

**Conflict Studies Research Centre**



# Lebanon's Future

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## **Key Points**

- The political situation in Lebanon has rapidly and radically changed over the past year, due to the Syrian military withdrawal and to the parliamentary election which gave the former opposition a majority in parliament.
- Lebanon faces major political and economic challenges. These include security sector reform, the adaptation of the electoral law, political sectarianism, economic downsizing, liberalisation, privatisation and development, relations with Syria, and the issue of Hizballah.
- Although change is needed in many areas, prudence is advisable regarding some of the most sensitive issues. Help from the international community is to be welcomed, but should on occasion be made conditional. Too much pressure, however, is likely to backfire, particularly regarding the issue of Hizballah.

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## Introduction

Lebanon has seen great changes recently. In the wake of the February 14<sup>th</sup> bombing that claimed the lives of former Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri and 19 others,<sup>1</sup> massive street protests<sup>2</sup> combined with international pressure<sup>3</sup> have seen Syria pull the last 14,000 of its troops out. This ended a Syrian military presence in Lebanon that dated from July 1976.<sup>4</sup> The Syrian pullout was completed on 26 April and confirmed by the UN on 22 May.<sup>5</sup>

The second major event in Lebanon this year was the holding of elections in a series of four electoral rounds starting on 29 May. These were heralded as being the first elections in 30 years free from foreign interference. However, they were also criticised for being held under the supposedly unfair and biased 2000 electoral law. The main results of the elections, in summary, were: a reasonably high turnout of around 50% in most of the country, except in Beirut where it stood at a mere 28%;<sup>6</sup> a parliamentary majority for the opposition coalition; victory in the southern districts for the Hizballah-Amal alliance; and former army commander Michel Aoun's return from exile and his victory in Mount Lebanon. However, the formation of a representative cabinet after the installation of the elected parliament took longer than expected, evidence of the difficulty of forming a balance between the major power wielders in a system based on consensus.

The new situation, with the Syrian presence gone and Syria's influence in Lebanon thus greatly diminished and an anti-Syrian majority in parliament, creates opportunities for Lebanon. The country is in need of major political and economic reform that has not been embarked upon yet, partly as a result of Syrian backing of the status quo. It faces the issues of the implementation of the Ta'if Accord, including the question of political sectarianism, and of UN Security Council resolution 1559, including the disarmament of Palestinian groups and Hizballah. It faces projects of liberalisation and privatisation, as well as an urgent need to economically develop some long-neglected areas of the country. It further needs to reconsider its relationship with Syria, which remains crucial.

But these challenges do not only present opportunities, they also carry great risk. In a system that has always been characterised by political sectarianism, and where the different communities have on different occasions taken up arms to challenge or maintain this system, the changing of the sectarian rules, or possibly the abolition as called for by the Ta'if Accord,<sup>7</sup> is necessarily a hazardous business. Clearly, so is the disarmament of a group that is well-trained, firmly entrenched and enjoys widespread support. Moreover, even policies that are not directly related to this sectarianism can be communally divisive because of ideological differences between and the territorial spread of the different communities.

This paper will therefore try to identify both the opportunities and the risks facing Lebanon today. It will mainly focus on four issues. The first of these is political reform. The second is economic reform. The third is the issue of Hizballah. The fourth and final issue is Lebanese-Syrian relations.

## Political Reform

Political reforms needed in Lebanon to bolster and streamline its democracy can be divided into different fields. The most important of these are reform of the security sector, a new electoral law and a mechanism for dealing with the sectarian political system. The latter two fields are connected in that they essentially come down to the question of how to create a functioning democracy in a society with severe communal rifts.

To start with the security sector, it is abundantly clear that it has failed to provide sufficient security to Lebanese politicians as well as to the average Lebanese.<sup>8</sup> It has also been accused by a UN fact-finding mission<sup>9</sup> of bearing responsibility for the lack of security, protection, law and order in Lebanon, and of serious flaws in conducting the investigation into Hariri's murder.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, the different security services are still, to an extent, influenced by Syria. Massive popular political pressure on the security system in the wake of the various bombings has already resulted in six of the seven heads of the security agencies being dismissed.<sup>11</sup> The replacement of these senior figures will be a contested matter and the eventual result, while inevitably a compromise between nationalist and loyalist factions as well as between different communities and political blocs, will reveal a lot about the direction in which the security services are headed, which in turn could reflect the degree of change in the political system as a whole. Related to this are the heavily contested posts of the interior and defence ministers, who between them control all of the security agencies.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, apart from change (or continuity) in the top officials, it will be interesting to see to what extent civilian control and oversight over the security sector is re-established. However, if an effort is made to establish this kind of control, care should be taken not to overreact and weaken these institutions too much. A historical parallel that is to be avoided is that of the early 1970s, when President Suleiman Franjeh, in order to break the political bloc of the Chehabists, took on the Office of Military Intelligence (the *Deuxième Bureau*) which he regarded as the Chehabists' power base. While he succeeded in curbing the influence of military intelligence,<sup>13</sup> it also severely reduced its effectiveness. This in turn undermined the state's control over the militarisation of all kinds of Lebanese and Palestinian groups, which in turn contributed to the outbreak of civil war in 1975. With the fragile security situation prevailing, it is imperative that a reorganisation of the security services does not result in their weakening, which will only exacerbate the situation.

Turning to the issue of the electoral law, this has been in heavy contention recently. The current law dates from 2000 and was used in both the 2000 parliamentary elections and the 2005 ones. While the Ta'if Accord of 1989, which effectively forms the constitution of the Second Lebanese Republic, called for future parliamentary elections to be held on the basis of the *muhafiza*,<sup>14</sup> a rather large electoral district, the 2000 law completely reorganised the electoral districts. The six *muhafazat* were divided into 14 electoral districts, with their borders being drawn to ensure the victories of Syrian allies.<sup>15</sup> In the run-up to the 2005 elections, there was much debate over whether to leave the 2000 electoral law in place, or to replace it with a different one. Different systems were proposed, including the use of the much

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smaller district of the *qada*, which was preferred by various Christian opposition MPs as well as Maronite Patriarch Nasrallah Boutros Sfeir, and the use of a system of proportional representation within larger districts, as was supported by Hizballah. Because of disagreements over how to change the law,<sup>16</sup> and because of insistence, both within Lebanon and in the international community that elections be held on schedule, in the end it was decided to hold the elections according to the 2000 law.

It is encouraging that even under that law designed by Syria to bolster its preferred candidates, the opposition managed to attain a majority in parliament.<sup>17</sup> However, the basic issue remains unresolved, which is that this electoral law has a real chance of resulting in an unrepresentative government. Depending on in which district people vote, their votes count for more or less, because the amount of representatives chosen from a particular district is not related to the amount of people allowed to vote in that district.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, certain local communities have had their voice stifled because they have been incorporated into different districts where they form an even smaller proportion of the population.

The 2005 elections have been held, and most would argue that they have resulted in a parliament that is reasonably representative of the population as a whole. However, in order to safeguard the legitimacy of future elections and parliaments, and thus of the whole democratic system, a more equitable election law will have to be passed. Several issues will have to be decided upon in drafting this law. The first is the size of the electoral district: smaller, larger, or perhaps even the whole country as one electoral district.<sup>19</sup> The second is the question of whether to move towards some form of proportional representation or to hold on to strict majority vote. The third issue, one that is perhaps the most contentious and lands us well into the area of sectarian relations proper, is that of the population census. For a new electoral law to produce a representative future parliament, unless Lebanon is indeed reformed into one single electoral district, lawmakers will have to be aware of demographic realities. However, since the last population census dates back to 1932, there are hardly any reliable figures about population numbers. The main reason is that the issue of the census has been immensely politicised. Populations who fear a demographically based change in the status quo have resisted calls for a new census, or have at the least insisted in holding one under their own conditions.<sup>20</sup> However, in order to design a new, fairer electoral law, as well as for economic reasons outlined below, a census is an important tool to generate the required knowledge about Lebanon's population.

The third political issue that should be addressed is that of political communalism. This has been the major and most debated issue in the history of Lebanese democracy, and the results of the process of designing a democratic framework for a society as sectarian as Lebanon have ranged from a rather smoothly functioning democracy, to political gridlock, to civil strife. One thing to remember, however, is that Lebanese democracy has been more resilient than is commonly assumed. Crises in 1952, 1958 and hopefully 2005 have been dealt with without the system collapsing under the strains. Moreover, effective government action was carried out in the fields of social and economic policy, particularly during the presidencies of Fu'ad Chehab and to a lesser extent Charles Helou.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, the Lebanese experience with democracy has enjoyed a certain measure of success. The major reason for the outbreak of the war in 1975, as well as the reason the war lasted as long as it did, was foreign influence: initially Palestinian, later on Syrian and Israeli. That is not to say that domestic issues did not play a major part in the outbreak and perpetuation of the war, but rather that the Lebanese system might well have

been able to handle those issues more peacefully had it not been for the added burdens of foreign interference.

However, although the Lebanese democratic system might have enjoyed its successes, it has also faced serious impediments. This is because a sectarian system like Lebanon's is essentially based on compromise between the different communities. The problem then is that the more difficult the political dilemmas, the more there is at stake, and the less likely a compromise is to be achieved, thus leading to political deadlock especially on the most important issues. Moreover, the existence of a sectarian system has been seen as divisive and as an impediment to the creation of a Lebanese nationalism. For these reasons, the sectarian system has been looked upon, even or especially by the 'founding fathers' that designed it,<sup>22</sup> as a necessary evil, to be abolished and replaced by a non-sectarian democracy as soon as possible.<sup>23</sup> But because all communities were afraid to lose out, they generally interpreted it even more strictly than its designers had intended<sup>24</sup> and were not prepared to discuss its abolition or alteration. That is why, while the Ta'if Accord mentions the abolition of political sectarianism according to a phased plan,<sup>25</sup> no action has been taken to design or implement this phased plan, and sectarianism has effectively stayed in place.

We should keep in mind two things regarding sectarianism, however. The first is that it is both unrealistic and inadvisable to get rid of all kinds of sectarianism in the Lebanese political system. Fear has always played a major part in the behaviour of different groups. The fear of losing out or being marginalised has driven actions by different communities, both in peace and in wartime, and the system of sectarianism was originally designed to allay these fears so that constructive cooperation could take place. An attempt to completely eradicate political sectarianism will once again threaten to upset certain communities, thus leading to an attempt to block the process and resulting in political paralysis at best, or a return to violent strife at worst. Both the Maronites, who have seen their demographic and political superiority gradually erode since the creation of Greater Lebanon in 1920, and the Sunnis, who have been overtaken as the largest Muslim group by the Shi'a, have much to lose. A system that leaves a certain measure of political sectarianism intact to assure these and other groups they will not be marginalised is therefore advisable. One could think in this context of a system of a non-sectarian Chamber of Deputies combined with a newly created Senate on a sectarian basis, as called for by the Ta'if Accord.<sup>26</sup>

The second consideration regarding political sectarianism is that it is, to a large extent, implicit rather than explicit in the constitution and laws of Lebanon. An example of this is the scramble for government posts that followed the 2005 parliamentary elections. Nowhere is there a rule that calls for a certain proportion of ministers of the different communities in government. Rather, it is implicitly understood that no sizeable community be left out of government, and it is common practice to distribute the most important posts amongst politicians belonging to the most important communities. The Lebanese tradition of strong, often hereditary leaders<sup>27</sup> contributes to this practice. Because of its implicit character, its long tradition and the vested interests among politicians in this kind of sectarianism, it will be immensely hard to eradicate. Therefore, the only practical way to try to start the process is to approach it from the angle of the electoral system and the composition of parliament. Even this, however, requires an intense effort and threatens to upset much of the status quo, therefore antagonising many. If the current 'opposition' can hold together and come to an agreement on this issue, there is a better chance than ever before to start working towards a change in the

system. But considering the profundity of the changes involved, the certain resistance it is bound to create and the cracks that are already discernible within the opposition coalition, the task might be too daunting.

## **Economic Reform**

As important as political reform, perhaps even more important for the average Lebanese, is the question of the economy. Lebanon is currently experiencing what is probably its worst economic crisis since the end of the war in 1990. Its public debt is estimated at 33.5 billion US\$, constituting 177.9% of GDP.<sup>28</sup> Debt servicing currently accounts for around 80% of state revenue.<sup>29</sup> This in turn has pushed the budget deficit up to US\$1.747 billion, or 9.3% of GDP.<sup>30</sup> Perhaps even more worrying, the population below the poverty line is estimated at 28%<sup>31</sup> while unemployment probably sits around 20%, higher for Lebanese youth. It is clear, then, that economic progress should be another priority of the new Lebanese government.

Hariri had, in the last years of his life, been pushing hard for economic reform.<sup>32</sup> After the Paris I conference in February 2001 he returned from France with a promise of US\$500 million in financial aid.<sup>33</sup> The Paris II conference in November 2002 was an even bigger success. Here, eighteen countries and eight financial institutions gathered to discuss the possibilities of relieving Lebanon's soaring public debt; Lebanon managed to secure around \$4.4 billion in soft loans. This support was tied to a pledge by Hariri and his government to implement privatisation of government agencies and cut government spending by 9 per cent. However, these reforms have been implemented only very slowly or not at all. This was in a large part due to obstruction by Lahoud. The President and Prime Minister were on very bad terms during the last years of the latter's life, leading to political paralysis and eventually to the resignation of Hariri following the extension of Lahoud's term in November 2004. At the moment, there are some favourable indications for the possibility of implementing economic reform. Current Prime Minister Siniora served as finance minister in all of Hariri's cabinets, and has secured the finance, economic, telecommunication, energy and agriculture ministries to either his close political associates or his allies.<sup>34</sup> But the road ahead will be hard.

The major challenges for the new government in managing the economic situation are fourfold. The first issue is the downsizing of the country's bloated civil service, of which the salaries and end-of-service benefits cost the government US\$ 1.7 billion a year, constituting the second largest spending item in the budget after debt-servicing at 30% of total government budget.<sup>35</sup> New Prime Minister Fouad Siniora has in fact pointed to the waste in some public institutions after the resignation of his government in 2004.

The second issue is that of developing certain long-neglected areas, particularly in Southern Lebanon. A plan to try to develop the South's infrastructure and educational institutions was presented to the former government;<sup>36</sup> it will hopefully be implemented by the current one. This plan will focus on enabling growth in the backward southern region. In practice, this will target a largely Shi'a population which could, if the plan turns out to be successful, help the eventual integration of Hizballah into the Lebanese military.<sup>37</sup>

The third issue is that of economic liberalisation. This includes a commitment to introducing modern legislation on competition and protection of intellectual property. It also includes work on the further opening of markets to services, such as banking, transport, insurance and tourism.

The fourth issue is that of privatisation. The most important intended sale is that of state-owned electrical company *Electricité du Liban*. The government spends more than US\$ 400 million a year on EDL in subsidising losses and financing the purchase of fuel oil.<sup>38</sup> Although currently making a loss, both *Electricité de France* and the American Insurance Group have expressed an interest in the company, something which will hopefully raise revenue for the state as well as streamlining the notoriously inefficient Lebanese electricity sector.<sup>39</sup> Implementing these reforms might also convince donor countries to award the rest of the loans pledged at Paris II. However, Lebanon needs to be extremely careful in how it spends that extra money; what it needs is less foreign debt, not more. In this respect, current plans for a possible Paris III should be approached with caution, too; structural improvements are needed rather than more bandages to stem the bleeding.

Lebanon's economy is traditionally heavily dependent on the service sector which, including banking and financial services, accounts for around 70% of GDP.<sup>40</sup> Major subsectors are commerce, financial services and tourism, which indicates a heavy dependence on foreign countries. Lebanon has done remarkably well considering the recent political turmoil, attracting US\$ 312 million in foreign investment in the first five months of 2005, while the total for 2004 was a record-breaking US\$ 1.05 billion.<sup>41</sup> It is imperative, however, that Lebanon succeeds in stabilising the political situation in order not to disrupt streams of foreign trade and foreign investment. It is also imperative that it re-establishes a working relationship with Syria, which is one of its main trading partners as well as its only link with the Arabic hinterland.

## **Relations with Syria**

Lebanese-Syrian relations have historically been highly complicated. Through the proclamation of Greater Lebanon in 1920, the borders of the traditionally autonomous Ottoman region of Mount Lebanon were enlarged to include the Beqaa Valley, the Mediterranean coast, the Akkar region and territories in the south. These regions were essentially taken from the former Ottoman province of Syria. From the beginning, the creation of this new state was controversial, especially among Lebanon's Sunnis and in Syria. The idea of a 'Greater Syria' of which Lebanon was supposed to be a part has persisted for long in Damascus, blocking the establishment of proper diplomatic relations until this day. When the Syrian army entered Lebanon in 1976,<sup>42</sup> it was officially with the backing of both President Frangieh and Prime Minister Rashid Karame. The Syrian military presence was then recognised through the creation of the Arab League-sponsored Arab Deterrent Force, consisting of around 30,000 troops of whom 25,000 were Syrian. Although the mandate of the ADF expired in June 1983, the Syrian presence in Lebanon continued throughout the war and was finally incorporated into the Ta'if accord<sup>43</sup> that finished the war,<sup>44</sup> although the accord did call for the eventual redeployment of the Syrian troops. The Syrian presence, and Lebanese-Syrian coordination on security issues, were further legitimised through the treaty of Brotherhood, Cooperation and Coordination of May 1991, and the Defence and Security Agreement of September 2001. On the other hand, the 1991 Brotherhood Treaty

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for the first time explicitly confirmed Syrian recognition of Lebanon's sovereignty and independence.<sup>45</sup>

Relations between the two states have deteriorated badly since 2004. The decision by Syrian President Asad to force the Lebanese cabinet to alter the constitution in order to extend Lahoud's presidential term by three years in September 2004<sup>46</sup> was widely resented in Lebanon, and caused the resignation of Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri. It has been seen as Asad overplaying his hand, by uniting opposition to Syria's role in Lebanon both inside Lebanon and within the international community. The assassinations of Hariri, Samir Qasir,<sup>47</sup> George Hawi,<sup>48</sup> as well as the attempted assassinations of Marwan Hamadeh<sup>49</sup> and even Elias Murr<sup>50</sup> have been widely blamed on Syria.<sup>51</sup> And although the decision by Asad to withdraw from Lebanon has been applauded by most Lebanese, relations have hardly improved in the wake of the parliamentary elections. Draconian security measures have been put into place at the main Lebanese-Syrian border crossings, explained by Syria through security requirements and justified by Damascus' assertion that it found explosives in a Lebanese truck travelling to Syria.<sup>52</sup> Nine fishermen, eight Lebanese and a Syrian, were also arrested by Syria for fishing in Syrian territorial waters. Lebanese border police further clashed with smugglers on the border. Moreover, Syria has announced that it will seek compensation for the families of 37 Syrian nationals killed in an anti-Syrian backlash after the assassination of Hariri.<sup>53</sup> Added to this has been the Syrian decision to expel large numbers of Lebanese managers and skilled engineers,<sup>54</sup> evidence that Syria is to an extent willing to damage its own interests to get to Lebanon. Lebanese-Syrian relations, then, are clearly in a major crisis.

It is clear that Syria is trying to put pressure on Lebanon. Even if the Syrians do have legitimate security concerns,<sup>55</sup> the total blocking of traffic as occurred at the end of June<sup>56</sup> was an overreaction, seemingly intended either to punish Lebanon for pushing the Syrians out or, perhaps more likely, to put pressure on the negotiations to form a new Lebanese government. From the re-election of Nabih Berri as Speaker of the House, the seeming reduction of pressure on Lahoud's position, and the composition of the new cabinet, in which about a third of ministers are loyal to Lahoud, it is clear that Syrian influence in Lebanon is still an important factor. It is hard to estimate the residual influence of possible remaining actors of the Syrian intelligence apparatus, as acknowledged by the 23 May UN report. There is also the issue of the influence the Syrian-Lebanese Higher Council<sup>57</sup> under its Syrian chairman Nasri Khouri.

What is clear, however, is that the mentioned "Brotherhood, Cooperation and Coordination", fancy as it may sound, is not purely a Syrian dictate to Lebanon to further Syrian interests, but is indeed founded upon solid reality. Syria is Lebanon's only land outlet. Syrian-Lebanese bilateral trade over the last few years has been around US\$270 million per annum.<sup>58</sup> Syrian blue-collar labour is of great importance for Lebanon, as are Lebanon's financial services to Syria.<sup>59</sup> Syria is currently cynically trying to press home to the Lebanese the importance of Syria for Lebanon's economy. But by the same token, Lebanon is of vital importance for Syria too. Official trade, black market trade activities, Lebanese expertise, as well as the remittances by the Syrian workers in Lebanon all play a part. Having lost at least some of its institutionalised and politicised opportunities for corrupt practices in Lebanon after its military pullout,<sup>60</sup> Syria has a great interest in continuing economic cooperation with Lebanon. Nor could this cooperation be ended, as bilateral trade now occurs within a framework of Arab-wide trade pacts that will remain binding.

It is therefore in the interest of both countries that trade resumes and that relations are normalised. Syria, already nervous with Israel still in control of the Golan and now America's military presence on its Iraqi border and its heavy-handed political pressure on Damascus, is obviously even more edgy about the current anti-Syrian mood in Lebanon and the loss of much of its influence there. It is therefore trying to keep some of that influence through its traditional Lebanese political allies, a strategy that seems to be working. This might help to allay Syrian worries about the situation in Lebanon and allow it to engage with Beirut in a more constructive manner. The upcoming visit of Prime Minister Siniora to Damascus is crucial in this respect. Two things need to be realised in that and subsequent meetings. The first is the re-establishment of a degree of trust and cooperation and the realisation by both sides that this is indeed in both countries' interest. The second is the practical implementation of measures that will reflect and reinforce this trust and cooperation, such as a resolution to the border dispute and, hopefully, the establishment of full diplomatic relations. It is to be hoped that Asad realises he has more to gain from genuine cooperation than from an attempt to perpetuate his influence over Lebanon through its security agencies.

A final issue in the Syrian-Lebanese relationship that needs to be clarified is the status of the Shebaa farms.<sup>61</sup> If the ambiguity surrounding the ownership of the Farms is clarified by Damascus officially stating that they are Lebanese territory, that would possibly pave the way for a deal in which Israel would withdraw from the area in return for Hizballah ceasing all its attacks, thereby facilitating the eventual incorporation of Hizballah into the Lebanese Armed Forces.<sup>62</sup> However, such an option seems rather unlikely as Syria does not have much of an incentive to see the Lebanese border issue resolved as long as it is not linked to a solution for the issue of the Golan, which in turn is linked to the wider Arab-Israeli peace process, on which front very little movement is currently discernible.

## **Hizballah**

The implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1559 and the disarming of Hizballah<sup>63</sup> is one of the most contentious issues Lebanon is currently facing. Ever since the Israeli withdrawal from South Lebanon in May 2000, Hizballah has postponed the strategic decision on whether to continue its armed struggle against Israel in the south or to consolidate its presence in the Lebanese political scene and become a purely political party. It has deferred its choice on this issue by insisting that the Israeli withdrawal was incomplete as they still hold on to the area of the Shebaa farms, as well as by linking its resistance to the Palestinian struggle, both in word<sup>64</sup> and, probably, in deed.<sup>65</sup> But since the passing of Resolution 1559 the pressure on Hizballah has been increasing. The fact that France threw its weight behind the resolution was a bad sign for the party.<sup>66</sup> The April 2005 Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon was a further setback that lost Hizballah the protection that Syria had traditionally bestowed on it. Hizballah has responded to these threats in different ways. It mobilised around half a million people for its pro-Syrian protest on 8 March. Arguably, the main goal of this demonstration was less sincere opposition to the Syrian withdrawal than a demonstration of its support base among Lebanese. Furthermore, on the political level, it has agreed for the first time to supply a minister to the Lebanese cabinet.<sup>67</sup> It has also used the influence of its 23 seats in parliament to successfully push for a Shi'a foreign minister.<sup>68</sup> Thus, it has flexed both its popular and its political muscle in the face of the mounting pressure.

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In the current situation, Hizballah enjoys certain strengths, but equally suffers from weaknesses. Its weaknesses are that both the Ta'if Accord and resolution 1559<sup>69</sup> call for its disarmament, the fact that there is heavy international pressure to back up resolution 1559, and the fact that it has lost the direct protection of its Syrian patron. Its strengths lie in the respect it commands, both nationally and regionally, for its role in resisting and ultimately ending the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon; the continuation of this legitimacy through the continued Israeli occupation of the Shebaa farms, its role as champions of the Shi'a, now the largest group in Lebanon; the fact that it is the only serious non-state armed group in the country; and possibly the coming to power of a new Iranian government that is less interested in cordial relations with the US, and therefore less interested in any compromises on the issue of Hizballah. If the goal is the disarmament of Hizballah as an independent armed force to allow the Lebanese government and military to spread its sovereignty over all Lebanese territories, either through Hizballah's physical disarmament or, more realistically, through the incorporation of its military wing into the Lebanese military and the change of its political wing into a purely political party, it is important not to lose sight of these strengths.

Two points are of particular importance here. One is the realisation that as long as the Shebaa farms remain in Israeli hands, Hizballah are unlikely to even consider disarming. Even if, as some claim, the Shebaa farms issue has been little more than an excuse to justify both Hizballah's continued armed status and Syria's continued military presence in Lebanon after the 2000 Israeli withdrawal, the fact remains that there is substantial evidence to back up the claim that it is Lebanese territory, and that Hizballah have repeatedly, although somewhat ambiguously, connected their continued resistance to the issue of the Shebaa farms. As stated above, a solution to this problem involves both Syria, which should clearly state the farms to be Lebanese rather than Syrian, and obviously Israel, which should be willing to vacate the strategically insignificant farms. However, both these resolutions are less straightforward than they may sound. Syria does not have an interest in seeing the Shebaa farms issue resolved as long as it is not linked to the issue of the Golan Heights, whereas Israel will be reluctant to withdraw from the farms, both because of the controversy surrounding the Gaza pullout and because it will not want to boost Hizballah's status as Lebanon's liberators any more. As for Hizballah itself, the question remains whether they will be willing to disarm after a possible Israeli withdrawal from the Shebaa farms. First of all, there is always a possibility that a new 'Shebaa farms' will be found. Candidates are the village of Ghajar, the village of Addaysi and even the 'seven villages' within Israel itself.<sup>70</sup> However, Hizballah would be very hard pressed to provide legitimacy to these claims. If Israel is to return the Shebaa farms, it should insist on a guarantee that the Israeli withdrawal is considered complete. A precedent to Israel-Hizballah talks has been created in the talks leading up to the 'prisoner exchange' of January 2004. Secondly, and more likely, would be Hizballah insisting on its indispensability defending Lebanon in light of possible future Israeli aggression. It has already hinted at continued resistance to Israeli 'attacks and aggression' even after a possible end to the occupation of the Shebaa farms.<sup>71</sup> It seems, therefore, that neither Syria, nor Israel, nor Hizballah will be inclined to move on this issue in the absence of a more comprehensive regional settlement.

The second of Hizballah's strengths is their position as champions of the Shi'a. This implies that they will only consider disarming if this is linked to an improvement for the Shi'a. Although they proudly claim they have never turned their arms on fellow Lebanese and have been a resistance force *pur sang*,<sup>72</sup> they are likely to be reluctant to give up their weapons without receiving anything in return.

In this respect, we could think of projects for the economic development of the south, and changes in the electoral law or the sectarian system that would give the Shi`a more power than they currently enjoy. However, linking these issues directly to the issue of Hizballah is likely to make progress on them even harder to achieve. Therefore, it is preferable to try to move ahead with these issues regardless of the question of Hizballah, but to keep in mind that these issues are related, just like so much else in Lebanon.

The reaction of the new parliament and government to the issue of Hizballah and resolution 1559 has been very careful. The new government, like the previous one, has repeatedly insisted that the question of Hizballah is an internal matter and has asked the international community, in particular the Americans, to refrain from pushing too hard for the implementation of resolution 1559. The policy statement released by the new government did not mention resolution 1559, which is a clear indication of the enormous sensitivity of the subject. Not only is there a risk of armed confrontation if the disarmament of Hizballah was attempted forcibly,<sup>73</sup> there is also a severe risk of polarising Lebanon's population by insisting on the disarming of Hizballah. Walid Jumblatt, in particular, although together with Saad Hariri the main leader of the opposition coalition now in power, has on numerous occasions defended Hizballah and called for restraint with regard to implementing resolution 1559. Thus, it seems that the government is not inclined to tackle this difficult and highly risky subject.

Hizballah itself has gone to considerable lengths to ensure an amount of political protection. It now has 23 MPs, more than ever before. They have joined the cabinet for the first time, and have also successfully used their influence to push for a Shi`a foreign minister who can be relied upon to be sufficiently sympathetic to the party. On the one hand, this further integration of Hizballah into the political sphere is to be welcomed as it is a step on the way to the possible eventual metamorphosis of Hizballah into a purely political party, and raises possibilities for the issue of Hizballah and the problems of the mainly Shi`a south to be solved in the political sphere. But in the short run, Hizballah's and Salloukh's presence in the government reduces the likelihood of any attempts to disarm its military wing.

## Prospects

These, then, are some of the issues that face the new government of Lebanon. They are important, difficult and sensitive at the same time. So what can realistically be expected from the Lebanese, and what can the international community do to help?

To start with political reform, in the short term the most important issue is that of the security sector. This must be brought under strict civilian control, but without compromising its effectiveness. Although Lebanon has been capitalist and democratic ever since independence, there are some parallels with the experiences of security sector reform in some Eastern European countries transitioning from communism and cooperation can be productive in this respect. The EU-Lebanese Association Agreement provides a framework for a "political dialogue [to] contribute to consolidating regional security and stability [and] create new forms of cooperation".<sup>74</sup> If Lebanon is interested, therefore, cooperation on this issue could be initiated and would hopefully contribute to an improvement in the functioning and transparency of the security agencies and eventually of the security situation as a whole.

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Turning to the issue of the electoral law, this is somewhat less urgent considering that the next parliamentary elections are four years away, but it is nonetheless important to safeguard the legitimacy of future democratically elected parliaments. The nature of Lebanon's sectarian divisions and their territorial spread make this a unique problem, while the implications of a change in the law for the relative electoral power of different local populations and for politicians' prospects of election make it a highly contested one. However, as under the current law districts have been blatantly gerrymandered, combined with the fact that it actually contradicts the Ta'if Accord and considering the widespread opposition to it in the run-up to the 2005 elections, it is to be expected that a more acceptable law can and will be agreed upon.

The final and most controversial political issue facing Lebanon is the question of the sectarian political system. The eventual ideal, as envisaged by the system's founding fathers and as called for in the Ta'if Accord, is a non-sectarian democratic system, based on a loyalty to Lebanon. On the one hand, recent events have been encouraging. In the wake of Hariri's assassination and particularly during the mass anti-Syrian demonstrations, there was a clear feeling of Lebanese nationalism that united large parts of the nation, particularly Maronites, Druzes and Sunnis. On the other hand, the Shi'a were largely uninvolved in these demonstrations, the majority of them appearing loyal to Hizballah or, at least, to their own group. Moreover, in the run-up to and during the elections populist political sectarianism seemed on the rise again, with different sides accusing each other of exploiting it for their own purposes. Post-election squabbling for ministerial posts has also damaged national unity, although the former opposition has so far largely held together. On a different level, clashes between Lebanese Forces and Amal supporters in Ain al-Rummaneh<sup>75</sup> after the announcement of Samir Geagea's<sup>76</sup> parole injured 14 and left one person dead, also indicating that sectarian polarisation is indeed rife.<sup>77</sup> Under such circumstances, then, it is doubtful that a de-confessionalisation of politics will be attempted. For such an effort requires a concerted approach and cross-confessional and cross-political determination and trust on a political level, as well as a large degree of trust and progressivism among the population. In the current climate of political jostling and popular apprehension, not to mention all the other serious problems facing the current government, it is not likely that such an effort is on the cards. It is ironic that the only politician currently calling for a de-confessionalisation of politics is Michel Aoun, somebody who can hardly be regarded as a truly national leader. Nor should such a sensitive issue be pushed, as that will only lead to public anxiety which would quite likely backfire. For the moment, while reflection on how a de-confessionalised Lebanon would look is to be welcomed, an effort to actually proceed with it is not to be expected.

The need for economic reform, however, is extremely urgent. Prime Minister Siniora seems to be perhaps the best qualified person in Lebanon to deal with this issue, as a senior economist who has served numerous terms as finance minister. Moreover, he seems to have assembled a capable team around him. It is to be expected, then, that the critical issues of downsizing, developing, liberalisation and privatisation will be tackled with vigour. Hopefully, with the personal antipathy between Lahoud and Rafiq al-Hariri no longer an issue, and with Syrian economic interests in Lebanon severely reduced, the President will be less of an obstacle to reform than he has proven in the past.

As for the role of the international community, it should make sure it comes through with the rest of the funds pledged at Paris II if and when further reforms

are carried out. In this field, too, the EU could provide expertise on the reform issues within the framework of the Association Agreement<sup>78</sup> if requested by Lebanon. Calls for a Paris III, however, should be approached with caution, and serious results in reform should be achieved before more money is pledged that might otherwise disappear into a dysfunctional economy.

Regarding the issue of Lebanese-Syrian relations, a first step has been taken with Siniora's visit to Damascus immediately following the vote of confidence his cabinet received from parliament. Siniora's meeting with Asad and Syrian Prime Minister Naji al-Otari, aiming to repair strained bilateral relations and to solve the border crisis seems to have gone well, but actual improvements need to be identified to corroborate this assessment. Lebanon needs to reassure Syria that it is not hostile to its security interests, while at the same time insisting that Syria should not deliberately try to hurt Lebanese economic interests to achieve its goals. Syria needs to be convinced that a stable Lebanon with a growing economy is indeed in its interest, too.

The role of the international community should also be to emphasise this fact. The Arab League could help to broker some of the differences between the Lebanese and Syrian positions, whilst the European Union should insist on an equal relationship between Syria and Lebanon as another prerequisite to the eventual signing of the EU-Syrian Association Agreement. Most of all, Syria needs to realise that the state of its economy is probably its greatest problem, particularly with regard to its decreasing oil reserves. If nothing is done about this issue, Syria faces severe economic problems in the coming decade that will likely spill out into the political domain.

Finally, on the subject of Hizballah, this is another issue on which rapid progress is currently not likely to be made. Hizballah and Syria are unlikely to provide any concessions in the absence of Israeli movement in the Shebaa farms, and possibly even the Golan and Palestinian issues. Lebanon's politicians are not willing to risk an armed confrontation between the Lebanese military and Hizballah, something that would at best be very violent and at worst turn the different Lebanese communities on each other once more. Israel is not likely to consider making concessions to an enemy group, particularly as any concessions would be interpreted as another victory for that group. The US is not willing to deal with a party they consider a terrorist organisation. This, then, seems to be a proper stalemate.

In the absence of a clear-cut solution to the issue of Hizballah and Lebanon's southern frontier, a number of actions should be undertaken. The integration of Hizballah into the Lebanese political sphere should continue and be encouraged. The economic situation in the south should be improved. But most of all, if progress is to be made in this area, there will have to be movement on the Arab-Israeli peace process. Without progress in that field, any change in southern Lebanon will most likely remain elusive. Therefore, Israel, Syria and the Palestinian Authority will eventually have to be pressed or persuaded into resuming negotiations about a final settlement. Without this, a solution to the Hizballah problem will be very hard to come by.

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> See Report of the Fact-Finding Mission to Lebanon inquiring into the causes, circumstances and consequences of the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, available at <http://www.al-bab.com/arab/docs/lebanon/unhariri.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> Anti-Syrian protests on 16 February and, particularly, 14 March, brought hundreds of thousands of Lebanese to downtown Beirut. The 8 March pro-Syrian Hizballah protest mobilised close to half a million people too. See International Crisis Group: Syria after Lebanon, Lebanon after Syria, ICG Middle East Report No 39, 12 April 2005.

<sup>3</sup> The US and France co-sponsored and pushed hard for the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1559, which calls for the withdrawal from Lebanon of foreign forces (ie Syria) and for the disbanding and disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias (ie Fatah elements in the Palestinian camps and Hizballah).

<sup>4</sup> The Syrians originally arrived in June and July 1976 and their presence was legitimised by the Arab League at the Riyadh Summit of October 1976, after which the Syrian troops were incorporated into a peacekeeping force called the Arab Deterrent Force. Although the ADF mandate was discontinued in June 1983, the Syrian presence continued and was partly legitimised by the Lebanese-Syrian Treaty of Brotherhood, Cooperation and Coordination of 1991.

<sup>5</sup> See Report of the United Nations Mission to verify the full and complete withdrawal of Syrian forces from Lebanon pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1559 (2004).

<sup>6</sup> This was actually less than the 34% of the 2000 parliamentary elections.

<sup>7</sup> National Reconciliation Accord, article 1.II.A.5 and 1.II.A.7.

<sup>8</sup> In the past year, bomb attacks have occurred in Lebanon on 1 October 2004 (Beirut, injuring Druze former minister Marwan Hamadeh and killing his driver), 14 February 2005 (Beirut, killing former Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri and 19 others), 19 March (New Jdeidah, injuring eleven people), 23 March (Kaslik, killing three people), 26 March (killing two people), 1 April (injuring seven people), May 6 (killing two), June 2 (killing journalist Samir Qasir), 21 June (killing Lebanese Communist Party leader George Hawi), 1 July (injuring one person), 12 July (injuring defence minister Elias Murr and killing two others) and 22 July (Beirut, injuring 12 people). Agence France Presse; First semi-annual report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the implementation of resolution 1559 (2004), 26 April 2005.

<sup>9</sup> The mission was headed by Deputy Commissioner of the Irish Police Peter FitzGerald and consisted of two police investigators, a legal advisor and a political advisor. It conducted its inquiry in Lebanon between 25 February and 16 March 2005.

<sup>10</sup> See report of the Fact-Finding Mission to Lebanon inquiring into the causes, circumstances and consequences of the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri.

<sup>11</sup> See "Security Sector Reform: Lebanon's Rare Opportunity", Daily Star, 2 July 2005.

<sup>12</sup> Although to what extent the security services have actually been controlled by these ministries is a matter of debate.

<sup>13</sup> The 1972 parliamentary elections have been called "the freest and cleanest in Lebanese history" due to the absence of illegal pressure on voters. The parallel with 2005 is striking. See T Hanf: Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon: Decline of a State and Rise of a Nation, London: Centre for Lebanese Studies/IB Tauris, 1993.

<sup>14</sup> There are six *muhafizat* in Lebanon: North Lebanon, Beirut, Mount Lebanon, Beqaa, Nabatiyya and South Lebanon. The purpose of using these large electoral districts was to force candidates to appeal to a broad range of communal voters to win, thereby fostering compromise. See G C Gambill & E Abou Aoun: Special Report: How Syria Orchestrates Lebanon's Elections, available at [http://www.meib.org/articles/0008\\_11.htm](http://www.meib.org/articles/0008_11.htm).

<sup>15</sup> For example, North Lebanon was split into two districts, one of which was not even geographically contiguous, to ensure the election of Suleiman Franjeh and other Syrian allies. See Gambill & Abou Aoun: Special Report.

<sup>16</sup> A planned session to discuss the issue of the electoral law in parliament on 28 April failed because of a lack of quorum. See "Lebanon settles on 2000 electoral law after lack of quorum", Daily Star, 29 April 2005.

<sup>17</sup> Although it should be added that this was partly also due to politicians changing sides rather than the electorate. One of the beneficiaries of the 2000 law had been Walid Jumblatt, although the Syrians later decided to back his rival Talal Arslan. Jumblatt, now

one of the leaders of the anti-Syrian opposition, won his seat in parliament in 2005 uncontested.

<sup>18</sup> In fact, when the number of seats in parliament was raised from 108 to 128 by the 1992 electoral law, most of these seats were added in the Beqaa and Northern Lebanon, where the Syrian army had its heaviest presence.

<sup>19</sup> In an August 2004 opinion poll on electoral issues, it was found that most people preferred the *muhafiza* districts, but that the second most popular option was that of Lebanon as one electoral district with weighted representation. See Information International: Polling Lebanon's Electorate, available at <http://www.information-international.com/opinionpolls.php>.

<sup>20</sup> For example, Maronites have traditionally insisted that emigrated Lebanese be counted as well, because a disproportionate number of these were Maronites.

<sup>21</sup> It should be noted that this was also one of the most authoritarian periods in Lebanese history. However, it can be argued in view of subsequent events in the run-up to the 1975-1990 war that a certain amount of authoritarianism was probably healthy.

<sup>22</sup> Bechara al-Khoury and Riad Sulh, respectively the first post-independence President and Prime Minister, agreed on the political principles of Lebanon's sectarian system in an oral agreement that would become known as the National Pact.

<sup>23</sup> "The abolition of political confessionalism is a basic national goal and shall be achieved according to a gradual plan", Lebanese Constitution Preamble, article h.

<sup>24</sup> See T Hanf: Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon.

<sup>25</sup> Accord of National Reconciliation, article 1.II.G.

<sup>26</sup> Accord of National Reconciliation, article 1.II.A.7.

<sup>27</sup> *Za'im*, plural *zu'ama'*.

<sup>28</sup> CIA World Factbook, 2004 estimates.

<sup>29</sup> The EU's Relation with Lebanon: Overview, available at <http://www.esds.ac.uk/International/access/guide.asp>.

<sup>30</sup> CIA World Factbook, 2004 estimates.

<sup>31</sup> CIA World Factbook, 1999 estimates.

<sup>32</sup> Hariri has been the main force in the post-war economic reconstruction of Lebanon. As Lebanon's richest person, a self-made businessman who made his fortune in construction, he returned to his native country after the end of the war to take up the reconstruction of Beirut. He set up a corporation called Solidere that bought up large chunks of central Beirut and managed the reconstruction of the area. During his two terms as prime minister (1992-1998 and 2000-2004) Beirut was indeed remade, but the government ran up huge debts in the process.

<sup>33</sup> Paris I was, in fact, a meeting held in Paris between Hariri and French President Jacques Chirac that turned into a donors' conference attended by several other countries. See International Crisis Group: Syria after Lebanon, Lebanon after Syria, Middle East Report No 39, April 2005, p39 note 328.

<sup>34</sup> Finance: Jihad Azour; economy and trade: Sami Haddad; communications: Marwan Hamadeh; energy: Muhammad Fneish; agriculture: Talal Sahili.

<sup>35</sup> "Cutting public sector may be Lebanon's next nightmare", Daily Star, 27 June 2005.

<sup>36</sup> See "New 'master plan' focuses on developing Southern Lebanon", Daily Star, 17 June 2005.

<sup>37</sup> The politicisation of the Shi'a has been characterised as a case of relative deprivation in the sense that a population that is improving its position but still relatively marginalised compared to other groups has been seeking further improvement through military means. Amal, which was involved more in the Lebanese war than Hizballah, is the best example of this. Moreover, possible economic progress of South Lebanon will decrease the need for Hizballah's social services, one of the reasons for its popularity.

<sup>38</sup> Fossil fuel, of which Lebanon has no known reserves, accounts for 97.3% of electricity production (the remainder being produced by hydroelectric plants) and 91.3% of electricity consumption, the difference being accounted for by electricity imports of 1.09 kWh from Syria. See CIA World Factbook, 2002 estimates.

<sup>39</sup> "Will latest initiative lead to Electricité du Liban's privatization?", Daily Star, 4 June 2005.

<sup>40</sup> See Embassy of Lebanon in the US: Profile of Lebanon: the Economy, available at [http://www.lebanonembassyus.org/country\\_lebanon/economy.html](http://www.lebanonembassyus.org/country_lebanon/economy.html).

## Lebanon's Future

41 See Oxford Business Group: Consensus and reform, available at <http://www.oxfordbusinessgroup.com/weekly01.asp?id=1423>.

42 This was not, in fact, the start of Syrian involvement in the Lebanese war; it had sent units of the Syrian controlled Palestine Liberation Army under the command of Syrian officers into Lebanon in late 1975.

43 Accord of National Reconciliation, article 2.D.

44 In fact, the war continued for another 11 months after the issuing of the Ta'if Accord, until the final assault on Baabda that ousted Michel Aoun on October 13 1990.

45 Treaty of Brotherhood, Cooperation and Coordination, article 1.

46 Reportedly, Asad invited Hariri to Damascus and then physically threatened him into supporting Lahoud's extension. See UN: Report of the Fact Finding Mission to Lebanon.

47 Samir Qasir was a columnist for the daily Lebanese newspaper al-Nahar, and typically critical of Syria's role in Lebanon. He was assassinated by a car bomb on 2 June 2005.

48 Hawi, a former secretary-general of the Lebanese Communist Party, had alternately been pro- and anti-Syrian; in recent years, however, he had been rather critical of Damascus. He was assassinated by a car bomb on 21 June 2005.

49 Trade minister Marwan Hamadeh was one of three ministers who resigned from the government in protest to the extension of Lahoud's term. He was injured in an attack on 1 October 2004.

50 Defence minister Elias Murr, a pro-Syrian politician and Lahoud's son-in-law, was injured in an attack on 12 July 2005. The motive brought forward to implicate the Syrians in this assassination attempt is that Murr, in his role as defence minister and head of several intelligence agencies, supposedly possessed incriminating evidence about Hariri's assassination.

51 Although, according to a poll conducted by Information International, Israel was held responsible for Hariri's murder by 23.9% of respondents, compared to the Lebanese and Syrian authorities together by 16.7%, and the Syrian authorities alone by 10.4%. See Information International: Polling the Lebanese on Hariri's assassination, available at [http://www.information-international.com/pdf/iipolls/hariri/Pages%20from%20issue33\\_mar05-en.pdf](http://www.information-international.com/pdf/iipolls/hariri/Pages%20from%20issue33_mar05-en.pdf).

52 See "Syrian border delays reduced", Daily Star, 13 July 2005.

53 See "Blocus – 37 ouvriers syriens tués au Liban depuis février, affirme la ministre syrienne du travail", L'orient-le jour, 22 July 2005.

54 See "Syria expels hundreds of Lebanese managers", Daily Star, 30 July 2005.

55 If Sharm al-Sheikh can be targeted, so could imaginably be Damascus or Aleppo, although Syria has neither the relations with the US and Israel nor the tourist infrastructure that makes Egypt a desirable target.

56 As of 13 July, estimated traffic is back up to round 150 trucks a day, from less than 10 in late June. However, the current volume of traffic is still only half of the usual 300 trucks. See "Syrian border delays reduced", Daily Star, 13 July 2005.

57 The Higher Council was created by the 1991 Treaty of Brotherhood, Cooperation and Coordination treaty. It was designed to "set up the general policy of coordination and cooperation between the two states in the political, economic, security, military and other fields ... [and] supervise the implementation thereof ..." Treaty of Brotherhood, article 6.1.

58 See A Tabler: "Economics of the Syria-Lebanon Relationship", available at <http://faculty-staff.ou.edu/L/Joshua.M.Landis-1/syriablog/2005/04/economics-of-syria-lebanon.htm>.

59 Syria, after the Baath-led nationalisation of banks in the 1960s, only recently allowed private banks to operate within its borders, although regulations remain tight.

60 See "Syrian fingers dipped in Lebanese pie", Financial Times, 22 March 2005.

61 This strip of land, 22 square kilometres in area, had been squabbled over by Lebanon and Syria since the 1920s, with Syria assuming control during the 1950s. The area was occupied by Israel during the 1967 war. Both Israel and the United Nations therefore consider it Syrian territory, subject to UN Resolution 242 of November 1967 and 338 of November 1973 that both dealt with Israeli occupied Syrian territory rather than UN resolution 425 of March 1978 that called for Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon. Syria, however, has, after the 2000 Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon, endorsed the claim that the farms are Lebanese, thereby insisting that the Israeli pullout was not complete.

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<sup>62</sup> See International Crisis Group: Syria after Lebanon, Lebanon after Syria.

<sup>63</sup> UNSC Resolution 1559 calls for “the disbanding and disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias”, implying Hizballah and the armed Palestinian organisations in the Lebanese camps. In most camps, the Palestinians run their own security, and Palestinian armed groups rather than the Lebanese authorities keep order. An increase in security by the Lebanese authorities around several camps has occurred recently but no attempt has been made to move into any of them.

<sup>64</sup> Hizballah’s Secretary General has repeatedly stated that he viewed Hizballah’s task as “reminding the Arab and Muslim world of its holy duty to support the Palestinian people.” See International Crisis Group: Hizballah: Rebel without a Cause, ICG Middle East Briefing No 7, 30 July 2003.

<sup>65</sup> Hizballah has been linked to an effort to ship weapons into Gaza, and with support for suicide bombing missions in Israel. Hizballah itself denies these claims.

<sup>66</sup> France initially wanted to keep the issue of Hizballah out of the resolution, focussing instead on the withdrawal of Syrian troops, but gave in to American pressure to include it. France has so far rejected classifying Hizballah as a terrorist organisation, contrary to the United States and several other European countries, including the United Kingdom and the Netherlands.

<sup>67</sup> Muhammad Fneish, minister of energy and water.

<sup>68</sup> Fawzi Salloukh, not affiliated to either Hizballah or Amal.

<sup>69</sup> Both Ta’if and Resolution 1559 call for “[the] disbanding of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias”. See Accord of National Reconciliation, article 2.A; UN Security Council resolution 1559, article 3. However, Hizballah naturally argue that they are not a militia but a legitimate resistance movement.

<sup>70</sup> See International Crisis Group: Old Games, New Rules: Conflict on the Israel-Lebanon Border, ICG Middle East Report No 7, 18 November 2002.

<sup>71</sup> See “No Downing of Arms”, al-Ahram Weekly, 9-15 June 2005

<sup>72</sup> This is not quite true; Hizballah clashed with Amal on numerous occasions during the war.

<sup>73</sup> At a Hizballah ceremony in Bint Jbeil celebrating the fifth anniversary of the liberation of southern Lebanon, Secretary-General Nasrallah said “we do not want to attack anyone ... but if anyone, no matter who, even thinks about disarming the resistance, we will fight him like the martyrdom seekers of Karbala. This is because any such step is an Israeli act ...” See H Avraham: Disarming Hizbullah: the public debate in Lebanon, the Middle East Media Research Institute, 30 June 2005.

<sup>74</sup> Euro-Mediterranean agreement between the EU and Lebanon, title I, articles 3 and 4.

<sup>75</sup> Unsettlingly, this was the very place where war broke out on 13 April 1975.

<sup>76</sup> Samir Geagea was the only ‘warlord’ convicted of crimes committed during the war, all the others benefiting from an amnesty law. He was convicted in 1994 and released in July 2005.

<sup>77</sup> See “LF Celebration Clashes Leave Man Dead”, Daily Star, 20 July 2005.

<sup>78</sup> Euro-Mediterranean agreement between the EU and Lebanon; title V deals with economic, title VII with financial cooperation.

## **Want to Know More ...?**

See: T Hanf, Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon: Decline of a State and Rise of a Nation, London: Centre for Lebanese Studies/IB Tauris, 1993

International Crisis Group: Syria after Lebanon, Lebanon after Syria, Middle East Report No 39, April 2005

International Crisis Group: Hezbollah: Rebel without a Cause, ICG Middle East Briefing No 7, 30 July 2003

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