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**THE POLITICAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC
RECONSTRUCTION OF POST-WAR LEBANON
(1989-1995)**

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in partial fulfilment of the requirements
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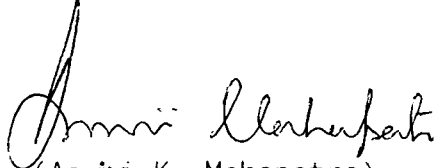
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CERTIFICATE

Certified that the dissertation entitled **The Political and Socio-Economic Reconstruction of Post-War Lebanon (1989-1995)** submitted by **P.V. Sahadudheen** in partial fulfilment of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other University. To the best of our knowledge, this is a bonafide work.

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiner for evaluation.


(Dr. Gulshan Dietl)
Chairperson


(Aswini K. Mohapatra)
Supervisor

Dedicated

TO My Parents

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PREFACE

Lebanon is a small beautiful country. But it was embroiled in a multi-dimensional conflict which was much larger than its size. The uniqueness of this conflict is its sectarian character and its effect on the regional and international political environment. Thus, Lebanon is a fascinating subject for a student of politics.

The Document of National Understanding, signed in 1989 at al-Taif, Saudi Arabia marked a definite turning point in the fifteen year conflict in Lebanon. As soon as the peace was set in motion the country set forth many socio-political and economic reforms. This work is a humble effort to bring out an explicit and elaborate analysis of the political reforms and socio-economic programmes undertaken by Lebanon in the period 1989-95.

An attempt is also made to determine various factors, domestic and external, in the war and post-war situation. The study also analyses the Ta'if Accord highlighting its political salience in the reconstruction process.

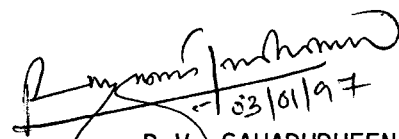
Additionally, it examines the efforts to raise the country from the ruins of a devastated economy, underlining the role of the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR). Finally, the problems and prospects for sustaining peace and stability in the country ~~are~~ discussed.

I am indebted to many people who helped make this study possible and wish to acknowledge my gratitude for their help. Foremost is the help given to me by my Supervisor, Mr. Aswini K. Mohapatra. I owe a special debt to him for his constant guidance, encouragement and advice.

Specifically, I would like to thank His Excellency Michel Bitar, Ambassador of Lebanon to India, for his input and advice.

I take this opportunity to thank my friends Anil Chandy, Sankar, Anil Mathew, Himu and Chaitali who helped me in a multitude of ways to bring this work to fruition.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: A BACKGROUND TO THE CONFLICT AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Lebanon is one of the most unique and distinct republics in the world. The name Lebanon originated from the semitic word "laban" which means milk, in reference to the country's beautiful snow covered mountains. It stretches about 135 miles from North to South and between 25 to 59 miles from West to East. As one of the smallest countries in the world, it has an area of 10542 sq. km. with a resident Lebanese population of around 3 million.

The Lebanese origins go back in ancient history, to the Canaanites, members of the Semitic Amorites, immigrant groups, who founded the coastal cities of Arad, Ougarit, Tripoli, Batroun, Byblos, Beryte, Sidon and Tyre.¹ They were called as Phoenicians by the Greeks, which means "Purple Red", a reference to the dye invented by them, an important item in their commerce. Lebanon maintained its Christian characters until the ninth century, while Muslim sects began to take root in the area from tenth century onwards.

Modern Period

Lebanon's uniqueness is characterised by the presence of a set of paradoxes and contradictions. Lebanon as a polity is archaic, inefficient, and divided; it is also liberal, democratic, and - in general

1 Speech of Michel Bitar, Lebanese Ambassador to India at the inaugural function of India-Lebanon Business Forum, New Delhi, on 6 November 1996.

- orderly. It is Arab and Western, Christian and Muslim, traditional and modern. The most important fact about Lebanon's human geography is the multiplicity of sectarian or confessional communities, Christian, Muslim, and others, not one of which can claim to constitute a majority² (see Table 1 for the sectoral division of Lebanese population).

Table 1: Lebanese Population by Sect, 1956

Sect	Estimated Population
Maronite	424,000
Sunnite	286,000
Shiite	250,000
Greek Orthodox	149,000
Greek Catholic	91,000
Druze	88,000
Armenian Orthodox	64,000
Armenian Catholic	15,000
Protestant	14,000
Jewish	7,000
Syrian Catholic	6,000
Syrian Orthodox	5,000
Latins (Roman Catholic)	4,000
Nestorean Chaldeans	1,000
Others	7,000
Total	1,411,000

Source: Michael C. Hudson, *The Precarious Republic* (Colorado: Westview, 1985), p.22.

Lebanon has a unique political culture divided along sectarian, regional and family lines. Michael C. Hudson wrote:

The fragmentation of modern Lebanon's political culture has two dimensions. One is socio-cultural and reflects the multiple, diverse, and often contradictory identification of its peoples. The second derives from the area's vulnerability to and attraction for foreign political interests.³

2 David C. Gordon, *Nation in Jeopardy* (Kent: Croom Helm, 1983), p.4.

3 See Michel C. Hudson, *The Precarious Republic* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1985), p.3.

Domestically, there is a chronic suspicion between Christians and Muslims,⁴ there is also a never ending antagonism among the various sects within each of the two religions. Local communalism antedates the establishment of the present territorial entity in 1920 by the French. The presence of different traditional social groups divided on the basis of religion, community, and kinships has made Lebanon a politically volatile area. This traditional pluralism is characterised by the extraordinarily pervasive influence of families and family alliances in politics and by the religious and sectarian differentiation of the country. Together they constitute a particularly intricate pattern of what Professor Carleton Coon calls the "Mosaic culture" of the Near East, and they constitute a crucial intervening variable in the political life of Lebanon.⁵

Externally, regional and international players like Israel, Syria, Iran and Western powers formed alliances with actors in the domestic political scene. External actors had their own interests to promote while internal actors got help through supply of arms, money and training. This dynamic interplay of different forces of internal security and external

4 For further discussion of the Christian-Muslim conflicts see Suad Joseph and Barbara Pilsbury (eds.), *Muslim-Christian Conflicts: Economic, Political and Social Origins* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1978).

5 Hudson, n.3, p.18.

rivalries formed the disintegrative factors of the Lebanese political system.⁶

Religious-Sectarian Divisions

Religious identity has always been a central point of debate in contemporary Lebanon. According to Albert Hourani, "The Primary divisions inside the Near East are, as they have been for over a thousand years, religious: whether a man is Moslem, Christian, or Jewish community he belongs to."⁷ The truth of this statement is more apparent in Lebanon than elsewhere. Although Lebanese have a multilevel affiliation to the various elements of their social structure like family, tribe and party, religious-sectoral affiliation remained the single most important identity.

Commenting on this, observers concluded that some Lebanese are "Christians first, Lebanese second," "Pragmatic merchants first, ideological pursuits second," "Arabs first, Lebanese second," and so forth.⁸ It has sometimes appeared especially during times of war, that the Lebanese sense of citizenship was determined by religious affiliation and that Lebanese religious sentiments and commitments superseded loyalty

6 For a discussion on the connection between external forces and internal actors in the Lebanese conflict see Khalida Ghous, "Lebanese Crisis: External Pressures and Internal Rivalries", *Pakistan Horizon*, July 1990, pp.41-58.

7 Albert Hourani, *A Vision of History* (Beirut, 1961), p.72.

8 Wadi D.Haddad, *Lebanon: Politics of Revolving Doors* (Washington, 1985), p.7.

to the country.⁹ Wadi D. Haddad reinforces this view by saying that "Today's Arab nationalist may be tomorrow's Maronite; Today's secularist socialist may be tomorrow's Shia cleric; today's Arab nationalist may be today's Maronite."¹⁰

There is another school of thought which expounded the commonalities among the communities. The basic foundation of this argument is that there are no genetic or racial differences between the Lebanese people from different communities. Georges Corm says that "there are no basic divisions in Lebanon: there are religious communities, which should not be mistaken for ethnic groups."¹¹ Moreover, these communities have a common language, culture and customs like clothing, music and food. However, this argument definitely agrees that socio-political divisions exist in Lebanon.

Lebanese Political System and the Sectarian Problem

Lebanon was comprised of separate areas divided among various religious sects, the most powerful of whom were the Maronites. In 1920 the Maronite leadership which traditionally had maintained close ties with France, convinced France that a Lebanese state in which the Maronites and other smaller Lebanese Christian sects dominated was the only way to ensure continuance of the French influence in the region. In order to

9 Raghid el-Solh, "Religious Identity and Citizenship", in Deirdre Collings (ed.), *Peace for Lebanon* (Boulder, 1994), p.231.

¹⁰ Haddad, n.8, p.8.

11 Georges Corm, "Myths and Realities of the Lebanese Conflict", in Nadim Shehadi and Mills (eds.), *Lebanon: A History of Conflict and Consensus* (London, 1988), p.261.

make the proposed State economically viable, it was suggested that in addition to the traditional Maronite Mount Lebanon enclave which was then 80 percent Christian and 20 percent Druze, the predominantly Muslim areas around should also be included. However, in this "Greater Lebanon", the Maronites and Christians would comprise only slightly more than 51 percent of the population. The Muslims who were not consulted about this arrangement threatened to opt for union with Syria rather than with the Maronites. A political understanding known as the national pact was eventually worked out in 1943, by which independent Lebanese republic was born.

The National Pact envisaged the confessional political system in Lebanon which is, theoretically speaking, based on the 'national accommodation' model.¹² Advocated by the pluralists, national accommodation model refers to a political mechanism for communally fragmented societies in which the political system accommodates the disparate communal groups. The pluralists emphasise on the vertical integration whereby each community conscious of its ethno-sectarian distinctiveness is allowed a place in the national government. The framework outlined by the National Pact contained various autonomous power-centres bound together in relatively interdependent relationship.

12 For a detailed examination of political pluralism and accommodation model see David and Audrey Smock, *Politics of Pluralism: A Comparative Study of Lebanon and Ghana* (New York: Elsevier, 1975), p.365.

The polity conceived by the Pact has also been variously referred to by some scholars as an ideal representation of consociational democracy.¹³

However, given the unequal socio-economic development at all levels - both at communal as well as regional - the Lebanese polity failed to survive the political jerks and jolts. The consociational Lebanese polity bereft of a national consensus and stable political institutions degenerated into a state of anarchy. For, the system was too restrictive and rigid to allow scope for resolving the inter-elite squabbles. In the absence of an over-arching loyalty to the 'national-centre' various confessional groups launched their respective militias to protect and promote the particularist ambitions. This, however, was in conformity with the pre-independence Lebanon's social pattern of patron-client relationship. In brief, the national pact not only reinforced the consociational model, also institutionalised the 'clientalism' in Lebanon's political life.

Features of the National Pact

National Pact of 1943 stipulated that the seats in the Parliament would be distributed between Christians and Muslims in a 6:5 ratio, which ensured a Christian predominance. Parliament is elected by the people every four years, and President of the Republic is elected for six years by the Parliament. The posts of President, Prime Minister and Speaker

13 See the Introductory chapter in Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration* (New Haven, 1977). According to Lijphart Consociational model entails the cooperation among elites representing various confessional or communal segments. It provides political stability in a deeply-divided society along with democracy.

were reserved for Maronite, Sunni and Shia communities respectively.¹⁴ The president may not seek reelection. The confessional distribution was done on the basis of population strength of each community according to 1932 census.

The ninety-nine seats of Parliament were divided on the basis of 6:5 ratio between Christians and Muslims. By the 1970s, there was a rapid demographic growth among Lebanese Muslims which resulted in the shrinkage of Christian population to a little more than one-third while Muslim and Druze grew to roughly two-third and the Shiites became the largest single community in the country. Non-Christian sects complained that the Christians, and especially the Maronites, were disproportionately powerful. The Christians, however, resisted all Muslim demands for political reforms and greater share in power commensurate with their new status. Congenital Christian-Muslim tensions exploited by external vested interests, slowly paralysed government functioning and resulted in the out-break of an open civil war in 1975 which continued intermittently till 1990.¹⁵

Domestic Actors

The changed social and political realities in the country resulted in the formation of militias and different communities rallied behind the

14 See Malcolm Kerr, "Political Decision-making in a Confessional Democracy", in Leonard Binder (ed.), *Politics in Lebanon* (New York: John Wiley, 1966), pp.187-212.

15 See Ronald D. McLaurin, "Lebanon: Into or Out of Oblivion?", *Current History*, vol.91, no.561, January 1992, pp.29-33. and Hussein Sirriyeh, "Lebanon: Dimensions of Conflict", *Adelphi Papers*, no.243, Autumn 1989, pp.1-84.

respective communal parties. Christians, in order to ensure the security of the community, supported the Lebanese Front, a predominantly Maronite Christian coalition. In another significant development, by 1975, a broad-based multisectarian coalition composed of both Muslims and Christians of various ideological orientations called Lebanese National Movement (LNM) was formed in order to oppose sectarian quotas and propose deconfessionalisation of the political system.

The Kataeb Party, otherwise known as *Phalanges Libanaises*, established in 1936, was active in the scene. It is a Maronite Christian Party, the main goal of which was "to retain the Maronite Christian Domination". Progressive Socialist Party, founded by traditional Druze leader Kamal Joumblatt in 1949, mobilized Druze population to protect their sectoral interests. It was under the leadership of Walid Joumblatt, son of Kamal Joumblatt.

Personalities and personal cliques played a major role in Lebanese domestic politics. The influential landlords, lawyers and businessmen operate through such informal groupings. The constitutional bloc and National bloc are examples. Moreover "all parties remained essentially sectarian in character and are dominated by personalities whose influence is rooted in parochial rather than modern affiliations."¹⁶

When the civil war broke out in 1975 all the political parties and sectarian groupings organized under militias. These militias unleashed

16 See Halim Barakat, "Social and Political Integration in Lebanon: A Case of Social Mosaic", *Middle East Journal*, Summer 1973, pp.301-18.

totalitarian terror. Simultaneously, a few external actors also became major warring factions in the conflict.

External Actors

The importance of regional political dynamics cannot be underestimated here. Israel became a super power in the region and because of the age-old conflict between the Jews and Arabs, it created a disequilibrium in the region. Palestinians who were driven out of Jordan in 1970 found political refuge in Lebanon (South) and started guerilla operations against Israel. This development dragged Lebanon into the vortex of the Palestine-Israel conflict. According to an observer,

the Arab-Israeli conflict and ancillary regional struggles were deeply embedded in the Lebanese crisis from the outset; at no time could one say it was a purely Lebanese affair. The two were inextricably enmeshed, because Lebanon's weak state structure and patchwork society allowed it to be infiltrated by all the region's problems and contradictions.¹⁷

Syrian tactics in Lebanon is a part of its strategy to put tremendous pressure on Israel in order to regain its lost territory - Golan Heights. As an observer has aptly put it, "Assad has always used Lebanon more than as a battle ground, it is for him a weapon".¹⁸ Presence of Hizballah and its relationship with Iran is another factor. Iran with

17 Jim Muir, "Lebanon: Arena of Conflict, Crucible of Peace", *Middle East Journal*, vol.28, no.2, Spring 1989, pp.207-8.

18 See, Christopher Dickey, "Assad and His allies: Irreconcilable Differences," *Foreign Affairs*, Spring 1987, p.59.

its expansionist dream cultivated a 'holy' relationship with Hizballah, a Shiite grouping, to create an Islamic state in Lebanon.¹⁹

Syria and Iran have a complementary relationship in their interference in Lebanon. Both the countries have a common hatred towards Iraq. By forming an alliance, Syria sought economic assistance, while Iran depended in Syria's regional power status to enhance its influence in the region.

A Prelude to the Civil War

There were occasional clashes between Palestinians and the Israeli army. Israeli raids became almost routine, by air and land, while the Lebanese government stood helplessly.²⁰ Palestinians clashed with the units of Kataeb also. Meanwhile, on university campuses and in the streets, students were engaging in one demonstration after another and clashing with the security forces. Both private and party militias flexed their muscles with new recruits and weaponry. Lebanon broke up into a complex of rival feudatories.

Civil War

Although government attempted to impose several ceasefires, clashes occurred between the militia of the Kataeb and Leftist and Palestinian units and between the inhabitants of 'Ayu al-Raummana' (mainly Maronites)

19 See for details, Martin Kramer, "Redeeming Jerusalem: The Pan-Islamic Premise of Hizballah", in David Menashri (ed.), *The Iranian Revolution and the Muslim World* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), pp.105-12. Also see A.R.Norton, "Changing Actors and Leadership Among the Shiites of Lebanon", *A.A.P.S.S.*, no.482, November 1985, pp.116-19.

20 Gordon, n.2, p.104:

and of al-Shiyyah (mainly Shiites).²¹ In the beginning of the civil war, Suleyman Franjiyya was the President and traditional Sunni Muslim leader Rashid Karami was the Prime Minister.

Table-6.1: Main Contenders in the Civil War (by the end of 1976)

Lebanese Front (or Kufur Front) (founded 1976)
Kata'ib (10,000-15,000 core militia; could raise some 30,000-40,000).
National Liberal Party (Chamoun)
Guardians of the Cedar (Etienne Saqir)
Zghartan Liberation Army (the Marada Brigade) (Franjiyya)
Permanent Congress of the Lebanese Orders of Mons (Sharbal Qassis)
Al-Tanizm (Fuad Shamali)
"Liberated Lebanon" (Major Sa'd Haddad) (2,000-2,500 forces after 1978)
Smaller units

National Movement (FPPNF) (founded 1973)
Progressive Socialist party (Joumblatt family)
Al-Murabitun (Ibrahim Qulailat)
Lebanese Communist party (Georges Hawi)
Arab Socialist Ba'th party (supported by Iraq)
Organization of Communist Action (Muhsin Ibrahim)
Arab Socialist Action party
Syrain Social Nationalist party (In'am Ra'd)
Smaller units
Total: Some 7,000 forces

Allied to the National Movement by Aligned with Syria

Nationalist Front
Organization of the Ba'th party (Asim Qansu)
Union of the Forces of the Working People (Kamal Shatila)
Syrian Social Nationalist party (Ilyas Qanaizah)
Movement of the Disinherited (al-Amal) (Imam Musa al-Sadr; then Nabih Berri)

Syrian forces (22,000-30,000)

Lebanese army (25,000 claimed by 1980)

United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (6,000)

Source: David C. Gordon, *Nation in Jeopardy* (Boulder: Westview, 1983), p.105.

21 *ibid.*

In order to resolve the conflict, President Franjiyya after consultation with Syria issued a Constitutional Document on February 6, 1976. Although the document provided for the equality of representation in Parliament between Muslims and Christians, the war continued.²² In this backdrop Syrian troops entered Lebanon in order to gain a foothold in Lebanon and avoid the victories of the left and the Palestinians. In early June Syria launched a full scale invasion of Lebanon officially to end the civil war and restore peace. With the increased Syrian intervention conflict acquired international proportions. Arab League intervened by sending an Arab peace keeping force comprising of Syria, Libya, Algeria, Sudan, Saudi Arabia and PLO but fighting continued unabated.

Another significant event was the assassination of Druze leader, Kamal Joumlatt on 16 March 1977, which were followed by a wave of revenge killings. In retaliation to al-Fatah attack on a bus near Tel-Aviv in March 1978, Israeli forces advanced into Southern Lebanon. The UN Security Council demanded an Israeli withdrawal and established a United Nations interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) of 6,000 men to maintain peace in the area. Although Israeli forces withdrew from Southern Lebanon in June 1978, it relinquished control to a Christian Lebanese militia.

22. See for details, Marius K. Deeb, "Lebanon: Prospects for National Reconciliation in the Mid-1980s," *Middle East Journal*, vol.38, no.2, Spring 1989.

In 1980 Phalangist militia strengthened and consolidated its position under its commander Bashir Gemayel.²³ The fight between Syrian forces and Christian militias continued while the government under Dr.Salim al-Hoss could not exert its authority. It resulted in his resignation.

The fight between Israel and PLO culminated in a full scale invasion of Lebanon by the Israel army. The devastation was enormous as thousands of civilians were killed and the siege was wide spread. Bashir Gemayel, the Phalangist leader, who got elected in 1982 presidential elections was assassinated in a bomb explosion, three weeks after he assumed power. This resulted in a mass killing of Palestinian refugees by Phalangist militia men. A week later Bashir Gemayel's brother Amin Gamayel was elected president.

The Michel Awn Phenomenon

Lebanon failed to elect a new President after the expiry of six year term of President Gemayel on 23 September 1988.²⁴ A six member interim military government under the leadership of General Michel Awn was appointed. But Muslim leaders did not participate in this government leading to a constitutional crisis, with two governments, one Christian in East Beirut, and one predominantly Muslim, in West Beirut, claiming

23 Georges Corm, n.11, p.260.

24 See Arild Schou, "Breakdown of Conflict Management in Lebanon", *Bulletin of Peace Proposals*, vol.20, no.2, June 1981, pp;193-204.

legitimacy. Syria did not recognize the interim military government.²⁵ In November 1988 Gen. Awn was dismissed as Commander-in-Chief of the army by Salim-al-Hoss's government.²⁶

Peace Making in Lebanon

On 18 September 1989 the Tripartite Arab Committee on Lebanon resumed its efforts to bring peace into Lebanon. At the Casablanca summit meeting of 25-26 May 1989, the Arab League formed the Tripartite High Commission consisting of President Chadli Benjedid of Algeria, King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, and King Hassan II of Morocco to resolve the Lebanon problems. In this backdrop, Lebanese Parliament met in Ta'if Saudi Arabia to discuss the charter of national reconciliation. The Ta'if accord which ended the civil war was signed by 62 members of the 1972 Parliament. The accord was very unique in many respects as it contained significant political reforms and balanced power sharing.

25 See Aswini Kr.Mohapatra. "Lebanon: A Banana Republic Without Bananas?", *Mainstream*, 8 April 1989, pp.27-28.

26 See for more details, Jim Muir, "Lebanon: Aoun the Stumbling Block", and "Lebanon on a Knife Edge", *Middle East International*, 17 November 1989, and 1 December 1989.

CHAPTER II

TA'IF ACCORD: AN ASSESSMENT

Ta'if accord otherwise known as the Document of National Understanding which was signed in al-Ta'if, Saudi Arabia on 22 October 1989 occupies an important place in the history of modern Lebanon. It took fifteen years of incessant fighting and destruction of the country before a settlement agreement was implemented.

Prior to Ta'if, every peace making effort was a failure due to various combinations of international, regional and domestic factors. Internationally the cold war had aggravated the conflict through competition between the two super powers for influence in the Middle East. Regionally, important events such as the 1967 and 1973 wars with Israel, the 1970 civil war in Jordan, and the Camp David process had intensified inter-Arab conflicts; this had prompted some Arab governments, as well as Israel, to exploit the opportunities offered by Lebanon's factionalized body politik.¹ Foreign sponsors had used Lebanese groups to promote their own narrow interests. At the same time, Lebanese factions had exploited Arab government infighting to forge external alliances to support their political and military programme. This shows that Lebanese war was a series of proxy wars.²

To talk about the earlier peace attempts, domestically, traditional mechanisms for dealing with conflict were no longer able to contain the

1 For details see Walid Khalidi, *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon: Confrontation in the Middle East* (Cambridge, 1979).

2 See for Israel and Syria's role in Lebanon, Itamar Rabinovich, "Israel, Syria and Lebanon", *International Journal*, vol.45, Summer 1990.

inter locking conflict issues that surfaced during the 1967-1975 period. When the war started, these issues became even more irresolvable because Lebanon's traditional elite became marginalized and the number of armed domestic actors (and their regional sponsors) began to burgeon.³ The level of violence was so high that the need for internal reform was felt. But the Lebanese leaders were unable to agree on reforms or implement peace plans due to the escalated sectarian consciousness and fears.

In the aftermath of the eruption of violence in 1975, Lebanese leaders were faced with these alternative courses of action relating to internal political reform: preservation of the status quo, abolition of the sectarian system, or adoption of reform measures that would allow for some re-adjustment of power-sharing arrangements. First alternative was totally impractical as it would not help to solve the problem in the light of the fundamental socio-economic and demographic realities. Implementation of the second alternative in a crisis atmosphere proved to be unrealistic. The third alternative which called for a negotiated compromise eluded the feuding parties until the Ta'if accord.

The Arab League Committee of six was activated in January 1989. At the Casablanca Summit meeting of the Arab League on 25-26 May, a Tripartite High commission consisting of President Chadli Bendjedid of Algeria, King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, and King Housan II of Morocco was created to chart out a plan to resolve the Lebanon problem. Specifically, the mandate of the triumvirate, with the help of the Arab League's indefatigable assistant secretary-general, former Algerian foreign affairs

3 For details refer Jonathan Randal, *The Tragedy of Lebanon: Christian Warlords, Israeli Adventurers and American Bunglers* (London: Hogarth Press, 1990).

minister Lakhdas Ibrahim, was to facilitate the election of a new Lebanese president and promote the adoption of presidential reforms.⁴

In the backdrop of the crumbled Lebanese economy, 62 members of the Lebanese parliament met in Ta'if, from September 30 to October 22, 1989, under the aegis of the Arab League Tripartite Committee. These parliamentarians were the members of the 1972 parliament with an equal number of Christian and Muslim, as was a smaller group of 16 which conducted most of the discussions.

The Ta'if accord which was a product of the al-Ta'if negotiations is not radically different from previous attempts to reform the Lebanese political system. The most serious attempts to settle the conflict were the National Dialogue Committee (1975), the constitutional Document (1976), the Arab Summit conferences at Riyadh and Cairo (1976), The Geneva-Lausanne Conference (1983, 1984) and the Damascus Tripartite Agreement (1985). Many of the features of the accord were anticipated by the Constitutional Document accepted by then-president Franjiah in 1976 and the Tripartite Agreement of 1985, both of which were mediated by Syria. The Ta'if accord approved by 58 of the 62 deputies implicitly endorses the National Pact with its stress on confessional compromise and intercommunal cooperation. In this way, the Ta'if Accord is rooted in a well established "tradition" that renders Lebanon more of a contractual, consociative counting than one based on a Constitution.⁵ This tradition

4 A.R.Norton, "Lebanon After Ta'if: Is the Civil War Over", *Middle East Journal*, vol.45, no.3, Summer 1991, p.460 and Andreas Rieck, "A Peace Plan for Lebanon: Prospects After the Ta'if Agreement", *Aussen Politik*, vol.41, no.3, 1990.

5 Joseph Maila, *The Taif Accord: An Evaluation*, in Deirdre Collings, *Peace for Lebanon*, Lynne Rienner, 1994, p.31.

is built upon a practical-consensual approach than a formal-legal approach in conflict and tension management.

The Ta'if accord has conceded that political sectarianism has to be there at least for some time to come. However, the accord is seen as a process and not a definite settlement. Another characteristic of the accord is that the signatories were not belligerents in the war unlike other peace attempts.

It was only on 21 August 1990 that the legislature, the Chamber of Deputies, approved constitutional reforms based on the Ta'if agreement while the United Nations (UN) Security Council had expressed support for the accord on 31 October 1989.

Constitutional Reforms

The Ta'if accord contains a number of important principles on which the Lebanese state is built.

Domestically, there are three important points to be noted. First in a statement of general philosophy, the accord reendorses that Lebanon is a country where various communities co-exist. It again sets forth the basic principles like independence, unity, sovereignty, a liberal, parliamentary democracy, Arabness and the definite nature of a "Lebanese homeland for all her sons". There is a structural regulation in the document which reads as follows: "There shall be no constitutional legitimacy for any authority which contradicts the pact of communal co-existence."⁶

In regard to institutions, the striking aspect of the accord was the elevation of the Chamber of Deputies, thereby lessening some powers of the

6 Part I, Subjection J of the Ta'if Accord quoted in Maila, n.5, p.35.

president, an office traditionally reserved for a Maronite. The terms of the speaker which is customarily reserved for a Shi'i Muslims would be elected for a four year term, and the nomination of the prime minister by the president would require consultation with the speaker who conveys the results of binding parliamentary consultations.

The Council of ministers, the cabinet would be the real wielder of executive authority, and the single most important position would clearly be that of the prime minister. Except for a few powers like accreditation of ambassador and the issuance of pardon, the autonomous powers of the president were shifted to the Cabinet.

In the parliament, seats were distributed equally between Christian and Muslims. This religious balance was achieved by the addition of nine more deputies to the original 99. Thus in the 108 seat parliament a 54-54 seat balance was maintained between Christian and Muslims. There is no doubt that Maronites and Shi'i Muslims have compromised in a big way. The pre-eminence of the presidential post which is the symbol of the political predominance of the Maronites became a thing of the past.⁷ Shi'i Muslims which is the third largest community compromised in favour of Sunni Muslims where they equalled in the number of seats in parliament. Even the small Alawi community gained two seats in parliament which shows the influence of the Alawi dominated Syrian government. The confessional distribution of Lebanese parliament is given in Table 1.

⁷ See Godfrey Jansen, "The Maronites Place in Lebanon's Future", *Middle East International*, 9 October 1992, pp.19-20.

Table-1: Confessional Division of the Lebanese Parliament

	1972* Parliament	1989 Ta'if Accord	1990 Vacancies
Confession			
Christians			
Maronite	30	30	12**
Orthodox	11	11	4
Catholic	6	6	0
Armenian Orthodox	4	4	0
Armenian Catholic	1	1	1
Protestant	1	1	0
Other***	1	1	0
Subtotal	54	54	17
Muslims			
Sunni	20	22	5
Shia	19	22	3
Druze	6	8	5
Alawi	0	2	0
Subtotal	45	54	13
Total	99	108	30

* Although the last general election was held in 1972, the last parliamentary election was actually in 1974 when Rafiq Shahin won a by-election in Nabatiyya.

** Maronite deputy Fuad Tihini of the Shuf died after implementation of the accord in September 1990 and he is not included in the total vacancies shown.

*** This seat is held by Farid Jibran, a Roman Catholic affiliated with the (Druze) Progressive Socialist Party.

Source: See Augustus Richard Norton, "Lebanon After Taif: Is the Civil War Over?", *Middle East Journal*, vol.45, no.3, Summer 1991, p.463.

In regard to electoral reforms, new constituencies on the basis of the mohafazah was redrawn, with its larger and multi-communal electorates. Provisions were laid out in the accord for the formation of a Supreme Court (which was first envisioned in the Constitution of 1926), a constitutional court, and an economic and social council. Administrative

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decentralization is another important provision in the accord. This enhances the importance of Lebanon's outlying regions. A transfer of administrative authority to regional departments *mohafazat* could help depoliticize decisions of the central authorities.

The question of sectarianism has always dominated the Lebanese political scene.⁸ Otherwise known as confessionalism was considered as transitional only, even though it appeared as early as 1926, in the article 95 of Lebanon's constitution. Even the 1943 National pact called for an eventual abolition of the sectarian system. The Ta'if accord went a bit further by suggesting certain steps for its gradual termination. For example the accord's text terminated certain criteria for recruitment of public servants, except for posts at high levels. Similarly, mentioning of religion on identity cards was stopped. A national committee under Lebanon's president was formed to chalk out further steps for the eventual elimination of sectarianism.

The Ta'if accord deals with important security and foreign policy provisions too. The dissolution of militias and disarming them seemed to be the most important provision regarding security. This would lead to the conversion of militia men to civilian life and enrolling them in the army or the internal security forces through conscription. The security plan's ultimate aim is for the state to "extend its authority over all the territory of Lebanon by means of its own forces", although Syrian forces "shall assist the legitimate Lebanese forces" in this task.⁹

8 For more details on religious sectarianism, see Ralph E. Crow, "Religious Sectarianism in the Lebanese Political System," *Journal of Politics*, 24 August 1963, pp.489-520.

9 Part II, Preamble and Section 5 of the Ta'if Accord, quoted in Mailla, n.5, p.36.

The Ta'if Accord and the Withdrawal of External Forces

The Accord also speaks about Lebanon's relations with Syria. Firstly, two years after the adoption of constitutional reforms, Syrian forces should redeploy to the Biqa Valley, but also to "any other position" decided upon by a Lebanese-Syrian military Committee. A Lebanese-Syrian agreement would determine the size of the remaining Syrian forces and the duration of their stay on Lebanese soil. The Ta'if accord states that the Tripartite Arab High Commission would assist the two governments in concluding this agreement, "if they so desire".

Secondly, the accord called for the establishment of "privileged relations" vis-a-vis Syria. Lebanon and Syria are expected to maintain close relations "in all areas".¹⁰ The cooperation between the two countries in the area of security is to be noted particularly.

The Accord talks about Lebanon's relations with Israel too. The Accord demands the implementation of UN Resolution 425 that demands the withdrawal of Israeli troops.¹¹ It also called for the reinstatement of the 1949 Israeli Lebanese armistice. Meanwhile all necessary steps should be taken to liberate Lebanese territory from Israeli occupation.

A Critique

The Ta'if accord is an extremely important document as it deals with a vast array of questions. It assumes importance as it is given as a package deal by articulating the internal and external aspects of the

10 For more information see, Patrick Seale, "Asad of Syria: The Struggle for the Middle East" (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

11 See Jim Muir, "Lebanon's Post Ta'if Reactions", *Middle East International* (362), 3 November 1989, pp.3-5.

crisis within a single scheme. This shows that regional factors are important as internal issues.

Another feature to be noted is that there is a strong Arab support to Lebanon on its march to peace. Tripartite Arab High Commission also reiterated its readiness to serve as an intermediary during Lebanese-Syrian negotiations.

Some provisions in the accord have invited criticisms from various quarters especially the chapters dealing with Syria's "redeployment" and Lebanese-Syrian relations. Because the text relating to these points had been determined in advance by way of prior Syrian-Arab negotiations.

To talk about the content of the accord, the changes brought in the political system by strengthening the legislature require special mention. Parliament became stable as the president cannot dissolve it at his own will. Another change to be noted is the transfer of powers from the President to the council of ministers. President no longer controls the government. He symbolises the political and moral authority and should not involve in political activities and the day-to-day management of governmental affairs.

CHAPTER III

THE PROCESS OF POLITICAL RECONSTRUCTION

Implementation of the Ta'if Accord

The signing of the Arab League sponsored Ta'if Accord in October 1989 brought a new dawn of peace into Lebanon. It set in motion the process of national reconciliation in Lebanon after more than sixteen years of fierce fighting and bloodshed. The end of war underlined the need to build a state of peace - one that can consolidate the foundations of stability and set the country on a steady course of orderly evolution and progress.

In order to build the right kind of state, all the ills associated with the defunct state of the pre-Ta'if era should be dealt with proper political reforms. The desired state should, in a nutshell, have the attributes of a strong, just, non-sectarian, administratively decentralized, and democratic system of authority.¹

Political schism between the two major communities, Christians and Muslims tormented Lebanese society in the pre-Ta'if era. The country lacked a strong and fair-minded central authority. This call for the need of a strong army on one side, and on the other more equitable power sharing in the political system. Debate on political reconstruction revolved around three concepts, political decentralization of the State, political deconfessionalization of the system, and democracy.

1 Salim el-Hoss. "Prospective Change in Lebanon", in Deirdre Collings (ed.), *Peace for Lebanon: From War to Reconstruction* (London, 1994), p.251.

The call for decentralization was too often embodied in plans to federalize Lebanon into highly autonomous geographic entities, so drawn as to have distinct sectarian colourings.² But this proposal was viewed by the opposing factions with suspicion. Political deconfessionalisation was also opposed by its critics³ as it may scuttle a balanced power equation when one sect gains control over the other. The proponents of political deconfessionalization emphasized on the point that equality among citizens is one of the basic human rights to be honoured in a civil society.

Another platform articulated was the call for democracy. Democracy in Lebanon is a misnomer, for democracy as a concept gives freedom to exercise his/her rights on the basis of a constitutional, legal, and institutional framework, which Lebanon is lacking. Equality and equal opportunities are the bedrocks of democracy. Practically speaking, Lebanon lacked equality of opportunity, political accountability and resilience.

Lebanon's "Second Republic"

The historic agreement, Document of National understanding, signed at al-Ta'if in November 1989, contained several principles commensurate with altered socio-political and demographic realities.⁴ The important

2 ibid, p.251.

3 A certain section of intellectuals who were debating on the different ways for political reconstruction.

4 See Jim Muir, "Lebanese Parliament Meet in Ta'if", *Middle East International*, 6 October 1989.

aspect of the agreement was that it envisioned the principle of Muslim-Christian parity. Parliamentary representation was divided on an equal basis between the two communities. Implicitly, the accord rejected the idea that parliamentary seats need to be reallocated periodically to adjust for disparate rates of population growth among the major confessional groups. Instead, the principle of parity provided the basis of a historic compromise highlighting the fact that Lebanon is a country shared by Christians and Muslims.

With regard to other reforms, the charter provided for the transfer of executive power from the presidency to the cabinet. However, the appointment of the Prime Minister would remain with the President in consultation with the members and President of the Parliament. The number of deputies in the Parliament were increased from 99 to 108. A further provision was the implementation of two security plans in Lebanon: one was the disbandment of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias within six months after the endorsement of the charter and strengthening the Lebanese army; second, the Syrian army would help the government to implement this plan and redeploy themselves to Biqa Valley within a maximum period of two years.⁵

Syrian Influence

Syrian influence was undeniably evident, as the accord had set-forth two key measures regarding Lebanon-Syria relations. The first one was the

5 W.B.Fisher, *Lebanon: The Middle East and North Africa* (London: 42nd edition, 1996), p.649.

redeployment of Syrian forces to the Biqa valley or to any "other position" decided upon by Lebanese-Syrian military Committee. The second measure was the establishment of "privileged relations" with Syria, which signified the accord's primary symbolic and political message.⁶

There were 40,000 Syrian soldiers and assorted secret service agents in Lebanon. Although, Syrian troops were not accepted as a permanent fixture in the Lebanese landscape, an armed Syrian presence was seen as a necessary condition for proceeding with the implementation of certain of the Ta'if Accord's provisions, especially disbandment of the militias.⁷

Moreover, Lebanese political leadership always followed the shadow of Syria and never took any action without consulting Syrian President Hafiz al-Assad.⁸

Ta'if Accord and Israel

With respect to Lebanon's relations with Israel, the basic principle was very simple: Ta'if called for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 425 that demanded the withdrawal of Israeli troops from

6 Joseph Maïla, "The Ta'if Accord: An Evaluation", in Deirdre Collings (ed.), n.1, p.36.

7 Norton and Schwedler, "Swiss Soldiers, Ta'if Clocks, and Early Election: Toward a Happy Ending?", in Deirdre Collings (ed.), n.1, pp.47-48. Israel's self declared "Security Zone" of 9 to 13 kilometres deep along Lebanon's South Eastern Borders which Israel invaded in 1978 remains as bone of contention.

8 See Giles Trendle, "Under Syrian Management", *The Middle East*, June 1992 and Raymond A. Hinnebusch, "Syrian Policy in Lebanon and the Palestinians", *Arab Studies Quarterly*, vol.8, no.1, 1987, pp.1-20. Syria sees Lebanon as a part of the Greater Syria (Bilad al-Sham).

the South. With regard to legal relations, the accord called for the resurrection of the 1949 Israeli-Lebanese armistice. Moreover, it added, "all necessary steps will be taken to liberate Lebanese territory from Israeli occupation."⁹

Michel Awn as a Hurdle

The Ta'if Accord received wide international support, including the USA, the erstwhile Soviet Union, Britain and France. But General Michel Awn, the Christian leader and appointed interim Prime Minister in 1988 by the outgoing President Amin Gemayel, had set up a rebel government in east Beirut and declared 'War of Liberation'.¹⁰ He refused to accept the Ta'if Accord by denouncing it as a betrayal of Lebanese sovereignty.¹¹ He accused that it did not contain a definite time table for a complete Syrian withdrawal from Lebanese territory.¹²

Initially, General Awan received the support of some Christian factions, including the powerful Lebanese Forces (LF) leader Samir Geagea. Interestingly, General Awan attempted to impose political control over the Christian militias by ordering his forces to close all the barracks of the

9 See Maila, n.6, p.37.

10 "Lebanon: The Gamble that Failed", *The Middle East*, June 1989.

11 Fisher, n.5, p.649.

12 See Jim Muir, "Lebanon: Aoun the Stumbling Block", *Middle East International*, 17 November 1989.

LF in east Beirut.¹³ This precipitated an intra Christian war in January 1990 which invited the intervention of France and Vatican. A truce was arranged in May 1990, however, Awn refused to reconcile with the government without drastic amendments to the accord.

In October 1990, taking advantages of Awn's isolation, the government with Syrian support, took military action to remove him by force. General Awn was defeated and he had to take refuge in the French Embassy in Beirut. The government did not allow him to leave for France, as he was charged with embezzlement of public funds and crimes against the State.¹⁴ However, government granted General Awan a general amnesty in August 1991, and allowed him to leave for France.

Early Achievements of Ta'if Accord

Despite scepticism both in Lebanon and outside regarding the government's ability to tackle the challenging task of implementing the provisions of Ta'if Accord, there were remarkable achievements.

The important achievements were:

- 1) elimination of General Awn's opposition (October 1990);
- 2) Unification of the Lebanese army in October/November 1990;
- 3) Establishment of a security zone in Greater Beirut;
- 4) Free of all militias (December 1990);

13 See Jim Muir, "Lebanon on a Knife Edge", *Middle East International*, 1 December 1989.

14 See *Middle East Economic Digest*, 24 December 1990, p.18.

- 5) Formation of a new Cabinet of reconciliation under Omar Karami in December 1990;
- 6) Cessation of hostilities between the Amal and the Hizbullah and the replacement of fighters by army units in South Lebanon in February 1991;
- 7) Disbandment of all militias except PLO and Hizbullah (May 1991);
- 8) Formalisation of the distinctive relationship between Lebanon and Syria through the signing of the 'Treaty of Fraternity, Cooperation and Coordination' in May 1991;
- 9) And the replacement of PLO fighters by the Lebanese Army in South Lebanon in July 1991.

Lebanon-Syria Treaty of May 1991

The signing of the Treaty of Fraternity, Cooperation and Coordination' between Syria and Lebanon was a significant development.¹⁵ The treaty declared that Syria and Lebanon had 'distinctive brotherly relations', based on their 'geographic propinquity, similar history, common belonging, shared destiny and common interests'.¹⁶ Syria's dominant presence in Lebanon coupled with the treaty of 'distinctive relations' invited considerable resentment within and outside Lebanon. The Lebanese Forces (LF) and the Phalangist Party opposed the treaty.

15 For details, see the document published in *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol.XX, no.4, summer 91.

16 Fisher, n.5, p.651; and *Middle East Economic Digest*, 8 June 1991, p.24.

while internationally, Israel criticized the excessive Syrian influence over Lebanon, Damascus of trying to 'swallow' Lebanon up.¹⁷

In the backdrop of the particular political situation after Gulf War (Syrian participation in the anti-Iraq coalition), Syria was given more or less free hand in Lebanon.¹⁸ The US seemed to have concluded that stability in Lebanon which was in its interest was not possible without the full support of Syria. The new treaty legitimised Syria's de facto control over Lebanon by making it incumbent on it to co-ordinate decision making in sensitive areas such as foreign policy, security and defence and by formalising the deployment of Syrian troops in designated locations in Lebanon.

The gain for Lebanon has been its recognition for the first time by Syria as an independent political entity, and the prospect opened up for peace and political stability. The Lebanese cabinet endorsed the treaty, knowing that the reconciliation which had taken place could not have been possible without Syria's blessings.

Ta'if and the Parliament

The last general elections prior to Ta'if accord was held in 1972. During the civil war, parliament remained nominally intact; and its members represented Lebanon in the Ta'if negotiations. Though frail and diminished in numbers by natural and unnatural deaths, Parliament played

17 Jim Muir, "The Syrian-Lebanese Treaty: Grounds for Concern or Hope?", *Middle East International*, 31 May 1991.

18 *Middle East Economic Digest*, 15 June 1991, p.18.

its constitutional role by electing Rene Muawwad president in 1989 and, following his assassination, seventeen days later, elected Elias Hrawi to the office.¹⁹

As part of the Ta'if accord, number of deputies were increased from 99 to 108 and equally split between Muslims and Christians.²⁰ There were forty vacant seats in the Parliament due to death or resignation. The Ta'if Accord included a provision for an exceptional procedure to fill the vacant parliamentary seats, namely, the "appointment of deputies."²¹ Interestingly, appointment of deputies to an elected body seemed to be anomalous, and the prospect for commencing Lebanon's national reconciliation with this procedure caused considerable opposition. However, no one questioned the need to reactivate parliament, some feared that 'appointive deputies' may represent vested interests.

In this backdrop, proposals for holding by-elections²² were put forward as an alternative to the 'appointment of deputies', arguing that, if conducted with integrity, would lead Ta'if process to genuine national rapprochement. Due to Syrian disinterest, holding of by-elections was shelved, as they feared that it would undermine their influence in

19 Norton and Schwedler, n.7, p.49.

20 See Augustus Richard Norton, "Lebanon After Ta'if: Is the Civil War Over", *Middle East Journal*, vol.45, no.3, summer 1991.

21 Norton and Schwedler, n.7, p.49.

22 To hold by-election for the vacant 40 seats in the Parliament after the signing of the Accord. Rest of the deputies were the members of the 1972 Parliament.

Lebanon.²³ Thus, on 9 May 1991, forty deputies were appointed, some of who were widely respected, in the midst of an increased domestic resentment and criticism against the appointments.

Ta'if and the Electoral Process

To the surprise of many, Syria started initiating the discussion for elections by early 1992. An explanation to this was that, Syria wanted to ensure a compliant legislative body prior to the Syrian redeployment as mandated by the Ta'if Accord.²⁴

Ta'if Accord had provided for a new electoral law by redrawing the electoral boundaries on the basis of the six provinces, or mohafazat. The provinces are the North, Beirut, the Biqa, Mount Lebanon, the South and Nabatieh. Treating the mohafazat as electoral constituencies was intended to "ensure: (a) co-existence among the Lebanese communities; (b) political representation for all classes and age groups in the population; (c) and the effectiveness of that representation."²⁵

But reorganising the constituencies according to mohafasat led to "official" gerrymandering and it benefitted, more or less, the traditional leaders and warlords. Redrawing of the boundaries of the constituencies

23 See *International Herald Tribune*, 30 April 1991, p.6.

24 See Judith P. Harik and Hilal Khasnan, "Lebanon's Divisive Democracy: The Parliamentary Elections of 1992", *Arab Studies Quarterly*, vol.15, no.1, winter 1993, pp.41-60.

25 Passage from an English translation of the Ta'if Accord published in *The Beirut Review*, vol.1, no.1, Spring 1991, in Norton and Schwedler, n.7, p.50.

coupled with Syrian forces' presence in Lebanon was severely criticised by Christian factions and they declared boycott of the elections.

The electoral law also increased seats to 128 from 108, the twenty additional seats being shared equally between the leading Christian and Muslim sects.²⁶ This resulted in the dilution of the political power of smaller sects, as Druze did not benefit from it, while Shiites and Sunnis split equally the ten new Muslim seats. The allocation of the 128 seats is shown in the Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of Seats in Parliament Total Seats 128: 64 Christians, 64 Muslims

Christian		Muslims	
Sects	Seats	Sects	Seats
Maronite	34	Sunni	27
Greek Orthodox	14	Shii	27
Greek Catholic	6	Druze	8
Armenian	6	Alawi	2
Other Christians	4		
Total	64	Total	64
Total seats = 128			

Source: Data drawn from Augustus Richard Morton and Jillian Schwedler, "Swiss Soldiers, Ta'if Clocks and Early Elections", in Deirdre Collings, *Peace for Lebanon* (London, 1994), p.52.

The Parliamentary Elections 1992

Pre-election Phase: As plans for the August/September elections began to crystallize, many foreign observers questioned the conditions under which the polling would be conducted. Several intellectuals and non-

²⁶ Norton and Schwedler, n.7, p.51.

governmental organizations proposed international monitoring of the elections in order to ensure the integrity of the process. Christian factions opposed holding of the elections before Syrian redeployment, as they would influence the outcome. However, Lebanese government, pliant to Syrian interests, neither postponed the elections nor requested an international monitoring.

Government went ahead with the preparations for elections, by August 1992.

Lebanon uses a list system for elections whereby the elector casts his or her ballot for multiple candidates. For example, in the constituency of Aley, five seats are at stake: two for Maronites, one for Greek Orthodox, and two for Druze. The elector, therefore, casts a total of five votes, allocated respectively, among the Druze, Maronite, and orthodox candidates. To ensure victory, candidates try to assemble (or join) a slate that will appeal across confessional lines. While voters are not obliged to cast their votes for an entire slate, they often do.²⁷

The selection of candidates and the formation of electoral coalitions take place weeks or months before election day. It gives lots of time for the subversion and contortion of the elections by vested interests. Considering the structure of Lebanon's electoral system, guaranteeing the integrity of the process without proper monitoring is a gigantic task.²⁸

Boycott of the Elections 1992

The 1992 elections illustrated the extent of Syrian presence as well as the intensity of anti-Syrian sentiments, especially in the Maronite

27 ibid, p.53.

28 See Harik and Khasnan, n.24.

community. Christians called for the boycott of the Syrian-steered election process. But government was of the view that elections should be held before the Syrian Forces' pullout as the Lebanese army had not got a firm grip over the whole of the country.²⁹ Leading the Christian opposition to holding the elections were Maronite Patriarch Nasrallah Boutros Sfeir, Kataeb Party chief George Saade, and Lebanese Forces Commander Samir Geagea demanding Christian pullout before elections.

In the event, the boycott was a remarkable technical success, although the wisdom of the boycott was questioned privately, by some Lebanese Christians, who note that the boycott provided a Parliamentary membership skewed in Syria's favour and with precious little scope for the active protection of civil rights.³⁰

Outcome of the Elections

In the midst of the Christian boycott and protest, elections were held in three phases; first phase on 23 August in the Biqa valley and in the North; second phase on 30 August in Mount Lebanon and Beirut; third phase on 6 September in the South. All seats but five of the 128 seats in the Parliament were filled. Election to the five seats in the Mount Lebanon area was deferred (the five seats were filled in a by-election in October) due to an effective Christian boycott.

29 David Butter, "Battle Lines Drawn Over Lebanon Poll", *Middle East Economic Digest* (MEED), 14 August 1992, p.2.

30 Norton and Schwedler, n.7, p.54.

Table-2: Turnout by Region and Affiliation in the
1992 Parliamentary Election in Percentage

Region	Christian	Muslim	Overall
North	20	45	25
Biqā	8	40	35
Mt. Lebanon	6	27	13
Beirut	5	40	20
South	5	75	37

Sources: Statistics derived from Augustus Richard Norton and Jillian Schwedler, "Swiss Soldiers, Ta'if Clocks and Early Elections", in Deirdre Collings (ed.), *Peace for Lebanon* (London, 1994), p.55.

Pro-Syrian candidates gained considerably, owing to the excessive Syrian influence coupled with the Christian boycott. The turnout was very high in Muslim areas while it was low in Christian areas.³¹ The turnout of voters according to region and affiliation is given in Table 2. By October 1992 all 128 seats in the Parliament were filled. The religious affiliations of the deputies elected to the Parliament are given in Table 3.

³¹ See *Middle East Economic Digest*, 18 September 1992, p.12.

Table-3: Religious Groups in the Parliament (General Election, 23 August, 30 August, 6 September and 11 October 1992)

Maronite Catholics	3
Sunni Muslims	27
Shi'a Muslims	27
Greek Orthodox	14
Druzes	8
Greek-Melkite Catholics	6
Armenian Orthodox	5
Alawites	2
Armenian Catholics	1
Protestant	1
Others	3
Total	128

Source: The Middle East and North Africa, London: Europa Publications, 42nd edition, 1996, p.669.

Strategy of Islamist Groups in the Elections

The elections illuminated substantial changes in the Lebanese political climate, including election platforms that appeared to indicate a widespread move away from sectarianism.³² Muslim groups like Hizballah, Amal and Jamah al-Islamiyyah as well as several Christian factions emphasized on nationalist and non-religious issues. Hizballah needs a special mention for its highly sophisticated campaign strategy. Hizballah mobilized a vast cross section of the society by adopting social outreach programmes like feeding the poor, rebuilding damaged homes, and providing fuel for heat during peak winter months.

All the candidates presented by the Iranian backed Hizballah, which contested as a political party, were elected. Hizballah's success was attributed to the Christian led boycott and its non-sectarian campaigning.

³² Norton and Schwedler, n.7, pp.54-55.

But the legitimacy of the process was widely questioned, with blame generally placed on officials rather than on election tampering.³³

The outcome of the elections was a watershed for the Shite community, because of the integration of Hizballah into the Lebanese political systems.³⁴ This can be considered as a significant political development, as the participation of the Islamic bloc in the political process is a positive step toward political normalization, liberalization and democratization.

Rafik Hariri Takes Over

The new Parliament, first ever since 1972, came into existence, and its first session was held on 20th October 1992. On 22 October, Rafik Hariri, a Sidon born multi-billionaire businessman, was invited to form the government by President Hrawi. Amal movement leader Nabih Berri was the elected speaker, traditionally reserved for a Shiite.³⁵

Challenges Ahead for Rafiq Hariri

Economic: One of the first tasks Hariri had set himself was to carry out a comprehensive reform of the government machinery in order to eliminate corruption and efficiency. Since the Ta'if Accord, the most challenging task faced by the government was the reconstruction and rehabilitation of

33 ibid, p.56.

34 Butter, n.29, p.3.

35 See *Middle East Economic Digest*, 30 October 1992, p.36.

the war-torn Lebanon. The economy was completely devastated. As the attempts by the previous governments at the economic reconstruction were more or less ineffective, it was Rafik Hariri's task to formulate a new plan of reinvigoration of the economy.³⁶

Hariri's appointment was more of economic significance than political. His appointment was greeted by a surge of confidence in the Lebanese pound, unprecedented since the currency started its free fall in the mid-1980s.³⁷ His top priority was to tackle the budget. In 1992, the budget deficit was around 41 percent because of the political disturbances during the elections. The effect of his appointment on the exchange rate went in favour of Hariri to tackle both the deficit and inflation.

Political: Politically, Prime Minister Hariri in a volatile and fluid conflictual situation. The flare up of violence between Hizbollah forces and Israel in the South had shown that the new government had to settle the difficult problem of reconciling its aim of disarming all militias with the desire to regain sovereignty over the whole of the country.³⁸ Dealing with the disgruntled Maronite constituency was another problem faced by Hariri.

However, Hariri had achieved a popularity unmatched by any Lebanese politician for many years on the basis of his reputation for honesty and effective management, the fact that he has no connection to Lebanon's

36 David Butler, "Hariri: The Saviour of Lebanon", *Middle East Economic Digest*, 6 November 1992, p.3.

37 *ibid*, p.2.

38 *ibid*, p.3.

traditional political class, and in the expectation that he can deliver some kind of miracle cure to Lebanon's ills.³⁹ But high expectations on him could prove to be detrimental, as he gets down to the job of reconstruction, which might involve a long period of continued hardship.

Sensitive South

The situation in southern Lebanon remained on tenterhooks because of the serious escalations of the conflict between Hizballah and the Israeli backed South Lebanon Army (SLA). On 25 July 1993 Israeli armed forces launched their heaviest artillery and air attacks on targets in southern Lebanon since 1982⁴⁰ in order to eradicate the threat posed by Hizballah and the Palestinian guerillas. This attack resulted in the displacement of 300,000 civilians towards the north and caused many civilian casualties.

To solve the south Lebanon problem, Israel put forward two conditions: the dismantling of Hizbullah as a military force, and the absorption of the SLA into the Lebanese Army, with continuing responsibility for security in the border area.⁴¹ But Lebanese officials made it clear that, if at least first of those conditions had to be met Israelis have to withdraw in line with UN Resolution 425; then only

39 ibid.

40 For a detailed examination of the 1982 Israeli Invasion of the South is given in Robert Fisk, "Pity the Nation: The Abduction of Lebanon", New York: Atheneum, 1990.

41 Jim Muir, "Lebanon Toughness its Stand Against Israel", *Middle East International*, 17 March 1995, p.4.

Lebanese army would assert its sole control and take full responsibility for border security. Another option was to have a negotiated settlement with Syria. Since the chances of Israel's unilaterally applying UN Resolution 425 are bleak, South Lebanon's fate depends entirely on what happens in the Syrian-Israeli arena.

Presidential Question

The question of the re-election of president was another contentious issue in 1995. Lebanon was approaching its first Presidential election since the end of the 1975-90 civil war, when President Elias Hrawi was retiring in November 1995. Presidential election invoked controversy because of the presence of two interests: one was the extension of Hrawi's term and, second was army commander Emile Lahond's intention to contest. But the constitutional provisions were in contravention of these two options. According to Clause two, Article 49 of the Constitution, the President should serve a single six years term, which prevents a reflection or extension; clause three, Article 49 bars public servants of the top rank such as the commander of the army or Governor of the Central Bank from standing for election unless they resign two years in advance.⁴²

Prime Minister Rafik Hariri was in favour of amending the constitution and giving an extension to the President. Because, he feared a change of presidency might scuttle the reconstruction process. But Hariri's opponents were projecting the Army Commander Emile Lahoud as the

42 David Butter, "Hariri Lives to Fight Another Day," *Middle East Economic Digest*, 2 June 1995, p.5.

presidential candidate through an amendment of the constitution. However, these speculations were put to an end by the Syrian President's positive nod to grant an extension for Hrawi. Thus, through an amendment Hrawi's term was extended for three years.

Conclusion

After started implementing Ta'if Accord there has been a tremendous improvement in the Lebanese political situation. Lebanon embarked on a series of reforms according to the provisions of the agreement and signs of long lasting peace had begun to emerge except in the southern Lebanon. But the intermittent fights between Israeli forces and Hizballah in the South still cast dark shadows of civil war. But 'South Lebanon Issue' is a part of the age-old Arab-Israeli Conflict and could not be resolved without settling the Palestinian question. Under Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, Lebanon has started improving economically; currency is stabilizing; and physical and social reconstruction are kept at the top of the priority. But Syria's unquestionable influence in the Lebanese political affairs imposes constraints on its autonomy.

CHAPTER IV

CRITIQUE OF ECONOMIC RECONSTRUCTION

The sixteen years of war in Lebanon destroyed not only the country's polity also its economic foundations. Its economy, once held as a "miracle" was in shambles. Its currency's purchasing power had eroded, its public administration had virtually disintegrated and what is more, its physical infrastructure was in ruins.¹ While a one-fourth of the population was displaced and had to live in sub-standard housing, many professionals and skilled workers left the country.

Since the implementation of the Ta'if Accord, Lebanon has undergone a massive reconstruction drive with the intention of restoring the war-damaged infrastructure and at the same time leading the country to the commercial forefront of the region. The ambitious Horizon 2000 programme was the brainchild of Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri which is considered as the blue print of the reconstruction of Lebanon and leading it to the 21st century. However, this is not the first-time that such plans have been drawn. In 1977, after the Two-Year War (1975-76), the Lebanese government created the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR), making it the focus of the reconstruction effort. Its mandate was extended at the end of the War in 1992 to include almost every facet of the reconstruction programme including roads, communications, electricity and water. This chapter will give an outline of the reconstruction effort

1 Ahmad A. Sbaiti, "Reflection on Lebanon's Reconstruction", in Deitre Collings (ed.), *Peace for Lebanon*, London: Lynne Riennes, 1994, p.162.

in the 1990s. It also briefly overviews Lebanese pre-war economy and mentions the various (major) reconstruction plans that followed in war's wake.

Lebanon's Pre-War Economy - 1950-1975

Lebanon's pre-war free market system was characterized by ardent laissez-faireism fostered by the government's 1946 decision to remove restrictions on international transactions (and on the movement of capital and persons) and the gradual unification of exchange rates.² Estimates show that the economy grew by an average of 7 percent per year during the 1950s, and at a slightly slower rate throughout the 1960s and early 1970s.³ This growth manifested in three important areas: balance of payments surpluses, more or less stable exchange rates and prices, and good employment levels. Lebanese economy was improving and attracting foreign investment.

There are also regional factors which contributed to Lebanon's economic success. Beirut port became the major centre of trade as a result of the embargo placed on Israel and the port of Haifa. Lebanon's well-developed service sector contributed trained people to the oil rich Arab states in the Gulf in the late 1960s. Lebanon became a major service centre for multinational and international companies and they based their headquarters in Beirut.

2 ibid, p.164.

3 For more details see, Samir Makdisi, *Financial Policy and Economic Growth: The Lebanese Experience*, New York, 1979, p.3.

Lebanon's economic base was composed of a weak agricultural sector, a small but growing industrial sector, and a dominant services sector whose collective share of the gross domestic product (GDP) averaged 80 percent over the years.⁴ But in terms of price stability, employment levels and balance of payment surpluses, Lebanon's pre-war economy was miraculous. In long-term point of view socio-economic inputs were inadequate. There were many lacunae in the economic and social policies and planning. Economic activities were centralized in Beirut and Mount Lebanon, neglecting other regions in Lebanon. Trade and service sectors were dominant at the cost of other productive sectors, for example agriculture. Private sector was given more prominence which created more socio-economic and regional imbalances. The neglect of public-sector affected the development of social infrastructure such as health services, education, housing, sanitation, electricity and water especially in rural areas. This imbalance in the economic development was a characteristic of the pre-war economy which in turn became one of the reasons for the civil war.⁵

Damages and Reconstruction Efforts During the War

Though the war was intermittent, destruction encompassed the entire country. The war destroyed all the service facilities (hotels,

4 ibid, p.16.

5 For a fuller treatment of this subject see Nadim Shehadi (ed.), *Politics and the Economy in Lebanon* (London: Centre for Lebanese Studies and the Centre of Near and Middle Eastern Studies, 1989), and Nadim Khalaf, *Economic Implications of the Size of Nations with Special Reference to Lebanon* (Leiden: Brill, 1971).

restaurants, banks) and the physical infrastructure like ports, airport, electricity lines, telecommunications etc. During the war many reconstruction projects had started but only to be destroyed in renewed fighting.⁶

Formation of the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR)

After the two year war in 1975-76, the Lebanese government created the Council for Development and Reconstruction to form a general guideline for the reconstruction effort, seek external aid, and coordinate expenditures. The CDR was a government unit with unprecedented powers and was directly responsible to the Council of Ministers. CDR was responsible for overall planning, programming, and budgeting; coordination of proposals and allocations between sectors for priority projects; procurement and mobilization of funds; payments to suppliers and contractors; disbursement of loans and grants; facilitating project implementation by line ministries; implementation of "special projects (at the request of the Council of Ministers); and overall programme monitoring.⁷

In 1978, CDR issued its first reconstruction project document prepared by experts by assessing both the damage and corresponding

6 For details of the economic foundation of Civil War, see Aswini Mohapatra, "Rising from the Ruins", *Financial Express* (Bombay), 22 November 1992.

7 Ahmed A. Sbaiti, n.1, p.176.

reconstruction and developmental costs for each economic sector. Total cost estimates were \$7.5 billion at 1978 prices.

In the wake of huge destruction caused by the Israeli attack on Lebanon in 1982, another reconstruction project was prepared by CDR in 1983. The total cost estimates for the 1983 project were \$15 million, to be spent over nine years.

The World Bank also sent a mission to Lebanon in November 1982 to develop reconstruction programme. They adopted a different approach from CDR and gave priority to economic and social infrastructure, where the CDR programme hardly concentrated. The formulation of institutional and policy framework to guide reconstruction and development of each economic sector was considered just as important as rebuilding of physical infrastructure. This key policy element was almost entirely absent from both CDR projects (1977 and 1983).

In 1983 there were hopes of peace, but soon proved elusive and renewed destruction was the result. The World Bank Plan was interrupted though the CDR opted to execute its own project. By 1985, there was a mass exodus of skilled workers and professionals. Reconstruction process was also hampered by the escalating inflation. This led to an increase in contract values and the reschedule and suspension of the projects became imminent. Thus many projects started after 1983, remained incomplete, delayed by deteriorating political, economic, and administrative circumstances. For example, some 112 contracts (worth \$600 million) were signed for road rehabilitation between 1978 and 1987. As of 31 January 1989, only 43 percent of these were close to completion. During the same

period, some 695 schools were under repair or rehabilitation; of these only 28 percent were more than 90 percent complete.⁸

Post Taif Reconstruction

After the 1989 signing of the Taif Accord, the CDR was revived and was entrusted to prepare a national recovery plan and a reconstruction programme with the help of local and international consultants. A two-phase plan was suggested namely National Emergency Recovery Programme (NERP) to address the immediate needs of the population (estimated cost \$3.9 billion) and a long term plan lasting beyond the year 2000 (estimated cost \$15 billion). It was also planned to rebuild Beirut's central business district and other commercial centres, which would require fifteen years and would cost \$6.7 billion.

The economic sectors which are considered to be more essential such as water, sewerage, sanitation, electricity, health, housing, education, transport, and telecommunications were included in the Emergency Recovery Programme (ERP). Agriculture, industry and tourism were included in the medium range plan. The long term plan was expected to address developmental aspects of all sectors.

8 See *Middle East Economic Digest* (London), 13 July 1990, p.5; and *Middle East Monitor*, June 1990, vol.20, no.6.

The public and private sectors were expected to shoulder the responsibilities of reconstruction, especially in Emergency Recovery Programme's (ERP) first phases. Thus public sector would be involved in⁹-

- (1) emergency repairs and rehabilitation to remove infrastructure bottlenecks and restore productivity;
- (2) implementation of economic stabilization measures to facilitate repatriation of private capital (needed to finance medium and long term investments);
- (3) programmes to rebuild the institutional capacity of public agencies, with emphasis on economic infrastructure.

The private sector was expected to involve in the remaining reconstruction tasks and to enliven the economy.

CDR's Role: An Evaluation

Lebanon has now reached an important milestone in the process of reconstruction. Most of the rehabilitation works which, following on from the initial war damage assessment phase, were started from 1993 onwards, are now drawing to a close.¹⁰ In the rebuilding of physical infrastructure country has marched ahead in a faster pace. In the case of power, rehabilitation is complete and the continuous supply of energy is assured. This, however, does not mean that the first phase of

9 See David Butter's Report on Lebanese Economy. *Middle East Economic Digest*, April 1990.

10 See CDR Chairman, Nabil el-Jisr's speech in *Business Lebanon*, Issue 1, Third quarter, 1996, p.10.

reconstruction is over. In a select few areas, especially in public health, water supply, waste water and solid waste, where the work is in progress have their origin in the National Emergency Reconstruction Programme (NERP). Now the emphasis is more on the reconstruction programme, rather than pure rehabilitation. New projects have been designed with the aim of modernising the economy, reducing the internal imbalances within the country and improving Lebanon's competitiveness in the region.

In the telecommunication sector, modernisation has been done by extending the Public Switched Telephone Network and giving its subscribers access to modern communication facilities.¹¹ As Lebanon enters the 21st century many measures have been taken by the CDR in building regional hospitals, extending irrigation to various agricultural areas, constructing a new university, vocational and technical schools, enlarging the capacity of Beirut International Airport,¹² and constructing a coastal expressway.

Social Sectors

The government had given prime importance to the restoration of internal security and the rehabilitation of basic infrastructure in order

11 See *Middle East Economic Digest*, 8 December 1994. Major foreign telecommunication firms like Alcatel (France), SITI (Italy), Siemens (Germany) are investing in Lebanon.

12 The cost of the reconstruction of the Beirut International Airport is US \$494 and the authority in charge is the CDR. The deadline is September 1998.

to reinvigorate the economy and private sector activity in the first phase of reconstruction. Currently, government's policy is to emphasise on administrative reforms and on projects in the social and socio-economic fields.¹³

Projects for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of hospitals and health centres throughout Lebanon are moving from the design stage into construction, which is the next stage of the reconstruction programme. In education, rehabilitation of existing buildings is over and the construction of New schools, colleges and the Lebanese University has started. In the socio-economic field works in irrigation, water supply, waste water and the treatment of solid waste have been activated. Additionally, a plan for the preservation of forests has been prepared to protect the national heritage and to exploit the tourist potential of Lebanon. Many projects have been started under CDR's supervision like Elissar project in the southern area of Beirut, the Linord project in the Metn coastal zone and the infrastructure rebuilding of Beirut Central district so as to provide improved social and physical conditions for people of low and middle incomes.

Financing

Financing of the reconstruction has been done by taking the budgetary constraints into account. So as to keep the public debt from

13 For a view on Lebanon's Administration, see George Grassmuck and Kamal Salibi, rev. ed. *Reformed Administration in Lebanon* (Beirut: Catholic Press, 1964).

the reconstruction process at an acceptable level, the government is calling on the financing and expertise for the private sector in order to increase national resources: arrangements of BOT¹⁴ nature (Build Operate and Transfer) have already their worth.¹⁵ This type of arrangement has found to be well suited to some types of operation and projects of strategic importance such as the auto route from Beirut to Masnaa (Syrian border), parts of the Beirut P'eripherique and some facilities at Beirut International Airport. BOTs and concession and operating contracts will give additional options to the public sector to develop public services without increasing taxation and while at the same time clarifying management responsibilities.

The Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR) is carrying out its task in collaboration with all the ministries and supervising the work carried out on each project.

Reconstruction of the Capital City

A company called Solidere, has been formed in May 1994 in order to redevelop the 1.8 million square meter Beirut Central District. It's mandate includes the installation of roads, tunnels, bridges, public spaces, gardens, lighting and electricity networks as well as

14 BOT (Build, Operate and Transfer) ensures that the contracted company pays for the development of the site, then manages the zone for 25 years until the expiry of the contract.

15 See Business Lebanon, Issue no.1, Third Quarter 1996, p.10. And also see David Butter, "Foreign Finance Fuels Projects", *Middle East Economic Digest*, 22 December 1995.

rehabilitating some of the original buildings. The Murr Tower in Kantari, a long recognized Beirut landmark is being redeveloped with the aim of transforming the forty storey building into the Beirut Trade Centre by Solidere. The Beirut Trade Centre is expected to become a flagship business Complex and a symbol of Beirut's return to financial prominence. Solidere model of reconstruction was even proposed for the reconstruction of war-torn Sarajevo in Bosnia. Solidere was recently declared the best example of "urban planning and Reconstruction of War-torn City Centre" at a UNDP Conference in Dubai.¹⁶ Solidere's profits for 1995 reached \$32.3 million almost doubling 1994's profits of \$18.1 million. Solidere is assisted by a number of consultants, local and international in its bid to revitalise the city.

Macroeconomy

In the post-war period there had been a marked improvement in the political and security situation and economic reconstruction had begun through a combination of expansionary fiscal and tight monetary policies. But despite a significant improvement in tax collection, huge expenditure on infrastructure such as electricity, water, roads etc. has increased the budget deficit to an estimated 60 percent of GDP. Though government outlays are supposed to increase GDP and promote investment, domestic investment has been hindered by high interest rates related to the large

16 ibid, p.9.

deficit. In order to meet the costs of \$18 billion reconstruction programme, the government laid stress on foreign borrowing and investment.

The Central Bank pursued a stable and sterile exchange policy to bring the Lebanese Lira back to life. In September 1992, it was 2,528 Liras to a dollar in June 1993. At present the exchange rate is 1,569 Liras to a dollar. The stability and strength of the Lira is being maintained by regular intervention of the Central Bank. Furthermore, the growth rate of the money supply was kept under control to absorb any inflationary pressures. Commercial banks were forced to buy Treasury bills for the equivalent of 60 percent of their deposits in Lira.¹⁷

The Real Sector

According to the Central Bank, the coincident indicator (an index of macro economic activity in the real sector) jumped from its base of 100 in January 1993 to 166.9 in December 1995 (see Figure 1).¹⁸ The construction field which began in 1991 showed a continuous progress. There was a significant increase in the delivery of construction permits, reaching a cumulative total since 1991 in excess of eighty million square meters. To meet the increasing demand for cement, plans were mooted to invest approximately \$250 million to increase the production capacities of cement factories.

17 See *Middle East Economic Digest*, August 1994, p.18.

18 See *Middle East Monitor*, vol.23, no.6, June 1993.

Table-1: Balance of Payment Results
(in millions of US dollars)

	Central Bank	Banks	Total
1993	456.4	713.1	1,169.5
1994	1,860.7	-730.2	1,130.5
December	-202.0	232.0	30.0
1995	591.1	-335.1	256.0
January	-56.3	-78.6	-134.9
February	-73.3	-5.6	-78.9
March	-64.9	-12.2	-77.1
April	-150.3	72.8	-77.5
May	-479.9	343.8	-136.1
June	54.6	-98.5	-43.9
July	151.1	150.4	301.5
August	-31.6	61.6	30.0
September	-134.7	181.4	46.7
October	561.9	-474.7	87.2
November	599.0	-369.0	230.0
December	215.5	-106.5	109.0

Source: Business Lebanon, Issue No.1, 1996, p.14.

In the trade sector, according to the High Customs Council, there is an increase in exports by 51.7 percent in 1995 to \$826.1 million. Total imports saw an increase by 22.7 percent to \$7,282.4 million. The trade deficit increased by 19.8 percent to \$6,456.2 million. The balance of payments registered a surplus of \$109 million in December 1995.¹⁹

High interest rates and the non-availability of credit set a low pace for growth in the agriculture and industry sectors. The fluidity in the regional situation stays as an obstacle for the free flow of tourists

19 See W.B.Fisher, *Lebanon in Middle East and North Africa*, London: Europa Publications, 1996.

which weakened the tourist sector. However, there is an increase in the activity at Beirut Airport (passenger traffic) from 1990 to 1994.²⁰

Monetary Sector

The main form of credit is bank credit which is generally given for a short term. Credit plays an important role in the monetary sector by channelling funds, both domestic and foreign into productive sector. Stable exchange rates were maintained by stabilising money supply components and by pursuing sterilization policies. But this stability was achieved at the expense of high interest rates on treasury bills which prevented commercial banks from long term productive investments. In order to change this scenario, the Central Bank lowered rates by adopting several policy changes to generate positive structural developments in the financial markets. Some of the important measures taken are:

- (1) Adoption of international standards in the structuring of financial markets.
- (2) Reduction of taxes to encourage new investment.
- (3) Bringing in International accounting standards.
- (4) Decreasing the requirement on commercial banks to buy Treasury bills from 60 percent to 40 percent of deposits.

²⁰ *International Herald Tribune* (Singapore), 16 December 1995, p.8.

Table-2: Macroeconomy - Main Indicators
(Year on year changes %)

	Average		
	1993	1994	1995
Electricity production (EDL network) (in millions of kWh)	347	382	417
Variation in %	5.40	11	10
Imports of Petroleum derivatives (in metric tonnes)	183967	200368	217326
Variation in %	37.60	14.27	17.51
Construction permits (in square meters)	760383	1419652	2853486
Variation in %	15.10	50.92	69.65
Cement deliveries (in tons)	216065	282890	330665
Variation in %	21.90	31.81	18.91
Customs receipts (in mil of LL)	55272	65949	110083
Variation in %	105.30	20.73	64.68
Total imports (in mil of LL)	321587	385118	652357
Variation of %	n.a.	21.15	83.62
Total exports (in mil of LL)	65573	71310	100842
Variation of %	n.a.	11.25	50.29

Source: *Business Lebanon*, Issue no.1, 1996, p.18.

The Lebanese economy is improving gradually, although its performance is not up to expectation. The counting has risen from a negative growth rate of -13.4 percent to a positive growth rate of 7.1 percent in 1993. In the end of 1995 the growth rate was expected to be 8.5 percent. As there is a large public debt Lebanon has to rely on external borrowing and seek foreign investment in to the country. But Lebanon's educated workforce, trade services and tourist potential project a bright future for its economy.

Stock Market and the Reconstruction Process

The re-opening of the Beirut Stock Exchange (BSE) after the thirteen year closure was a significant step towards becoming an important capital market of the region. In 1994, the government formed a commission to reestablish the BSE which led to a financial agreement in February 1995 between the French and Lebanese governments to modernize the exchange and train staff. The government sees the BSE as a new and viable method of attracting foreign capital to finance the reconstruction process. Earlier, government had to rely on the release of Treasury bills, eurobond issues and international loans to cover the estimated \$25 billion reconstruction programme which has compounded government debt.²¹ Now, the government expects the BSE to attract approximately \$20 billion over the next decade mainly from the Lebanese expatriates who are thought to have assets worth \$30 billion.²² Treasury bills are also considered as a popular investment as it offers high interest rates and because of the improvement of the Lebanese Lira/dollar exchange rate. But it may not affect the stock market investment.

Investment funds have made a mark on the Beirut stock exchange as a popular investment tool. Investment Development Authority of Lebanon (IDAL) has proposed a \$100 million fund to provide medium-term finance for Lebanese companies wishing to participate in the reconstruction process.

21 Refer Butter, n.15. The autumn of 1995 saw an upward spiral in Treasury bill yields and total subscription, as Banque du Liban (Central Bank) lifted the ceiling on the volume of weekly issues.

22 *Middle East Economic Survey* (Cyprus), 10 October 1995, p.14.

The second one is the Lebanon Fund, a fixed capital, closed-ended fund that will be initially floated on the Dublin Stock Exchange followed later by the BSE. The Beirut Stock Exchange thus expects to play an important role in the region's capital market by providing numerous incentives and play a valuable role in the reconstruction process.

Foreign Investment in the Reconstruction

The Lebanese government had realized the importance of foreign participation in the reconstruction programme. Accordingly, in December 1994 the Council of Ministers created the Investment Development Authority of Lebanon (IDAL) to promote all aspects of foreign and domestic investment in Lebanon. The country has revived its economic contacts with China and Japan by its prime minister Rafik Harri's recent visits to these countries and sought for a multi-million dollar loan and the restoration of export credit to Lebanon. Trade between Lebanon and China, which have had economic links for twenty-four years, grew to \$250 million in 1995.²³

Japan has agreed for a soft loan of \$120 million to be used for environmental water projects, such as drinking water and waste water networks. A notable development is that "Asian Tigers" like Japan and China have seen Lebanon as a very viable investment and a vibrant economy.

Lebanon has also signed a series of new trade agreements with Eastern European countries and Egypt, so as to help Lebanese companies to establish commercial and trade ties with other countries as well as sleek

23 See *Middle East Monitor*, vol.19, no.1, January 1996.

investment for Lebanon's rebuilding process. Four high level delegation from Beirut visited Romania, Ukraine, Germany, Czech Republic and Egypt and signed several agreements to strengthen bilateral trade relations.

Investment Development Authority of Lebanon (IDAL) and Reconstruction

Apart from facilitating foreign and domestic investment in Lebanon, IDAL has developed Lebanon's free trade zones to encourage the flow of trade throughout the region and provide a convenient manufacturing base for export oriented industries. The free zones will have bonded warehousing, assembly lines and processing factories. All goods entering and leaving the free zones will be exempted from custom duties, except those marketed within Lebanon. At present, there are three zones located at Al-Qleaat, Riyak Airport in the Bekaa Valley and Beirut Airport Free Zone.

IDAL is also taking care of the existing and proposed industrial zones. There are approximately forty three industrial ones in the country and IDAL is planning to create a further fifteen. One of IDAL's largest project is the sports city commercial centre in the southern suburbs of Beirut. Sports city consists of 136,000 square meters and features commercial areas and leisure facilities.

IDAL has succeeded in attracting considerable Arab and international attraction for the redevelopment of Beirut which is one of the largest urban renewable projects in the world. In many respects, IDAL and the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR) are similar. Both promote tenders for infrastructural projects and both work closely with

the government. However, the CDR is the organizational arm of the government's reconstruction programme and directly handles all bid submissions and oversees all construction projects while IDAL is mainly concerned with attracting foreign investment and assisting companies who have won or are seeking contracts in Lebanon.²⁴

Conclusion

Since the end of the conflict, Lebanon has undergone a significant transformation due to a large scale reconstruction drive in the physical infrastructure as well as macro economic field. The Horizon 2000 programme adopted by the Lebanese government in 1993 provided a further boost to the reconstruction effort. Many of the projects are financed through loans from international donors including the World Bank, United Nations agencies, the Saudi Development Fund, and the European Bank for Development. Other projects are implemented through Build, operate and Transfer (BOT) contracts with the private sector.

Within the framework of the National Emergency Recovery Programme (NERP) implemented by the Lebanese government in 1992, the Council for Development and Reconstruction had already spent nearly \$3 billion. The CDR is expected to spend \$18 billion by the year 2007 over the reconstruction. The thrust should be laid in the management of expenditure by balancing the projected benefits of reconstruction programmes against their potential costs.

24 See *Business Lebanon*, Issue no.1, Third Quarter 1996, p.22.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The Ta'if Accord has muzzled the fighting warlords in Lebanon, but it alone cannot ensure a long-term peace. For, the political stability and the rebuilding of its economic base depend on the actors, and more so on their actions than a document or constitution. However, the accord's provisions lay stress on external and domestic prerequisites to durable peace.¹ Externally, Lebanon's stability is inextricably linked to the degree of legitimacy and sovereignty respected by external actors. Domestically, socio-political stability is conditioned by a measure of legitimacy the state derives from its people, i.e., the reestablishment of state authority subsuming the sectoral or communal loyalties.

As pointed out in the previous chapters, the foremost reason behind Lebanon's war was the absence of above two pre conditions, crucial to the continued existence of Lebanon as an independent political entity. The volatile regional and international environment of the 1960s and 1970s produced a plethora of external actors who were more than willing to pursue their own interests on Lebanese soil. Lebanon's domestic instability produced a patron-client relationship between the external and internal actors. This instability was caused by rapid changes in the socio-economic and demographic spheres combined with rising political discontent and the ideological polarization of the masses. As the

1 See Andreas Rieck, "A Peace Plan for Lebanon? Prospects After the Ta'if Agreement", *Aussenpolitik*, vol.41, no.3, 1990.

Lebanese State was not strong enough to exert influence over its populace, the whole domestic stability was dependent on the solidarity of the power elites and the control they had on their respective constituencies. By 1975, foreign intrusion and domestic volatility attained its maximum fluidity which made the enfeebled Lebanese state difficult to sustain. It culminated in the collapse of the *esprit de corps* in the society, flaring up a seemingly unending war. The war took an irresolvable character because of the presence of an intricate pattern of external and internal alliances.²

The dawning of peace in Lebanon, after the 1989 Ta'if Accord started implementing, can be attributed to a Kaleidoscopic change in the regional, international and domestic environments. The changes in the external environment have a special significance to the implementation of the Ta'if Accord. The termination of conflict in the wake of the 1989 Accord did not mean that all domestic differences were reconciled or the root of the problem was resolved. Doubtless, the accord created an environment conducive for restoring normalcy and peace in Lebanon.

External Challenges to Peace-Building

There has been a significant change in the external environment since the accord was signed, notably in the pattern of patron-client relationship. This would, in all likelihood curb the flow of arms to the

2 See Walid Khalid, *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon: Confrontation in the Middle East* (Cambridge, Mass.: Centre for International Affairs, Harvard University, 1979).

domestic actors from their external sponsors. All the same, Lebanon is not completely free from its problematic external cobweb. For example, three external forces, the Palestinians, Israel, and Syria continue to offer direct challenges to its complete independence and sovereignty and enduring internal peace. Iran still exerts its influence by sponsoring Hizballah, while Israel supports the South Lebanon Army (SLA). Saudi Arabia also has an overbearing influence through its financing power and connection with Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. The collapse of the Soviet Union has made the United States the sole superpower in the entire region. Lebanon is entangled in this intricate cobweb of external actors.

Besides, Palestinians continue to pose a serious political and humanitarian challenge.³ If there is a further inflow of Palestinian refugees, it would precipitate a benign challenge for Lebanon's foreign policy making. Israel's continual bombing and patronization of the South Lebanon Army (SLA) in the South is a perplexing hurdle for long-lasting stability. Israel's declared motive for its military action is to put pressure on the Lebanese government to restrain Hizballah. But for Lebanon this problem is a part of the larger question of Arab-Israeli conflict. Israeli occupation in the South and Hizballah's resistance remain a perennial problem for the country.

With regard to Syria's influence, it is considered as a mixed blessing. Although it protects Lebanon from the external penetrations there is a significant section in Lebanon which perceives the Syrian

3 See Rosemary Sayigh, "Palestinian in Lebanon: Uncertain Future", in Deordre Collings (ed.), n.3.

domination with a "conquered" feeling.⁴ However, despite the negative domestic fallout that Syria's presence provokes, its insulating effect has a positive domestic consequence: it allows the Lebanese to focus better on their internal problems.⁵

In the event, Lebanon's future shaped by external pressures and influences will be largely dependent on the regional peace process. It is not that Lebanon has any direct role in the process. But the peace exercise between the major players, Syria, Israel and the Palestinians will have a tremendous effect on the Lebanese political scene.

Domestic Challenges

Political : Ta'if Accord, undoubtedly, contains many provisions to tackle long standing sources of domestic instability, namely, socio-economic disparities and socio-political discontents. In the socio-economic arena, provisions for equitable regional development and administrative decentralization are notable. In the political side, Ta'if Accord emphasises the abolition of political confessionalism as a basic national goal.

Deconfessionalisation is considered as an important step toward re-legitimizing Lebanon's political system. Substantiating to this,

4 Indeed, the Lebanese government till date remains hostage to the Syrian *diktat*.

5 See for a detailed examination of Syrian influence in Lebanon in, Mahmud Faksh, "Syria's Role and Objectives in Lebanon", *Mediterranean Quarterly*, vol.3, no.2, Spring 1992.

Ta'if's provisions assert that the sectarian political structure is not inherently stable institutional formula for Lebanon.⁶

As 1926 constitution and 1943 National Pact, the Ta'if Accord has also provided for sectarian principles and procedures as transitional features. The Ta'if Accord calls for the eventual elimination of the confessional system and it refers to the establishment of a national committee that will devise measures to guide the political transition.

However, the process of deconfessionalization is not as simple as it appears from outside, it is encumbered by severe limitations. Deconfessionalization means dis-enfranchisement of the existing establishment which derives its power from the same confessional constituency. It is doubtful whether the confessional establishment would ever take such a drastic step to disempower those benefiting from it. Moreover, considering Lebanon's current political and social reality, whether an institutional change will produce a functionally deconfessionalised system or not is a question.

With regard to this, socio-political characteristics of Lebanon require a special mention. As primordial ties and politics are very much inter-related in Lebanon, deconfessionalization of the institutions alone do not bring complete democracy to the country. As Samir Khalaf notes,

6 For a detailed analysis of confessionalism see, Georges Corm, "Myths and Realities of the Lebanese Conflict", pp.258-74; and Michael Hudson, "Why Consociationalism Failed", pp.224-239 in Nadim Shehadi and Mills (eds.), *Lebanon: A History of Conflict and Consensus* (London, 1958); and Malcolm H.Kerr, "Political Decision Making in a Confessional Democracy", in Leonard Binder, *Politics in Lebanon* (New York: John Wiley and Sons Inc., 1966).

Kinship has been, and is likely to remain, Lebanon's most solid enduring tie. The extended patriarchal family... has demonstrated remarkable resiliency as a unit of social organization.... The family, not the individual is the basic social unit. To a large extent a person's status in society, his occupation and social and political prestige are defined by it.⁷

Khalaf explains the far-reaching consequences of the extended family for the political life of the country:

The persistence of kinship rivalry and the political dominance of prominent families has, on the whole, seen more dysfunctional... political alliances; parliamentary blocs and opposition fronts are still predominantly initiated and sustained by personal and not ideological considerations.⁸

This is not to suggest that there are no changes in the political outlook of the Lebanese populace with regard to disengagement from the closed vertical aspects of the socio-political organisation. Beginning in the 1960s, there was a growing disillusionment among the educated and mobilized Lebanese with the particularist character of the political system.⁹ The growing number of modern political parties, expanding size of middle class and trade unions indicate the political maturing of the Lebanese and hence possibility for change in the system.

Economic: The Lebanese economy which suffered extensive damage during the civil war has shown remarkable resilience and recovery. Prime Minister Rafik Hariri has succeeded in restoring confidence and stability in the economy thereby activating reconstruction and development programme.

7 See Samir Khalaf, *Lebanon's Predicament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), pp.104-5.

8 *ibid*, p.109.

9 Explained in Hudson, n.2, p.329.

Rafik Hariri's 'balance sheet' in the economic arena is quite impressive. Hariri's assumption of power added 30 percent to value of the Lebanese pound in October 1992, and since then, the currency has remained stable. This has been sustained by high treasury bill yields and Central Bank intervention.

In the Balance of payments scene, surpluses of more than \$1,000 million were recorded in both 1993 and 1994, reflecting confidence in the economy, as capital flows compensated for the heavy trade deficit. However, in 1995 the trend is towards deficit, as the capital flows have slowed down.¹⁰

In the reconstruction front, Hariri's experience in contracting has been an asset. The CDR has done an excellent work in the areas of telecommunication, electricity and physical infrastructure rebuilding. But Hariri has been criticized for giving priority to the physical infrastructure at the cost of social infrastructure. For example, instead of taking action on the water supply system, government is spending \$400 million on a new airport.

Hariri, a businessman himself, has brought strategic planning into financial management. The targets have been laid for a public investment of \$18,000 million in the period up to 2007. Budget revenues have been raised by introducing changes for construction planning, and fines for building violations. But Hariri has been criticized for a high budget deficit, which is 50 percent of total spending. Moreover, government has

10 See *Middle East Economic Digest*, 15 June 1995.

not taken enough measures to compute Lebanon's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

To conclude, Rafik Hariri's arrival has a positive effect on the political and economic spheres of Lebanon. He has used his relationship with Syria to avoid major crises breaking out in the open, and his connection with Saudi Arabia has given a boost to the country's financial power.

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