
PROSPECTS FOR LEBANON

**THE CHALLENGE OF
COEXISTENCE**

Antoine N. Messarra



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THE CHALLENGE OF COEXISTENCE

*Antoine N. Messarra**

LEBANON is—or was, according to some—the expression and concrete model of a historical dream: an intercommunal coexistence which is—despite some degree of conflict (such as any complex reality is)—essentially democratic in an environment that aspires to freedom. The equilibrium ensured by the Lebanese balance of power implies mutual acceptance and sharing. This cause, or dream, deserves to be defended not only for ecumenic, human and political reasons, but also for international considerations: the contemporary international system is composed of a constellation of states, the majority of which are forced to deal with their pluralism so as to consolidate national unity and concord.

Thus, the analysis of the chances of future coexistence in Lebanon lies at the heart of major contemporary controversies: ecumenic controversies bearing on the effectiveness of dialogue between different religions; political controversies concerned with the operational character of consensual or power-sharing systems; and international diplomatic controversies over the role and place of small nations in a multipolar or bipolar international system. The Ottoman Empire managed to maintain its cohesion for four centuries through a pragmatic management of ethnic, confessional, and linguistic pluralism. Another contemporary empire, the Soviet Union, might ‘explode’¹ for

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¹ Hélène Carrère d’Encausse, *L’Empire éclaté*, Paris, Flammarion, 1978.

lack of management which provides even minimal legitimacy to diversity and participation.

Has the Lebanese model existed? Given the mental confusion and the political/socio-economic stalemate as a result of several years of war, the answer to this question is best sought in an analytical interpretation of facts, their significance and implications, rather than in a normative approach. It also implies a methodological examination of statements and affirmations, taken as evidence and fact, regarding the 'dismemberment' or irreducible 'partition' of Lebanon.

Paradoxically, it is in times of crisis that a political system best reveals its capacity to resist, its strengths and weaknesses, the extent of its effectiveness, and its limitations. Whatever survives in the Lebanese political system should remain; whatever succumbs should be eliminated. The analysis of a system in such conditions proves the futility of formalist judicial interpretations, of alienating ideologies, and stereotyped perceptions. What has the functioning and dysfunctioning of the Lebanese political system since 1975 indicated in this connection?

I

Concordant and Cumulative Facts

Perceptions of the Lebanese reality are often altered by four phenomena: (a) the prolongation of multinational and 'drawer' (i.e. internal)² wars in Lebanon, two parallel wars since 1975, (b) the difficulty of separating the internal and external aspects of these wars, (c) the proliferation of conflicting ideologies aiming to mobilize public opinion, and (d) the international communications system which thrives on sensational and accessible information.

Is Lebanon actually without a state and government, radically fragmented, and consisting of segregated communities? Constant, general and cumulative facts which bear witness to the population's unity and inter-communal coexistence deserve to be pinpointed here.

Lebanon's constitutionality

The coups d'état that did take place in Lebanon were no more than television broadcasts; the coup carried out by Abdel Aziz Ahdab, and

² Expression used by Ghassan Tuéni, *Une guerre pour les autres*, Paris, Lattès, 1985.

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that by Saad Haddad who proclaimed the Free Lebanese Republic from the border zone. Other coups d'état were aborted before they were broadcast.³

In a country devastated by 13 years of war and subjected to several forms of terrorism—be it state terrorism or terrorism springing from groups loyal to foreign forces, the necessary quorum for the election of a head of state or a House Speaker remains a serious issue, and jurists and constitutionalists are continually urged to interpret Articles 34 and 49 of the Lebanese Constitution and to discuss their constitutional practice.⁴ When polemics over the ministerial crisis and the need to submit the cabinet's resignation in writing to the head of state, instead of an oral resignation to the people, reached a climax, some politicians expressed their disdain for this false concern over the 'purity' ('iffat) of the Constitution. The 'purity' of the 1926 Constitution and of the 1943 National Pact is well preserved in judicial terms. Those who were most intransigent in their claims that the days of the 1943 National Pact had ended followed the rules of the same pact to legitimize their ascent to power. The most widely supported militia followed the dictates of the 1926 Lebanese Constitution and of the 1943 National Pact to achieve representation in the central government or to acquire a legitimate cover. Such a phenomenon has no equivalent in most regional states.

An analysis of daily events shows that the constitutional mechanism functions as a legal source of legitimacy. The Lebanese perpetually manage to find institutional substitutes to evade internal and external pressures. Case in point, three heads of state, Presidents Elias Sarkis (1976–82), Bashir Gemayel (1982), and Amin Gemayel (1982–88), were elected according to the rules of the 1926 Constitution and 1943 National Pact, and all in the midst of the crisis.

Claims that the Lebanese state or government are absent are oversimplifications and contrary to the constitutional reality. When the cabinet of ten lost three of its members, Pierre Gemayel (deceased on 29 August 1984), Rashid Karami (victim of an attempt on 1 June 1987) and Camille Chamoun (deceased on 7 August 1987), an infallible constitutional mechanism managed to fill the vacuum legally. By virtue

³ Cf. detailed information concerning a coup against the presidency of the republic and the army command in *Al-Safir*, 18 and 19 July, 1987.

⁴ See Appendix for all Articles of the Constitution referred to in the paper (Ed.).

of an automatic constitutional mechanism which dates back to 1975, President Chamoun's interim at the Finance Ministry was allotted to Joseph Hashem, and that of the Housing Ministry to Joseph Skaff, just as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was handed over to Salim Hoss following the death of Premier Rashid Karami, without calling for special consultations or meetings. When the council of ministers was prevented from convening following foreign occupation, it overcame any obstacles by means of *ministerial meetings* and regular *individual contacts*. Though this might not be the most effective solution, the recourse to several institutional processes—coupled with a great sense of adaptability—to ensure even a minimal functioning of the government apparatus within the framework of legality deserves the attention of analysts.

Forming a new cabinet of *fait accompli* would be formalizing the rupture sought by foreign powers to pave the way for their intervention. Reuniting the resigned cabinet, in its capacity as a council of ministers, is forbidden without external endorsement and the abolition of roadblocks on the road to the Baabda presidential palace. The entire cabinet shares the central authorities' dilemma in a state of siege or occupation. There are *institutional substitutes* at all levels.

First, at the level of the presidency of the Republic; a few ministers ensure the necessary connection with the presidency of government and the Muslim cabinet of ministers. Since January 1986, 'councils of ministers by correspondence' and 'itinerant decrees' have become common practice.

Second, at the governmental level, contacts between ministers are continual, whether on the personal level or related to matters of the state. For instance, five ministerial meetings held in Parliament from 13 to 31 July 1987 aimed at reviving the resolutions of the ministerial meeting of 24 April 1987, which make for the deployment of the Lebanese Army in the administrative jurisdiction of Beirut, and the restoration by the forces on the ground of usurped gains to the state's treasury.

'Ministerial Council', 'Governmental Committee', or 'ministerial meeting'? 'Official' meeting or 'informal' and 'technical' meeting? At the Serail, in Baabda, at the 'Villa Mansour' or at the residence of acting Premier Hoss in 'Aysha Bakkar? Each qualification bears its own significance and implications. Should reforms in power-sharing

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fail to be achieved, the result would be concern over a *de facto* displacement of the decision-making centre which would be sanctioned by custom. For its part, the location depends on demarcation lines and the persons who control them and set them aflame. However, the will to adapt exists. In effect, acting Premier Hoss declared that 'no socio-economic initiatives take place without global ministerial endorsement', and he set a week's deadline to conclude his talks with cabinet ministers. He also expressed his intention publicly to meet ministers on an 'individual' or 'dual' basis to reach a consensus on socio-economic measures. Ministers were sent a draft agenda because the acting Premier was intent on noting down the remarks of his colleagues. In line with the ministers, the Head of State underlined that diversity should not be considered and exploited as a source of conflict.⁵

The ministerial crisis triggered off by the resignation of Premier Karami underlined deadlock, the cost of veto, and the impossibility of ignoring inter-communal co-operation in the administration of public affairs. Even those who most intransigently called for the formation of a new cabinet of *fait accompli* also feared new obstacles or more serious disruptions of deadlock. The dispatch of Greek-Orthodox minister Abdallah Racy, a close ally of former President Suleiman Franjeh, to deliver a message from Sunni acting Premier Salim Hoss to the Arab Summit convening in Amman (8 November 1987), shows that there are in fact no inter-confessional cleavages but rather intra-confessional ones.

The attachment to the Constitution and to the spirit of the National Pact in their capacity as legal sources of legitimacy appears, in the third place, at the level of Parliament with its regular meetings and unswerving regard for all legislative procedures. Since it was first elected in 1972, Parliament lost 19 of its 99 members, but its ongoing meetings and legislation despite the wars are worthy of a less ideological analysis. The session of 30 July 1987 represents a historical date in the annals of the Lebanese Parliament. It constitutes a strong retort to any attempt made to usurp legislative power, even if by a minister who was at the same time a militia leader. The submission of a draft law passed by Parliament to be approved, or rather and even worse, to

⁵ Cf. the press of 20 to 30 August, 1987, namely *An-Nahar* and our documentary analysis in *Panorama of Events*, no.47, 4th quarter, 1987.

be vetoed by the said minister was described by House Speaker Hussain Hussaini as 'an unprecedented incident in parliamentary practice', an 'attempt at the legislative rights of Parliament through the will of one or several ministers', and 'a flagrant violation of the national sovereignty embodied, through custom and constitutional rules, in Parliament'. The obstacle was circumvented by disassociating the law granting one billion and 750 million Lebanese pounds to the army from that allotting one hundred million Lebanese pounds to the restoration of the 'Villa Mansour'. This procedure, which was entirely constitutional, won House Speaker Hussein Husseini the nickname of Parliament's 'god-father', which was given to him by the minister in question.

Meetings of the parliamentary committee, usually with heavy agendas, are another proof of the regard that institutional mechanisms bear for legality. Parliament initiates a debate on the mode of election of committees, and a few days later, the committees' chairmen are elected with a concern for a balanced and communal sharing of functions.⁶

The desire to keep Parliament sheltered from the divisions fanned by foreign occupations and politicians with foreign loyalties can be assessed in different ways. However, cohesion and solidarity are shown repeatedly. We notice that the communal affiliations and residential areas of MPs do not determine their voting patterns: 39 MPs, eight of them Muslims, live in the so-called 'Christian' zone, while 33 Christian and Muslim MPs live in the so-called 'Islamic, national' zone. Their autonomy is quite evident in relation to the power of the forces on the ground. The public opinion that they represent always approves their decisions, positions and votes, even though this state of affairs displeases the militia. For instance, at the end of a three-and-a-half hour meeting with Christian representatives at the residence of MP Gebran Tok, on 19 October 1987, the Christian MPs were given a free hand in the support of, or opposition to, the re-election of House Speaker Hussein Husseini.⁷ The independent Maronite parliamentary

⁶ *An-Nahar*, 18 and 20 March, 1987.

⁷ *An-Nahar*, 20 October, 1987, and the clarification of former minister, MP Khatchig Babikian, concerning the 'confessionalization' of voting and the tutelage of parliamentary representatives by confessional gatherings, in *An-Nahar*, 30 October, 1987.

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gathering has stressed on several occasions its 'independence and freedom to act'.⁸

The fourth manifestation of the constitutional legality is the public administration which, though deprived of resources, continues to serve as the exclusive reference to all 'official' formalities. The council of public services published an extensive five chapter report on its activities from 1983 to 1986.⁹ There is, most certainly, state usurpation; it is, however, coupled with a unanimous concern to maintain the state either to ravage it or to use it as a scapegoat, or, as is the case for the most intransigent, to achieve integration and gain legitimacy.

Regulated violence and the capacity to adapt inherent in the social structure

The National Pact has long suffered but its days are not over. The slogan claiming its end perhaps expresses a legitimate desire, but it does not reflect the reality of the situation. The Pact is a source of deadlock, but it proves extremely resistant when compared to all the world's political systems. Launched in an ideological climate of structural change, the two presidential elections of 1982 are held in strict observance of the rules: a dual, Christian and Muslim, majority must be achieved by the winner-to-be.

Agreement and compromise are so much within the 'nature of things' in Lebanon that, for 13 years of war, the Lebanese have practised regulated violence. The requirements of balance are observed through reciprocal bombardments. Every shelling of the Mukhtara castle calls for revenge on the Baabda presidential palace. Should Baadaran in the Shuf, headquarters of the Druze spiritual leader, be attacked, Bkirki, headquarters of the Maronite Patriarchate, will also be shelled. The bombardment of Beiteddin, where the head offices of the Druze 'civil administration' are located, corresponds to that of the Defence Ministry in Yarzeh. Should Baaklin be the target, Bikfaya, native village of President Gemayel, will receive its share of rockets. Any attack on other villages in the Shuf and Aley corresponds to an indiscriminate and blind shelling of the residential areas of East Beirut and of the north of the capital. The bombing is not meant to achieve

⁸ *L'Orient le Jour*, 24 October, 1987.

⁹ *An-Nahar*, 2 August, 1987.

military advancement, but to demoralize the adversary who can neither be subdued nor eliminated. According to an analysis conducted by Theodor Hanf, there have been processes to regulate violence, in so far as it can be regulated, aimed at achieving a balance of terror. There was no interruption in the exchange between leaders and the collegial aspect of meetings. Regulated violence worked at all levels of the conflict because it ensured the continual supply of vital services. Partners negotiated the repair of a water conduit, or ensured the distribution of flour or the repair of an electricity grid. Such regulations cannot be envisaged in a *full scale* war, as pointed out by Theodor Hanf.¹⁰

The system of kidnapping and hostage-taking equally obeys the logic of a savage regulation. This is a confessional *exchange currency*, because kidnappers who have enough money need no hostages. According to a journalist, 'this is the communal counterpart of a kidnapped person. The release of a Maronite calls for the capture of a Shiite and the liberation of a Druze demands the abduction of a Maronite. What about Sunnis? No one wants them as hostages, because they have no exchange value.' The release of a hostage is a communal consecration of his captor as leader or negotiator. Relations are thus often maintained between the hostage and his abductor.¹¹ Violence is also regulated in plunder operations and travel between the sectors. According to well-correlated tales, the Lebanese fighting in the old commercial centre of the capital reached a cease-fire as a compromise to allow for the looting of the intermediary zone between their respective positions, once they had completed plundering the sectors under their control. They met, established a *bilateral committee* and dispatched *joint teams* charged with the systematic sacking of all the shops. Once they had finished, they resumed fighting. Division of the loot between associate and rival partners remained a rule. Zones were also spared through a policy of compromise, and often through an understanding attained between rival fighters.

¹⁰ Theodor Hanf, 'Violence but not for victory. The politics of containing violence in intercommunal and international conflict: The case of Lebanon', exposé at the conference of the European Consortium for Political Research, Fribourg-en-Brisgau (FRG), 20–25 March, 1983, p.33.

¹¹ Gaby Nasr, 'Sondage pour un otage' in *L'Orient le Jour*, 16 November, 1984.

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Travel between various sectors is also ongoing, despite the dangers, through a strict application by the citizens of Article 95 of the Constitution. Muslim and Christian taxi drivers at the Beirut International Airport can only preserve their right to move between areas by striking a pact between themselves. In the case of individuals travelling on their own, their safety is guaranteed by having friends of another religion accompany them. At another level, and despite their commitment to an ideology of differences and cultural specificity, editors of school books equally apply the laws of sharing and equilibrium on the basis of commercial calculations. The names of Christian and Muslim authors are still indicated on the covers of books to ensure their all-out marketing in the country, even if the authors did not effectively participate in writing the manuals.

Despite ideologies, held by Christians and Muslims alike, calling for the end of compromises (*al-taswiya*), the unbridled policy of agreement and adaptation is often reclaimed by either segment of the population whenever it serves its purpose. 'Security through conciliation' (*al-amn-bi-l-tarādi*) becomes a principle, while negotiation does not go as far as negating the nature of the law and the state, as well as the use of state control. In effect, should the legislation and decision stages be subject to negotiation, the *stricto sensu* implementation of the law cannot be negotiated unless the state is negated.¹² The non-majority principle of coalition is also abused by implementing the principle of absolute unanimity. The most basic decision could be blocked if one of the members of the council of ministers opposed it. The paradoxical expression 'opposition minister', which represents the extreme case of cohabitation, has become fashionable.

The principle of the 1648 Westphalia treaty, *sola amicabile compositio lites dirimat non intenta votorum pluritate* (differences are settled through an understanding rather than a majority vote)¹³ is carried to its limits rather than denounced. An all-out agreement is required instead of the *amicabilis compositio*, even though the opposition of only one person is highly prejudicial. The policy of the *empty*

¹² See our study entitled: 'Où s'arrête le compromis?' in *L'Orient le Jour*, 22 and 29 November, 1982.

¹³ Cited by G. Lehbruch, *Proporzdemokratie: Politisches System und Politische Kultur in der Schweiz und in Österreich*, Tübingen, 1967, pp. 7-8.

seat or the *deadly veto* of bombardments are used instead of a regulating veto to block decisions. Thus, we reach a paradoxical situation where the persons who reject the power of veto as a principle indulge in its use. Leaders who believe it possible to rise to power and subsequently maintain that authority in Lebanon on a non-confessional basis soon realize the error in their view through experience. Thus, the elites at the top who isolate themselves from the reality end up trapped in deadlock.

The limited autonomy that has been agreed on for each of the various communities in Articles 9 and 10 of the Constitution is unbridled, but none has yet succeeded in creating its own state or 'civil administration'. In 1982, Muslim leaders opposed the projects for 'civil administrations' in West Beirut. When the same administrations were finally established they only managed to impose taxes, without building up a new legitimacy. Extreme decentralization would result in such an advertisement, published by the Lebanese branch of an international cosmetics company: 'Société (...) requires qualified beauticians living in the north, for North Lebanon; in East Beirut, for East Beirut; in West Beirut, for West Beirut. Call Mrs. (...).'¹⁴ Can the employment market ever function in this way and to the advantage of workers, in a 10,000 sq.km. country?

The minutes of the central security committee (*al-lijna-al-amniyya*) which included militia representatives from the various committees, are rich in details concerning the imperatives of compromise, bargaining and sharing in a system of concordance controlled by violence. The committee used to meet at the Beirut horse-tracks to settle either security issues or resolve vital problems such as the repair of telephone networks and water conduits, or the distribution of fuel and foodstuffs. The militias had also set up a joint clearing house to ensure the payment of cheques without provision paid by citizens trying to escape parallel customs taxation at militia checkpoints. Removing all roadblocks and obstacles between the two sectors in Beirut is seen by the militia as posing a two-fold problem: they would have to share access through these roads; and they would have to designate each road for the transit of a specific type of

¹⁴ *L'Orient le Jour*, 28 October, 1984.

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merchandise in order for all militias to profit equally from the taxes raised.

All these manifestations of a '*savage concordance*' made up of compromise, bargaining, balance and sharing, even in the practice of violence, positively point up the determined character of coexistence in Lebanon. Only the central authority is capable of rationalizing these savage compromises and of channelling them in favour of the common good and the collectivity.

The priority of the inter-communal over the intra-communal

This priority is manifested in five domains.

(i) Traffic jams when crossings are opened

Every time a crossing is opened in Beirut, traffic jams occur and crowds travelling on foot resemble demonstrations. The eagerness to put up obstacles and disrupt relations and communications proves the inadequacy of internal conditions in fanning the flames of the conflict and their disproportion to the magnitude of the conflict.

(ii) Failure of efforts to close up ranks on exclusively communal bases

The failure to unite Christian and Muslim ranks despite all efforts and pressures throughout the 13 years of war has been perceived as a negative fact. The inability to do so on exclusively communal, or even segregationist, bases reflects the intricacies of the Lebanese social fabric, i.e. of inter-communal relations. The search for a sectarian or intra-communal Lebanese unity would entail diverting the attention of the Lebanese from the deeply entrenched inter-communal unity if not through formal agreement then by virtue of the constraints that mutual coexistence on a small territory would impose. A gruesome count of the casualties shows the magnitude of militia attacks on their own members. Intra-communal violence was no less atrocious than inter-communal violence. The intra-communal dimension must then be examined alongside the inter-communal aspects.

(iii) The emergence of a desire for intra-partisan and intra-communal pluralism

Following a long period during which parties and communities were subjected to a trusteeship, their opinions and representation being subsequently usurped, they expressed a desire for pluralism. All the

movements witness internal reform or succession which reflect a claim for partisan or intra-communal pluralism. The attempt to divide recalcitrant communities to achieve better control of allied gatherings resulted in an unchecked growth of internal groupings within communities, thus weakening the representativity of the communal supporters of the forces on the ground.

A study of the genesis and counter-genesis of communal groupings is helpful in understanding the process of usurping opinion and trusteeship, and the opposite phenomenon of liberation and autonomy.¹⁵ House Speaker Hussein Husseini was quoted to have said the following on the formation of a new front to monopolize 'Muslim' or 'national' opinion:

We will not join the enlarged front that you dream of and work towards. We will only reach our aims through constitutional institutions. The establishment of a front would result in the creation of another opposing front, driving both away from their original targets. Only the front of united Lebanon, formed of Lebanese Muslim and Christian individuals or organizations, can ensure salvation. Only such an initiative would attract supporters and defenders. Any other method is useless.¹⁶

The Mourabitoun Movement also stated in a communiqué that 'the joint Muslim-Christian decision is the underlying base of any liberation and unification operation.'¹⁷ The political commentator Monah Solh equally stressed that:

Lebanon cannot be rebuilt if the Muslims think they are going to liberate the Christians, or the Christians that they're about to liberate the Muslims. Salvation lies in moderation wherein no one liberates the other but where common efforts restore normal life all over Lebanon.¹⁸

¹⁵ Press releases concerning one of the communities from 1 January to 12 February, 1987. See also controversies within the Lebanese Front and the Kata'eb (October 1987) and within the Unification and Liberation Front (July 1987).

¹⁶ *An-Nahar*, 26 June, 1987.

¹⁷ *An-Nahar*, 24 July, 1987.

¹⁸ *An-Nahar*, 27 August, 1987.

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The line of conduct of the Independent parliamentary gathering which includes Muslim and Christian MPs follows this view.¹⁹ On the other hand, the attempt by a 'Christian parliamentary committee' of 11 to 13 members to draw up a unique document expressing the opinion of Christian MPs and to submit it to the Maronite Patriarchate reached a dead end.²⁰

(iv) *The unity of the Lebanese University*

The Lebanese University scattered throughout 45 Lebanese regions, from Tripoli to Nabatiyeh, reflects the unity of the Lebanese consensus.²¹

(v) *The obligation of most partisan media to broadcast partisan cultural programmes nation-wide*

Media created in a sectarian aim will not record high advertising gains unless they address themselves to a public larger than a community or a specific region. In a half-page advertisement in the written media, the television network LBC has the following: 'Why do all regions prefer the LBC? The LBC is the most widely watched network in all regions.'²² Political programmes inevitably reflect the media's sectarian commitment for the purpose of mobilization, but the same media ingeniously look for even marginal political programmes as proof of their open-mindedness and yearning for 'authenticity', in order to ensure high advertising returns (without applying pressure).

They also lay heavy stress on variety programmes which would appeal to the Lebanese collectively. A series of programmes entitled *Nādi al-Nawādi* (The Club of Clubs) offer cultural clubs of different villages the opportunity to present their own cultural evening. The common traditions, handicrafts, local foods, dances, songs and folk poetry (*zajal*) appear on television summing up a common loyalty which points up the unity of the Lebanese. This programme allows all the communities to remember Lebanon at the time of the Baalbek festivals, of Feyrouz, *zajal*, *mezza*, and *dabké* in contrast with the ideology of 'plurality of civilizations' in Lebanon (*al-ta'adudiyya al-ḥadāriyya*). All the media established during the war and seeking to

¹⁹ *An-Nahar*, 24 June and 12 July, 1987.

²⁰ *An-Nahar*, 26 June, 1987.

²¹ Interview with Georges Tohmé in *L'Orient le Jour*, 20 October, 1987.

²² *An-Nahar*, 30 March, 1987.

enlarge their audiences for higher advertising returns, increase the broadcast of variety programmes favoured by all communities to balance heavily-committed political programmes.²³

The deadlock of the new feudalism and emirates of fait accompli

The new emirates are called districts so as to hide their ugliness: cultural confinement, poor demographic distribution, limited employment opportunities, the transformation of self-protection into hegemony and racketeering, and the growth of the emirates into zones of foreign influence or protectorates. The Higher Islamic Shi'i Council thus opposes 'partitionist attempts at establishing civil administrations anywhere in Lebanon', because 'the whole territory belongs to all the Lebanese, not to an exclusive group or part', of the population.²⁴ Other Shi'i leaders make even stronger statements as, for instance, the deputy chairman of the Amal Movement, Akef Haydar:

We oppose the establishment of a civil administration. This would mean that the officials in such an institution would soon turn into real thieves. All the Lebanese parties, without exception, have sworn allegiance to regional states of great powers in the name of the struggle to safeguard unity and independence.²⁵

The experience of *de facto* war administrations offers a wide field of study for a comparison between the efficiency of the central power and that of parallel forces claiming to represent communities. The situation in Lebanon can be compared with the one described by Japanese author Inoue Hisashi in his best-seller *Kirikirijin* (People of Kirikiri) which tells the story of a village that dared to separate itself from the Japanese state, in a tragi-comic mode. The author draws a caricature of the glory and failure of the transient independence.²⁶

²³ Cf. the programme of broadcasts on *Sawt al-Sha'b*, (Voice of the People), in *An-Nahar*, 31 January, 1987.

²⁴ *An-Nahar*, 16 July, 1987.

²⁵ *An-Nahar*, 16 August, 1987.

²⁶ Cited by Yoichi Higushi, 'La décision de décentralisation', exposé at the round table organized jointly by the International Association of Constitutional Law and the Institute for Federalism, Morat (Switzerland), 12-16 December, 1984, pp.3-20, especially p.4. On the situation in the emirates of *fait accompli*: Scarlett Haddad and

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Resistance by the civilian population

Celebrated or marginalized by the media, this resistance has been continuous since 1975. Together with the human chain of 20 August 1987, which connected the two sides of the capital, the march of the handicapped from 12 to 16 October 1987 throughout Lebanon, and the crossing over the Museum demarcation line by demonstrators of the General Workers Syndicate (CGTL) on 9 November 1987, the conflictual ideology of 'plurality of civilizations' reached an end.

On 20 August 1987, hundreds of Muslim and Christian Lebanese, dressed in white and holding hands, shrugged off the war and the demarcation line dividing Beirut. Men and women of goodwill carrying children climbed the wall of earth stretching along the 'green line', a no-man's land with shattered buildings, fortifications and wild vegetation. The demonstration 'for peace' refused to heed the warnings of Lebanese soldiers who, from 5 a.m. to 7 p.m., controlled the traffic on that road restricting it to officials, diplomats, military personnel, and the few privileged enough to hold special authorization.

Inspired by the US chain against hunger which gathered 6 million persons, the Lebanese chain was initiated by the 'Lebanon-Love Committee'. It wanted to show that, despite 12 years of sufferings, the 'Lebanese [were] still one people' according to a communiqué issued by the Committee. This was the third demonstration by a group of youngsters who, in 1985 and 1986, challenged the guns of militiamen controlling the streets of Beirut by organizing peaceful demonstrations in the capital. 'Stop the war, partition and hunger' were their words. On the next day the press reported that many burst into tears during Muslim/Christian embraces and that all sang the Lebanese national anthem.

In another demonstration on 15 October 1987, thousands of Lebanese citizens from East and West Beirut crossed over the demarcation line and assembled in front of Parliament in a brilliant show of their will to coexist. The dual demonstration, organized by the

Abdel Karim Ghandour, 'Chouf, mini état en quête d'habitants' in *Magazine*, no.1514, 9 August, 1986. See also Antoine N. Messarra, *al-Mas'ala al-lubnaniyya. Dirasat hāla fī iḥtimāliyyāt al-balkana (The Lebanese Problem. Case Study on the Eventuality of Balkanization)*, exposé given at the seminar organized by the Jordanian Centre for Research and Information, Amman, 25-27 October, 1986.

Workers Syndicate (CGTL) upon the recommendation of the national congress of syndicates, went beyond its aim set by syndicate leaders to express political protest and social reintegration to become a spontaneous encounter. This report on the event appeared in *L'Orient le Jour*:

At the call of 'Workers, unite!', demonstrators—who came in greater numbers from West Beirut—appeared at both ends of the Museum crossing at 4 p.m. to meet and form a single demonstration heading towards Parliament. Astonished by their daring and stunned at being allowed to draw close to each other, they first embraced and then cried while an old man, sitting on the shoulder of a youngster, shouted in a megaphone: 'No East, No West, we want national unity. The confessional system won't feed our children'.

The newspaper also noted the 'absence' of militias.²⁷

In yet another demonstration by the handicapped from 12 to 16 October 1987, the participants marched from Tripoli to Tyre, chanting words which rhyme in Arabic, 'No West, no East, national unity', clearly alluding to the two sectors of Beirut which have a confessional connotation for the Lebanese. They were received by 26 orphans on the Berbir bridge. War had deprived them all, through loss of limb or loss of kin. They waved small white flags which depicted in the centre a wheelchair and a dove.

The peaceful resistance of the civilian population is also manifested by the strike of the syndicates of printers and journalists on 26 June 1987, in protest against the obstacles hindering the distribution of publications between sectors. They also decided on a three-day strike, from 17 to 19 September 1987, against the curtailment of freedom. Other facts are no less significant: 50 Lebanese pound banknotes stamped with the following statement: 'No to the regime of the Maronite minority, yes to the Islamic Republic', were rejected by the customers of shops in the border zone. They cannot be put into circulation again.²⁸

²⁷ *L'Orient le Jour*, 16 October, 1987. We focus on recent facts to underline the effects of war in Lebanon.

²⁸ *An-Nahar*, 14 October, 1987.

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Unity and co-ordination in the syndicate movement

The population's rallying around major syndicates and professional organizations also reflects the socio-economic unity in Lebanon, or perhaps the infrastructure of a political unity that needs to be reinforced.

Syndical activity covers the whole territory, with no regional, communal, or partisan distinction. The syndical councils and administrative boards are formed of Muslims and Christians in accordance with the spirit of the National Pact. Case in point, the council of Lawyers' Guild postponed its 1986 elections since the Muslim/Christian quorum (which calls for the presence of 1,350 lawyers) was not achieved because all the crossings were closed. Many lawyers who reached the palace of justice refused to register on the attendance roster before their colleagues from West Beirut had arrived. Chairman Issam Karam declared: 'I noticed among the lawyers present a will not to achieve the quorum exclusively with participants from one side (Christians). This reinforces my confidence in the Lawyers' Guild which holds firmly to its unity.' Kata'eb leader George Saadeh castigated the 'military escalation provoked to boycott the elections,' adding that 'we are in favour of democracy but not at the price of the unity of the Guild.'²⁹ The chairman noted that he had not hindered the 1986 election but that the 'lawyers refused to hold them in the interest of the Guild and the country.'³⁰

The elections of 15 November 1987 at the Beirut Lawyers' Guild is an unequivocal model of co-operation and concord worthy of a detailed analysis. The Lawyers' Guild of North Lebanon managed to form its new council without problems, according to the rules of communal sharing.³¹ The exclusive council of union of bank employees also proceeded to the election of its new board, the inter-communal structure of which reflects the spirit of the National Pact.³² The same applies to the new administrative board of the Management Company of the Port of Beirut.³³ On 21 October 1987, the general

²⁹ *L'Orient le Jour*, 17 November, 1987.

³⁰ Interview in *An-Nahar*, 2 September, 1987.

³¹ *An-Nahar*, 8 November, 1986.

³² *An-Nahar*, 8 August, 1986.

³³ *An-Nahar*, 26 June, 1987.

assembly of the syndicate of journalists reviewed the three-year mandate of the syndicate's chairman and the members of the 'List of Professional Solidarity and Syndical Unity'.³⁴ Formed in 1961, the Council of Beirut Municipality is composed of 10 Muslim and 10 Christian members. When eight of the council's members passed away, the Federation of Islamic Association requested that the empty seats be filled, but it did not allude to any changes in the adopted parity sharing.³⁵

Attempts at politicizing the syndical movement become even more deceitful once the parties or confessional groups fail to appropriate such a movement. Despite pressures exerted in both East and West Beirut, 60,000 Lebanese teachers (with the exception of those in the mountain) held firm to their strike, thus challenging the militia whose authority no one dared to contest since the start of the war.³⁶ The attempt to create confessionally-based syndicates under the trusteeship of the forces on the ground failed. Here lies the meaning of the will to 'liberalize syndical activities in Lebanon'.³⁷

The persistence of inter-communal civility

In the heart of the Shuf, Lebanon reunites around the casket of Camille Chamoun, deceased on 7 August 1987. All the communities regularly participate in the major commemorations (fortieth day following the death of Rashid Karami, on 12 July 1987; third anniversary of the death of Pierre Gemayel, on 29 August 1987; fifth anniversary of the death of Bashir Gemayel, on 14 September 1987). The various social rituals allow the Lebanese on all sides to prove the permanence of inter-communal traditions. Religious and official leaders continue to exchange greetings on the Muslim and Christian feasts. The stay of the Maronite Patriarch Nasrallah Sfeir at the Patriarchal summer See in Diman (North Lebanon), from 21 July to 15 September 1987, gives the Lebanese an occasion to express their attachment to the symbols of concord. A large number of non-Christian villagers attended the first church services celebrated by Sfeir on 26 July 1987, in Diman.

³⁴ *An-Nahar*, 22 October, 1987.

³⁵ *An-Nahar*, 8 November, 1986.

³⁶ *L'Orient le Jour*, 27 October, 1987.

³⁷ Communiqué in *L'Orient le Jour*, October 24, 1987.

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The martyrs of concord

National concord has its martyrs also. The list is long and not fully established yet. The (Sunni) adviser to the President of the Republic, Mohammad Shoucair, is shot in his Beirut residence on 2 August 1987. In another incident, various political personalities and organizations strongly condemn the murder of the Jesuit priest André Masse in Bramiyeh (east of Sidon), chairman of the South Lebanon section of the Jesuit University, on 24 September 1987—the eighth Jesuit priest to be killed since the beginning of the multinational wars in Lebanon.

Even the press has its defenders and martyrs. On 14 September 1987, the editor-in-chief of *Al-Shira'* magazine, Hassan Sabra, escapes an attempt on his life.

The vividness of collective memory

We tend to think that the youth who did not know Lebanon in peace are isolated and radicalized. Surveys in this connection have proved the opposite. On this issue, the greater impact was that of socialization through families not media and events. Questioned on their view of Lebanon when they reach their forties, 350 youngsters who had just completed their secondary school education felt that they had missed out on the festivals of Baalbek, Burj, Tyre, Sidon, Tripoli, Birdawni, vacations and trips in the Bekaa, and skiing in Zaarour. They rejected the possibility of national reconstruction without solidarity. A young Lebanese girl wrote the following: 'We are face to face now; each understands the other.' Another said: 'I'm afraid that my country might be divided or cease to exist, for we would then be lost. It is terrible to be confined to living in one sector. . . . I cannot imagine living in a Lebanon divided into several districts, and where each citizen is constrained to geographical limits within which to live.' Pragmatic and mercantile worries have an absolute priority. A youngster wrote the following:

the peasant of the Bekaa cannot sell his fruits and vegetables to citizens in Beirut. . . . We are in need of a big orphanage to accept us and teach us how to love. A new education might be useful, for we might be crazy. The elders have put hatred into our fragile hearts. . . . The Lebanon of tomorrow is in harmony with the image of past

Lebanon. The major change would be to instil more discipline.³⁸

The emergence of a culture of coexistence

A study of the cultural field in Lebanon³⁹ and of the allegiance of intellectuals since 1975 point to the clarification, rationalization, and strengthening of a culture of coexistence appearing within the framework of publications, conferences, and multicomunal international meetings. These publications and encounters are characterized by a scientific spirit and a capacity for regeneration.⁴⁰

II

The Evolution of the Contemporary International System: A Threat to Democracies

The survival of harmonious coexistence in Lebanon depends on internal and external factors. Despite the high level of social integration in the Lebanon of 1974, the country did not benefit from suitable international and regional conjectures to consolidate its independence and national construction.

The international stakes under the cover of the notion of 'civil war'

Understanding the war or wars in Lebanon is essential, since the opposition between protagonists has been translated into differences concerning this understanding. Research on Lebanon which applies

³⁸ Antoine Messarra, 'A quelles valeurs croient aujourd'hui les jeunes libanais?' in *Magazine*, 12 and 19 April, 1986, as well as the analysis of the contents of the 50 copies written by students on war, in *An-Nahar*, 4 June, 1987.

³⁹ Commission on Studies at the Kaslik University, *Dār al-'Amal* (Kata'eb), House of the Future, *Dār al-Fatwa*, Cultural Movement of Antelias, Arab Cultural Circle, Centre for Arab Unity Studies.

⁴⁰ The conference organized by the Goethe-Institute at the Lebanese University on the subject: 'Democratic regulation of conflict in plural societies' (17-21 December, 1984) should be recalled as well as its minutes published *a.p.* Theodor Hanf, Antoine N. Messarra and Henrich R. Reinstrom, *La société de concordance: Approche comparative*, Beirut, Publications of the Lebanese University, Oriental Library, 1986, p.186; the annual conference of the Antelias Cultural Movement; the International Seminar of the Lebanese Foundation for Permanent Civil Peace (8-12 July, 1987); the conference of the Centre for Lebanese Studies in Oxford (10-12 September, 1987), etc...

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the social sciences, including classical political study, to the study of conflicts, tends to look for and establish links between the internal imperfections of the system (confessionalism, deadlock, socio-economic inequality, organization of space . . .), and the origins of the conflict in Lebanon. Such studies reflect a lack of political vision through various assessments of the 'causes' and the 'consequences', and the 'clarity' of the conclusions. This is an oversimplified perception of the dialectic between 'internal' and 'external' events in the contemporary international political system where the mere concept of 'civil war' should be questioned.

The contemporary international system can create a situation of conflict in a country lacking a major internal cause for discord, by supplying the adequate quantity of money and armaments to surpass the power of the internal system to resist. Polemics have more often been connected to the phenomenology of conflicts rather than to the study of their genesis, given the absence of a social basis to a conflict. In effect, we can imagine the 'joint' or parallel coexistence of conflicting groups. The conflict is then triggered off by a disturbance in the balance of power. This disruption would depend on a massive supply of armaments and money in the contemporary international system. An external power gives a militia the opportunity for a victory which, in turn, forces another displeased militia to outbid it. It is then the turn of the frustrated to win a victory by proxy which implies further outbidding, thus reversing the roles. A quasi-mechanical game, therefore, follows. The scientific search for causes is then less relevant than determining through a political and phenomenological approach what is provoking and fanning the conflict.

The days of talking about a Lebanese war and establishing direct causal links between Lebanon's internal problems and the regional and international wars unfolded in Lebanon since 1975 are long gone. The new stakes are the fight of the two superpowers over their succession to the Ottoman Empire in the Arab World where fratricidal wars are fought. Even if the internal factions were entrusted with the task of hindering and opposing foreign pressure and interference, this would not necessarily mean that internal factors had become a cause of the conflict.

The strategy of walls (Berlin and Cyprus) and demarcation lines (Lebanon and Sri Lanka) creates a centre of conflict and a condition of

imposed division. Violence then spreads in a structured and confined space, aimed at maintaining the threat, triggering off and controlling tension. The conflict is nurtured by three processes: geographical barriers, the patronage of militias and misinformation. These processes, used to create a conflict situation with no internal causes to justify it, bring into question the notion of 'civil war' as applied in the contemporary international system. Contemporary internal wars, also termed 'civil wars', have become substitutes for a costly global Third World War that the international and regional powers, jealous of their development and comfort, do not want to launch. Internal forces, motivated by imperious patriotic concerns, the lure of wealth and power, or forced into submission for purposes of self-defence, play a role of regional destabilization while awaiting the ripening of the conflict and the interference of the great divider, the US/USSR. Therefore, the notion of internal war is more appropriate than that of 'civil war'. In effect, the reduction of the various forms of the contemporary Third World War to strategic zones in third party states, or to the small dimension of constitutional attributions, deprived communities and regions, is a method of the 'dark ages' applied in an era of star wars. The multinational forces did not come to Lebanon (August 1982–March 1984) to settle a problem of presidential and governmental attributions. In a small country such as Lebanon, however respectful of the fundamental freedoms, a strong state would have only impeded the magnitude of wars on its terrain, but it would have failed to stop them. Facts prove this theory: multinational forces are dispatched for Lebanon's multinational wars.

Three facts help us to understand the situation of Lebanon in the regional and international context: (a) the departure of the mainly US, multinational forces, 'ousted' from Lebanon by the extension of state terrorism (August 1982–March 1984), (b) the interstate bargaining concerning Western hostages, and (c) the Gulf war in the framework of fragmentation of the Arab regional security system.

The departure of the multinational forces from Lebanon is—despite all the procedures used to conceal the failure—the greatest Western defeat since the Second World War. Another international mobilization in the form of mine-hunting operations was spurred on by the exacerbation of the conflict in the Gulf. This was yet another version of the dispatch of multinational forces to Lebanon. Iran does not miss

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the opportunity of reminding France and Great Britain of the fate of these forces in Lebanon.⁴¹ Is this a high-risk strategy or a new tactical stage in exhausting the regional forces, prior to an intervention by the US/USSR couple?

The 'by proxy' world war takes place in an Arab World which has been fragmented since the Camp David Accords of 26 March 1976. Can the Soviet-backed Syrian policy of strategic equilibrium be pursued without risks of extreme polarization? ⁴² Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak had called upon the Arab states 'to meet again and reach an understanding, even without Egypt'. He added that 'should we go with marginal or partial conflicts, this will be the beginning of the end for the Arab Nation.'⁴³ Acting Premier Salim Hoss is reported to have said the following to the envoy of the Arab League, Al-Akhdar al-Ibrahimi, during a visit to Lebanon:

Look where the Arab nationalist action reached! You have come to Lebanon to settle the issue of a small town east of Sidon. For my part, I am only anxious to stop the danger of hunger facing the Lebanese citizen.⁴⁴

If Arab solidarity fails to be restored in the framework of the Arab League, the Arab World will be threatened with balkanization, growing polarization, and the extension of Soviet influence through Syria and Libya (despite Syria's concern for a real equilibrium) beyond the limits of strategic equilibrium.

Through the small Lebanese nation—where a Third World War 'by proxy' is ongoing—it is a particular type of democracy, the antithesis of the monotheistic state of the Zionist kind which is threatened because international powers act feebly in their international policies.⁴⁵ Even Europe would be vulnerable in such an operation of the international system. The French Premier underlined this fact, following

⁴¹ *An-Nahar*, 13 August, 1987.

⁴² *Balkanization, op.cit.*

⁴³ *An-Nahar*, 21 September, 1987.

⁴⁴ *An-Nahar*, 22 August, 1987.

⁴⁵ Expression used by Alexandre de Marenches, director of the French Intelligence Services from 1970–1981; *ap. Ockrent-Marenches, Dans le secret des Princes*, Paris, Stock, 1986. In the same connection: Jean-François Revel, *Comment finissent les démocraties*, Paris, Flammarion, 1985.

Washington's agreement on the withdrawal of euromissiles: 'I would not like us to have the illusion that an important step was made in terms of security.'⁴⁶

The internal issue and the means of disengagement

To understand the war in Lebanon, one must recognize its international dimension without denying the existence of an internal dilemma, in the issue of power sharing in the heavy residuals of 'drawer wars'. The rigidity of Lebanon's internal affairs and, in equal measure, the excessive lethargy of the Western powers in the management of world affairs are not favourable to the stabilization of Lebanon. However, the external game is evident in the wars of Lebanon. The Lebanese prove their national solidarity, by whatever means they have at their disposal, and in all domains of national life. Observers coming from the troubled Gulf do not fail to underline that the Lebanese traditions of legalism, the solidity of the social fabric, and the often proclaimed Lebanese attachment to his soil distinguish Lebanon from a host of regional countries. The Lebanese people, thirsty for freedom, possess the sociological foundations for a legal state. The survival of a rational and harmonious coexistence in Lebanon depends on two conditions:

(i) *The ending of the issue of constitutional reform*

This issue has always inflamed the conflict and camouflaged regional or international stakes. The 1943 National Pact, perceived as laying the responsibility upon the two major minorities, the Maronites and the Sunnis, is contested. An evolved system of concordance implies mechanisms that are at the same time competitive and co-operative, and eventually regulating mechanisms with no quota systems incompatible with the notion of equality, and with no fragmentation of the central authority through confessional balances which weaken the authority.⁴⁷ In a multiple balance system such as Lebanon's, the power-sharing issue cannot be solved without a global and evolving

⁴⁶ 'L'Europe sans defense', file in *L'Express*, 25 September–1 October, 1987, pp.40–56.

⁴⁷ Antoine N. Messarra, 'Partage du pouvoir: dilemme et perspective d'évolution. Le cas du Liban', exposé at the second conference of the Centre for Lebanese Studies, Oxford, 10–12 September, 1987, p.48.

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historical approach. A minimal agreement on an egalitarian sharing of power at the top levels, which would be implemented once all occupations have ended, is a realistic strategy which should be resorted to as quickly as possible.

On the other hand, subordinating all thoughts on reforms to the end of all occupations or subordinating the end of all occupations to the elaboration of a new consensus are two tactical manoeuvres used by those who profit from the status quo, and those who refuse to leave Lebanon under the pretext of a Lebanese civil war. Cabinet Minister Nabih Berri stressed that: 'We refuse to submit to worn out tactics exploiting bread to revive the 1943 National Pact and avoid a new consensus.'⁴⁸ Some continue to circumvent, or take small steps towards the dilemma of institutional change. Some do not genuinely want to change things, others may want more than change, and still others who hold through a coherent and dynamic view of the issue may fear being outbid.

Lebanon has several internal advantages favourable to an egalitarian power-sharing system: the absence of a majority or near-majority; the small size of the population; the seriousness of the external threat, and particularly the solid intercommunal traditions of constitutionalism and adaptation.⁴⁹ The balance in the Lebanese system is multiple, formed by seven communities, all of them minorities failing to acquire a near-majority status. Moreover, since 1975, experience has shown that no group could succeed in turning a community into the only social reality (the Druze community being a special case). The population does not identify with the forces on the ground which fail to perform in the political and socio-economic domain. Another favourable element is the disappointment of some segments with external, namely Israeli, assistance in achieving salvation. The late Cardinal Cook who visited Lebanon during the Israeli invasion declared in front of Parliamentarians:

Some of you were lured into establishing an exchange relations with Israel. This was naiveté. The greatest world

⁴⁸ *An-Nahar*, 23 August, 1987.

⁴⁹ Arend Lijphart, *Power Sharing in South Africa*, Berkeley, University of California, Institute of International Studies, no.24, 1985, p.180, p.120.

power, the US has failed until now to establish such a relation. The Israeli lexicon does not contain the concept of giving. Israel takes, it does not give. It never gives. How could you then establish such a relation when Israel invades your country? I saw some of you applauding, this is a historic mistake. It has become part of history. But should it be repeated, it will become a deadly sin and a murderous daily sin.⁵⁰

(ii) *The reconstruction of the political and spatial centre*

This reconstruction rests on four main conditions:

a. A central power as a neutral space or a bridge to link all communities and citizens The failure to achieve sectarian unity and identification between the forces on the ground and the central power with all its attributes. Lebanon does not need a president who would live up to the sectarian idea of a 'strong president'—i.e.: representative of his community—nor does it need an honorary president, but one whose strength lies in his acceptability to all communities for his consensual policy. Geographic routes in themselves create a situation of conflict by hindering exchanges and interaction. Regulated coexistence—instead of regulated conflict—implies the reopening of all crossings in Beirut (*al-balad*), once a privileged place for exchanges and meetings prior to the establishment of the demarcation lines. Any state maintaining links with Lebanese confessional organizations, outside the framework of the central power, cannot pretend working for the unity and sovereignty of the country.

b. The regaining of the traditional functions by the higher Muslim and Christian religious hierarchies Lebanon does not suffer from confessionalism as much as it does from the usurpation of communal representation by politicians and political groups. Many of the problems in Lebanon lie in the opposition between a simplified conception rejecting the dealing of religious authorities with policies in a modern state and another conception according to which politics is one of the dimensions of religion. Re-establishing a healthy and operative system would imply a dual function for the higher religious

⁵⁰ Reported by the House Speaker Hussein Husseini (interview conducted by May Makarem), in *L'Orient le Jour*, October 18, 1987.

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authorities. They should first have autonomous power concerning the basic principles of the communities and the future of their mutual relations. They should also unite politicians by allowing them to decide by themselves on a common future with the other religious communities. When spiritual leaders resign from these functions, the political leaders step in to perform them.

c. The end of militias, self-protection and taxation The correlation between the taxation system and political institutions has always been at the root of the stability or instability of political systems. At the end of the Roman Empire, the state collapsed when taxation became impaired and later, the Old French regime saw its decline because of economic difficulties and a financial crisis which originated in taxation. The central authority could lose its viability if it lacked resources and an efficient tax collection system.

d. The promotion of multicommunal cultural activities This promotion would safeguard the collective memory, that of the youth in particular. The Lebanese intelligentsia is an ecumenic factor of unity. The failure of the societal segments to impose their authority upon each other, the existence of several trends within the same community because of the solidity of the social fabric, and the various means of popular resistance however obfuscated by the media are further proof of the strong foundations of concord, national unity and state legitimacy in Lebanon.

The networks of economic interests and gains set up by the forces on the ground are an obstacle to the reconstruction of a centre. Political corruption is not a phenomenon peculiar to the Lebanese. The French conscience was shaken by revelations concerning the reality of some French resistance 'heroes' during the Second World War.⁵¹ In the preface to the latest publication of former president Charles Hérou, *Liban, remords du monde (Lebanon, Remorse of the World)*, French President Mitterrand writes:

From the hundred years war to the Nazi occupation, through the wars of religion and other fronts, what an anthology of factionality and exclusion! However, the

⁵¹ Ockrent-Marenches, *op.cit.*

French Nation stood up, and at times, reached the higher degrees of universal humanism. As Nietzsche once said: 'Whatever does not kill me, strengthens me'.⁵²

Leaders or heroes, prisoners of their attitudes and interests, live in the fear of surprise attacks and murder attempts. A long-lasting violence ends up by destroying its own instruments. A legal state is also an issue of interests.

III

Conclusion

If we talk about the chances of coexistence in Lebanon, we would be assuming that coexistence has been shattered, that the state is split, and the communities are segregated by walls, barricades and demarcation lines. But in Lebanon, coexistence is neither a choice nor an opinion, nor an alternative among others, but an imperative imposed by the balance of power and the nature of the Lebanese society. The best proof is that the external game which aimed at manoeuvring the internal balance, breaking intercommunal and inter-regional relations and segregating (*farz*) the community had the opposite effect: each community felt that, alone, it did not make a people, a nation, a semblance of state, a tribe or a unified group. In an interview in the weekly *Al-Atlal*, acting Premier Salim Hoss summed up the situation by saying: 'If some people believe that Lebanon's reunification is difficult, we believe that its partition is impossible.'⁵³ The partition of Cyprus took six months of war, but, in Lebanon, divisions multiply to impose impossible ruptures by force. The imperative of coexistence should thus be assumed not as an expediency but as an original experience and a national, human ecumenic cause with an international dimension.

Can the demarcation lines and the obstacles to communication in time lead to a surgical segregation of communities or to a *consecration* of the *de facto* situation? This is the wager of the 1954 Zionist

⁵² Ap. Charles H elou, *Le Liban, remords du monde*, Paris, Cariscript, 1987.

⁵³ *An-Nahar*, 2 August, 1987.

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correspondence.⁵⁴ Lebanon cannot be partitioned but its division would derail the separatist ideologies of more than half the world's population, because Lebanon is one of the most successful examples of concordance. The communal pluralism in Lebanon is a humane and universal wealth. The Muslim-Christian concordance in Lebanon is a living, daily phenomenon, inherent in the reality and established on the land by a people united by a common history, common sufferings, similar customs and one destiny. This is the Lebanese model, a magnificent realization and an asset. The alternative, if it ever existed, is between a *savage* coexistence set as a societal model and a pragmatic element of regional and international stability. By destroying the pre-1975 rationalized and harmonious Lebanese coexistence, humanity destroyed in Lebanon the image of its own future.

At the international level, the survival of coexistence depends on the future of the contemporary international system which functions like a feudal system with lords, vassals and serfs. The conflict over hegemony in the Middle East, the loss of American credibility in the region, the deadlocks and the price of the Soviet-backed Syrian diplomacy of strategic equilibrium, the superpowers' will to marginalize Europe and the Arab states, and the rise of regional powers—all are international conditions which are unfavourable to the consolidation of the democracy of concordance in Lebanon.

The chance may reside in reactivating the Vatican's and European and Arab diplomacy towards a lesser subordination to the US/USSR as well as to troubled and vassal regional powers. Democracies such as Lebanon are threatened because of the listlessness of the great powers which have become powerless in the management of the world diplomacy.

The myth of Israel, considered by the US diplomacy as the Western stronghold, the defender of US interests and the gendarme of the Middle East, is also confronted with certain facts: the Middle East crisis has several ramifications, the US Marines are ousted from Lebanon, the US diplomacy witnesses severe setbacks in the Gulf, the US is hostage to its own hostages, and the Arab and international

⁵⁴ Published by Dawar (Israel) in October 1971 and reproduced in *Bayrut al-Masa'*, no.97-98, 9 and 16 December, 1975, also published in Moshe Sharett, *Mémoires*, Tel Aviv, Ed. Maariv, 8 volumes, 1987 (in Hebrew).

credibility of the US is at its lowest. In the absence of an international Mideast conference, the West is currently losing the Third World War.

Détente may be over. The Lebanese experience equally shows the limits of the diplomacy of containment. This diplomacy is a tacit agreement according to which a military or political deterioration in a US-Soviet zone of struggle for influence is 'condoned' to stop the fire from spreading. However, by triggering off too many conflicts in the Middle East with no respect for basic Arab rights, a great power ends up reaping hostages and becoming their hostage.

The failure of the Lebanese model of democracy, which is favourable to regional and international stability, represents a religious, human and political resignation. There is no other Lebanese—or international cause—of greater importance.

APPENDIX

These Articles of the Lebanese Constitution were extracted from *The Lebanese Constitution, A Reference Edition in English Translation*, Beirut, Khayats, 1960. They are meant as an easy reference, but the reader is advised to refer to the source for citations of legislation, for cross-references, and for amendments or original Articles which, due to space, we were unable to include (Ed.).

ARTICLE 9—There shall be absolute freedom of conscience. The state in rendering homage to the Most High shall respect all religions and creeds [mathāhib], and shall guarantee under its protection the free exercise of all religious rites provided that the public order is not disturbed. It shall also guarantee that the personal status and religious interests of the population, to whatever religious sect [millat] they belong, shall be respected. (p.6)

ARTICLE 10—Education shall be free in so far as it is not contrary to public order and morals and does not affect the dignity of any of the religions or creeds [mathāhib]. There shall be no violation of the right

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of religious communities [tawā'if] to have their own schools, provided they follow the general rules issued by the state regulating public instruction. (p.6)

ARTICLE 34—(As amended on Oct. 17, 1927). The Chamber shall not be validly constituted unless the majority of the total membership is present. Decisions [qarārāt] shall be taken by a majority vote. Should the votes be equal the question under consideration shall be rejected.

THE ORIGINAL ARTICLE WAS: Neither of the Chambers shall be validly constituted unless more than half the total membership is present. Decisions [qarārāt] shall be taken by a majority vote. Should the votes be equal, the questions under consideration shall be rejected.(p.16)

ARTICLE 49—(As amended on Jan. 21, 1947). The President of the Republic shall be elected by secret ballot and a two-thirds majority of the Chamber of Deputies. After a first ballot an absolute majority shall be sufficient. He shall be elected for a term of six years. He may not be re-elected until six years have elapsed since the date of expiration of his last mandate. No one may be elected to the Presidency of the Republic unless he fulfills the conditions of eligibility for the Chamber of Deputies.(p.20)

ARTICLE 95—(As amended on Nov.9, 1943). As a provisional measure and for the sake of justice and amity, the sects shall be equitably represented in public employment and in the composition of the Ministry, provided such measures will not harm the general welfare of the state.

THE ORIGINAL ARTICLE WAS: As a provisional measure and according to Article one of the Charter of the Mandate and for the sake of justice and amity, the sects shall be equitably represented in public employment and in the composition of the Ministry, provided such measures will not harm the general welfare of the state.(p.33)

