 1976), 41.

12. *Ibid.*, 55-56; Sirriyyeh, "The Palestinian Armed Presence," 79.

13. John P. Entellis, "Palestinian Revolutionism in Lebanese Politics: The Christian Response," *Muslim World* 62, no. 4 (October 1972): 341.
14. Salibi, *Crossroads*, 55.
15. Sirriyyeh, "The Palestinian Armed Presence," 81.
16. For an account of this period, see Elie A. Salem, *Violence and Diplomacy in Lebanon: The Troubled Years, 1982-1988* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1995), 145-56.
17. Helena Cobban, *The Making of Modern Lebanon* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1985), 187.
18. Elizabeth Picard, *Lebanon: A Shattered Country* (New York and London: Holmes and Meier, 1996), 134.
19. "Documents: The Constitution of Lebanon After the Amendments of August 21, 1990," *Beirut Review* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 119-60.
20. Paul E. Salem, "Two Years of Living Dangerously: General Awn and the Precarious Rise of Lebanon's 'Second Republic,'" *Beirut Review* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 67.
21. Michael Jansen, "Lebanon: Israel on Top?" *Middle East International* 563 (21 November 1997): 14.
22. Foreign Minister Faris Buwayez to author, 10 December 1993.
23. "Lebanon, which is Arab in its belonging and identity, has close filial ties to all the Arab states; there exist between it and Syria distinctive relations which derive their force from the roots of propinquity, history, and common filial interests. This is the foundation on which coordination between the two countries shall be based." "The Ta'if Agreement," *Beirut Review* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 171.
24. "Treaty of Brotherhood, Cooperation, and Coordination Concluded Between Lebanon and Syria on May 22, 1991," *Beirut Review* 1, no. 2 (Fall 1991): 115-19.
25. The Higher Council is made up of the presidents of both states, the speaker of the Lebanese parliament, the prime minister and deputy prime minister of the Lebanese government, the speaker of the Syrian parliament, and the prime minister and deputy prime minister of the Syrian government. Simone Ghazi Tinaoui, "An Analysis of the Syrian-Lebanese Economic Cooperation Agreements," *Beirut Review* 3, no. 8 (Fall 1994): 102.
26. *Ibid.* Lebanon-Syria Treaty of Cooperation, May 20, 1991 [sic.], 21 March 1999 <almashriq.hiof.no/lebanon/3...sciences/320/327/lebanon-syria.txt>
27. *Ibid.*, 108-9.
28. Capital flight from Syria over the past decades has been estimated at some \$25 billion. See Volker Perthes, "From Front-Line State to Backyard? Syria and the Economic Risks of Regional Peace," *Beirut Review* 3, no. 8 (Fall 1994): 90.
29. *Ibid.*, 89.
30. Tinaoui, "Analysis," 111.
31. See for example, Frederic C. Hof, "Syria and Israel: Keeping the Peace in Lebanon," *Middle East Policy* 4, no. 4 (October 1996): 110ff.

32. "Preamble, The New Constitution of Lebanon," Section (i). *Beirut Review* 1, no. 2 (Spring 1991): 123.

33. Salim al-Hoss to author, 2 December 1993.

34. Foreign Minister Buwayez to author, 10 December 1993.

35. See Julie Peteet, "From Refugees to Minority: Palestinians in Post-War Lebanon," *Middle East Report* (July-September 1996): 27ff.

36. According to Peteet, around 60,000 Palestinians have been naturalized in Lebanon since 1994. The majority of these were Shiites from border villages who had Palestinian refugee status; others were "Sunnis who, for reasons not made public, were naturalized in 1995, perhaps to balance out the Shia naturalization." Most Palestinian Christians had already been given Lebanese citizenship; the few who remained, about 10,000, have since been naturalized.