Lebanon After Ta'if: Is the Civil War Over?
Norton, Augustus Richard
The Middle East Journal; Summer 1991; 45, 3; ProQuest
pg. 457

LEBANON AFTER TA'IF: IS THE CIVIL WAR OVER?

Augustus Richard Norton

WHILE the world was transfixed by the Gulf crisis, Lebanon turned a corner. In December 1990, the "Green Line," which stood as a ramshackle yet deadly symbol of the country's catastrophe, was dismantled, thereby bringing the physical division of Beirut to an end. It is premature to discern whether the Lebanese have simply entered yet another passage in their maze of suffering or have actually turned a corner toward peace. It will take more than a few bulldozers to knock down the psychological barriers which divide Lebanese from one another, and it is by no means clear that the present government of Umar Karami possesses either the capacity or the will to foster a climate of genuine reconciliation. Although some outside observers have proclaimed that the end of the internecine conflict is coming within sight, the violence-toughened Lebanese have learned to be cynical about predictions of this sort. Indeed, the most formidable hurdles lie ahead. Beirut may only be enjoying a respite.

Much depends, of course, on Syria, whose influence in Lebanon is now virtually unfettered. Symptomatically, the designation of Karami as the successor to Prime Minister Salim al-Huss was announced in the Syrian press two days prior to his formal nomination in December 1990, thereby mocking customary parliamentary consultations while providing a not-so-subtle nudge to Huss to stand aside.[1] Although the hand of Damascus is roundly resented and contemptuous references to the Syrian "brothers" are common, the Beirut government is too

1. See Samir Kassir, "Au Liban, fragile domination syrienne," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, March 1991, p. 11.

Augustus Richard Norton is professor of political science at the United States Military Academy, senior research fellow at the International Peace Academy, and a member of the International Study Group of the Center for Peace and Reconstruction in Lebanon. He is co-author of The Middle East after Desert Storm *(New York: Foreign Policy Association, forthcoming 1991).*

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

weak to stand alone. The daunting challenge of disarming and dissolving Lebanon's militias will be impossible unless the Syrians lend their weight, and, even then, the militias are likely to retain significant residual paramilitary power. Obviously, it remains to be seen whether Syria will, when the time comes, leave Lebanon, particularly while Israel remains entrenched in the south.

The latest phase in the political saga of Lebanon began in 1988 with Syria's thwarted attempt to impose a president upon Lebanon. The troubling precedent of a vacant presidency, the resultant emergence of two competing governments, and the ensuing mayhem and slaughter provided an urgent context for external mediation by the Arab League. In autumn 1989 in al-Taif, Saudi Arabia, a majority of the surviving members of the 1972 Lebanese parliament agreed on a political reform document and subsequently succeeded in filling the vacant presidency. Implementation of the Ta'if accord would, however, await the signal distraction of the Gulf crisis and the vanquishing of the rebellious General Michel Awn. This article addresses the major political developments of the last three years with a view toward assessing, albeit tentatively, where the present phase is leading.

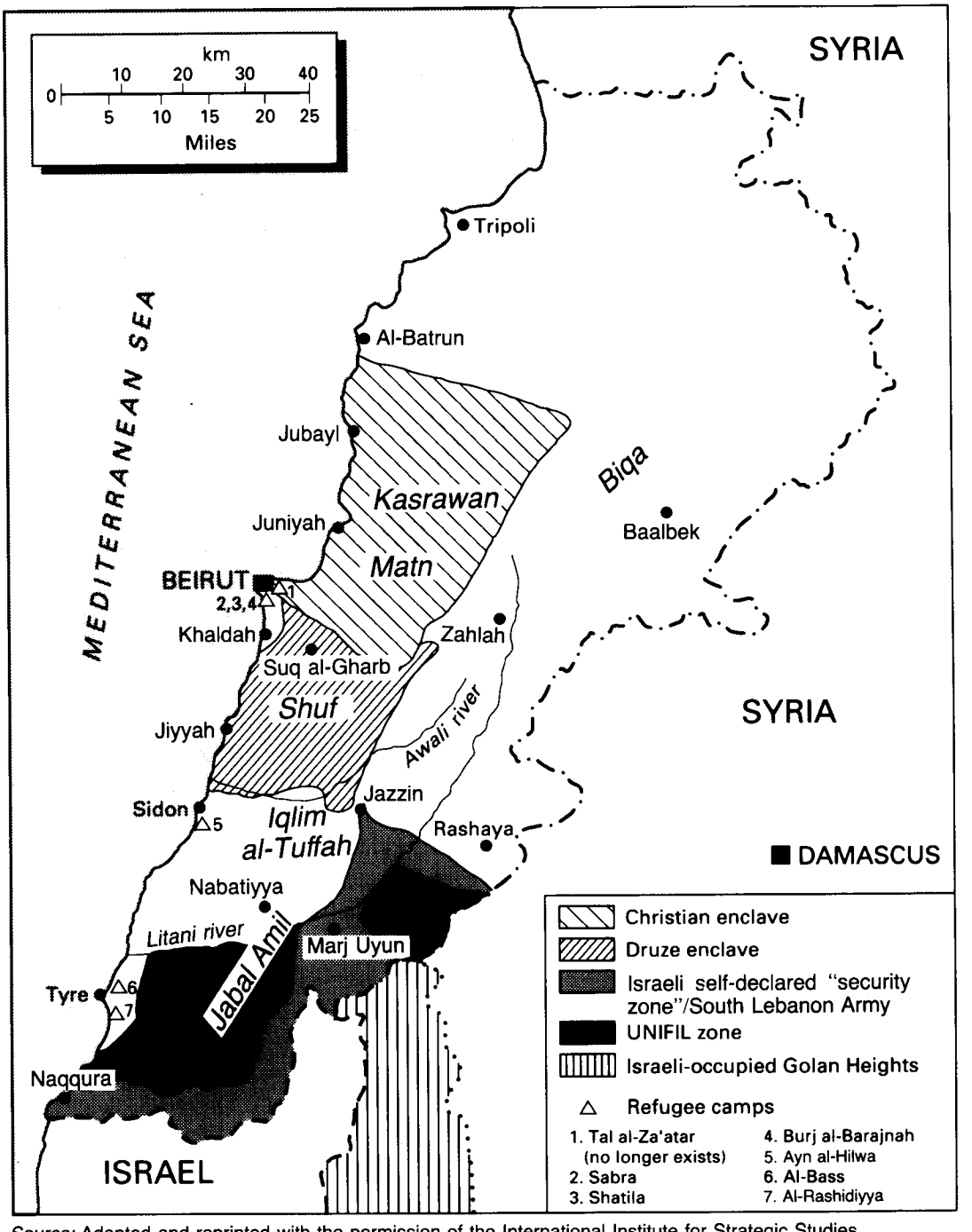
THE ELECTION FAILURE OF 1988

With Amin Gemayel's six-year presidential term expiring in September 1988, Syrian president Hafiz al-Asad was intent on selecting a Lebanese president who would be pliant to Syrian interests. He, therefore, attempted to impose the election of Sulayman Franjiyah who had previously served in the post from 1970–76. The last year and one-half of Franjiyah's term coincided with the beginning of the civil war, and few Lebanese applauded the role that the Zgharta *za'im* had played in that period. Most important, Franjiyah was completely unacceptable to the Lebanese Forces, the Maronite militia led by Samir Jaja. When the parliament met in August 1988 to vote on Franjiyah's candidacy, there was no quorum, largely because Jaja succeeded in preventing a number of deputies from attending the session. Syria had the power to impose Franjiyah's nomination, but not his election.

After a month of discussions, including some intense sessions with US diplomats led by Assistant Secretary of State Richard Murphy, the Syrians put forth an alternative candidate, Mikhail al-Dahir, a deputy from Akkar in the north. Dahir was a political ally of Franjiyah, although he was sometimes less friendly towards Damascus than Franjiyah. Throughout summer 1988, the US government had assiduously avoided endorsing any of the many candidates, a posture endorsed by many government officials and area specialists, but, as the end of Gemayel's term loomed, the hands-off approach ended. The United States, after consultations in Lebanon, believed Dahir to be an acceptable candidate to all of the major parties and gave him its backing. The appearance of a US-Syrian diktat, however, and Dahir's links to Franjiyah led to his almost immediate rejection by the Lebanese Forces, whose obstinacy reflected not only their intention to protect

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Lebanon



Source: Adapted and reprinted with the permission of the International Institute for Strategic Studies (London) from Hussein Sirriyeh, *Lebanon: Dimensions of Conflict* (London: Brassey's for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1989), Adelphi Papers, no. 243.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Maronite privileges but also the backing of an unusual trio—Iraq, Israel, and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

The stalemated presidential election of 1988 marked the end of the First Lebanese Republic and gave rise to two rival governments on 23 September when the term of Gemayel expired. Literally, in the last minutes of his term, when all else had failed, Gemayel appointed General Michel Awn, commander of the Lebanese Armed Forces and himself a presidential aspirant, as prime minister to head a transitional military government. Thus, Gemayel claimed adherence to the constitutional provisions for succession in the event of no election. In the view of the Shi'i, Druze, and Sunni opposition forces, although Awn enjoyed an impressive and widespread popularity in autumn 1988, his appointment was seen as a transparent effort to preserve Maronite privilege.

Rival governments led by Awn and acting Prime Minister Huss each claimed the mantle of legitimacy, but neither could make good its claim. Although the actions of militias, over the course of Lebanon's conflicts, have undermined the functioning of a unified state, no significant Lebanese party or militia has espoused destroying Lebanon as a political entity. Yet, with the phenomenon of competing governments, the cleaving of Lebanon's political system was threatened with the prospect of being formalized. Instead of a new president, Lebanon was faced with a constitutional vacuum. The predominantly Muslim forces led by Huss insisted that political reforms precede the election of a president, while their opponents demanded that the reverse order be observed.

THE TA'IF ACCORD

The Arab states had always been willing to tolerate the chaos within Lebanon, because the cost of toleration was lower than the cost of stopping it. The aborted 1988 presidential election, however, changed the calculus. Increased Iraqi involvement by way of arms shipments to General Awn, as well as continued support of the Lebanese Forces by Baghdad, raised the prospect of a direct confrontation between Iraq and Syria. Most important, with the end of the pretense of a unified government, the division of Lebanon became palpable. In January 1989, the Arab League Committee of Six was activated. At the Casablanca summit meeting of 25–26 May, the Arab League decided to create the Tripartite High Commission consisting of President Chadli Bendjedid of Algeria, King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, and King Hassan II of Morocco and delegated to them the task of resolving 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 minister Lakhdar Ibrahimi, was to facilitate the election of a new Lebanese president and promote the adoption of presidential reforms.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Against the background of the collapse of the Lebanese economy,[2] accelerated emigration from Lebanon, especially by Christians, and a near-total breakdown of public services, 62 members of the Lebanese parliament met in Ta'if, from September 30 to October 22, 1989, under the auspices of the Arab League Tripartite Committee. The parliamentarians present at Ta'if—they last stood for election in 1972—were split evenly between Christians and Muslims, as was a smaller group of 16 which conducted most of the discussions.

The Document of National Understanding which emerged from the Ta'if negotiations hardly represented a radical departure from previous attempts to reform the Lebanese political system. Many of its features were anticipated by the Constitutional Document accepted by then-president Franjiyah in 1976 and the Tripartite Agreement of 1985, both of which were mediated by Syria. The accord, approved at Ta'if by 58 of the 62 deputies, represented the end of efforts to jettison the National Pact of 1943. Indeed, the Ta'if document implicitly ratifies the National Pact with its emphasis upon confessional compromise and intercommunal cooperation.[3] Deconfessionalization is stated as an explicit goal in the agreement, but without a specified deadline or timetable. The accord effectively concedes the futility of any serious attempt to expunge political sectarianism in Lebanon, at least for the foreseeable future. (It bears recalling that the unwritten 1943 pact also was not intended to institutionalize political sectarianism.) The accord leaves no doubt that, rhetoric aside, confessionalism is here to stay for some time to come. In all fairness, however, most of the deputies who participated in the negotiations emphasized that they saw the accord as part of a process, not a definitive settlement.

The 1989 Ta'if accord was unique in one significant respect: It was the product of the elected officials who were not, in most cases, belligerents in the war. In contrast, the failed 1985 Tripartite Agreement represented the consensus of three militia chieftains—Nabih Berri, Walid Jumblatt, and Elie Hubayqah. Like the 1985 agreement, Ta'if formalizes Lebanon's "special" relations with Syria, and it calls for the extension of the Beirut government's authority over all Lebanese territory, with Syrian assistance.

The United Nations (UN) Security Council expressed support for the accord on October 31, 1989, but it was not until August 21, 1990, that the legislature, the Chamber of Deputies, approved constitutional reforms based on the Ta'if agreement. In September 1990, when the constitution was amended, thereby starting the "Ta'if clock" with regard to the dissolution of militias and the withdrawal of Syrian forces to positions in the Biqa, respectively timed to occur six months and two years after parliamentary endorsement of the agreement.

2. For an incisive analysis of the political economy of the war, see Salim Nasr, "Lebanon's War: Is the End in Sight?" *Middle East Report*, January-February 1990, pp. 5–8.

3. For an English-translation of the Ta'if accord, see the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Daily Report*—Near East and South Asia, October 24, 1989, pp. 1–6.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Table 1
New Equilibrium in the Lebanese Government

Ta'if	Pre-Ta'if
CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES	
Christian-Muslim parity is established by dividing 108 seats equally.	Ninety-nine seats were divided according to a 6:5 ratio in favor of Christians.
Enhanced political role established for the speaker, traditionally a Shi'i Muslim, who will serve a four-year term.	The speaker served a one-year term and was decidedly subordinate to both the prime minister and the president.
Given sole power to cast no-confidence votes and to dismiss individual ministers and the Council of Ministers.	The Chamber of Deputies shared with the president the authority to dismiss ministers.
PRIME MINISTER	
The prime minister, traditionally a Sunni Muslim, is appointed by the president on the basis of binding parliamentary consultation.	The president selected the prime minister after non-binding parliamentary consultation.
The prime minister forms a government based upon non-binding parliamentary consultations.	In practice, the prime minister and the president shared the task of forming a government, but the president retained the ultimate constitutional authority to create the government.
The prime minister presides over the Council of Ministers, which sets general policy, drafts laws and decrees, and decides on the implementation of laws passed by the Chamber of Deputies.	The president presided as the ultimate political authority although a strong prime minister often tempered presidential power.
PRESIDENT	
The president, traditionally a Maronite, has no vote in the Council of Ministers, but he may preside over it when he wishes.	The president ruled through the council, over which he held ultimate authority.
The president convenes, with the agreement of the prime minister, extraordinary meetings of the Council of Ministers or the Chamber of Deputies.	Only the president could convene the Council of Ministers or Chamber of Deputies in extraordinary session.
The president presides over the Supreme Defense Council, but the Lebanese Armed Forces are subject to the authority of the Council of Ministers.	The president possessed ultimate command authority over the armed forces.
The president may not block legislation by refusing to promulgate laws.	The president often exercised a tacit veto by simply refusing to promulgate laws.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Table 2
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.
Sources: [Salim Nasr], Center for Peace and Reconstruction in Lebanon, *The Lebanese Parliament: The Vacant Seats,* Background Paper no. 6, May 1990; Luc-Henri de Bar, *Les Communautés Confessionnelles du Liban* (Paris: Editions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 1983); and information provided to the author by senior Lebanese officials.

In terms of internal reforms the striking aspect of the accord was the elevation of the Chamber of Deputies, at the expense of the president, an office traditionally reserved for a Maronite. The speaker, a post customarily reserved for a Shi'i Muslim, would be elected for a four-year term, and the nomination of a 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 custodian of executive authority, and the single most important position would clearly be that of the prime minister. With a few minor exceptions, such as the accreditation of ambassadors and the issuance of pardons, the autonomous powers of the president were shifted to the cabinet.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

With regard to the distribution of parliamentary seats, the principle of Christian-Muslim parity was adopted at Ta'if. Nine new Muslim seats were to be added to the Chamber of Deputies, creating a 54–54 seat balance. There is no question that the Maronites and the Shi'i Muslims were the big losers in Ta'if. The political predominance of the Maronites, symbolized notably in the prerogatives of the president, became history. Simultaneously, the political claims of the fast-growing Shia, who account for at least a third of Lebanon's population, were blunted in the Ta'if accord in favor of the Sunni Muslims. Although no community comprises a majority in multi-confessional Lebanon, there is a de facto working majority, backed by Shi'i-phobic Saudi Arabia, and comprised of those non-Shi'i Lebanese who oppose the domination of the state by the Shia. Despite their status as the plurality in Lebanon, the Shia gained only three of the new appointive seats giving them, like the Sunni Muslims, a total of 22 seats. The small Alawi community of about 20,000, which includes an influx from Syria in the 1980s, is centered in and around Tripoli. They were unrepresented through the 1972 elections, but the Alawis will reportedly receive two of the nine appointive seats—an obvious concession to the influence of the Alawi-dominated government in Damascus.

As of September 27, 1990, when implementation of Ta'if actually began, the parliament had 30 empty seats. Two of these seats belonged to living presidents—Gemayel and Ilyas Hrawi, who forfeited their places by moving to the presidency—but the remaining 28 vacant seats formerly belonged to deputies who were killed or, in most cases, succumbed to old age. The accord provided for the government to make appointments to the vacated posts as well as to the nine new seats. (Seats becoming vacant subsequent to September 27, 1990, will not be filled by appointment.) The confessional distribution of the vacant seats is shown in the following table, as is the distribution of the nine new seats.

Given the recent successes of the international community in monitoring elections in Central America and in Namibia, and the ambitious scale of the anticipated UN election-monitoring operations in Cambodia, many Lebanese are distressed that the process of appointment has been chosen to fill the parliamentary seats, rather than elections. No doubt, it would be excessively ambitious to envisage either general elections or country-wide by-elections, but by-elections organized sequentially in Lebanon's five provinces continue to be feasible and desirable. One possibility, discussed in the March 1990 meeting of the Center for Peace and Reconstruction in Lebanon, was to start in south Lebanon and take advantage of a number of factors: the presence of the UN force, UNIFIL, which could be readily supplemented with civilian election monitors; the limits on direct Syrian influence in the south and the scope for US influence on Israel to insure the conduct of elections even in the Israeli self-declared "security zone"; strong pro-government sentiment among many, if not all, of the residents; and, perhaps most importantly, the fundamental significance of the south for the future stability

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

of Lebanon.[4] Changes in Lebanese electoral laws would be necessary, for instance to permit the establishment of safe polling places outside of occupied regions, but such diversions from standard practice would certainly be less radical than the notion of appointing members to an elective body. Whatever the merits of by-elections, however, and despite the patent unpopularity of appointments, as of May 1, 1991, it appeared that the process of appointment would proceed.[5]

THE AWN PHENOMENON

Of course, the delay in implementing the Ta'if accord can largely be attributed to the phenomenon of General Michel Awn which shone, fizzled, and was then extinguished in October 1990. Awn reflected accurately the widespread disdain and resentment of the domination of public life by the militias. When he brought the Lebanese Forces to heel in early 1989 he chose a target of popular resentment. Lebanon had been waiting for a national hero, but Awn was too naive and too impetuous; Lebanon needed a DeGaulle but Awn was not prepared for the role.

As the son of a peasant and having grown up in the Maronite-Shi'i suburb of Haret-Hreik, Awn could hardly be described as a member of the traditional elite. He was not without his admirers in West Beirut, including, for a time, Prime Minister Huss. If he had reached out across the Green Line, it is possible that he could have built some interesting alliances, not least with Sunni politicians but also in the Shi'i Amal movement, where he had many potential allies. Instead, he imperiously decreed the closure of all illegal ports in February 1989, thereby threatening the supply lifeline of all of the militias. Because Syrian president Asad had spurned Awn's entreaties, the general needed all the friends he could find, yet he needlessly created enemies.

On March 14, 1989, Awn declared a "war of liberation" against the Syrian presence in Lebanon, a campaign in which he was joined by the Lebanese Forces. Awn's soldiers, on the whole, were more competent than their Syrian counterparts, and they were not without some successes, but they also caused great damage in civilian neighborhoods which often served as their targets. Thus, Awn's support in West Beirut decreased with every incoming shell. Syrian gunners responded in kind, but with even greater intensity, inflicting deadly

4. The March meeting was held in Freiburg, Germany, and the proposal for sequential by-elections was offered by the author as a device for creating constructive momentum within Lebanon and invoking international support during a period when outside interest in Lebanon seemed to be on the wane. Some Lebanese participants were skeptical about the proposal, but most of them received the idea with marked enthusiasm and interest. Subsequent discussions between well-placed Lebanese and Arab League officials, however, revealed an entrenched commitment to the appointment of deputies.

5. The jockeying for appointive seats has been under way for months. See articles in *al-Shira'*, December 3, 17, 24, 1990, and January 7, 1991.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

hardship on the people of the east.[6] By mid-1989, it was estimated that more than 1 million Beirutis had fled the city to escape the volleys of artillery fire between the eastern and western sectors of the city, and that more than 800 had died in the shelling. In August 1989, Awn unconditionally accepted a UN call for a cease-fire, but the Syrian battering continued nonetheless. In early September, Awn was rebuked for his not-so-subtle threats against US diplomats when Washington decided to close its embassy. Awn's major accomplishment was to energize the Arab League in its efforts to stop the fighting and to bring an end to the anomaly of two Lebanese governments.

In September, Awn attempted to forestall the league-sponsored Ta'if meeting by demanding a Syrian withdrawal as a precondition. Once the meeting went forward, Awn resorted to threats against the deputies who participated and later refused to allow those living in the areas under his control to return. To thwart parliamentary approval of the Ta'if agreement, he unsuccessfully declared the dissolution of the parliament on November 4, 1989, but the agreement was nonetheless ratified on November 5, 1989, at a session held in Qulay'at, where René Mu'awwad was elected president on the second ballot. Following the election, Abd al-Halim Khaddam, the Syrian vice-president and "specialist" vis-à-vis Lebanon, visited Mu'awwad for five hours to "discuss" who should serve in the cabinet, but Mu'awwad's term was brutally shortened when he was assassinated by a remote-controlled bomb as his autocade drove through Beirut just 17 days later. His assassination, like so many others, remained unsolved. Ilyas Hrawi of Zahlah, widely considered a second-tier politician, was promptly elected president and he named Salim al-Huss prime minister. Hrawi immediately, and, in the view of many Lebanese political veterans, intemperately vowed to depose Awn in 48 hours. The general, however, would totter on for almost a year.

Awn rejected the Ta'if agreement on the grounds that it did not call, even in principle, for a Syrian withdrawal from all of Lebanese territory, but only a redeployment of Syrian forces to the Biqa Valley two years after the ratification of the accord. Awn refused to credit reports of an unpublished but written Syrian commitment to withdraw from Lebanon in two stages, of which only the first stage was spelled out at Ta'if.[7] The general's followers launched a series of attacks on the Ta'if participants and their defenders, including a particularly unseemly assault on the residence of the Maronite patriarch Nasrallah Butrus Sfayr. On the other hand, Lebanese Forces commander Jaja accepted the Ta'if accord and quietly began sending messages to Huss indicating his willingness to serve in a government of national reconciliation. Awn, riding an extraordinary wave of

6. For a vivid depiction of the period see Robert Fisk, *Pity the Nation: The Abduction of Lebanon* (New York: Atheneum, 1990), pp. 629–43.

7. The agreement was reportedly given by Syrian foreign minister Faruq al-Shara' to Saud al-Faysal, his Saudi counterpart, in October 1989. See Nora Boustany and Caryle Murphy, "Syria Signed Secret Pledge on Pullout from Lebanon," *Washington Post*, January 12, 1990.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

popular support amongst the Maronites, refocused his campaign on the Lebanese Forces.

Fighting began January 30, 1990, in the Furn al-Shubbak suburb of Beirut after Awn had basically ordered the Lebanese Forces to disband. This proved to be one of a series of miscalculations as shown when the militia promptly counterattacked and overran army positions in Jubayl and Kasrawan. As the Lebanese Forces proved more resilient than Awn had anticipated, Syria, taking advantage of intra-Maronite fighting, provided assistance to Awn. Iraq was alarmed by this turn of events, and, in May 1990, Iraqi president Saddam Hussein and Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz mediated a truce between Awn and the Lebanese Forces after inviting their representatives to Baghdad. The truce more or less held until late August when it was ruptured by more fighting.

For nearly a year, Awn stymied the Ta'if process, at the cost of at least 1,000 Lebanese lives, until he was ousted by the Syrians on October 13, 1990, when Damascus exploited the region's focus on the Gulf crisis and Syria's new modus vivendi with Washington.[8] By that time Awn was isolated diplomatically and economically. Using the popular metaphor of a traffic light, officials noted pointedly that the United States had given the Syrians no light whatsoever.[9] Awn had a chance to become the hero for whom many Lebanese yearned; instead he simply came to be seen in many corners as a diplomatic nuisance. After surrendering, Awn fled to the French embassy, from which his extrication has been complicated by reports of public funds in his personal bank accounts.

THE KARAMI GOVERNMENT

A "government of national reconciliation" was formed on December 24, 1990, by Prime Minister Karami, the brother of former prime minister Rashid Karami who was assassinated by a bomb hidden in a military helicopter in which he was a passenger in June 1987. The 30-member cabinet—split evenly between Christians and Muslims—is the largest in Lebanon's history and includes 12 ministers of state and 18 ministers with portfolio. There is no question that the Karami government has a pro-Syrian aura. In addition, the government is a government of the militias. The theory is that the militia heads—appointed as ministers of state—will be willing to exchange paramilitary authority for a role in politics.

8. The Gulf crisis evoked support for Iraq in Lebanon, particularly among Sunni Muslims, but, in general, the response was muted. As one woman interviewed on the television station run by the Lebanese Forces said, "I have my own war, let them have theirs." The presence of cars in Lebanon with Kuwaiti and Saudi license plates did not signify a renewal of vacationing by Gulf Arabs but, rather, the return of Lebanese workers from the Gulf. For the first time in 16 years the migration pattern was reversed, with Lebanese workers fleeing to Lebanon.

9. Thomas L. Friedman, "U.S. Calls Removal of Aoun Only Solution for Lebanon," *New York Times*, October 28, 1991.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Hizballah, which denies the legitimacy of the government, is not represented in it, while the six Shi'i members reflect Amal's influence. In contrast, the Maronites are split. Lebanese Forces commander Jaja was brought into the government, only to be joined by old enemies: Sulayman Tony Franjiyah—the son of Tony Franjiyah who was murdered in 1978, reputedly by a group led by Jaja; and Elie Hubayqah, who signed the 1985 Tripartite Agreement and, as a result, was overthrown as leader of the Lebanese Forces by Jaja. Pro-Awn people are excluded, although he still retains many supporters among the Maronite new middle class. For his part, Jaja has boycotted the cabinet, citing its pro-Damascus tilt, but, since March 1991, he has been directly represented by Roger Deeb who took up the post which had been intended for the Lebanese Forces leader.

Karami has continued to implement the Greater Beirut Security Plan which was launched under the Huss government. By early December, the Green Line was down. The Lebanese Armed Forces, assisted by Syrian troops, took control of the area from the Damur River south of Beirut to the Kalb River north of the city, and 2,000 troops were deployed in the Saida area. The key task on the horizon is the dissolution of the militias—the major test for Ta'if. All militias have withdrawn from Beirut and its suburbs. The government has regained control over territory where 50 percent of the population resides and which accounts for 70 percent of the economic activity. The commander of the army, General Emile Lahhud, has also begun reintegrating the 40,000-man army; for instance, battalions have been exchanged between the army's 6th and 8th brigades.[10]

There are four important Lebanese militias: Amal, deeply rooted in southern Lebanon, has about 6,500 fighters; Hizballah, especially strong in the Beirut suburbs, boasts around 3,500 motivated militiamen; the militia of the predominantly Druze Progressive Socialist Party of Walid Jumblatt is centered in the Shuf and now numbers approximately 3,000; and, the Lebanese Forces count less than 6,000 militia members, most of whom are Maronites or Greek Catholics. All told, the combined strength of the militias never exceeded 30,000 people under arms, and the present figures are well below that number.[11] In addition to the Syrian and Israeli forces in Lebanon, the major non-Lebanese forces are the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, headquartered in Baalbek, which account for another 2,000 men, and the PLO with major strongholds in the refugee camps south of Beirut, with as many as 10,000 fighters

The government ordered all Lebanese and Palestinian militias to disarm by the end of April 1991, seven, not six months, after the Ta'if clock began ticking. The government's decision, reached during a lengthy cabinet session in late March, provided that the Lebanese Armed Forces, backed by the Syrians, would

10. See the informed analysis by Ronald D. McLaurin, "From Professional to Political: The Redecline of the Lebanese Army," *Armed Forces and Society*, vol. 17 (forthcoming summer 1991).

11. The 30,000 figure is found in Salim Nasr, "The Militia Phenomenon," *Middle East Report*, January-February 1990, p. 7. The estimates for current strengths of the leading militias are the author's and should be considered more-or-less accurate as of May 1, 1991.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

use force against any militia failing to comply with the order. The process of disarming the militias has, as of 30 April, enjoyed remarkable success; however, the process of disarming the militias remains complicated by the situation in south Lebanon, where the long-contemplated deployment of the army finally occurred in February 1991. Some 2,400 soldiers deployed, without serious incidents, to Iqlim al-Tuffah, Nabatiyya, Tyre, and the western Biqa. This action symbolizes the government's strategy which is aimed at invoking UN Security Council Resolution 425 of 1978 that calls for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanon and the upholding of Lebanese territorial integrity, sovereignty, and independence.

SPECIAL PROBLEMS IN THE SOUTH

South Lebanon, from Sidon and Tyre on the coast to Nabatiyya and Jazzin inland, and south to the troubled border with Israel, continues to be an arena for intra-Lebanese and regional conflict. Iran, Israel, various Palestinian groups, and Syria all have a stake in the future complexion of the south. The area is at the center of the bitter disputes which have divided the Lebanese Shi'i community, and both the Druze and Christian communities have large stakes in the area as well. Whatever security exists in the south is the product of a complex chain of forces and a shifting web of tacit and explicit alliances. Although the level of violence has decreased since 1987, the trend is by no means irreversible. Indeed, the delicacy of the situation is such that the removal or strengthening of one of the key players could throw the area into turmoil.

The crux of the problem is the so-called security zone which Israel created when it redeployed the bulk of its forces from Lebanon in 1985. This area accounts for a little less than 10 percent of Lebanese territory, excluding the environs of Jazzin, which is controlled by Israeli proxies. In contrast to the 1982–85 period, Israel conducts a nuanced and calibrated policy clearly intended to foster tacit alliances and incapacitate adversaries. Thus, it was not inconsistent with Israeli policy that Hizballah was able to move military supplies freely across Israeli lines in 1990, in order to further challenge Amal's strength in Iqlim al-Tuffah. As Uri Lubrani, the Israeli "coordinator" for Lebanon, once told this author, "We will play Lebanon as it is."[12] The 2,500-member South Lebanon Army (SLA), led by Antoine Lahd, has been improved considerably through a program of training and economic incentives, and periodic rations of coercion. Without active Israeli support, the SLA would wither quickly, but for the foreseeable future there is little prospect that support will not be available. Arabic-speaking Israelis, often Druze, have been integrated into some key positions in the SLA, and some of them serve as local military governors.

12. Discussion in New York, August 19, 1986.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The Israel Defense Force's Northern Command has reduced the exposure of Israeli soldiers in the "security zone" in south Lebanon. Routine patrolling is now coordinated through a series of defensive strongpoints which effectively decrease the chance of a successful attack on Israeli soldiers. Compared to 1987, when 750 resistance operations were launched against the zone, the total for 1990 was only one-third of that figure. (The key players in the resistance include pro-Hizballah factions, Amal, communist factions, and Palestinian groups.) Thus, the "security zone" is widely viewed as a success within Israel.

The most vociferous opponent of the "security zone" is the Iranian-funded Hizballah, which came to light following the Israeli invasion of 1982. Hizballah has proven to be a competent, dedicated, and well-led challenger to the Amal movement created by Sayyid Musa al-Sadr in the early 1970s.[13] Although young Shi'i clerics dominate the leadership of Hizballah, it is noteworthy that Hizballah has been especially effective in recruiting members and sympathizers among well-educated Shia from secular professions, many of whom have lost confidence in Amal. From 1988 to 1990, Amal and Hizballah were locked in a savage turf war which began in the south with the February 1988 kidnapping of US Marine Corps officer Lieutenant Colonel William R. Higgins, who was serving with UN forces in southern Lebanon, and spread subsequently to the Beirut suburbs. Though Amal has been able to sustain its control, however tenuously, in southern Lebanon, it has been less successful around Beirut. In May 1988 fighting in *al-dahiya* (literally "the suburbs," the usual term of reference for Beirut's southern suburbs), Hizballahis triumphed over Amal militiamen, underlining Hizballah's steady success in enlisting the Shia, including many disgruntled former Amal members.[14] Although Amal still claims the larger membership and a firm base of popular support in Jabal Amil, Hizballah has become firmly established as a political force in Lebanon. Hizballah challenges in the south, as in Iqlim al-Tuffah where it initiated an attack on Jarju on July 16, 1990, show that Amal's base in the south is by no means impregnable. The Jarju attack reactivated an objective alliance between Fatah elements of the PLO and Amal, neither of which wished to see Hizballah's influence increase in the south.

In the six years since Hizballah published its "Open Letter," or manifesto, in 1985, the context in which the party sprang to life has changed in marked ways.[15]

13. See Augustus Richard Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), and the following articles, *idem*: "Shi'ism and Social Protest in Lebanon," in Juan R.I. Cole and Nikki Keddie, eds., *Shi'ism and Social Protest* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), pp. 156–78; "Imam Musa al-Sadr," in Bernard Reich (ed.), *Political Leaders of the Contemporary Middle East & North Africa* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1990), pp. 460–7; and "Religious Resurgence and Political Mobilization of the Shi'a of Lebanon," in Emile Sahliyeh (ed.), *Religious Resurgence and Politics in the Contemporary World* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), pp. 235–47, 350–1.

14. For an analysis of intra-Shi'i fighting see Augustus Richard Norton, "Lebanon: The Internal Conflict and the Iranian Connection" in John L. Esposito (ed.), *The Iranian Revolution: Its Global Impact* (Miami: Florida International University Press, 1990), pp. 130–3.

15. For the text, see Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a*, pp. 167–87.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Iran, banker and adviser to Hizballah, has entered its postrevolution stage. With Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in his grave, President Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani has consolidated his position and, in the process, neatly put aside many of the main advocates of exporting Iran's revolution, notably former ambassador to Damascus Ali Akbar Mohtashemi who lost his position as Iran's interior minister in 1989 although he has maintained contact with his allies in Lebanon. Arguably, revolutionary Iran made the same mistake that many Western experts did, which is to say that it grossly exaggerated the appeal of militant Shi'ism and it underestimated the importance of the regional or local political context. If Western experts miscalculated by treating the Shia, no matter where located, as if they were religiously-inspired automatons, Iranian officials often made the same error. Hashemi-Rafsanjani, disgusted with the bloody fighting between Amal and Hizballah that erupted in 1988, reduced Iranian support for the latter and promised that Iran would henceforth pursue a more even-handed policy vis-à-vis its involvement in Lebanon.[16] Where this all leaves Hizballah, which retains significant, if reduced, Iranian support, is still unsettled. Hizballah is a major player, but it has rejected on principle the prospect of repairing the Lebanese political system and has continued to insist on the establishment of a Lebanese state governed by a system of Islamic law, a goal which many Lebanese, as well as 40,000 Syrian troops, will fight to prevent. Nonetheless, Hizballah is sinking deep roots in al-dahiya, where it runs a network of social, educational, and quasi-public services. It is also maintaining a significant store of weapons while lowering its paramilitary profile, for example by dispatching a number of militiamen to the east, to the Biqa, for "training."[17]

The Lebanese government faces several dilemmas: Its options are bounded by limits set in Damascus not Beirut. Thus, it was the Syrian president, not the Lebanese one, who agreed in late April 1991 negotiations with his Iranian counterpart that Hizballah militants would be permitted to maintain their presence in the south and in the eastern Biqa.[18] Even if Iran and Syria were not so deeply insinuated into Lebanese affairs, the Lebanese government could not avoid affirming the legitimate right of Lebanese to resist occupation. Nonetheless, by allowing exceptions for groups like Amal and Hizballah, both engaged in resisting the Israeli presence, the dissolution of the militias risks becoming derailed. Nor, for that matter, is either group likely to willingly disarm as long as there is a major armed Palestinian presence in the area. The Shia suffered under PLO domination until 1982, and they do not desire to repeat the experience. For its part, the PLO's strategic interests are invoked in the south, where it is free from direct Syrian

16. See Norton, "Lebanon: The Internal Conflict and the Iranian Connection," pp. 116–37.

17. For a useful discussion of Hizballah's efforts to "legitimize" itself amongst the Shia, see *al-Hayat*, February 14, 1991, as translated by the Joint Publications Research Service, March 14, 1991, pp. 35–8.

18. Alan Cowell, "Syria and Iran Agree Militias Can Remain in Parts of Lebanon," *New York Times*, April 30, 1991.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

pressure and where it can maintain something of a safe haven from diplomatic pressure—an important factor in the post-Gulf War Arab world, where several of the PLO's former allies are now avidly working to punish the organization for its pro-Iraqi stance. Although the Lebanese legislature abrogated the 1969 Cairo Agreement in 1987, the PLO continues to claim a regional mandate for itself which excuses it from complying with the Beirut government's disarmament demands. The Lebanese army has been warmly welcomed in its return to the south, but the army is neither equipped nor capable of disarming the PLO. If the government settles for a symbolic, rather than a categorical disarming of the PLO, the southern-based Shi'i militias will remain armed, thereby providing a rationalization for the maintenance of other militias. In a fundamental sense, the success of dissolving the militias turns on events in the south.

President Hrawi has understandably called for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 425, which specifies an Israel withdrawal from Lebanon. He explicitly demanded an Israeli withdrawal in February 1991. In the context of an activist Security Council, as exemplified in the Gulf crisis, renewed international interest in implementing the resolution and thereby ending Israel's occupation is not implausible. In fact, this may well be the crucial step if the dissolution of the militias specified in the Ta'if agreement is to be achieved without disabling exceptions and loopholes made necessary by the need to maintain the legitimate right of the Lebanese to resist occupation. In addition, the question of the south automatically invokes the larger question of Palestine and the interests of the PLO. Any analysis of Lebanon will not move very far without discovering how inextricably the fate of Lebanon is tied to the Arab-Israeli and Palestinian-Israeli conflicts. The process of disarming the militias is highly susceptible to being derailed without parallel movement on the broader diplomatic front. In the meantime, the following axiom applies: Tranquility rarely reigns in Beirut and south Lebanon simultaneously.

CONCLUSIONS

Beirut has been uncommonly peaceful since late 1990. Is the civil war over? There are obviously positive signs. In addition to the developments noted above, it is noteworthy that rumors abound regarding the imminent release of the 12 Western hostages as part of an Iranian-Israeli-Lebanese package deal. The end of that egregious chapter of Lebanon's history would doubtlessly provoke a positive international response. It is also noteworthy that the United States has assigned Ryan Crocker—a foreign service officer known for his understanding of the Arab world—to Beirut as ambassador. (One of the "highlights" of Crocker's previous tour in Lebanon was the destruction by a truck bomb of the US embassy in 1983 which he experienced as an occupant of the building.) In addition, Washington resumed non-lethal military aid to Lebanon in April 1991.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The more difficult problems, however, lie ahead, not the least of which will be relations with Syria, whose power is no longer checked in Lebanon by Iraq, Israel, or any other power. Syria's grip on Lebanese politics has tightened, and it will be further tightened when 39 deputies—all more or less sympathetic to Syria—are appointed. This raises the question of whether post-Ta'if Lebanon will be free or remain nestled, indeed clutched, in Syria's possessive grip. Here again, much depends on the Arab-Israeli and Palestinian-Israeli "peace process" and whether Syria continues to thrive diplomatically in the still evolving post-Gulf War alignment of regional powers oriented more-or-less congenially toward the United States. In the absence of movement toward a solution of the Arab-Israeli and the Palestinian-Israeli conflicts, freedom and peace for Lebanon will remain hostage to regional conflict. Much depends, therefore, on the fate of the diplomatic initiatives launched by the United States or the prospects for supplementary forums for multilateral negotiations.[19] If US diplomacy comes to a crashing halt, it is a safe bet that Lebanese suffer the whiplash.

For its part, Syria retains its dependency on Saudi Arabia's largesse, which, in turn, reflects Riyadh's penchant for an Arab order in which the power of the PLO is checked and Shi'i political power is limited. As long as the Second Lebanese Republic continues to bear a striking resemblance to the first one, the Saudis can be expected to temper (but not halt) Syria's repressive urges. If the process of resuscitating Lebanese legitimacy continues to gather momentum, the prospects for a crisis in Syrian-Lebanese relations will probably increase, particularly when the Lebanese get around to rejuvenating their economy and holding elections—apparently initially planned at the municipal level. Syria's economy is a dead weight which the Lebanese will strive to reject, and no one who knows the Lebanese expects them to suffer Syrian control a moment longer than necessary.

Lebanon has become a term for a pathology of fragmentation and destruction. If political developments—particularly those in fall 1990—provide a basis for hope, ample scope for despair remains. It is striking that foreign diplomats exude more enthusiasm for the Ta'if process than the Lebanese themselves. They remain skeptical, if hopeful.

19. On the latter, see Mohammed Muslih and Augustus Richard Norton, "The Need for Arab Diplomacy," *Foreign Policy*, no. 83 (Summer 1991), pp. 3–22.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.