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THE COLLAPSE AND RECONSTRUCTION OF LEBANON

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by

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INTRODUCTION

Events in Lebanon during the 1975-1990 period, often referred to as the Lebanese "Civil War", were never far from media headlines. For many people in the world, Lebanon became synonymous with anarchy, reflected in incidents ranging from random violence, car bombings and kidnapping to major military conflicts such as the 1982 Israeli invasion. Lebanon was regarded by many people as a hotbed of anti-Westernism which should be ostracised by the international community.

Academic focus on Lebanon during this period was also extensive. Numerous books and journal articles were published on various aspects of this extremely complex conflict, or conflicts to be more precise. However, the quality of the publications varied considerably. On the one hand, some excellent and very detailed studies were published. Many of these, however, either concentrated on a limited aspect of the conflict,[1] or were published at the beginning of the conflict, and they soon became dated.[2] On the other hand, many publications tended to be polemic, reflecting either the authors' ideological bias or their sectarian/religious sympathies.

In spite of the extensive number of publications, very few studies have actually provided a succinct account of the causes of the breakdown of the Lebanese political system, or the impact of the war on the system. The purpose

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[1] Amongst many others, this list includes: Robert Fisk, *Pity The Nation: Lebanon at War*, (Oxford University Press, 1990); Noam Chomsky, *The Fateful Triangle: The U.S., Israel, and the Palestinians*, (Boston: South End Press, 1983); and Wade Goria, *Sovereignty and Leadership in Lebanon 1943-1976*, (London: Ithaca Press, 1985).

[2] Amongst many others, this list includes: Kamal Salibi, *Crossroads to Civil War: Lebanon 1958-1976*, (London: Ithaca Press, 1976); Walid Khalidi, *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon: Confrontation in the Middle East*, (Cambridge Mass.: The Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, 1979); and Michael Hudson, "The Lebanese Crisis: The Limits of Consociational Democracy," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, no. 344, Spring-Summer 1976.

of this paper is to fill this void in the literature by providing the reader[3] with a very concise analysis of the causes of the breakdown of the post-1943 Lebanese political system, and the effects of the subsequent war on the system.

The paper is divided into three parts. It begins with an examination of the post-1943 Lebanese political and economic order, and then proceeds to explain why that order collapsed. Second, a brief discussion of the war is given, examining primarily the effects of the conflict on the political and economic system. Finally, the paper discusses briefly the post-civil war political system and provides insight into the future stability of the order.

[3] This paper is aimed at the students of Middle Eastern Politics/Political Science, or to anyone with a general interest in Lebanon.

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT: 1943-1975

An extensive body of literature pertaining to Lebanon is available in the West. Prior to 1975, the tone of this literature was generally optimistic.[4] Much praise was directed toward the genius of Lebanon's political and economic systems, which provided the religiously divided country with relative stability in a region fraught with political and economic upheaval. So impressed were the experts, that the Lebanese political system was hailed as a potential model for other heterogenous societies such as Northern Ireland and Cyprus.[5]

The Lebanese Political System: 1943-1975

The political system which existed in Lebanon from the 1940s to the early 1970s essentially conforms to the political model of "consociational democracy" which was developed in the 1960s through the political scientist Arend Lijphart's research into how societies deeply divided along communal lines managed their latent conflicts. Consociational democracy can be defined as: "government by elite cartel designed to turn a democracy with a fragmented political culture into a stable democracy."[6] According to Lijphart, several important conditions of social structure, and of mass political culture,

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[4] In particular, see Leonard Binder (ed.), *Politics in Lebanon*, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1966); and Elie Adib Salem, *Modernization without Revolution: Lebanon's Experience*, (London: Indiana University Press, 1973). A notable exception to this is Michael Hudson, *The Precarious Republic: Political Modernization in Lebanon*, (New York: Random House, 1968).

[5] For more information regarding this point, see Myron Weiner's chapter on political change in the developing world. Myron Weiner, "Political Change: Asia, Africa and the Middle East," in Myron Weiner, and Samuel Huntington (eds.), *Understanding Political Development*, (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman/Little, Brown Higher Education, 1987), pp. 36.

[6] Arend Lijphart, "Consociational Democracy," *World Politics*, vol. 21, no. 2, 1969, pp. 216.

are prerequisites for a successful consociational democracy. First, there must be clear boundaries between subcultures, as limited contacts between groups tend to lessen the chance of hostility. As Quincy Wright explained, ideologies accepted by different groups within a society may be inconsistent without creating tension. The chance of greater tension arises only when the groups are in close contact.[7] A second condition, however, stresses the necessity for elites within each group to work closely together, while at the same time maintaining the loyalty of their followers. A major threat to the system may occur if elites lose control over their followers.[8] A third condition is the existence of a multiple balance of power among subcultures. For instance, in a dual culture society, the tendency is for the majority culture to attempt to dominate the other culture. However, in societies with several subcultures, none of which holds a clear majority, the likelihood is greater that the elite groups will be willing to cooperate with each other.[9] A fourth condition is a relatively low total load on the system. The stability of the system can be weighed in terms of its capacity to handle increased demands. Writing in 1968, Lijphart contended that the loads on the Lebanese system were not great and that this helped to explain its stability.[10]

Lebanese society has been deeply divided for centuries along vertical lines: clans, villages, tribes, sects, and ethnic groups. The most prominent division, at least for purposes of political analysis, is sectarian, and an important feature of Lebanese society is the relationship among the various religious sects who make up the population.[11] As Helena Cobban explained:[12]

> *For about a millennium now, the major present-day sects have been living in the Lebanese mountain, each with its quite rich and varied inner life. The idea of the interaction of a number of these sects, which*

[7] Arend Lijphart, "Typologies of Democratic Systems," *Comparative Politics*, vol. 1, no. 1 April 1968, pp. 25.

[8] *Ibid.*, pp. 26.

[9] *Ibid.*, pp. 27.

[10] *Ibid.*, pp. 30.

[11] For a very succinct examination of this, see David McDowell, *Lebanon: A Conflict of Minorities*, (London: Minority Rights Groups, 1986). Also, see Samir Khalaf, "Primordial Ties and Politics in Lebanon," *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 4, no. 2, April 1968.

[12] Helena Cobban, *The Making of Modern Lebanon*, (London: Hutchinson, 1985), pp. 11.

> *lies at the heart of the concept of `Lebanon', persisted from the late sixteenth century down to the 1980s. Even after the emergence of a 'Lebanese' polity, however, the sects continued to live out their own inner lives.*

Further emphasising the vast importance of parochial loyalties in Lebanon, Michael Hudson wrote:[13]

> *Parochial divisions are uncommonly important because they are the traditional primary social organisation in terms of family, community and security. They serve as semi-autonomous communities, institutionalised during Ottoman domination, maintaining their own personal status laws and effective internal systems for conflict resolution.*

There are seventeen official religious communities in Lebanon, the two most prominent of which, historically, have been the Maronite Christian and Sunni Muslim sects. The Maronite Christian community was the most politically and militarily aggressive of the religious sects. They were the first to espouse a distinct Lebanese identity, and they played a major role in the creation of present day Lebanon.[14] In 1918, France secured a mandate over Lebanon, and it was under French tutelage that the Maronites became the dominant sect in the country. The central ideology of the community, which certainly predated these developments, was incisively remarked upon by the Maronite historian Isfan al Duwayhi (1629-1704): "the Maronite community's history is a continuous struggle to maintain national and religious identity in a dominant Muslim environment."[15] In sharp contrast to the Maronites stood Lebanon's Sunni community, the leading Muslim community in the country, whose ideology had long been pan-Arab. Accordingly, they were opposed to the creation of an independent Lebanese state, preferring that Lebanon should belong to a larger Arab/Muslim entity, or failing that, that it should at least be aligned with the Arab/Muslim world.

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[13] Michael Hudson, *op. cit.*, (1968), pp. 21.

[14] For a history of the Maronite role in the creation of modern day Lebanon, see Meir Zamir, *The Formation of Modern Lebanon*, (London: Croom Helm, 1985).

[15] Quoted in Peter Sluglett, and Marion Farouk-Sluglett, "Aspects of the Changing Nature of Lebanese Confessional Politics: al-Murabitan, 1958-1979," in Ernest Gellner (ed.), *Islamic Dilemmas: Reformers, Nationalists and Industrialization*, (Berlin: Mouton Publishers, 1985), pp. 269.

Within each of Lebanon's religious sects there was a core group of elites, known as *zu'ama* (political bosses), who wielded extensive political power within their respective sects and were the main players in the Lebanese government. There were at least three different types of *zu'ama*. First, there was the semi-feudal variety, possessing large estates and traditional lordships. Their power rested on their positions as landowners, their use of strong-arm men, and their ability to give protection and patronage. This type of *za'im* (singular form) was particularly prominent within the Druse community, within the Shiite community, and in the Sunni community of the rural Akkar region, and included, among others, Kamal As'ad, and Kamal Jumblatt. A second type of *za'im* was the 'populist' variety, found in the predominantly Christian regions of Mount Lebanon, and included such noteworthy figures as Camille Chamoun and Pierre Gemayel. Their leadership was derived from the use of powers of protection and patronage and/or some kind of ideological appeal. The third type of *za'im* was the urban boss, found primarily in Sunni communities in Beirut, Tripoli, and Sidon. This included Riad Solh and Rashid Karami among others. Their power rested on the manipulation of the urban masses, through patronage, ideological appeal, and the use of strong-arm men.[16]

The extreme importance of the *zu'ama* was commented upon by Elie Salem:[17]

> *... in the moment of truth local leaders and established families held greater control of their followers than did the central government. Each religious and ethnic group had its own pyramid of power and its own internal source of strength, and it is with these pyramids that the cabinet must deal and at times even negotiate.*

In 1943, a compromise agreement, known as the National Pact, was reached between the elites of the Maronite and Sunni communities. This led ultimately to Lebanon's independence from France. Essentially, the agreement upgraded Lebanon's 1926 constitution, and established the basic parameters of both

[16] Albert Hourani, "Ideologies of the Mountain and the City," in Roger Owen (ed.), *Essays on the Crisis in Lebanon*, (London: Ithaca, 1976), pp. 35-36.

[17] Quoted in Halim Barakat, "The Social Context," in Edward Haley and Lewis Snider (eds.), *Lebanon in Crisis: Participants and Issues*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1979), pp. 12.

domestic and foreign relations. At the domestic level it installed a confessional democracy where political power was divided among the religious communities in such a way that those communities which were numerically the largest at the time were guaranteed the most political power. Based on a 1932 census, the Lebanese population was as follows:

Community	**Population**	**%**
Christian		
Maronite	226,378	28.8
Greek Orthodox	76,522	9.7
Greek Catholic	45,999	5.9
Armenians	31,156	4.0
Others	22,308	2.8
Total Christian	402,363	51.2
Muslim		
Sunni	175,925	22.4
Shiite	154,208	19.6
Druse	53,047	6.8
Total Muslim	383,180	48.8
Total Population	785,543	100%

Lebanon's Christian population was accordingly guaranteed a ratio of 6 seats in parliament for every 5 Muslim seats. At the external level, the National Pact stipulated that Lebanon would pursue a neutral foreign policy in which the Maronites would renounce their reliance on, and support for, the West, while the Sunnis would accept that the Lebanese state was to be independent from, and neutral towards, the Arab world. Seemingly, the Sunni elite accepted the National Pact, and the Maronite hegemony which accompanied it, primarily because it gave them access to state patronage which they subsequently used

to strengthen their own positions within their community. The elites of the other religious communities generally followed suit. As Roger Owen remarked:[18]

> *Once it was decided to reward the leaders of some of the religious communities with access to high office, and to attempt to incorporate others into the system on the same basis, ... a powerful group [was created which was] committed to the defence of the existing status quo.*

The Lebanese Economic System: 1943-1975

As we have noted previously, Lebanon's capitalist economic system was generally looked upon favourably in Western circles. This was particularly true where the Lebanese economy was compared to the command economies of other Arab countries. As of 1974, there seems to have been a reasonable consensus that Lebanon was a relatively prosperous country.[19] The dominant economic group in Lebanon was the commercial bourgeoisie, which emerged in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, when the rapid expansion of usurious capital, controlled primarily by the Lebanese merchant and commercial classes, combined with other effects of European trade to lead to the collapse of the feudal economy. While the financial and commercial industries expanded dramatically, the development of the agricultural and manufacturing spheres was somewhat limited, to the extent that, by the time the French mandate was established after the First World War, Beirut's financial and commercial class had assumed a dominant role in the Lebanese economy.[20]

The dominance of the commercial bourgeoisie assumed even greater importance during Lebanon's independence period, when the laissez faire nature of the Lebanese economy was solidified. The Lebanese economy was dominated by the tertiary sector - trade, banking and services - which accounted for three quarters of

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[18] Roger Owen, "The Political Economy of Grand Liban 1920-1970," in Roger Owen (ed.), *op. cit.*, (1976), pp. 24.

[19] See Iliya Harik, "The Economic and Social Factors in the Lebanese Crisis," *Journal of Arab Affairs*, vol. 1, no. 2, April 1982, pp. 209-244.

[20] Paul Saba, "The Creation of the Lebanese Economy - Economic Growth in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," in Roger Owen (ed.), *op. cit*, (1976), pp. 1-20.

its national product. The importance of this sector, and its continued growth during Lebanon's independence period is illustrated by the fact that, by the late 1950s and the 1960s, Lebanon was the banking centre of the Arab world.[21]

The commercial bourgeoisie included representatives from all of the religious communities, but most importantly from the Sunni, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, and Maronite communities. Individual members of the Greek Orthodox community, for example, owned much of the wealth of Beirut, although the community as a whole only played a minor part in the political life of the country.[22]

The commercial bourgeoisie's alliance with the zu'ama ensured the stability of Lebanon's economic system. Admittedly, there was some overlap between these two groups, but for the most part their respective memberships were distinct. Their co-operation was based on their common interest in keeping the Lebanese state weak, and in maintaining the status quo. For the commercial bourgeoisie, this meant ensuring that the government pursued policies that would guarantee private sector dominance over the economy. This included keeping taxes and tariffs low, as well as ensuring the overvaluation of the Lebanese pound. The *zu'ama* had other reasons for wishing to see the Lebanese state remain weak, primarily the maintenance of their control over the patronage system.[23]

The fundamental features of the Lebanese political and economic systems were summed up by Owen:[24]

> *[The] main characteristic of a system which by virtue of its confessional political arrangements, its commercially oriented economy and its underdeveloped government services gave great power to a small class of men, both Christian and Muslim, whose positions as landlords, merchants or bankers was reinforced by the leadership of their respective religious communities.*

[21] Whereas in 1951 there were only five banks in the country, in 1966, there were ninety-three. Michael Hudson, *op. cit.*, (1968), pp. 95.

[22] Albert Hourani, *op. cit.*, (1976), pp. 34.

[23] *Ibid.*, pp. 34-35.

[24] Roger Owen, *op. cit.*, (1976), pp. 26.

The Collapse of the Lebanese Political System

There has been much debate concerning the collapse of Lebanon's political system in 1975. Hudson's description of the demise of Lebanon's consociational system is apt: "the difficulty in applying the consociational model to developing countries is that the system is too static to accommodate changes unleashed by social mobilisation."[25] Hudson argued that by 1975, the Lebanese political system was unable to adjust to a broad range of political, economic and social developments. In effect, all of the theoretical prerequisites for the stability of the consociational democracy had ceased to exist.

While it is generally acknowledged that several factors contributed to the outbreak of the war, some authors would argue that certain ones were more crucial than others. Essentially, there are five schools of thought.

The first school of thought (including both Marxist and non-Marxist scholars) suggests that problems in the Lebanese economy were the major cause for the outbreak of the civil war. The argument is based on class conflict.[26] Authors subscribing to this school point out that Lebanon's wealth was significantly concentrated along two axes. The first of these was class. There was a dominant economic class, a weak middle class, and a large proletariat. The wealthiest four percent of the population received 32 percent of the total gross national product, and 82 percent of the population received only 40 percent.[27] The second was geographic. The heart of the economy was centred around Beirut, which in 1957 accounted for nearly a third of the GNP, while Lebanon's heavily neglected agricultural sector, which employed nearly half the labour force, contributed only 15% of the GNP in that same year.[28] The members of this school of thought proceed to argue that these economic inequalities led to the breakdown of the traditional patron-client system. The government attempted to offset problems created by the concentration of

[25] Michael Hudson, *op. cit.*, (1976), pp. 113.

[26] Such an argument has been put forth in such scholarly journals as the *MERIP* and *Arab Studies Quarterly*, the French daily, *Le Monde*, and in such studies as B.J. Odeh, *Lebanon: Dynamics of Conflict*, (London: Zed Press, 1983).

[27] Halim Barakat, *op. cit.*, (1979), 10.

[28] Roger Owen, *op.cit.*, (1976), pp. 28.

wealth around Beirut by assisting the poorer rural areas with development projects. These projects were met with great resistance by the rural *zu'ama*, who feared that government aid would undercut their own control over the patronage system. This somewhat short-sighted perspective led to their undoing, however, as continuing poverty in the rural areas initiated a tendency towards urbanisation (in the form of migration to Beirut), which actually served to place much of their traditional client base beyond their influence. The urban *zu'ama* also suffered from the change in population distribution as they were unable or unwilling to provide patronage for the great numbers of people entering their sphere of influence. As the government was also unable or unwilling to assist them, the new urban poor, facing extreme hardship, turned to an increasingly radical and aggressive Leftist movement. As Lebanon's poorer classes, under Leftist leadership, challenged the privileges of the rich, the Right resorted to coercive measures to disrupt the challenge, and a civil war ensued.

A second major school of thought, which includes some of the most prominent observers of the Lebanese scene, including Kamal Salibi and the late Albert Hourani, do not accept the first school of thought as a sufficient explanation, arguing that it fails to account for the fact that Lebanon's population split primarily along sectarian, rather than class lines. As an alternative explanation, they put forth the thesis that, above all else, the Lebanese political system collapsed because of a lack of political community. As we noted previously, Lebanon had a divided political community - those, predominantly Muslim, who supported pan-Arabism, and those, predominantly Christian, who supported a pro-Western Lebanon. The National Pact was based, to a great extent, on a compromise between the major sects which ostensibly neutralised Lebanon's foreign policy orientation. Changes in the Arab world (namely, the popularity of Arab nationalist and Arab socialist ideas) undermined public confidence in the workability of this compromise, and sectarian mistrust superseded class interest as a reason for conflict. As Arab socialism and Arab nationalism tended to be strongly linked, the Lebanese Left was perceived by many of the Christians (perhaps with some justice) as being too much in line with the Arab nationalist and pro-Palestinian agendas of pan-Arabism. Therefore, rather than seeing the Left primarily as a group opposed to the privileges of the wealthy, the Christian masses saw it as a disguise for a Muslim challenge to the basic Western nature of Lebanon and the traditional position of the Christian community. As the Leftists manifested increasingly aggressive tendencies, and solidified their alliance with the Palestinians in Lebanon, the Christian masses flocked to and encouraged the Christian Right.

A third school of thought suggests that a major cause of the civil war involved increasingly ardent demands for the redistribution of political power by groups which perceived themselves as under-represented in the context of the existing decision making process. In short, groups on the fringes of the Lebanese political system challenged proportional representation on both demographic and ideological grounds. Demographically, it was contended by many in the other sects that the Maronites were no longer numerically the largest group and, therefore, had no legitimate claim to political dominance. The Shiites particularly began to lay claim to their share of political power. Ideologically, the Leftist movements were opposed to the status-quo, calling for the deconfessionalisation of the political system, and a change in Lebanon's foreign policy orientation in favour of support for pan-Arab issues, such as the Palestinian cause. Naturally, many, both within the existing elites and among the masses, with particular reference to Christian elements, were opposed to such radical changes in the status quo. Hence, demands for change were resisted, and society became increasingly polarised, to such an extent that when additional stresses arose to challenge the existing system, a major conflict ensued.

A fourth school emphasises the breakdown of elite-mass relations. In short, the elites were increasingly unable to control their followers. Their respective attempts to solve this problem led to a general breakdown in good relations between the elites themselves. In his 1986 study of Sunni patron-client relations, Michael Johnson argued that the Sunni *zu'ama* were unable to control their own 'street', as their clients found alternative patrons including pan-Arab and Palestinian groups. In an attempt to retain the support of their clients, Sunni elites paid lip service to popular pan-Arab causes, most particularly the armed Palestinian presence in Lebanon. This position, however, served to put them at odds with other elites, particularly within the Maronite sect, whose own community fervently opposed the Palestinian presence.[29] Tewfik Khalaf argued that the Maronite elite, like their Sunni counterparts, were prisoners of their own 'street'. Popular Maronite attitudes hardened as a result of the Palestinian presence in Lebanon and of the increased demands of the Muslim communities.[30] As a consequence, it was

[29] Michael Johnson, *Class and Client in Beirut: The Sunni Muslim Community and the Lebanese State 1840-1985*, London: Ithaca, 1986).

[30] Tewfik Khalaf, "The Phalange and the Maronite Community," in Roger Owen (ed.), *op.cit.*, (1976), pp. 43-56.

difficult for Lebanon's elites to find common solutions to the problems facing the country. The increasingly poor intra-elite relations paralysed the government.

A fifth school, of which Iliya Harik and Georges Corm are leading advocates, argues that it was primarily the pressures originating from external factors, such as the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which caused the civil war.[31] The position of this school was summed up by Corm:[32]

> *Lebanese society was not genetically flawed; ... {this is} not to say that Lebanon was a country without problems, but only that there was little time to adjust to and assimilate the tensions, imbalances and shortcomings which are also common to other societies before the regional conditions that destabilised the country appeared in 1967.*

The Arab-Israeli dispute and the armed Palestinian presence was, according to this school of thought, the major external load on the Lebanese system, greatly polarising Lebanese domestic politics. In addition to drawing the Lebanese completely into the Arab-Israeli conflict, with all the problems which that entails, the Palestinians actively offered their support to Lebanon's Left, reinforcing Maronite fears that the Palestinian presence would upset the political balance. Following Egypt's withdrawal from the Arab-Israeli conflict, Maronite fears that the Palestinian presence in Lebanon would become permanent increased. With the Lebanese government politically powerless to use coercive measures due to the aforementioned intra-elite conflict, the Maronites reacted aggressively by arming themselves, and in 1975, began a military conflict with the Palestinians that ignited the war. The regional loads on the Lebanese political system were commented upon by Walid Khalidi:[33]

When a deeply divided society like Lebanon belongs to a regional system characterised by the level of turbulence prevailing in the Arab world, and when the Pan-doctrine is actively espoused within this system, the centrifugal tendencies within this member society are likely to be maximised.

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[31] In addition, see Walid Khalidi, *op. cit.*, (1979); Kamal Salibi, *op. cit.*, (1976),

[32] Georges Corm, "Myths and Realities of the Lebanese Conflict," in Nadim Shehadi and Dana Haffar Mills (eds.), *Lebanon: A History of Conflict and Consensus*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1988), pp. 240-259.

[33] Walid Khalidi, *op. cit.*, (1979), pp. 101.

THE LEBANESE CIVIL WAR: 1975-1990

As noted above, for most people, the Lebanon of the late 1970s and the 1980s became synonymous with anarchy, ranging from incidents of random violence, car bombings and kidnappings to major military conflicts such as the 1982 Israeli invasion. The antagonists in the many conflicts which made up the war included both domestic and external actors, and battles were fought over a diverse range of issues. Conflicts over political change in Lebanon and the territorial ambitions of rival militias coexisted with major regional wars which had little to do with internal Lebanese politics but which were fought, nevertheless, on Lebanese territory. A detailed discussion of Lebanon's civil war is beyond the scope of this paper, but it will be important, for our purposes, to examine briefly the political and economic changes which have taken place since the outbreak of the conflict.[34]

The Political System 1975-1988

From a technical standpoint, at least, the Lebanese political system continued to function from 1975 to 1988. Although the security situation prevented the election of a new parliament, resulting in the extension of the 1972 parliament's mandate, new presidents were elected in 1976 and 1982. The Lebanese bureaucracy also continued to function. Moreover, none of the major players involved in the war called for the disintegration of the Lebanese state structure, although their actions did much to undermine it.

Looking at the situation from a broader perspective, however, the government was effectively powerless. With the disintegration of the Lebanese army in early 1976, the Lebanese government lost its coercive capability, thereby

[34] Numerous studies on the Lebanese war were published. In particular, see Kamal Salibi, *op. cit.*, (1976); Walid Khalidi, *op. cit.*, (1979); Robert Fisk, *op. cit.*, (1990); Roger Owen (ed.), *op. cit.*, (1976); Michael Hudson, *op. cit.*, (1976), David McDowell, *op. cit.*, (1986), Salim Nasr, "Lebanon's War. Is the End in Sight?" *Middle East Report*, January-February 1990, pp. 5-8.

becoming, for the most part, a peripheral player for the remainder of the war years. In effect, the Lebanese state was forced both to compete against, and to negotiate with, other more powerful actors in Lebanon, including various Lebanese militias, Palestinian groups, and the Syrian and Israeli governments, all of which were in de facto control over certain territories in the country. In short, it was the policies and actions of these groups, and of their international supporters, which dictated the pace of developments in Lebanon during the war years.

At the end of the first phase of fighting in 1976, the Maronite militias were in control of East Beirut and the Christian parts of Mount Lebanon; the leftist Lebanese National Movement and its ally the PLO were in control over West Beirut and much of South Lebanon; the Lebanese government, with the backing of the Syrian-army-dominated Arab Deterrent Force, was in control of North Lebanon and the Biqa‘ Valley; and Israeli backed militias controlled a strip of land straddling the Israeli border. Further divisions were to occur during the war. For example, after 1982, and during much of the remainder of the war, the Shiite militias, Amal and Hizb Allah came to dominate West Beirut and the South. The Lebanese government was unable to reinstate its authority after the initial phase of fighting, or in any other period during the war, because of opposition from these domestic and external actors.

The territorial integrity of Lebanon was further undermined by the growth of various administrative centres within the enclaves, which very much came to resemble autonomous “states” within a state. Some of these enclaves, particularly the Maronite and PLO dominated ones, developed highly sophisticated administrative units. For example, the Maronite militias developed a public service department which operated through civilian popular committees in villages and towns, and provided such services as a public transportation system, water, electricity, telephone services, a police force, and the regulation of consumer prices. In addition, the militias collected taxes, and made military service compulsory. They even had a foreign affairs department with representatives in important world capitals.[35]

In addition to the much weakened role of the Lebanese government, and the establishment of rival “governmental structures”, elite turnover occurred. For

[35] Raymond Helmick, "Internal Lebanese Politics: The Lebanese Front and Forces,” in Halim Barakat (ed.), *Toward a Viable Lebanon*, (London: Croom Helm, 1988), pp. 311.

example, some of the *zu'ama*, particularly in the Shiite and to a lesser extent in the Maronite communities, lost control over their clients and were supplanted largely by sectarian based militias. Within the Shiite community, Amal and Hizb Allah became new "*zu'ama*" able to represent the community through their control over coercive power and patronage. Hizb Allah, for instance, built hospitals and other community projects. Within the Maronite community the Lebanese Forces militia became the new dominant force.

The Economic Situation 1975-1990

Ironically, the Lebanese economy performed relatively well from 1975 to 1982. As Salim Nasr put it: "civil strife and continuous confrontation coexisted with economic prosperity. During these seven years of strife the standard of living of most Lebanese remained stable or even improved."[36] For example, per capita income rose from $1,415 in 1974 to $2,011 in 1982, while the monthly minimum wage during the same period rose from $135 to $195.[37] Certain sectors of the Lebanese economy including banking, construction, public works, engineering, consulting, and printing and publishing showed substantial growth.

Nasr attributes this surprisingly strong economic performance to five main factors. First, Lebanon had a strong economic reserve. In 1975 Lebanon had a balance of payments surplus of more than $4 billion, with large reserves of gold and hard currencies. In addition, the wealthy Lebanese held considerable private reserves and savings. This situation helped offset the economic disruptions which occurred because of the conflict. Second, an economic boom in the Gulf states created many opportunities for Lebanese workers and businesses, particularly those in the sectors noted above. Lebanese migrant workers in the Gulf increased from 98,000 in 1975 to 210,000 in 1979. As a consequence, transfers and remittances rose dramatically, from $910 million in 1975 to $2,254 million in 1980, representing more than a third of Lebanon's national income. A third factor was the presence of a "Palestinian economy". In 1981, for example, it was estimated that the Palestinian economy represented more than 15% of Lebanon's GNP. The PLO, which was headquartered in Beirut, and which, according to Nasr, had a budget larger than that of the Lebanese government, created tens of thousands of jobs both

[36] Salim Nasr, *op. cit.*, (1990), pp. 5.

[37] *Ibid.*, pp. 6.

directly and indirectly. In addition, Palestinian salaries and other sources of income were, to a great extent, either spent in Lebanon or deposited in Lebanese banks.[38] A fourth factor was the presence of "political money": grants and transfers given to the militias from their external backers. In the early 1980s, the influx of political money was estimated at $300 million a year. This political money underwrote the costs of the various conflicts in Lebanon, lessening pressure on specifically Lebanese sources. A fifth factor was the social and spatial redistribution which occurred because of the fighting. This included the creation both of new elites, such as the militia leaders, and of new regional centres, such as the Christian port city of Jounieh, which created an increasing demand for construction of housing and schools, and the increase of durable goods.[39]

The Lebanese economy during this period did, however, suffer some negative effects from the conflict, including physical destruction to infrastructure (factories, hotels, and other facilities) and the reduction of certain sectors including industry, tourism, transit, the re-export business and educational and health services to non-residents.[40]

Beginning with the Shiite militia takeover of Beirut in 1984, and continuing until the advent of the prime ministership of Rafiq Hariri, the Lebanese economy went into serious decline.[41] For example, GDP dropped to less than one-third its early 1980s level, the exchange rate dropped from 3.4 pounds to the dollar in 1980 to 450 pounds to the dollar in 1989, and the unemployment rate increased from 12% in 1980 to 35% in 1989.[42] The collapse of the economy can be accounted for by a number of factors including the effective disappearance of many of the elements that helped propel the economy in the late 1970s. Economic problems in the Gulf countries closed that economic alternative. By 1987 there were only 65,000 Lebanese working in the Gulf

[38] *Ibid.*, pp. 5.

[39] *Ibid.*, pp. 6.

[40] *Ibid.*, pp. 7.

[41] In addition to Salim Nasr's article, see Yusif al-Khalil, "Economic Developments in Lebanon Since 1982," *The Beirut Review*, no. 3, Spring 1992, pp. 83-94; and Saade Chami, "Economic Performance in a War-Economy: The Case of Lebanon," *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*, vol. 13, no. 3, 1992, pp. 325-336.

[42] Salim Nasr, *op. cit.*, (1990), pp. 8.

States. Remittances fell off from a peak of $2,254 million in 1980 to only $300 million in 1987. In addition, the return of thousands of Lebanese from the Gulf increased pressures on the Lebanese job market.[43] Second, as a result of the expulsion of the PLO from Beirut in 1982, the Palestinian economy was lost. Third, the richer Arab states greatly reduced their contributions of political money to the various factions in Lebanon. Fourth, the Lebanese state's finances collapsed. On the one hand, expenditures, especially military spending and public subsidies, increased, while, on the other hand, tax collection and customs revenues fell off drastically. This can be partially explained by the fact that a parallel economy had developed in some of the enclaves, which included the illegal collection of non-government taxes and the use of illegal ports. The increased spending and reduced revenues resulted in growing budget deficits, and led to massive inflation. In 1987, for example, inflation was 425%.[44] The poorer economic conditions and the continued escalation of violence (see below) led many Lebanese, particularly the middle classes, to emigrate.[45]

A Violent Prelude to the 1989 Ta'if Accord

In addition to the economic crisis of the late 1980s, Lebanon also experienced an increasingly severe political and security crisis. As battles among the various militias and foreign armies became both more frequent and more intense, Lebanon, after 1984, became the focus of considerable negative attention internationally due to the fact that Lebanese hostage-takers began to target Westerners. The dominant players in Lebanon were essentially external; or, to put it more precisely, the Lebanese were no longer the masters of their own country. Syria, with thousands of troops in the country, and a carefully cultivated and maintained alliance with several Lebanese clients, had become the dominant foreign power;[46] Iran played a key role through its client Hizb Allah;[47] and Israel was still active in the South. Only the Maronite enclave,

[43] *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

[44] *Ibid.*, pp. 7.

[45] *Ibid.*, pp. 8.

[46] See Marius Deeb, "The External Dimension of the Conflict in Lebanon: The Role of Syria," *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, X11, no. 3, Spring 1989, pp. 37-52.

[47] Jim Muir, "Teheran Calls the Tune," *Middle East International*, no. 303, 25 July 1987, pp. 6.

dominated by the Lebanese Forces militia, was reasonably independent of any foreign control.

In 1988, a new political crisis occurred when the leaders of the various militias and foreign powers failed to agree on the election of a new president for Lebanon.[48] Instead, rival governments, both claiming to be the legitimate government, were set up. One was led by Salim Hoss and dominated by the Syrians, and the other was led by the anti-Syrian Lebanese General Michel 'Aoun. This dual government system remained in place until the end of the war in the fall of 1990.[49]

The crisis took on a new dimension when General 'Aoun's government attempted to break the stalemate. First, he successfully extended his government's control over Christian dominated East Beirut by moving against the unpopular Christian militia. This move was applauded in both Christian and Muslim circles, as the Lebanese public had long tired of militia rule and relished the return of a strong central government. Second, he attempted to take the rest of Beirut, an obvious challenge to the Syrians, by moving against their equally unpopular militia allies. The latter move failed, resulting in heavy fighting. 'Aoun declared a "war of liberation" against the Syrians, refusing to end the fighting until they withdrew from Lebanon.[50]
The political crisis, combined with heavy fighting, prompted the international community to seek an end to the conflict. A series of Arab mediation efforts came to fruition in the autumn of 1989 in the form of the Ta'if Accord. The accord, negotiated by Lebanese Parliamentarians in Ta'if, Saudi Arabia, under the auspices of the Arab League, brought a formal ending to the civil war.[51] In fact, the accord only called for minor changes to the political system, and it was not greatly different than two previous peace plans, the 1976

[48] Jim Muir, "Lebanon Set to Plunge Over the Brink," *Middle East International*, no. 334, 23 September 1988, pp. 3-4; Jim Muir, "Why Lebanon Stepped Over the Brink," *Middle East International*, no. 335, 7 October 1988, pp. 3-7.

[49] On the popularity of 'Aoun, see Mansour Road, "Everyone Misunderstood the Depth of the Movement Identifying with Aoun," *MERIP*, no. 162, vol. 20, no. 1, January-February 1990, pp. 11-14.

[50] Jim Muir, "Aoun's Bloody Challenge to Asad," *Middle East International*, no. 347, 31 March 1989, pp. 3-4; Jim Muir, "The General Overplays His Hand," *Middle East International*, no. 346, 17 March 1989, pp. 6-7.

[51] The Ta'if Accord was an American and Saudi idea.

Constitutional Document, and the 1985 Tripartite Agreement. The key aspect of the agreement was that it established the principle of Muslim-Christian political parity.[52] Beyond this change to the confessional balance of power, the pre-civil war political and economic systems were to remain intact. Obviously, the system was to remain a confessional one. Moreover, as Norton explained:[53]

implicitly, the accord rejected the idea that parliamentary seats needed 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 an historic compromise meant to underscore the fact that Lebanon is a country shared by Christians and Muslims.

No changes to the laissez faire nature of the Lebanese economy were envisioned, even though, as we noted, Lebanon's economic problems had worsened considerably since 1975.

Just as few authors had predicted the outbreak of the civil war in 1975, very few would have predicted the conclusion of the war in 1990. As noted, The Ta'if Accord was not substantially different from previous peace plans. It had few supporters amongst the Lebanese leaders and the fighting actually did continue for another year after Ta'if. Indeed, in some cases the fighting was every bit as ferocious as any which had been seen since the beginning of the war.

This raises the question of just why the war did end in 1990. There is general agreement that the conflict ended only as a result of external pressure. In other words, it seems that the Ta'if Accord was imposed on the Lebanese. On the whole, the international community was supportive of the deal. Its major supporters included the United States and Saudi Arabia, both of which sponsored the Ta'if process and, significantly, Syria, whose pre-eminent position in Lebanon was not substantively affected by the accord. On the domestic front, none of the groups allied to, or dependent on, Syria could

[52] The major communities were guaranteed the following number of seats: Maronites 34, Sunnis 27, Shiites 27, Greek Orthodox 14, Greek Catholics 8, Druse 8. Sunni control over the powerful office of prime minister would continue to ensure their political supremacy over the Shiite community.

[53] Augustus Richard Norton, and Jillian Schwedler, "Swiss Soldiers, Ta'if Clocks, and Early Elections: Toward a Happy Ending in Lebanon?," *Middle East Insight*, vol. 10, no. 1 November-December 1993, pp. 46-47.

openly oppose the deal, no matter how much they disliked it. The comments of Druse leader Walid Jumblatt to the French daily *Le Figaro* are most telling: "I will be summoned to Damascus this week, and I will be told to accept the agreement: I have no choice. I will stupidly accept it."[54] 'Aoun openly opposed the agreement, largely because it did not set a firm date for a Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon. His troops held out against various Lebanese militias and the Syrians until 13 October 1990 when the Syrian air force, with a green light from the U.S., successfully ousted him. This effectively ended both the civil war and resistance to the newly appointed president, Elias Hrawi. On 3 December, a rehabilitated, Syrian-backed Lebanese army under the control of the government in West Beirut proceeded to take control of all of Greater Beirut for the first time since the eruption of the war in 1975. On 24 December, Prime Minister Omar Karami formed a "government of national reconciliation" which included 30 ministers, equally divided between Christians and Muslims. By the Summer of 1992, the Lebanese government, with the assistance of the Syrian army, had extended its control over all of Lebanon except the Israeli occupied parts of South Lebanon.

[54] *FBIS*, NES-89-206, 26 October 1989, pp. 49.

THE POST-CIVIL WAR POLITICAL SYSTEM

The Lebanese political system has been relatively stable since the war ended in the autumn of 1990. Moreover, the Lebanese State has made a remarkable comeback since the war years when it was little more than a peripheral player on the political scene. With Syrian assistance, it has disarmed and disbanded the militias (except Hizbollah), and, as noted, has extended its sovereignty over the entire country (again, with the exception of Israeli occupied South Lebanon).

Parliamentary elections have taken place since the conclusion of the war, and the present government is implementing a multi-year economic program aimed at rehabilitating the economy. In short, the country has returned, for the most part, to a degree of normality. Perhaps an interesting indicator of this is the fact that international media interest in Lebanon has waned since the war ended.

The purpose of this section is to discuss briefly the post-Ta'if political order, addressing, in particular, the issue of political stability. We will begin by mentioning some of the main changes to the political system introduced by the Ta'if Accord; we will then proceed to mention many of the problems associated with the political system; and we will end our analysis by commenting on the future stability of the system.

Changes to the Political System

The Institutional Arrangement

As we explained elsewhere, the post-1943 political order was a confessionally-based patron-client system. Political leaders would use their positions of power to distribute patronage to their followers in return for political support. Essentially, the political leaders of the various sects, through the use of informal compromises, divided the patronage amongst themselves. Obviously, those with the most political power, such as the President of Lebanon, would

have access to the greatest amount of patronage. Moreover, political leaders were also likely to use their positions of power to gain financially.

As noted above, the Ta'if Accord did not change the basic foundations of this system, but simply made some adjustments which lessened Maronite power in favour of the Sunni and Shiite communities. For example, Maronite political power was curtailed by the fact that the powers of the presidency were reduced considerably, diminishing the significance of their traditional prerogative and depriving them of their effective veto power over the political system. By contrast, the role of the prime minister, the traditional prerogative of the Sunni community, was greatly strengthened, as was the role of the speaker of parliament, the traditional prerogative of the Shiite community. In fact, the Ta'if Accord made the necessity for compromise amongst the top leaders even more essential for the system to function. Although compromising was important in the pre-Ta'if system, the president was usually powerful enough that his views prevailed. In the post-Ta'if political system, the architects of the accord made the divisions of power between the president, the prime minister, and the speaker of the house intentionally ambiguous, on the understanding that the three leaders, as representatives of the three most powerful communities in Lebanon, would have to compromise in order to successfully govern the country. This arrangement has often been termed the "leadership troika". As one keen observer of the Lebanese political system explained, "the term (leadership troika), widely accepted and used, came to legitimise what could more accurately be called a confusion of powers."[55]

Syria: The Arbiter of the Lebanese Political System

A proper understanding of the workings of the post-Ta'if political system requires an examination of Syria's role in Lebanon. In short, Syria is the ultimate arbiter of the Lebanese political system. As we explained above, Syria has been, and is, the dominant political and military power in Lebanon. Both the Syrian army and the Syrian secret police have penetrated nearly all facets of Lebanese society, making any form of opposition to either Syria, or the Syrian-sponsored political order in Lebanon, extremely difficult. Furthermore, Syria has cultivated an impressive group of political dependants. For example, both the president of Lebanon and the speaker of the house, Elias Hrawi and

[55] Joseph Bahout, "Lebanese Parliamentarism: Shadow Plays and the Death of Politics," *The Lebanon Report*, no.1, Spring 1996, pp. 28.

Nabih Birri, to a considerable extent owe their power to Syria. In addition, several ministers, and numerous members of parliament also owe their positions primarily to Syrian influence. Very few political decisions are made without first consulting Damascus. Lebanese politicians, including all three members of the troika, regularly travel to Damascus to hear Syria's opinion before proceeding with a policy. Disputes between members of the troika are settled by Syria. In addition, Syrian leaders such as Khaddam regularly visit Beirut, while Syrian leaders based in Lebanon, such as the head of Syrian military intelligence, General Kaanan, are in constant contact with Lebanese politicians to ensure that Syrian interests are given adequate consideration.

The Post-Ta'if Political Order

Few observers of the Lebanese scene predicted either the conclusion of the war, or the continued stability of the post-Ta'if political order. The predictions they did make were based on several events, including: public rejection of both the political reforms and of Syria's dominant role in all facets of Lebanese life; the use of force to implement the Ta'if Accord; the political marginalisation of the Maronite community, and other groups opposed to Ta'if;[56] economic problems, which have shaken public confidence in the Lebanese political system, and which have, at times, led to serious political crises; and the continuing conflict in South Lebanon, which, from time to time, has spilled over into other parts of Lebanon, resulting in political problems.

The most serious challenges to the pro-Syrian post-Ta'if political order occurred in 1992 when an increasingly deepening economic crisis, combined with a lack of political legitimacy, led to popular protests which nearly overthrew that order. In May of 1992, several violent demonstrations occurred

[56] There is a general consensus that the Maronite community has not been properly represented in the political system. Maronite leaders in the government, including President Hrawi, are allies of Syria, and are not seen as being representative of the community. The most popular, or important Maronite leaders, including General 'Aoun, live ouside of Lebanon. Other Maronite leaders, including the ex-warlord Samir Geagea, continue to be persecuted by the government for the very crimes committed by many members of the government itself. Although Geagea was never really a popular leader, his fate is viewed by the Maronite community as a symbol of their status in post-Ta'if Lebanon. The fact that this community, still one of the largest and most important in Lebanon, remains shut out of the political process, does not bode well for long term political stability.

throughout the country to protest against poor economic conditions, and the government's inability or unwillingness to deal with it. On 5 May, the home of the Finance Minister was burned down, and banks and expensive cars were attacked. The riots in May led to the resignation of the Karami government, and the installation of the Solh government, although it also was unable or unwilling to deal with the country's economic problems.[57]

The legitimacy of the political order was called into question once again following the Syrian-forced parliamentary elections of 1992, which a significant segment of the Lebanese population boycotted. Popular anger over the elections, combined with a worsening economic situation, which was heightened by political uncertainty, led to demands by both domestic and international forces for a credible and independent Lebanese government. The desire to strengthen the pro-Syrian political order, combined with increasingly serious threats from domestic and international forces to challenge Syrian supremacy in Lebanon, forced Damascus to compromise and appoint a credible government led by the independent pro-Saudi Lebanese billionaire, Rafiq Hariri.

The Hariri Compromise

On 22 October 1992, Hariri was asked to form a new government. As noted, the decision was basically a compromise aimed at appeasing domestic and international opposition to Syria's continuing role in Lebanese affairs. The essence of this accommodation was that Hariri was to be given free rein to deal with economic issues, while the larger political and military issues, including the redeployment of Syrian troops and the disarming of Hizbollah, were to be decided by Syria and its Lebanese allies. This arrangement was acceptable to the international community because it allowed for the possibility of greater independence on the part of the Lebanese government. The Saudis and the U.S. were particularly satisfied, because of their links with Hariri. The arrangement was acceptable domestically because it raised the possibility of a credible reconstruction programme. This pleased business interests and blunted the opposition of the Lebanese masses to continued Syrian involvement by giving them a stake in supporting the system.

[57] *MidEast Mirror*, 15 May 1992; *Arab Press* Service, Diplomat 20, Recorder Covering 2/9 March 1992, SP 272.

Hariri was received initially with great enthusiasm from the majority of the Lebanese populace. Part of his attraction was that he did not belong to Lebanon's traditional political class or to the war elite. With his vast fortune, and his connections to Saudi Arabia and the West, he was seen as the one figure capable of rebuilding the Lebanese economy. As one writer put it, Hariri was the "ultimate Mr. Fix It, the Ross Perot who made it."[58]

On the announcement of his appointment to the position of prime minister, Hariri pledged to form a government of "economic salvation". He said he would name "representative and competent people capable of bringing the qualitative change hoped for" to the cabinet.[59] Twenty members of the cabinet were new, including 12 experienced technocrats appointed to the economic portfolios, many of whom had close ties to Hariri. Although the Syrians gave Hariri some autonomy in appointing ministers to the economic portfolios, pro-Syrian figures retained the key non-economic ministries, including Defence, Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of the Interior.

Under the Hariri government, the legitimacy of the political system increased. Hariri presented a credible multi-year economic programme, dubbed Horizon 2000, to revitalise the economy, and he introduced several private sector projects, including a plan to revitalise the Beirut City Centre. Under the Hariri government, the economy has grown, foreign investment has increased substantially, and the Lebanese pound has stabilised. Consequently, public confidence in the Lebanese political and economic systems has increased substantially.

The Stability of the Post-Ta'if Political System

The post-Ta'if political system, especially after the formation of the Hariri government, has been relatively stable. In short, power is essentially concentrated in two poles, one led by P.M. Hariri and the other by Syria.

Prime Minister Hariri, the primary domestic political force, has used his enormous influence over the Lebanese economy, and his extensive connections to Saudi Arabia, France, and the U.S., to carve an impressive political base. He has

[58] Jim Muir, "The Bandwagon Roll On," *Middle East International*, no. 440, December 1992, pp. 8.

[59] *Arab Press Service*, Diplomat 18, Recorder Covering 17/24 October 1992, SP 244.

appointed men loyal to him to many of the vital ministerial portfolios, to the leading economic institutions of the country, including the Central Bank, and to the key institution managing the reconstruction, the Council for Development and Reconstruction (the C.D.R.). In addition, he has used his vast resources to extend patronage to the Lebanese population, ensuring that he, and a number of his allies, were elected to parliament. As a result, Hariri controls the largest bloc in parliament.

In spite of Hariri's impressive political base, his powers are curtailed by Syria and its allies, which include the other two members of the troika, and several cabinet ministers. Key issues related to foreign policy, security concerns, and many domestic political decisions are controlled by Syria and its political dependants. Furthermore, even Hariri's economic policies are checked, to a considerable extent, by Syria and its allies. In fact, Hariri has had to negotiate with the other two members of the troika, and with Syria, in order to push through the recovery programme. Part of the bargaining process included allowing politicians, or political forces, access to some of the reconstruction projects, which they have used as sources of wealth and patronage. As a result, in many cases, decisions about such matters as the awarding of contracts have been based on political rather than economic considerations. As one observer of developments in Lebanon put it, "Lebanon's reconstruction program has become a fountainhead of influence and wealth from which the political class, many deputies included, have benefited."[60]

In spite of the earlier successes of the Hariri government, enthusiasm for his government has waned. A number of reasons may account for this, including: growing government debt associated with reconstruction programmes; a slowdown of the economy; the inability of Hariri to promote any sort of reform of the bureaucracy or other popular policies due to opposition from other political forces; widespread corruption at the highest levels of government; continued Syrian dominance of the system; the continued marginalisation of many groups, especially within the Maronite community; and government intolerance of any form of criticism or opposition.

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[60] Michael Young, "The Price of Politics," *The Lebanon Report*, no. 3, Fall 1996, pp. 22.

In spite of these problems, the political system should remain stable for the foreseeable future. There are no domestic political actors[61] powerful enough, in terms of political, economic, or coercive power, to challenge the Syrian-Hariri order, an order which continues to hold a monopoly on coercive power, and has increasingly used it against political opponents. However, although the system is stable at the moment, the lack of a legitimate institutional arrangement may pose serious problems to future stability, particularly if a number of scenarios arise.

First, stability may continue to depend on the health of the economy. If the economy continues to falter, it is conceivable that popular demonstrations may resume, and may even ignite other political protests, such as opposition to the Syrian presence.

Second, the fact that the Lebanese political system is dominated, to some extent, by one leader, Hariri, raises some interesting and perhaps worrying questions about the stability of the political system. To begin with, it may be appropriate to raise an issue which is often raised with reference to regimes dominated by one man: what if he passes away? For that matter, what if the economic situation or the political system becomes so intolerable, that Hariri resigns? In the context of the Lebanese political system and the economy, is there an alternative leadership candidate who can fill Hariri's shoes in terms of domestic or international connections, popularity, the credibility that he has brought to the system.

Finally, acknowledging that Syria is the dominant force in Lebanon, one must consider the impact of potential instability in Syria. Given President Asad's age and apparent ill-health, it is conceivable that Syria may soon suffer a leadership crisis. Even the most seasoned observers of the Syrian scene do not know how the

[61] The Maronite community, for example, is effectively leaderless.

post-Asad succession will resolve itself, and it is even more difficult to predict the impact that such a development will have on Lebanon.[62]

[62] One possible scenario is that Syrian forces would be inclined to return to Syria to help settle the leadership issue, thereby leaving a power vacuum, which Hariri and the Lebanese army will attempt to fill, either as competitors or as partners. This kind of situation might present an opportunity for the Maronite community and other disaffected groups to assert themselves.

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