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Precarious peacebuilding: Post-war Lebanon, 1990-2005

Are Knudsen

WP 2005: 12

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CMI Working Papers

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www.cmi.no

Price: NOK 50

ISSN 0805-505X

ISBN 82-8062-124-5

This report is also available at:

www.cmi.no/publications

Indexing terms

Civil war

Post-war

Peacebuilding

Lebanon

Middle East

Project title

Peacebuilding

Project number

25062

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Introduction¹

The killing of the former Lebanese premier Rafiq Hariri in a massive bomb blast on 14 February 2005 brought Lebanon international attention again almost to the date 30 years since the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war on 13 April 1975. The political fall-out of Hariri's murder was severe and caused a political upheaval and massive public demonstrations. It also increased the international pressure on Syria, forcing it to comply with the UN Security Council resolution [1559](#) demanding a Syrian withdrawal. Rafiq Hariri was the personification of Lebanon's post-war economic miracle and his death exposed the country's inherent contradictions which the post-war era either had left unsolved or unexamined. The symbolical implications of Hariri's murder were likewise daunting; killed in the fashionable financial district in downtown Beirut he had been the driving force in reconstructing, the emotional impact was felt across the country's divided sectarian communities. Would Hariri's murder open the scars from the war and lead to new outbreaks of violence or could the political system this time contain the brimming political crisis? Buried at the Martyrs' Square outside a mosque he himself had funded, the late Hariri's new public image as billionaire-turned-martyr was as contradictory as the country itself. The political stalemate following Hariri's assassination pitted the country's pro-Syrian government against the increasingly vocal opposition and both parties demonstrated their "street power" by staging massive grassroots demonstrations of a scale not previously seen in Lebanon. The "Cedar Revolution" in a dramatic way underlined Lebanon's underlying divisions between those favouring Syrian suzerainty and those opposed to it. But it also underlined the country's unity and the demand for "the truth" (Ar. *al-haqiqa*) behind Hariri's assassination.

Civil war devastation

Lebanon's weakness has traditionally been cast as a virtue – "Lebanon's weakness is its strength" the saying goes – but behind this truism are lingering doubts about the future of the perhaps most fractured country in the Middle East. Lebanon is multi-religious state and home to eighteen different denominations (as well as about 350,000 Palestinian refugees) and the country's ethnic and religious diversity belies its small size. Lebanon has for much of its short history as an independent country been politically unstable and only recently emerged from a devastating civil war that left the country in ruins, the economy in shambles and the populace traumatised. The fifteen-year long civil war (1975–90) was extremely bloody with atrocities and massacres committed by all sides to the conflict (Khalaf 2002). The civil war inflicted physical damages estimated at US\$ 25 billion, more than halved the GDP and caused massive human suffering such as more than 100,000 deaths, displaced some 800,000 people and sped up the already large emigration from the country. The war was also very complex, involving many state and non-state actors which during the course of the war shifted their allegiance many times. The reasons behind the outbreak of the war have been debated and blamed on economic- (Makdisi and Sadaka 2002), political- (el Khazen 2000), social- (Johnson 2001) and regional factors (O'Ballance 1998). There has been less attention to the post-war period and the peace accord, the Taif Agreement, which against large odds ended fifteen years of intense fighting and factional in-fighting that brought the country to its knees and added "Lebanonisation" to the political science terminology. The Lebanese peace treaty and post-war period have a number of unique features that make them important

¹ *Acknowledgements:* This paper was prepared under CMI's [Peacebuilding](#) programme examining selected post-war countries. Field research and interviews in Lebanon were conducted under a visiting research fellowship at the American University of Beirut (AUB) during April-May 2005. The usual disclaimer applies.

lessons for post-war reconstruction and peacebuilding, especially in multi-religious countries.² Thirty years after the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war, such an exercise is not only important but timely.

From war to peace

Civil wars rarely end with negotiated settlements but the Lebanese civil war did (Walter 1997). Three peacekeeping missions were launched during the war, but neither of them was able to halt the violence. In 1976 the Syrian Army invaded Lebanon, a move later construed as an Arab peacekeeping force, the Arab Deterrent Force (ADF), but in reality the beginning of a Syrian occupation. In 1978 the United National Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) was deployed in Southern Lebanon. One of the longest peacekeeping operations in UN-history its mandate (recently extended into 2005) only involved preventing incursions along the Israeli border. The second peacekeeping mission, the Multinational Force (MNF), consisting of US, France and Italian troops was deployed in September 1982. The mission was aborted less than two years later following a string of devastating suicide attacks. From then on, the civil war was allowed to run its course without any direct superpower intervention, although regional powers made repeated attempts at bringing the parties to the negotiating table.

The peace treaty that ended the war neither involved Western countries as a guarantor of peace nor as key players in the peace talks. Instead, the peace treaty was based on an initiative from the Arab League which, bypassing Syria, created the Tripartite Arab High Commission comprising heads-of-state from Algeria, Saudi Arabia and Morocco (Maila 1994). The peace treaty was signed in October 1989 in Taif, Saudi Arabia ("Taif Agreement") by surviving members of Lebanon's 1972-76 parliament. The Taif Agreement demanded the demobilisation of all militias, a timetable for Syrian redeployment and subsequent withdrawal from Lebanon and political reform. The full name of the Taif Agreement, "Charter of National Reconciliation", underlines that that its main purpose was to facilitate post-war reconciliation, heal war-time divisions and solve the most sensitive and intractable problems afflicting the country. In particular, the Taif Agreement included general principles for political and administrative reforms, the need for restoring Lebanon's sovereignty, disbanding militias, liberating Lebanon from Israeli occupation and reiterating the paramount importance of Syria-Lebanese relations.

During the war, many elements of the Taif Agreement had been discussed and agreed to and the final document was the result incremental process that included meetings in Geneva (1983) and Damascus (1985), punctuated by repeated fighting that stopped the political process (Krayem 1997).³ By 1989, many of the controversial sections of the Taif Agreement had been resolved (such as Lebanon's Arab character) and in many ways the Agreement reaffirmed the principles of the National Pact of 1943 and turned it into a binding written agreement. The Taif Agreement was firm on some principled sections (parliamentary democracy, free economy), but despite specifying 31 constitutional amendments later signed into law, did not fundamentally alter the system of political confessionalism nor set a timetable for its abolition.⁴ Nor was the planned administrative reform

² The term "peacebuilding" came into widespread use after 1992 and has since then become a broadly used (but often ill-defined) term connoting activities that go beyond crisis intervention such as longer-term development and building of governance structures and institutions, see (Cousens et al. 2001: p. 5).

³ The Taif incorporates previous texts and formulas such as "the Constitutional Document (1976), the Principles of Entente (1980), the Lausanne Paper (1984), the Policy Statement of the National Unity Government (1984) and the Tripartite Agreement (1985)", see (Salam 2003).

⁴ Since the National Pact in 1943, the country's political system is based on a confessional system where the political representation in the parliament reflects proportional strength of the religious denominations stipulated in the 1932 census.

carried through and instead a parallel system of government was created tied to the prime minister's office (ibid.).

However, the Taif Agreement redressed many of the imbalances that were inherent in the constitution. Importantly, the agreement ended the Maronite political dominance by curtailing the power of the Maronite reserved presidency (shifting the executive power to the Council of Ministers) as well as enlarged the number of deputies in the parliament and introduced a parity in parliamentary representation between Christians (64 deputies) and Muslims (64 deputies). Likewise, the position of prime minister, reserved for the Sunnis, was strengthened, as was the role of the speaker of the parliament (reserved for the Shia) whose term was extended from two to four years. These amendments created a new power troika consisting of the President of the Republic, the Parliament and the Council of Ministers.

Poverty and social exclusion

Poor countries are more likely to experience civil and inter-state war and reducing social inequality will reduce the risk of a post-war relapse of violence (Collier et al. 2003). The backdrop of contemporary poverty in Lebanon is the civil war and currently one third of the population is living below the poverty line (MoSA and UNDP 1998). Beirut has the largest share of poor people, about 25 per cent, most of them rural Shia migrants settled in the city.⁵ Most of the poor reside in the Muslim dominated, rural periphery (Akkar, Bekaa and the South) as well as in the "misery belt" of southern Beirut. This means that although the country's economy has recovered during the past decade, this has not benefited the poor. Lebanon is characterized by extremely low levels of social mobility (el Khoury and Panizza 2001: p. 13) and this may help explain why poverty is entrenched in the Muslim dominated rural regions and urban slums. There is a close link between poverty and unemployment. The official unemployment rate is only around eight percent, while the unofficial rate is close to 30 per cent (Nasr 2003).

During the post-war years, social inequality and poverty has increased and the middle class has been halved: from 1973 to 1999 the middle class was reduced from about 68 per cent of the population to only 29.3 per cent. During the same period the lower income groups increased from 22 percent to 61.9 percent. The higher income group was largely unaffected by these changes and still accounted for about 9 to 10 percent of the population (ibid.: p. 155). This development has served to polarise society and at the same time as the economic elite has tightened its grip on power. In line with neo-liberal economic policies, poverty is regarded as inevitable and state policies target the economy rather than social issues. In lieu of poverty reduction policies, the government expects poverty to be reduced by the "trickle-down effect" of economic growth. Partly for the same reason, there is no national health policy and health care is provided only through the private sector. There is a rudimentary public system subsidizing health care which covers about 50 per cent of the population, but no publicly funded social safety nets targeting poor or vulnerable groups (Nehme 1996). This means that the poor have to turn to their network of family or friends or sectarian charities.

Because of the problems of obtaining public goods and services, many rely on informal patron-client networks providing goods and services, so-called *wasta*, a system that is entrenched throughout the Middle East and in Lebanon as well (Huxley 1978). Being excluded from *wasta* means being cut-off from benefit streams (e.g., economic support for medical care) and services

⁵ During the start of the civil war in 1975–76, there was massive displacement of Shias living in quarters and shanty-towns in East Beirut by Maronite militias. In 1982, a new stream of Shias left the war-zone along the Lebanese-Israeli border and settled in south-eastern Beirut. This migration was so large that by 1980, one-third of the Shia population was living in Beirut (Cobban 1986: p. 141-42).

(e.g., getting a job), which poor households cannot otherwise access or afford. In pre-war Lebanon, the most common way of accessing *wasta* was by joining clientelistic networks controlled by an urban-based merchant elite of political leaders (Ar. *za'im*, pl. *zu'ama*) (Johnson 1985). The Sunni *zu'ama* of Beirut offered help and services to families or individuals. In return for their help, their clients voted for them during the elections. In order to ensure that clients voted for their respective *za'im*, as well as closed ranks behind him, the leaders had at their disposal strong-arm retainers (Ar. *qabaday*, pl. *qabadayat*) whose main job was to recruit and control the *za'im*'s clientele (Johnson 1996).

The civil war disrupted these networks and replaced *zu'ama* clientelism with a new and more complex mix of clientelistic networks developed around militias, parties and Islamist groups (Hamzeh 2001). Hizbollah (Party of God), for example, was able to circumvent the traditional *zu'ama* networks and build their own clientelistic networks enabling them to provide welfare services to followers and adherents (Harik 2004). Nonetheless, clientelism impedes modernisation and the development of a modern welfare state. Moreover, clientelism remains essential for accessing social and welfare services and is integral to the country's parliamentary democracy. This causes the government to function as a system based on exchanging favours so that Lebanese politics come to be "associated with personal enrichment, social status, upward mobility and clientelist practices" (Haddad 2002: p. 207). This is the reason why a majority of the people are distrustful of the government and considers politicians a crooked, self-serving elite bent on personal enrichment.

The civil war ended the reign of the traditional Sunni *zu'ama* of Beirut who were eclipsed by the new super rich business tycoon, Rafiq Hariri. Until his death, Hariri was the pre-eminent Sunni *za'im* not only of Beirut but of Lebanon itself. He served as prime minister for most of the post-war period (1992–98, 2000–04) until his resignation in October 2004. A flamboyant, self-made billionaire his personal fortune was estimated at US\$ 3.8 billion. In addition to major business ventures in foreign countries, his business empire in Lebanon included a bank (Banque de Méditerranée), major stakes in other banks, a TV-station (Future Television), a newspaper as well as "Solidere", the company owning the most valuable parts of down-town Beirut destroyed during the war and under contract to renovate it.⁶ This unusual mix of personal economic interests and public office made critics accuse Hariri of running Lebanon like his private fiefdom. Hariri invested some of his vast personal fortune in charities bearing his name ([Hariri Foundation](#)), but government policies and economic activities under his tenure as prime minister has been marked by widespread corruption as has the bloated Ministry of Finance.⁷ In 2004, Lebanon's corruption perceptions index (CPI) score was 2.7, earning the country place 97 in Transparency International's country ranking list covering 146 countries. Most of Lebanon's corruption problems stem from the booming construction sector, which fused private business interests and vast public spending through the country's entrenched clientelist system.

Economic recovery and reconstruction

The importance of transforming a war-economy to a peace economy is a key to post-war transitions (Nitzschke and Studdard 2005). In 1990, at the end of the civil war, Lebanon's economy was in shambles, the GDP a mere US\$ 2.2 billion and the inflation sky-high (500 per cent in 1987). During the war, a large, lucrative and complex informal economy developed around militias that in some areas mimicked the workings of the state (Picard 2000). At the same time, the civilian population was tied to a subsistence economy and lacked basic amenities such as clean water and proper

⁶ Solidere is the French acronym for the Lebanese Company for Development and Reconstruction.

⁷ Senior UNDP official, *interview*, Beirut, 27 April 2005.

housing and most schools and hospitals were closed (Najem 1998: pp. 31-32). Despite its war-time devastation, Lebanon was unable to attract significant foreign aid to help rebuild the country.

In 1993, the first Hariri government launched “Horizon 2000”, a US\$ 20 billion reconstruction program which was funded by a combination of grants, soft loans and bilateral loans from western countries, oil-rich Gulf States as well as international organisations, aid agencies and commercial banks (Najem 1998). This “borrow-to-build” strategy left the country heavily indebted and the country’s stagnant economy is now burdened with a debt of US\$ 31 billion (180 per cent of GDP). Debt-servicing alone amounts to US\$ 3 billion annually, forcing Hariri’s government to seek an economic bail-out to the tune of US\$ 5 billion from European and Gulf countries. In 1996 the economic growth rate fell to 4 per cent, in 1998 it was 3 per cent and in 2000 it reached zero (Picard 2002: p. 174). In order to revive the faltering economy, Hariri’s second government (2000–04) introduced a number of austerity measures that together with new loans helped stabilise the economy. In November 2002, the Hariri government met with international donors at the Paris II conference seeking bilateral assistance restructuring its domestic debt at lower rates of interest. Following Hariri’s assassination, the economy has again weakened and there has been a slump in the tourism sector.

Lebanon is now a middle income country, but with huge income disparities. The macro-economic framework favours the tertiary service-sector, in particular banking, which is the cornerstone in the country’s rentier economy. The dual currency system (US dollars and Lebanese pounds) coupled with high interest rates, absence of property tax and a flat income tax (15 per cent) means that the taxation base remains low. Recently value added tax (VAT) was introduced to boost government income but still the macro-economic framework favours the service sector and is not conducive to the redistribution of wealth. It has also prevented investment in labour intensive sectors such as industry and agriculture which are rapidly declining. This has among other hurt Tripoli while favouring Beirut, the country’s economic power-house. Most of the economic investments are made in Beirut and the surrounding Mount Lebanon region to the neglect of more remote regions and cities.

Lebanon is like most countries in the Middle East predominantly urban: about 33 percent (1.3 million) of the population live in Beirut and its suburbs. In pre-war Lebanon the “primacy ratio” of Beirut (the size of the largest city against the three next largest cities) was very high (in 1975; 2.8), but by the end of the war the ratio was almost halved (in 1990; 1.5). The growth of regional cities, local administration and services at Beirut’s expense should have been supported by economic investments. Instead there was a re-concentration of public expenditures in and around Beirut (Nasr 2003: p. 152).⁸ Thus, in post-war Lebanon the regional disparities have continued to grow and the lions’ share of the reconstruction expenditures for the first part of the of post war period have been spent in Beirut and Mount Lebanon (27 per cent). The much poorer north-, east- and southern regions received much smaller portions of the funds. This imbalance also reflects the political marginalisation of the northern Sunni political elite, now eclipsed by the late Rafiq Hariri and his Beirut and Sidon constituencies.

Democratic deficit

Post-war democratisation in deeply divided societies has traditionally involved establishing a democratic political system, reviving political parties and holding elections (Manning 2004). Formally a parliamentary democracy, the Lebanese political system is an oligarchy where party

⁸ In 1975 Beirut had “more than fifty percent of the population, over-two-thirds of economic activities, two-thirds of overall employment, the entire state administration, all the country’s higher education, and ninety-five percent of the banking activity (Nasr 2003: p. 153).

politics does not exist, political leaders are marginalised and most parties without partisans. In Lebanon political parties have traditionally catered for sectarian groups with the sole aim of securing parliamentary representation for the party leader and his hand-picked deputies, thus reducing “most politics to crass clientelism and confessionalism” (Salem 1998: p. 23). Hence, political parties in Lebanon have lacked traits common to parties in most Western democracies; they have often had no ideology, have devised no programs and have made little effort at transcending sectarian support, thus most of them have seen their support wane (el Khazen 2003a).

With the exception of a handful of left-wing movements, most parties have been the organizational personification of a few powerful politicians. This has also been the reason for the growing irrelevance of many of the traditional political parties. On a positive note the absence of a ruling party in Lebanon and the lack of a state ideology, a number of political parties have flourished catering for sectarian and communal interest groups (ibid. p. 605). During the civil war, most of the parties were militarised and turned into militias. During the post-war period, the key to the parties’ political fortunes have been their relations vis-à-vis Syria: the loyalists have prospered, those mere tolerated have persevered and those banned or persecuted have struggled to survive.

In post-war Lebanon, the Christian nationalist parties the Phalange (“Kataib”), the National Liberal Party (NLP) and the National Bloc have been weakened from internal power struggles, internecine vendetta and the Christian boycott of the post-war elections. The infighting typical of Christian parties can be traced to the vendetta between the leading Christian families – Franjeh, Gemayel and Chamoun – that led to the killing of the heirs-apparent during and shortly after the civil war (Johnson 2001). The Phalange party especially, has been divided over the Syrian presence in Lebanon fuelling an internal power struggle meant to prevent Amin Gemayel (returning from 12 years in exile) from regaining control of the party. The party leadership has now passed into the hands of the pro-Syrian faction (Gambill 2001a). In the post-war elections (1992, -96, -00), neither of the parties have been represented in parliament, pointing to their sharp decline in power and loss of client base.⁹

Because of the failings of the traditional Christian parties and the fragmentation of political leadership, the main Christian opposition figure is the leader of the Maronite church, patriarch Nasrallah Boutros Sfeir (Gambill 2003a). Sfeir was a key in the decision to call for a Christian boycott of the 1992 elections, but first in 1998 did Sfeir openly criticize the Syrians and called for ending “the Syrian tutelage over Lebanon” (ibid.). In April 2001, the increasingly vocal Christian opposition to Syrian occupation led to the formation of the Qornet Shewan Gathering (QSG), a coalition seeking a Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon, named after a Maronite monastery where the group’s founding members held their first meeting (Gambill 2003a). In 2003, Boutros Sfeir and the QSG demanded a timetable for the Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon.

In post-war Lebanon, the (Christian) ultra-nationalist parties; the Lebanese Forces (LF), the Guardians of the Cedars (GoC) and the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) (a.k.a. Free National Current, FNC) have been subject to official persecution due to their principled opposition to the Syrian occupation. They have been further weakened by the fact their leaders have been exiled (Michel Aoun), imprisoned (Samir Geagea) or sentenced to death in absentia (Etienne Sacre) and the movements either dissolved (FC), banned (GoC) or suffering periodic crackdowns (FPM). In the post-war period these parties in general and the LF especially, have had their members detained,

⁹ The Phalange (Kataib) party managed to elect two deputies to the parliament in the 2000 elections (el Khazen 2003b: p. 70).

imprisoned or killed.¹⁰ Nonetheless, the LF is the fastest growing political grassroots movement in Lebanon attracting the support of Christian students and professionals and has campaigned for the unconditional release of Samir Geagea (Abdelnour 2004). The Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon in May 2005, has redrawn the political map in Lebanon and enabled Michel Aoun's return from exile, prepared Samir Geagea's release from prison and secured an electoral victory for the FPM in the Christian-dominated Mount Lebanon.

The main sectarian Muslim parties Hizbollah, Amal and the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) have thrived under Syrian tutelage and been represented in all post-war parliaments. Hizbollah was the only war time militia that after the war didn't surrender their weapons and still hasn't disarmed (Hamzeh 2004). Hizbollah rejected the Taif Agreement, but still took part in the parliamentary elections in 1992. Hizbollah's transition from militant movement to political party has not been easy and in the 1990s the "Lebanonisation" process led to clerical factionalism (Ranstorp 1998) and subsequent change of leadership (Ranstorp 1994). Under its present leader, secretary general Hassan Nasrallah, Hizbollah has successfully contested parliamentary (Hamzeh 1993) and municipal elections (Hamzeh 2000) and emerged as the country's only modern party. Despite Hizbollah's parliamentary accommodation and military victory leading to an Israeli pull-out in 2000, the party is now under pressure to disarm following UN Security Council Resolution 1559.¹¹

The Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) is a sectarian party catering for the Druze, a heterodox Muslim sect located mainly in the Shouf mountains. Following Hariri's assassination, the PSP-leader Walid Jumblatt has emerged as the leader of the anti-Syrian opposition after years of maintaining cordial relations with the Syrians who in previous elections have helped orchestrate Jumblatt's electoral success by twisting the electoral law (Gambill and Aoun 2000). Due the manoeuvrings of Jumblatt and the feudal-cum-clientelist nature of the party, the PSP has been represented in all post-war parliaments and Jumblatt has served in various minister posts enabling the Druze community, which only represents 6 per cent of the country's population, to prosper far beyond their limited numbers.

Amal is a Shia sectarian party that emerged from the ranks of the "Movement of the Deprived", a social movement which led to the political awakening of the quiescent Shia community (Ajami 1987). Amal's program is secular (Norton 1987), and despite losing influence among its Shia constituency to its rival Hizbollah, the party remains politically significant due to the party leader Nabih Berri's long tenure as speaker of the parliament, a position reserved for the Shia. Despite differences between Amal and Hizbollah, the two have joined forces in post-war elections following Syrian and Iranian intervention to prevent splitting the Shia vote.

Gerrymandered elections

Post-war elections are usually seen as a key in restarting the democratic process after civil war, yet studies from multi-religious states, show that elections tend to reinforce rather than replace consociational politics (Belloni 2004). Lebanon's pre-war elections (1960–72), were held on the basis of the same electoral law, the 1953 electoral law which prescribed district-wise voting. The 26 districts (Ar. *qada*, pl. *aqada*) were for the most part uni-confessional areas (Norton and Schwedler 1994: p. 50). The elections were dominated by a clientelist system controlled by urban and rural leaders who were re-elected without facing any real opposition and positions were inherited from

¹⁰ In May 2002, Ramzi Irani, a member of the LF student committee was abducted, tortured and his mutilated body found in the trunk of his car. In 2004, another LF-activist, Pierre Boulos, suffered a similar fate. In both cases the criminal investigation was inconclusive (Abdelnour 2004).

¹¹ In 2003 Hizbollah was put on the US list of "Designated Foreign Terrorist Organisations" (FTOs), www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/fs/2003/17067.htm

father to son. This cemented the rural and urban elites grip on power. In order to break the old clan-based clientelist political system and forge multi-confessional alliances, the Taif Agreement stipulated that voting should be based on large administrative units or “governates” (Ar. *mohafazah*, pl. *mohafazat*). The purpose of this change was to bring an end to the pre-war district-wise voting and break the clientelist system. The electorate was also enlarged beyond the 108 stipulated in the Taif Agreement to 128 with an equal number of representatives for Christians and Muslims.

The post-war parliamentary elections have all violated the Taif Agreement. First, in each of the post-war parliamentary elections (1992–02), a new electoral law has been used. Secondly, the post-war elections saw a return to district-wise (“uni-confessional”) voting in some or all of the districts in order to secure seats for influential politicians (often with Syrian backing) and to weaken opponents. Thirdly, the confessional system has not been revoked as stipulated in the agreement. These violations have made the election system unjust,¹² and resulted in a low level of trust in government and politicians (Haddad 2002). Failing to reform the political system has ensured that there have hardly been any changes in the composition of the post-war parliaments and most MPs still inherit their seats along family lines (Khalaf 2003).

The post-war elections (1992–02) have been conducted under Syrian tutelage, especially the 2000 elections where the electoral law was orchestrated by Syria (Gambill and Aoun 2000). The law combined voting along governates and districts by carving up some governates along carefully drawn district boundaries and even joining areas that are not geographically contiguous into a single district. The purpose of the electoral manipulation was to ensure the election of candidates favoured by Syria.¹³ Beirut, which previously had been a single electoral unit, was split into three carefully circumscribed districts in order to weaken the electoral clout of Rafiq Hariri and boost those of his main rivals.¹⁴ On the other hand, in the 2000 elections supporters of Rafiq Hariri were accused of buying votes for US\$ 64 apiece (Gambill and Aoun 2000). Due to extensive malpractice, the per capita costs of the Lebanese elections are one of the highest in the world (Picard 2002: p. 53).

One explanation for the weakness of political parties in Lebanon is the role played by electoral “lists”, a particularity of the Lebanese electoral system. For each electoral district, the different sects are allotted candidates in proportion to their share of the electorate. As an example the Baalbek-Hermel district has ten seats divided among Shia (6), Sunni (2), Maronite (1) and Greek Catholic (1) candidates. Voters are therefore casting their ballot for a multi-confessional list of candidates that has been assembled after (more often than not) Syrian consultation. Although names can be crossed out, this rarely happens. The composition of electoral lists is therefore much more important for electoral victory than political programs and party manifestos. The electoral lists are given nondescript names to appeal to voters of different religious sects. It is also common that some of the candidates, often with no prior political experience, are able to buy themselves onto an elections list by promising large sums of money to the leader of the list and offering to sponsor the election campaign.¹⁵ Due to late minute deal-making, the electoral lists are usually announced only a few days ahead of the elections, thus precluding ordinary election campaigns. Because of the importance of electoral lists, most of the parliamentarians are not affiliated with parties but with lists. In post-war elections, the percentage of candidates having a party affiliation has remained around 30 per cent, thus almost two thirds of the deputies in the parliament are non-partisan independents (el

¹² Lebanese elections analyst, *interview*, Beirut, 2 May 2005.

¹³ Former Prime Minister Selim Hoss has described in his autobiography how the new electoral was presented to him as a Syrian *fait accompli* and subsequently endorsed by Hoss and his cabinet despite his own misgivings about the law (Hoss cited in, el Khazen 2003b: p. 64-65).

¹⁴ Nonetheless, Rafiq Hariri’s electoral list beat his opponents, MP Tammam Salam and former prime minister Selim Hoss and secured 19 seats in the new parliament.

¹⁵ Lebanese elections analyst, *interview*, Beirut, 2 May 2005.

Khazen 2003b: p. 70). In the 2000 elections, only three of the 128 seats were won by candidates not affiliated with an electoral list.

In addition to pre-election manipulation of electoral districts and electoral lists, Lebanon's gerrymandered elections include vote rigging, voter intimidation, buying of votes and control of media-outlets in favour of pro-Syrian candidates and independents. In order to limit the political role of the large Lebanese diaspora (who hold Lebanese citizenship), the electoral law excludes them from voting. As émigrés, they are expected to vote for the opposition, and excluding their vote serves to bolster the position of pro-Syrian candidates. A further oddity of the Lebanese electoral law is that people do not vote in the constituency where they live, but in the village where they are born. This means that about half of the population cannot cast their vote where they live and work (eI-Kak 2000). This has had negative implications for the urbanised rural populations who unable to vote for local political candidates are also excluded from access to political patrons dispensing services and goods.

For the reasons cited above, the voter turnout in post-Taif elections has been very low, in particular in the 1992-elections when Christian leaders and parties boycotted the elections because of the presence of Syrian troops.¹⁶ In order to boost the legitimacy of the elections, the authorities have inflated the size of the voter turnout. In light of the above it is easy to understand why agreeing to a new electoral law has proved difficult and in spring 2005 served to polarise the pro-Syrian groups and the anti-Syrian opposition. The opposition parties charged (Omar Karami's) government with purposely delaying the elections in order to prevent a popular resentment against Syria's hegemony to translate into a landslide victory for the opposition.

In preparation for the 2005 parliamentary elections a new electoral law should have been tabled but the political situation, international pressure to conduct the elections on time and the disagreements between the major actors made this impossible. The controversial 2000 electoral law hence got a new lease of life despite vocal Christian criticism. The Christians' fear of being marginalised explains why Boutros Sfeir along with the League of Maronite Bishops slammed the 2000 electoral law (which reshuffled district boundaries in ways that marginalised Christian constituencies) as being unjust because it deprived the Maronite Christians from electing the MPs that truly represent them thus contributing to the "Christian frustration" (Ar. *al-ihbat al-masih*). Sfeir wanted to revert to the old district-wise voting and denounced the governates because they favour the numerical dominance of Muslims (Daily Star 12/05/05). The Christian candidates seeking election as MPs must do so on an electoral list composed of a Muslim leader who selects Christian (and other minority) candidates to run on the same "ticket". Independent Christian candidates seeking Christian-only votes have little chance of being elected. Only in small religiously homogenous districts, would Christian voters be allowed to elect their "own" candidates.

The first round of elections in late May 2005 was a foregone conclusion with many of the candidates on Saad Hariri's – Rafiq Hariri's son and political heir – electoral list in Beirut being elected unopposed and the voter turnout was consequently very low, in reality a remake of the Christian boycott of the 1992 elections. In subsequent elections in the South, the joint Amal and Hizbollah list steamrolled the opposition. The Mount Lebanon elections showed major gains for Michel Aoun who (unique to Lebanon) had decided to co-operate with his erstwhile enemy the pro-Syrian (Maronite) Suleiman Frangieh jr. The final elections in the North again proved a major victory for the list allied with Saad Hariri whose parliamentary bloc will lead the new government overseeing an anti-Syrian majority in the parliament. Positively, the elections in Mount Lebanon

¹⁶ During the period 1992–2000 the total voter turnout was; 1992 (30%), 1996 (45%), 2000 (40%). The Christian share of the vote was only half of the total voter turnout (15%, 22% and 20%), see (Picard 2002: p. 176).

and the North showed a voter turn-out of close to 50 per cent. Nonetheless, the EU Elections Observation Mission has urged Lebanon to reform its sectarian political system (Daily Star 21/06/05b) However, the re-election of Nabih Berri to the post as speaker of parliament, his fourth term in office, testifies to the longevity of clientelist politics and the problems of reforming the political system (Daily Star 29/07/05).

Post-war violence

Peace accords often do not lead to cessation of violence (Steenkamp 2005). Although the Lebanese civil war ended in 1990, there was renewed violence between the former allies Samir Geagea and Michel Aoun, illustrating the problem of “second-order” conflicts following peace accords (Atlas and Licklider 1999). In the post-war period, fierce battles also erupted along the country’s southern border with Israel in 1993 (“Operation Accountability”) and 1996 (“Operation Grapes of Wrath”) which destroyed thousands of homes (19-20,000), killed Lebanese civilians and led to a mass exodus of IDPs (300,000) from the conflict zone. In addition to these large scale battles, there were many lesser campaigns involving Hizbollah fighters. In the post-war period the attacks on Israel by Hizbollah escalated from about 100 militant operations during 1985–89, to more than 1,000 during 1990–95 and finally to close to five thousand during 1996–2000 (Hamzeh 2004: p. 89). During the same period (1982–99) the loss of militants and soldiers were roughly equal (approx. 1,200) for each of the parties (Hizbollah and the combined Israel and South Lebanese Army casualties). Following the Israeli pull-out from the southern security zone in July 2000, the number of Hizbollah’s cross-border attacks again slumped to pre-1990 levels. The cross-border war came to an end in 2000 when the Israeli forces withdrew, following Hizbollah’s long military campaign in the southern security zone (Murdon 2000). Due to the tensions along the border, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) has remained as a peacekeeping force in the southern zone and recently had its mandate extended.

The political history of Lebanon is a bloody one with repeated assassinations of political leaders and rivals following inter- and intra-sectarian conflicts (Khalaf 2002; Johnson 2001). Since the ending of the civil war, Lebanon has to a considerable degree been able to put its war-thorn past behind, but there are nonetheless lingering tensions between Christians and Muslims and a resurgent sectarianism in present day Lebanon. While there has been a marked decrease in war-related violence, there is a gradual rise in sectarian attacks on civilians, officials as well as vendettas between rival Islamist groups as well as attacks targeting churches, mosques and other places of worship. There has also been a rise in targeted assassinations of politicians, political activists, religious leaders and Islamic militants. There have also been examples of abuse of power, deaths in police custody and the dubious killing of more than 20 militants in 2000 by the Lebanese army (Daily Star 10/06/05). The general lack of independent inquiry into political murders is one reason for the “return of the bomb” in post-war Lebanon as a means of settling scores and targeting rivals. In the months since Hariri’s assassination, several bombs have gone off in the predominantly Christian areas of Beirut, Jounieh and Brummana killing and injuring civilians.

In addition to the unsolved security problem in Lebanon and the possibility of Syrian interference, another reason for the frequent politically motivated murders is the Lebanese tradition for silencing political opponents by seeking outside allies, more often than not, Syrian patrons. The UN’s investigative report on Hariri’s assassination likewise stress that the government failed to fully investigate the incident and hints at Syrian involvement in the killing, citing threats from the Syrian president Bashar al-Assad against the late premier Hariri (FitzGerald Report 2005). The killing of Rafiq Hariri is only the latest unsolved political assassination that since the late 1970s has claimed the lives of a party leader (Kamal Jumblatt), a prime minister (Rashid Karami, Hariri’s predecessor), a Sunni religious leader (Grand Mufti Hassan Khalid), two presidents (Bashir Gemayel, René Moawad) and three Christian militia leaders (Tony Frangieh, Dany Chamoun and

Elie Houbeika). Bombs are also used to intimidate those that oppose the Syrian stewardship of Lebanon; an example is the car bomb on 1 October 2004 which nearly killed the Druze MP Marwan Hamade, one of only four MPs to vote against the extension of president Lahoud's term in office a month earlier. On 2 June 2005, another car bomb killed the prominent journalist and ardent Syria-critic Samir Kassir (Daily Star 03/06/05). Less than three weeks later another Syria-critic, George Hawi, a former leader of the Lebanese Communist Party, was killed in a car bomb in Beirut (Daily Star 21/06/05a). On 12 July, the former Defence Minister and Deputy Premier Elias Murr survived a bomb attack in Beirut that claimed two lives and injured several bystanders (Daily Star 12/07/05). This was the first attack on a pro-Syrian politician and adds to the confusion surrounding the responsibility for the recent spate of devastating bomb attacks.

Syrian suzerainty

Peace treaties involving third party enforcement are generally more stable than those without it (Walter 1997). The Syrian role in the conclusion of the Taif Agreement fortified the peace, yet the country's subsequent tutelage of post-war Lebanon testifies to the dangers of foreign interference. According to the Taif Agreement, the Syrian forces in Lebanon, numbering about 40,000 in 1989, were to be redeployed to the Bekaa valley within two years after the agreement was implemented. In contravention of the Taif Agreement, the Syrian army remained in the country. Although the Syrian troops were reduced in successive redeployments and troop reductions, about 14,000 remained in Lebanon, most them in the Bekaa valley, at the time of Hariri's assassination. Following Hariri's assassination and international pressure on Syria to comply with UN resolution 1559, the troops were fully withdrawn ahead of the 30 April 2005 deadline. More difficult has been verifying the dismantling of the extensive Syrian intelligence apparatus (Ar. *mukhabarat*) in Lebanon which until October 2002 was headed by Maj. Gen. Ghazi Khanan (Nassif 2000).¹⁷ Under Khanan's tenure, the Syrian intelligence grew to become a dominant force in Lebanon with power to veto all important political decisions, selection of the president, prime minister and key minister posts and well as the candidates seeking election to the parliament. The Syrian intelligence has strongly influenced post-war elections by manipulating the electoral law, dictating the political agenda and when necessary forced the Lebanese parliament to amend the constitution in order to secure a pro-Syrian leadership (the three year extension of president Emile Lahoud's term in office is the latest example).

The post-war period saw Syrian influence grow to unprecedented levels in Lebanon. Syria oversaw the completion of Taif Agreement and made sure that it institutionalised Syrian dominance over Lebanon (el Khazen 2003b). In post-war Lebanon, Syria has tried to portray Lebanon as fatally unstable and peace only possible through a security guarantee from Syria. Different theories have been put forward to explain the Syrian preoccupation with controlling its tiny neighbour, ranging from historical antecedents such as reviving the former "Greater Syria" (Ar. *bilad al-sham*), national concerns meant to preserve Syrian unity, to narrow regime interests pursued with little concern for the damage to Lebanese civilian institutions (Abukhail 1994). A fourth reason is the importance of Lebanon to Syria's ailing economy: Lebanon provides Syria with a window into the free-market world. Lebanon's gross national product (GNP) is more than three times that of Syria's as is Lebanon's per capita income (Gambill 2003b). This explains why Lebanon is an important market for Syrian products and unskilled labour. Moreover, bilateral agreements regulating the trade between the two countries favour Syrian exports even when this harms Lebanon's domestic economy and its citizens (Baroudi 2005). This has especially hurt the agricultural sector (Gambill 2003b) and made Lebanon the temporary home to an estimated 1.4 million Syrian guest workers

¹⁷ Following his successful tenure as intelligence chief, Khanan was promoted to his current post as Syrian interior minister and replaced by Rustom Ghazzali (ICG 2005: p. 28).

residing illegally in the country.¹⁸ They neither pay taxes nor work permit fees and monopolise many unskilled professions (Gambill 2001c). Due to rising unemployment there has been increasing hostility toward Syrian workers. Following Rafiq Hariri's assassination there has been a spate of attacks against Syrian workers and many have returned to Syria to avoid prosecution.

Prior to Rafiq Hariri's assassination there was hardly any public protest against the Syrian hegemony, except from the ultra-nationalist groups whose principal agenda is Syrian withdrawal. This was also the reason why Christian nationalists (such as Michel Aoun) rejected the Taif Agreement because it endorsed Syrian stewardship. The unique aspect of the Syrian occupation of Lebanon was that it was praised by leading Lebanese politicians as a critical factor in the country's post-war recovery and political stability, referring to the military presence as a "necessity" for Lebanon and an "obligation" for Syria (Gambill 2004). Lebanon's domestic and foreign policies have also been "made in Syria" on the basis that two countries share a "common destiny" (Ar. *talazun al-masarayn*, lit., "concordance of two paths"). The special relationship between the two "brotherly nations" was institutionalised in bilateral agreements, most importantly the Treaty of Brotherhood, Cooperation and Coordination (TBCC) concluded in May 1991 and the Defence and Security Pact (DSP) signed in September 1991, coordinated by the Lebanon-Syria Supreme Council. The "syrianisation" of Lebanon was hence both *de facto* and *de jure* (el Khazen 2003b: p. 57). In 1994 it was predicted that "as long as Syria maintains its troops in Lebanon, and as long as the world remains indifferent, no regional or international rivals will be capable of threatening Syrian political dominance in Lebanon" (Abukhail 1994: p. 133). The murder of Rafiq Hariri and the UN Security Council resolution 1559 ended the post-war indifference to the Syrian hegemony in Lebanon but did not end the country's influence. However, the suicide of Syria's former kingpin in Lebanon, Interior Minister Ghazi Khanan, on 12 October, just two weeks before the UN commission inquiring into death of Hariri were to submit their report, suggest that the Syrian regime is crumbling (Daily Star 12/10/05).

Punishing war-crimes and human rights violations

A peace that is premised on a general amnesty offering impunity for war-time crimes is not a stable one (MFA 2005). The Lebanese civil war included a long list of gross human-rights violations and brutal massacres of Christians, Muslims and Palestinian civilians (Fisk 1992). Yet, there was neither any criminal investigation of these violations nor were any of those responsible brought to trial. Instead, the Lebanese government passed the General Amnesty Law in 1991 (Law 94/91) which granted amnesty for all crimes committed by militias and armed groups before 28 March 1991.¹⁹ The law effectively stopped legal action against war crimes and war criminals and opened for militia leaders to assume minister posts and for their militias to be turned into parties. Because of this, the General Amnesty Law has been described as a "disaster":²⁰ it prevented the country from confronting its war-time record, punish human-rights violations and bringing those responsible to trial. Instead, the amnesty law worked on a selective basis, rewarding those who were favoured by Syria and punished those who fell out with the regime.

A striking example of the failings of the Amnesty Law is the post-war political career of Elias Hobeika, the former leader of the Lebanese Forces' (LF) security agency. In 1982 Hobeika ordered LF-militiamen into the Palestinian refugee camps Sabra and Shatila leading to the massacre of more

¹⁸ The official estimates of the numbers of numbers of Syrian guest-workers are much lower. The Lebanese Ministry of Labour has estimated the total number at 300,000–500,000 (ICG 2005: p. 13). It should be kept in mind that cheap Syrian labour meant great savings for their Lebanese employers.

¹⁹ However, the law (Article 3) does not provide amnesty to "crimes of assassination or attempted assassination of religious figures, political leaders, and foreign or Arab diplomats" (AI 2004).

²⁰ Lebanese policy analyst, *interview*, Beirut, 5 May 2005.

than 800 residents.²¹ Despite his war-time record Hobeika was twice elected to parliament and from 1991 to 1998 held several ministerial posts (Gambill and Endrawos 2002).²² In the years to follow, Hobeika's political career faltered and in 2000 his war-time record was exposed as part of the attempt to indict Israel's prime minister Ariel Sharon for his role in the Sabra and Shatila massacres. Hobeika publicly denied involvement in the killings and announced that he was willing to testify before the Belgian High Court on his role in the massacre.²³ This never happened as Hobeika was killed near his home by a remote controlled car bomb in late January 2002. The investigation into the killing led to nowhere and joined the long list of unsolved political assassinations in Lebanon.

In stark contrast to the failure to try Elias Hobeika, Samir Geagea, the leader of the Lebanese Forces (LF), the largest Maronite militia, was imprisoned for life and the LF outlawed. Geagea's trial is instructive as it shows the selective justice used to persecute war-related crimes in Lebanon. Geagea supported the Taif Agreement believing it would put an end to the war and the LF-militia disarmed and demobilised its soldiers and dismantled its war-time organisation to become a political party by the May 1991 deadline. In late January 1994, a bomb exploded in a village church near Beirut (Our Lady of Deliverance Church at Zouk Mikhael) killing ten people. Despite condemning this incident, Geagea and the LF were singled out as the culprits and shortly afterwards the Lebanese cabinet lifted the General Amnesty Law, ordered the arrest of Geagea and dissolved the LF. Geagea was arrested in mid-April and in 1995 tried for his involvement in the church bombing. He was found innocent of the bombing charge but sentenced to four death sentences, later commuted to life sentences, for several murder accounts (*ibid.*).²⁴ Geagea remains the only war-time leader tried for crimes committed during the war. The case against Geagea and his subsequent imprisonment has been condemned by Amnesty International (AI 2004) and underlines the judiciary's subservience to the government and the cabinet (Takieddeine 2004). Apart from Geagea, only two other war-time leaders have been indicted: former general Michel Aoun, until recently in exile in France, charged with mutiny and embezzlement of public funds and Etienne Sacre, leader of the right-wing nationalist movement Guardian of the Cedars, who has been sentenced to death in absentia. It is telling that both Aoun and Sacre, the most vocal critics of the Syrian occupation, have been indicted but not those favouring Syrian suzerainty of Lebanon.

The Syrian withdrawal which was completed on 26 May (ahead of the UN Security Council deadline of 30 April 2005), made Samir Geagea's fate again assume centre stage as did calls for his release (Daily Star 05/05/05b). All the major Lebanese factions and parties have supported Geagea's release, except the family of former premier Omar Karami, whose brother, former PM Rashid Karami was assassinated in an attack blamed on Samir Geagea. On 18 July, the Lebanese parliament overwhelmingly approved an amnesty bill that secured Geagea's release from prison (Daily Star 19/07/05). A few months earlier, a similar volte-face by the Lebanese judiciary dropped all charges (which included treason) against the former general Michel Aoun (Daily Star 05/05/05a) and made it possible for him to return to Lebanon on 7 May after a fourteen year exile in France. It is likely that the General Amnesty Law of 1991 will be also amended (Daily Star 27/04/05). One solution that has been tabled is to extend the period of the general amnesty to cover the whole post-

²¹ The number of victims remains disputed and range from 350 to more than 3,500 (Shahid 2002: p. 44).

²² Hobeika is also believed to have planned the ill-fated assassination attempt on Hizbollah's spiritual leader Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah in March 1985 as well as a number of other assassinations attempt targeting leading politicians and rivals (Gambill and Endrawos 2002).

²³ Hobeika's testimony was part of a war crimes lawsuit against Israel's prime minister Ariel Sharon filed by relatives of the victims in the Belgian High Court. On 24 September 2004, the court dismissed the war crimes case against Sharon and ruled that there was no longer a legal basis for the lawsuit, see www.indictsharon.net

²⁴ This included ordering the assassination of the leader of the Maronite "Tigers" militia Dany Chamoun (1990), the LF-official Elias Zayek (1989) and prime minister Rashid Karami (1987), as well as the attempted assassination of defence minister Michel Murr (1991), see (Abdelnour 2004).

war period before 14 February 2005 so as not to exonerate those implicated in the murder of Rafiq Hariri. The current law only provides amnesty to Lebanese citizens and excludes non-citizens such as the Palestinian refugees. In early May, Lebanon's Fateh commander (Brigadier) Sultan Abu al-Aynayn requested that the General Amnesty Law should be amended to encompass both Lebanese and Palestinians (Daily Star 10/05/05).²⁵

Palestinian refugees

The responsibility to ensure a "sustainable return" of refugees is often at odds with the disinclination of post-war states to host refugees (Chimni 2002). Lebanon's Palestinian refugee problem predates the civil war and was compounded by the Palestinian militias' role in the conflict (Haddad 2003). Since their forced exile from Palestine more than fifty years ago, the majority of the refugees (and their descendants) have been living in squalid shelters and cramped refugee camps. The about 350,000 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon now form a disenfranchised minority, suffering from economic marginalisation and fearing being excluded from future peace settlements, which would leave them exiled in Lebanon. Unlike other Arab countries such as Jordan and Syria, which also serve as hosts to Palestinian refugees, Lebanon did not grant the Palestinians civic rights and only a few were granted work permits. Currently, Lebanon has the highest percentage of camp-dwelling refugees (55.4 per cent) of all the countries hosting Palestinian refugees. In recent years the Lebanese government has removed refugee privileges.

The most extreme measure used to discriminate against Palestinians is preventing them from holding jobs and seeking higher education. Palestinians are barred from entering more than seventy high and low status professions so that they come to form a permanent underclass. The most comprehensive study of present living conditions among camp-dwelling Palestinian refugees to date finds that the refugees suffer from widespread unemployment, poor living conditions, ill health, low education levels and rising illiteracy (Ugland 2003). Because of progressive social marginalisation and political disfranchisement, there has been a rise of Islamist sentiments among sections of the refugee community (Knudsen in press)

Blamed for igniting the civil war in 1975, the Palestinian refugees' relationship with the Lebanese state and its citizens has since been strained. In recent years the boundaries of all the camps have been more closely demarcated and are subject to stricter security measures. In addition, the camps themselves have come under scrutiny and been branded "security islands" (Ar. *juzur amniyya*, "islands of [self-policed] security"), a euphemism meaning that they are beyond the reach of Lebanese law, harbouring weapons and sheltering criminals and assassins (Suleiman 1999: p. 72). Lebanon's many confessional communities tend to disagree over political issues but they are in agreement that Palestinian refugees should not be "naturalised", locally referred to as "implantation" (Ar. *tawteen*) (Azar and Mullet 2002). The rejection of permanent resettlement in Lebanon was also inscribed into the Taif Agreement which states that "there shall be no fragmentation, no partition, and no repatriation [of Palestinians in Lebanon]" (Taif Agreement Online: section I, h). Nonetheless, the Palestinian refugees have received continued backing from Hizbollah which has supported their claim to civic rights and funds social programmes in the refugee camps.²⁶ Recently, the Labour and Agriculture Minister Trad Hamade, a Christian named by Hizbollah for this post, announced that Palestinians born in Lebanon will be allowed to work in the majority of professions (Daily Star 28/06/05).

²⁵ Sultan Abu al-Aynayn has been sentenced to death in absentia on weapons charges and for forming an armed militia.

²⁶ Hizbollah official, *interview*, Beirut, 6 May 2005.

The political upheaval following the assassination of former prime minister Rafiq Hariri and the subsequent Syrian withdrawal has changed the traditional power constellations inside the refugee camps which traditionally has been under Syrian control (Knudsen in press). Responding to the new situation, steps have been taken to resolve the power struggle inside the largest refugee camps and improve the security situation.²⁷ The Palestinian's right to bear arms ended when the Lebanese government unilaterally abrogated the Cairo Agreement in 1987, but neither war-time nor post-war governments enforced the arms' embargo.²⁸ The UN Security Council Resolution 1559 has increased the pressure on Hizbollah and the Palestinian refugees to hand in their weapons and for Hizbollah to complete the transition to a political party. Both Hizbollah and the Palestinian refugees have rejected the call for disarmament and joined forces in preventing the resolution from being enforced (Daily Star 25/04/05).

Reconciliation and remembrance

The importance of post-war reconciliation has long been recognised and studies suggest that a low-cost "forgiveness" approach works best in post civil war situations (Long and Brecke 2003). The Lebanese civil war "came to an end in a state of nearly universal defeat and bitterness" (Picard 2002: p. 153). Yet, there was no post-war reconciliation process, truth commissions, public apologies or other forms of public conciliation processes. Thus "missing in the transition from war to peace was national reconciliation" (el Khazen 2003b: p. 59).²⁹ The main reason why national (and grassroots) reconciliation was never on the agenda was due to the Syrians which did not want the Lebanese factions to reconcile, seeking to manipulate them for political ends in its quest for control over Lebanon.³⁰ When the civil war ended, it was hoped that the Taif Agreement itself would redress war time divisions and end sectarian animosity. An ongoing study from an urban quarter in Beirut finds that people are not finished with the war and harbour feelings of anger and mistrust against neighbours belonging to other sects but that these sentiments are closely guarded and private.³¹ This example illustrates that the slogan "no victor, no vanquished", which has been used to imply that post-war divisions were neither deep nor profound are incorrect.

Even 15 years after the civil war ended, it remains a sensitive and contested topic and requests for instituting a national day for commemorating the war have been rejected. Likewise, attempts at staging commemorative events on 13 April, the day of the outbreak of the war, have been banned (Daily Star 14/04/05). There has also been a neglect of the fate of those missing and presumed dead and whose fate has only recently been highlighted in public protests from relatives and families. This lack of concern for the recent past has also shaped the plans for rebuilding Beirut's central district which has attempted to deny the country's war-time record (Nagel 2002). Instead, the reconstruction of Beirut's Central District has either focussed on recovering the city's distant archaeological heritage, which can be appropriated by Muslims and Christians alike, or bury the war-time record and replace it with a futuristic, glitzy "Hong Kong of the Middle East" version that interprets the future while leaving the past unexamined (Khalaf and Khoury 1993).

²⁷ Palestinian political leader, *interview*, Beirut, 5 May 2005.

²⁸ The Cairo Agreement was signed in 1969 between the Lebanese authorities and the PLO. It gave the Palestinian refugees the right to employment, to form local committees and bear arms in the camps and to engage in cross-border combat against Israel (Knudsen in press).

²⁹ A notable exception is the public apologies of the Maronite militiaman Ass'ad Shatari which was published as three articles in the Lebanese Arabic newspaper "An-Nahar", 14-16 February 2002. Shatari apologised to the victims and argued that sectarianism had betrayed Lebanon and its peoples, see (Haugbølle 2002).

³⁰ Lebanese policy analyst, *interview*, Beirut, 5 May 2005.

³¹ Lebanese PhD-graduate, *interview*, Beirut, 27 April 2005.

It is understandable that Lebanon's civil war heritage was so complex, convoluted and contested that agreeing on an "official version" was impossible. This also explains why the country has no public memorials, no national museums and why the restoration of the Martyrs' Square has not yet been attempted. The centre of Beirut which used to be a no-man's land between the warring factions is the country's most sensitive public space. Thus, the Martyrs' Square has remained an open void in the heart of the capital.³² A testimony to the Martyrs' Square national importance is the fact it was chosen as the burial site for Rafiq Hariri next to an imposing mosque he himself funded. The square also became the locus for the youthful crowd that set up camp there following Hariri's death demanding a Syrian withdrawal. The Martyrs' Square was also the site for the Cedar Revolution and the public outcry against Hariri's murder which unleashed a public mourning of a scale not previously seen in Lebanon. However, the outpouring of grief and call for national unity could not subdue the country's sectarian and political divisions as shown by the anti-Syrian and pro-Syrian rallies that gripped Beirut in the weeks following Hariri's demise.

The civil war changed Lebanon's social geography and reversed the social heterogeneity (mixed confessional residence in villages and cities) that had been growing during the decades leading up to outbreak of the war in 1975. After the civil war many of the former heterogeneous areas had in reality become uni-confessional (Nasr 2003: p. 148ff). One of the best examples of this is Mount Lebanon (Shouf, Aley and upper Metn) which had a mixed pre-war population of Druze (45 per cent) and Christians (55 per cent). By the 1989, the percentage of Christians in Mount Lebanon had dropped to 5 per cent. The reason for this demographic change was the failure to return those internally displaced by the bloody Shouf war (1983) between Druze and Christians.

The Taif Agreement explicitly called for fully resolving the plight of the internally displaced persons (IDPs).³³ However, a sign of the absence of national reconciliation is the failure to return the about 500,000 IDPs to their place of origin (Global IDP Project 2004).³⁴ The majority of the IDPs are the 300,000 Christians who fled during the Shouf war. Just after the war there were early attempts at grassroots reconciliation between former adversaries, but they were quickly stopped by the Syrian regime.³⁵ Later, renewed attempts at community-based and grassroots reconciliation efforts were dismal and there was little tangible results from them, suggesting that "grassroots reconciliation does not work".³⁶ In August 2001 the Maronite Patriarch Boutros Sfeir visited the Shouf and met the PSP leader Walid Jumblatt. At the conclusion of their meeting, Boutros Sfeir and Jumblatt announced the end of the communal conflict between the Druze and the Maronites.³⁷ The public reconciliation between the two communities was seen as a significant threat to Syrian hegemony in Lebanon and shortly after there was a massive crackdown on the anti-Syrian opposition parties (Gambill 2001b). The actions of the Lebanese authorities were widely interpreted as a Syrian engineered *coup d'etat* against national reconciliation.

³² Solidere, the company in charge of rebuilding central Beirut, launched an international urban design and ideas competition for rebuilding the Martyrs' Square. The competition results were announced recently, see www.beirutmartyrssquare.com.

³³ "The problem of the Lebanese evacuees shall be resolved fundamentally and the right of every Lebanese evicted since 1975 to return to the place from which he was evicted shall be established" (Taif Agreement Online).

³⁴ The exact number of IDPs in Lebanon is not known and estimates vary by a factor of ten; from 50,000 to more than 500,000 (Global IDP Project 2004).

³⁵ Lebanese UNDP official, *interview*, Beirut, 27 April 2005.

³⁶ Lebanese policy analyst, *interview*, Beirut, 5 May 2005.

³⁷ Boutros Sfeir proclaimed that "the curtain has been lowered for good on this black past and now we must close ranks to defend freedoms and human rights in Lebanon" (Sfeir quoted in, Gambill 2001b).

This could be one reason why the formal reconciliation between Sfeir and Jumblatt did not lead to a return of the Shouf IDPs (Picard 2002: p. 168). Even by 1998, only about 15 per cent of the internally displaced had returned to their homes. The “Ministry of the Displaced” which was created in 1992 with Walid Jumblatt as the first minister spent about US\$ 500 million from the Central Fund for the Displaced (CFD) in the Shouf (Picard 2002: p. 167). The funds were disproportionately used to aid the Druze and not the Christians that accounted for about 75 per cent of the IDPs (Gambill 2003a). Until today, the majority of the Christians have not returned to the Shouf. It has been estimated that returning all the IDPs to their place of origin will cost an estimated US\$ 122 million (Global IDP Project 2004).

Disarmament and demobilisation

The process of **disarmament**, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants plays a critical role in transitions from war to peace. The success or failure of this endeavour directly affects the long-term peacebuilding prospects for any post-conflict society (Knight and Özerdem 2004). The Taif Agreement led to renewed fighting between the largest militia, the Lebanese Forces (LF) and the interim prime minister general Michel Aoun commanding the Lebanese army (Atlas and Licklider 1999). By the end of 1990 the fighting ended, and a new government was formed in early 1991. By the 30 April 1991 deadline, twenty-four militias organising about 50,000 fighters disarmed following a general amnesty and offering militia leaders governmental posts (Picard 1999). A major factor for the rapid disarmament was the overwhelming presence of the Syrian army which filled the resulting power vacuum. It has been estimated that only one out of thirty Lebanese had been a permanent militia member (ibid.: p. 29). This means that the total number of fighters associated with major militias was not more 30,000 with an additional 15,000 fighters associated with minor militias (Makdisi and Sadaka 2002). The militias’ finances were a combination of protection rackets, looting and robberies, taxation and trading in drugs and contraband that together has been estimated at about US\$ 15 billion during the war years.³⁸

The purpose of the post-war DDR-process was to forge national reconciliation, social reconstruction and re-establish the authority of the state (Picard 1999). The DDR-process targeted communal and local militias as well as militias linked to political parties but excluded the Palestinian militias, Hizbollah and the South Lebanese Army (SLA).³⁹ The militias were supposed to “hand in their heavy weaponry, and to close their military headquarters, barracks and training centres” (ibid.: p. 7). A stipulated 6,000 militiamen would be integrated in the first phase of the process and the cost of the entire operation was set at US\$ 500,000. The extent to which the militias complied with the decree, their willingness to decommission and dispose of their weapons varied, as did their ability to reintegrate ex-combatants. Initially, all the militias sought to have many more ex-soldiers integrated into the new Lebanese Army than it could possibly absorb and at the same time keep the confessional balance between Christians and Muslims. When the first (and only) phase of the reintegration process was completed in October 1993, about 6,000 ex-militiamen had been integrated into the army.

The Druze militia under the leadership of the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) surrendered most of their heavy weaponry to Syria and sold the remaining to Yugoslavian fighters. Of a total 3,300 ex-militiamen put up for integration, about 1,300 were integrated with the Lebanese Army. An additional 1,200 PSP militiamen were either provided jobs in the Gulf countries or reintegrated into private business in the Shouf, testifying to strength of the traditional clientelistic networks. The

³⁸ For a more detailed account of the militias’ informal economy, see (Picard 2000).

³⁹ In recent months, Hizbollah and the largest Palestinian faction Fateh have denounced resolution 1559 and criticised the call for disarmament and called for the other Security Council resolutions targeting Israel to be implemented first (Daily Star 25/04/05).

Amal militia closely abided by the DDR-process, and gave up its heavy weaponry to Syria. An important reason for this was the Amal militia's disintegration into local groups and losses and defections following its destructive war with its rival Hizbollah during the last phase of the civil war. This made Amal announce its dissolution months prior to the government's deadline for disarmament. Thus, Amal disposed of their heavy weaponry by handing them over to the Syrian army and the ex-Amal officers joined the new Lebanese Army. Many ex-militiamen also joined the civil service, found jobs in the Council for the Development of the South or the local administration in the southern districts with a Shia majority. The insertion of ex-militiamen into the civilian sector was made possible with Amal's strong ties to the state and the role of the leader, Nabih Berri, who as speaker of the post-war parliament turned Amal into a "powerful clientelist machine with a direct hold of the state" (ibid.: p. 15).⁴⁰

In stark contrast to Amal's DDR-process, the Lebanese Forces' (LF) integration into the army was a total failure. This was a reflection of the LF's weakness following the internal conflict between those accepting the Taif Agreement (Samir Geagea) and those that didn't (General Michel Aoun). The LF disposed of their large arsenal of heavy weapons by selling it to foreign countries and warlords, repatriated some it to Israel and stowed the remainder in selected sites and strongholds. The LF wanted a large number of its militiamen (8,600) and officers (650) to be integrated with the new Army preferably as distinct army units. However, only a fraction of them were accepted. This meant that the great majority of the militiamen were neither integrated in the Army, nor in civilian positions and thus did not benefit from an amnesty under the General Amnesty Law. Their remaining option was to emigrate and many left the country. An important reason for the failure to integrate the LF-soldiers was the political marginalisation of Samir Geagea who fell out with Syrian leaders controlling the country. The incomplete demobilisation of the LF thus was a result of the LF's failure to integrate with the new (Syrian controlled) political system.

Conclusion

This paper finds the reasons for Lebanon's precarious attempts at rebuilding the country from war and implementing a peacebuilding agenda must be sought internally in the country's inability to confront its war-time past, regionally in its subservience to Syria and its international isolation in the post-cold war period. The start of the Lebanese post-war period (1990–2005) coincided with the launching of "peacebuilding" as an international agenda for peace in 1992. However, there was never an international peacebuilding strategy for Lebanon and the country was left to fend for itself having lost its pre-war strategic importance. This partly explains why Lebanon's post-war period violates many of the criteria for ending violent conflict and rebuilding war-thorn countries (Cousens, Kumar, and Wermester 2001; Keating and Knight 2004). It also explains the international community's tacit acceptance of the Syrian tutelage of Lebanon for most of the post-war period. Unable to undertake comprehensive social, economic and political reforms, the country has deflected rather than tackled social problems, displaced rather than resolved communal conflict and disguised rather than dissolved sectarian animosities. Taken together, this explains why Lebanon's fragile peace is under pressure from many of the same forces that are believed to have triggered the war in the first place: poverty, sectarianism and political confessionism. The fact that there has been no return to large scale violence should not be interpreted as proof that war-time divisions have been healed. Instead, the country's sectarian divisions still run deep and can be manipulated for political gain.

The Taif Agreement was meant to facilitate post-war reconciliation, yet a number of the proposed reforms were not implemented and others were violated. Nonetheless, the Taif Agreement still

⁴⁰ For this reason, the Council [for the Development] of the South (Ar. *Majlis al-janub*) has been derided as the Council of the Pockets (Ar. *Majlis al-jujub*), see (Norton 1986: p. 166).

serves as the country's constitution and remains the cornerstone of the post-war period. The Taif Agreement did not lead to fundamental political reform and the confessional political system remained in essence unchanged although the confessional balance was adjusted to accommodate the country's Muslim majority. Even though the Taif Agreement ended the civil war, the political conflict continued.

In post-war Lebanon there were neither social reforms nor attempts to reverse regional and social disparities which have continued to grow in the decade since the civil war ended. Poverty and social exclusion have increased and wiped out the middle class and hurt the country's Muslim majority. While rapid economic growth is considered an important, even a necessary condition for a peace treaty to hold, Lebanon's economy is lagging behind. Aid to post-war countries is nowadays considered vital for supporting reconstruction and building peace. Despite the devastation produced by the war, Lebanon's post-war economic recovery was financed with foreign loans and the country received minimal aid in the form of grants. The Lebanese government's borrow-to-build strategy left the country heavily indebted and the country's stagnant economy is now burdened by a huge debt and pervasive corruption. Nonetheless, the country's post-war economic recovery helped fortify the peace and reduce tensions between warring groups.

Lebanese politics still revolve around politicians rather than parties and tend to cater for sectarian groups rather than broader national goals. Due to the importance of pragmatic coalitions in the form of electoral lists whose main function is to secure seats for individual candidates, political parties remain subservient to personal ambition and sectarian interests. Hizbollah is the country's only modern party but has stayed outside all post-war governments. Having made its mark as a resistance movement, Hizbollah continues to oppose calls for its disarmament.

The Lebanese post-war elections were neither free nor transparent but characterised by extensive pre-election manipulation, vote rigging and Syrian interference. The 2005 elections were free and transparent but not fair due to the combined electoral law and confessional system which served to marginalise minorities and increase the Christian population's sense of disenfranchisement.

Because of the General Amnesty Law, the Lebanese authorities did not undertake a comprehensive review of war-time violations but offered a *carte blanche* amnesty to all war-crimes committed during the civil war. In one case, the authorities engaged in a selective judicial trial against one militia leader, Samir Geagea, for crimes committed during the period covered by the General Amnesty Law. No other cases against war-time violations have been opened probably because this would have doomed the post-war peace efforts since 1990. The implication of this is that Lebanon has never attempted to confront its war-time past and been more concerned about forgetting the war than in remembering it.

The failure to try war-time violations also extends to the failure to investigate the many political assassinations that remains an ingrained part of the country's political culture and testifies to the weakness of the country's judiciary and its subservience to the political agenda of the ruling elite and that of Syria. Lebanon amply demonstrates that post-war societies are not necessarily beyond conflict, and political violence continued as did the UN-peacekeeping along the country's southern border. Whereas the post-war period has seen the "return of the bomb", the country's democracy weathered Hariri's assassination and the Cedar Revolution remained peaceful.

The post-war period saw incipient reconciliation between community leaders but national reconciliation was blocked by Syria and Lebanon has yet to confront its war-time past. There has been little progress in returning IDPs to their place of origin, mostly due to lack of money and political will. In recent months there have been unprecedented advances in national reconciliation between former adversaries in an attempt to forge electoral alliances and election lists. The freeing

of Samir Geagea and Michel Aoun's return from exile can likewise be interpreted as important contributions to ending war-time divisions.

The post-war period has seen anti-Palestinian sentiments grow among the Lebanese citizens and their situation has become progressively more tenacious. The denial of "civic rights" to the refugees is a human rights violation that is tacitly accepted because naturalising the refugees would upstage the sectarian system and offset the balance between Christians and Muslims. The Palestinian refugees' right to bear arms have been abolished but not enforced and disarming the Palestinian factions as part of the UN Security Council resolution 1559 will also need to resolve Hizbollah's rejection of disarmament.

The post-war DDR process was undertaken under Syrian tutelage and involved some, but not all, of the war-time factions. The success of the DDR process varied, ranging from compliance (Druze militias) to rejection (LF). The relative success of the DDR process was linked to the General Amnesty Law which turned war-time leaders into political leaders and enabled officers and soldiers' integration into the Lebanese army. Syria's presence aided in the rapid demobilisation and disarmament of all but one of the Lebanese militias; Hizbollah, but the Syrian presence later turned into liability and continued occupation.

The *Pax Syriana* came at very high price for Lebanon and the country became a Syrian client state and was economically, politically and militarily subservient to its larger neighbour. Thus, the Taif Agreement not only heralded the end of the war but also the end of Lebanon as a sovereign country. Regional developments (such as the war in Iraq) allowed Syrian stewardship to reach unprecedented levels and penetrate all social and political fields. Despite withdrawing its forces and dismantling the intelligence apparatus, Syria has crafted an inner colonisation of Lebanon that provides the country with a formidable political and economic leverage with whoever governs the country. This, in turn, means that the withdrawal of Syrian troops is not the end of the "friendly occupation", but only the first stage in reclaiming Lebanon's sovereignty.

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SUMMARY

This paper analyses Lebanon's post-war period (1990–2005) from the perspective of peacebuilding and argues that the country's precarious attempts at implementing a peacebuilding agenda must be sought internally in the country's inability to confront its war-time past, regionally in its subservience to Syria and internationally in its strategic irrelevance in the post-cold war period. The start of the Lebanese post-war period coincided with the launching of "peacebuilding" as an international agenda for peace in 1992. However, there was never an international peacebuilding strategy for Lebanon and the country was left to fend for itself having lost its pre-war strategic importance. This partly explains why Lebanon's post-war period violates many of the criteria for ending violent conflict and rebuilding war-thorn countries. It also explains the international community's tacit acceptance of the Syrian tutelage of Lebanon for most of the post-war period and why the fragile peace is under pressure from many of the same forces that are believed to have triggered the war in the first place: poverty, sectarianism and political confessionalism

ISSN 0804-3639
ISBN 82-8062-124-5

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