
PROSPECTS FOR LEBANON

*The Demobilization
of the Lebanese Militias*

by

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The Demobilization of the Lebanese Militias

Elizabeth Picard

Although the war in Lebanon began at a time when the cold war was still making an impact on the entire Middle East, it nevertheless possessed many traits characteristic of conflicts in the post-bipolar era. Such traits included the prevalence of communal mobilization over ideological cleavages, close interaction between domestic and international spheres, interwoven economic and political interests, and alternate cycles of violence and tranquillity. Many analysts came to consider the conflict in Lebanon as the paradigm of contemporary wars. In several war-torn countries as far as the Caucasus and Liberia, irregular forces came to be known as militias, and each destroyed and divided capital was compared with Beirut. Thus any break-up of a pluralistic state, any quick disintegration of a society or any prolonged conflict between opposing factions was invariably given the label of 'lebanonization'.¹

Now that the conflict in Lebanon has ended, it is less certain that one can actually refer to a Lebanese paradigm. Those who study the disciplines of conflict resolution and peace research find many references to the examples of Angola and Mozambique or to the supervised elections in El Salvador and Cambodia. Comparisons are also made between the mediating role of the United Nations in Afghanistan, the Arabs in Yemen, and the Europeans in the former Yugoslavia. In addition, analysts see common characteristics in the search for peace between blacks and whites in South Africa, between

1. For a discussion of the concept of 'Lebanonization' see Georges Corm 'Balkanisation et libanisation', in *L'Etat du monde 1992*, Paris: La Decouverte, 1993, p. 583; and Hani A. Faris, 'The Failure of Peacemaking in Lebanon, 1975-1989', in Deirdre Collings (ed.), *Peace for Lebanon: From War to Reconstruction* (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1994), pp. 17-30.

Palestinians and Israelis in the Middle East, and among communal groups in Northern Ireland. In all three cases, the cessation of violence was impelled by external factors coupled with local initiatives which then took on a momentum of its own through the implementation of confidence-building measures. But the case of Lebanon seems to be of only marginal significance in relation to these general characteristics and to such methods of analysis. The peace process in Lebanon remains largely enclosed within the larger Arab–Israeli conflict in the Middle East both in space — since Lebanon’s most important neighbours, Israel and Syria, remain adversaries — and in time — since Lebanon’s political future is still dependent on regional negotiations. Meanwhile, the intermediate stage between the state of war and the state of peace carries on. The benefits that accrue as a result of the end of the violence are weighed against the present difficulties and the cost of reconstruction.² For very many Lebanese, the aftermath of war is as difficult and as problematic as the war itself.

Examining the process of the demobilization of the Lebanese militias and the reconstruction of a unified army provides an excellent opportunity to analyse the transformations in, and dynamics of, postwar Lebanon. Demobilization presumes the conversion of combatants; it requires that their projects be revised or abandoned; it involves a complex process of negotiation between the legitimate power and centrifugal forces through the mediation of various civilian and political protagonists. It is, therefore, a decisive stage in the ‘civilianization’ and reconstitution of elites and in the readjustment of the country’s political forces. Demobilization also raises the problem of professional and social reintegration, not simply in relation to combatants, but to the society as a whole. Indeed, demobilization implies a break from the economy and culture of war that dominated the country during the previous 15 years. It also highlights the acute problems associated with the amnesty of war-related crimes and, by extension, the Lebanese population’s collective memory upon which national reconstruction is supposed to be based. Finally, on the

2. See Adam Przeworski, ‘Democracy as a Contingent Outcome of Conflicts’, in J. Elster and R. Slagstad (eds), *Constitutionalism and Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

political level, demobilization is the pre-eminent test by which the state recovers its powers and functions, starting with the monopoly of legitimate violence. As such, it is a necessary prelude to the return to civil practices.³

A Political Decision with Military Consequences

Throughout the 15 years of war in Lebanon, the one constant theme that prevailed was the indictment, by the Lebanese state, of the various militias. The state insisted on the need to dissolve them, and even announced the decision to abolish them. As early as April 1975, Prime Minister Rashid el-Solh had called for disbanding the Kata'ib militia after the shooting in Ayn al-Rummaneh. In 1977, at the end of the 'two-year war', President Elias Sarkis issued an order to disband all the Lebanese and foreign militias. Equally, one of the first gestures of Bashir Gemayel when he was elected president was to announce that his own militia, the Lebanese Forces, would be rapidly fused with the Lebanese Army. However, as the war intensified and the fighting shifted from one region to another, and as it became complicated by intra-sectarian fighting among the militias, it became increasingly clear that the authority of the state was being eroded, and that the Lebanese Army was less and less capable of restoring order. The marginalization of the regular forces of the state *vis-à-vis* the sectarian militias was marked by the 'war of the Mountain' in 1983 and the revolt in West Beirut in 1984. And the final misadventure was the 'war of elimination' launched in 1990 between the army of General Aoun and the Lebanese Forces.

As it happens, the disarmament process was not instigated as a result of a military victory over militia forces. Neither Amal, nor Hizballah, nor the Progressive Socialist Party, nor even the Lebanese Forces — which had taken care to distance itself from the Aounist resistance before the final assault — had been militarily defeated when the demobilization process began in spring 1991. Demobilization was more of a political act made possible due to changes on the Lebanese

3. Field research for this study was made possible by a grant from the Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches Internationales—CNRS, Paris.

domestic scene that coincided with regional and international upheavals. On a domestic level, the changes included the signing of the Ta'if Agreement in October 1989. This made possible the reactivation — itself subject to criticism — of the constitutional functioning of the state paralysed since the end of Amin Gemayel's mandate. A new president was elected by a majority of deputies in November 1989 and constitutional reforms were adopted in September 1990. Moreover, the clashes between Hizballah and Amal in the *Dahiye* weakened the Shi'i militias' potential for insubordination and weakened their strength to equal that of their Christian counterparts. In a matter of months, and with the help of its Syrian protector, the Lebanese state had restored its authority over a great part of the Lebanese territory, which had been lost to it for 15 years. The fighting stopped in most of the country with the exception of the Israeli-occupied zone in southern Lebanon and its surrounding regions. The army loyal to the Hoss government under the command of General Emile Lahoud was deployed in stages in Greater Beirut, Sidon, the Chouf, Kisrwan, Batroun, Tripoli and the Bekaa. The sectarian militias were henceforth threatened on their own territory while their political projects had lost their legitimacy.

Changes were even more significant on the regional scene. Following the break-up of the Soviet Union, the Gulf War provoked a rapprochement between Syria and the United States. An opportunity arose to re-establish in Lebanon a legality that was both acceptable to the international community while at the same time satisfying the ambitions of Damascus. Baghdad was no longer able to intervene in Lebanon, and Israel — more of a temporary burden to Washington than a strategic asset — opted for a negotiated settlement and accepted the idea of a peace conference in Madrid in autumn 1991. Finally, Iran, the sole remaining influential actor, exercised a certain restraint on the regional scene due to state interests, economic difficulties and the end of its revolutionary phase.⁴ This time, it seemed that the end of the war was in sight. It was no longer an illusion.

4. Olivier Roy in chapter 11 of *The Failure of Political Islam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994) analyses the downwards reassessment of Iranian ambitions in the Muslim world, especially among the Lebanese Shi'ias.

Condition and Test of the Restoration of State Authority

The ministerial declaration of 28 March 1991 made it clear that all the Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias would be disbanded, disarmed and rehabilitated. Non-Lebanese militias referred to several hundred *Pasdarān ul-Islam* on the one hand, and to Palestinian militias that still controlled the neighbouring camps of Sidon and Tyre, on the other. In Tripoli and Beirut, the camps were under the control of Syria.

The immediate Iranian response, made by a diplomat based in Beirut, was that the Pasdaran militiamen rejected any attempt to disarm them or to force them to leave the country before a complete withdrawal of Israeli troops to the international borders as specified in the 1949 armistice agreement and ordered by UN Security Council resolution 425 (1978). In reality, the legitimacy of their armed presence in Lebanon remains part of the so-called 'strategic' relationship between Damascus and Teheran,⁵ and their future remains unsettled, pending developments in the negotiations between Syria and Israel. Moreover, the Lebanese government can hardly question the legitimacy of their armed presence, since it is not questioned by Syria. But the fact remained that, while the Lebanese crisis was transnational in nature and aggravated by the intervention of external actors controlled or not controlled by foreign states, it could only be resolved by refocusing on the Lebanese national stage.⁶

The question of disarming the Palestinian militias was the subject of lengthy negotiations throughout spring 1991, which culminated, in July of the same year, in a show of force between the Lebanese Army and Palestinians based around Sidon and as far south as Tyre. The Lebanese Army had the upper hand and was deployed in the areas surrounding the camps to control their points of entry. Part of the

5. H. Agha and A. Khalidi, *Syria and Iran: Rivalry and Cooperation* (London: Pinter, Royal Institute of International Affairs Papers, 1995).

6. Regarding the departure of the Pasdaran and the national nature of the solution to the Lebanese crisis, see Nizar Hamzah, 'Lebanon's Hizbullah: From Islamic Revolution to Parliamentary Accommodation', in *Third World Quarterly*, 14, 2 (1993), pp. 321-37; and Richard Norton, 'Lebanon: The Internal Conflict and the Iranian Connection', in John Esposito (ed.), *The Iranian Revolution* (Miami: Florida International University Press, 1990) pp. 116-37.

Palestinians' heavy weaponry was handed over to the army. From July 1991, the armed Palestinian presence in the camps of Lebanon was tacitly considered a solved problem, or even a non-problem. The failure to disarm the Palestinian camps was nothing more than a waiting game justified by a presumed imminent breakthrough in the Syrian–Israeli and Lebanese–Israeli negotiations. While such a breakthrough would indeed have allowed the genuine disarmament of the Palestinian militias in Lebanon, the Syrian authorities in the mean time were keen to exploit the fact that most of the Palestinian militias belonged to the rejectionist camp and were willing to fight the Israeli occupation alongside the Islamic movements. This situation, reminiscent on a smaller scale of the one that prevailed after 1969 when the Cairo Agreement was signed, indicated that the war, lengthy and damaging as it was, did not resolve the country's structural problems.

Aside from the question of the Palestinian militia groups, the whole process of disarming the militias was seen in 1991 as a formula for communal reconciliation, social reconstruction and, more specifically, as a means to re-establish the authority of the state. It was therefore regarded primarily as a Lebanese problem, though not without regional dimensions. Three major communal militias were targeted — the *Jaysh al-Sha'bi* of the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP), the Amal movement and the Lebanese Forces (LF) — as well as a number of the smaller local militias such as the *Marada* of the Franjiyyehs in Zgharta, the *Fursan Ali* of the Alawites in Tripoli, and the Sunni *57th Brigade* in Tripoli. Also involved were those militias linked to political parties, such as the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP) in the Kourah and the Upper Metn, and the Popular Nasserist Organization of Mustapha Saad in Sidon. Two additional militias, however, remained outside the process — Hizballah and the South Lebanon Army (SLA). Because the larger militias had a prevailing tendency to dominate and unify smaller ones — often by force — during the war, the demobilization process may be understood through an analysis of the cases of the three largest ones. Examining the manner in which their situation has evolved will shed greater light on the process of reconstruction and reconciliation in Lebanon in the aftermath of the war.

Between Consensus and Contradiction

The dissolution of the militias and the reintegration of a number of militiamen into the military and civilian branches of the public service were swiftly implemented. The Council of Ministers took a decision on 28 March 1991 to disband the militias, effective as of 20 March. The militias were given until 30 April to hand in their heavy weaponry and to close their military headquarters, barracks and training centres. On 5 May the Council of Ministers decided to integrate 'some' militiamen into 'national administrative or military national institutions'. This integration was intended to take place in stages and to include those militiamen who submitted applications before 30 June. Law 88, opted by Parliament on 13 June 1991, specified that 6000 militiamen would be reintegrated in the first phase. That same law simultaneously reintroduced compulsory and comprehensive military service. A decree on 19 October allocated an initial expenditure of US\$ 500,000 for the operation. Each phase of the operation was to coincide with new regions of the country being placed under the control of the Lebanese Army. But, contrary to general expectations, and one year after Parliament's adoption of the constitutional amendments called for in the Ta'if Agreement (23 September 1990), the Syrian forces in Lebanon (estimated at over 30,000 men) had still not entirely redeployed to the Bekaa. As a result, the demobilization of the militias took place in the presence of, with the collaboration of, and eventually under the control of the Syrian military.

A ministerial committee entrusted with the task of disbanding the militias brought together Minister of Justice Khatchig Babikian, Minister of Defence Michel el-Murr, and Interior Minister Colonel Sami el-Khatib with negotiators from the three largest militias in question — Roger Deeb representing the Lebanese Forces, Sharif Fayad representing the PSP militia, and Mohammad Beydoun representing Amal. In April and May, three subcommittees dealing with the questions of heavy armaments, demobilization and 're-education' convened. In principle, the handing over of heavy weaponry was not an issue and all militias were supposed to have complied with the 'zero option' according to the official deadline. However, each disposed of its heavy weapons by resorting to different methods, as we

shall see below. But the dissolution of the militias had immediate implications for the future of the militiamen, particularly regarding their integration into the regular forces.

Since the signing of the Ta'if Agreement,⁷ widespread rumours had circulated around the estimated number of men who would eventually be demobilized. Most of the figures were based on the LF's claim to have rallied 20,000 men in their fight against Aoun. Thus it was expected, at the time of the demobilization of all the militias, that the public service would be asked to make way for the integration of about 40,000 men, half of whom were Christian and the other half Muslim. Most the militias in question were willing to seize the opportunity offered by Law 88: the militia leaders in order to satisfy their political ambitions and the militiamen for economic reasons, at the very least. The number of applications submitted in March 1991 was exorbitant. They included a request by the Lebanese Forces to integrate 8600 men and 100 officers; a proposal by the PSP to include 2800 men and 50 officers of the *Jaysh al-Sha'bi*; and even higher numbers from Amal. However, the fact that the Lebanese Army had only ten operational brigades at that time (meaning that it could only accommodate a total of 25,000 to 30,000 men), such demands were unacceptable. Nevertheless, provisions were made to transfer some of the applicants to the police force or to subsidiary security organizations such as firemen and customs officials. Furthermore, the army had to tackle the additional problem of reintegrating the ex-Aounists as well as restoring a confessional balance within its officer corps (where Christians were over-represented) and among the troops (where Muslims had an extra 5000 men).

In October 1993, when the results of the first — and only — wave of integration were made public, 6000 ex-militiamen and only a few dozen officers had joined the regular forces. Even if these figures are approximations based on sources that intersect and contradict one another, such discrepancy between the number of applicants and

7. Part II, points 1, 2 and 3 of the Ta'if agreement adopted on 22 October 1989 deals with the demobilization of the militias and the reinforcement of the regular forces. See Joseph Maila, 'The Document of National Reconciliation: A Commentary', *Prospects for Lebanon* N°4 (Oxford: Centre for Lebanese Studies, 1992).

those actually integrated points to a number of problems that arose during implementation. Some of these problems were social in nature (marginalization), some were political (relations between the army and the militias) and some were sectarian (confessional balance).

However, before analysing the effect of demobilization on the Lebanese state and its society, we will examine the experiences of each of the three major militias as regards the implementation of Law 88. While simultaneous, the process of dismantling each of the militias took place in relative independence, all the more so since the largest sectarian militias had long ceased fighting one another. Moreover, they exhibited huge differences both in origin and structure as well as in the way each was entangled in the confessional fabric. In the first years after the war, the relationship of each with the state, and particularly with the army, was different and even antagonistic. Their demobilization has therefore brought to light many diverse problems and has opened the way for as many innovative solutions. From these experiences we will draw a few hypotheses concerning the problems and possible developments that may arise when the time comes to dismantle Hizballah and the South Lebanon Army. Finally, an examination of these various cases will allow us to identify the obstacles that prevented a return to 'civilian' politics, as well as the tensions prevalent in Lebanese society in the aftermath of war.

The Progressive Socialist Party: To Remain Autonomous

The Progressive Socialist Party — whose membership structure was almost exclusively reserved for the Druze community of the Chouf, Aley and the Upper Metn — had recruited up to 5000 militiamen in the 1980s. Most recruits were from the Mountain and, until the return of the Syrian Army in 1987, from the Sanayeh and the seafront quarters of West Beirut. In addition to the combatants, the Civil Administration of the Mountain (CAOM) had 3000 employees dating from the Chouf war and the split with Amin Gemayel's presidency. The PSP had emerged victorious from the war. It had expelled the Lebanese Forces from the Chouf in 1983 and remained in control of the Mountain as far as Souk el-Gharb and Iqlim al-Kharroub. By contrast, the PSP was politically badly represented at Ta'if (Walid Jomblatt and

Marwan Hamade were not deputies at the time) and it only reluctantly accepted the agreement that was adopted by the deputies there. But Ta'if brought the PSP several gains, particularly the two extra parliamentary seats, more than the relative demographic weight of the community probably warranted. Moreover, in the prospect of future administrative decentralization,⁸ one of the party's favourite themes, the Mountain's autonomous administration was allowed to survive as part of the public service when it was officially dismantled after hostilities ceased. In the PSP leadership's view, peace would permit the return of the 'displaced' Christians who had fled the Chouf and Aley in 1983 and would favour an economic revival through public and private financial aid. Over and above these advantages, acceptance of the Ta'if Agreement was essential to relations between the Druze leadership and Syria. Thus, the PSP's position *vis-à-vis* the nascent Second Republic was both co-operative and critical — which inevitably translated into ambivalence regarding the process of demobilization.

Significantly, the PSP militia decided to surrender its heavy weaponry, which was Syrian and Palestinian in origin, to Syria rather than to the Lebanese Army, which was simply sent an inventory. This indicated both the limit of Druze submission to the military authority of the Lebanese state as well as the extent of Druze dependence on Damascus. This, however, is only the official side of the story. Covertly, the Druzes took advantage of the troubled situation in the Balkan states and sold part of their weapons to Slovene and Croat fighters via a German broker.⁹ Moreover, they may have retained some of the weapons that had been obtained from the PLO and hidden them in the mountains. Neither Syria nor the Lebanese Army made any statements concerning armaments that had not been accounted for.

With regard to the dissolution of the PSP army and the integration of its militia members into the Lebanese Army, two opposing arguments operated simultaneously. The first was the economic argument that dictated that the largest possible number of militiamen join the army or the security forces. This was due to the loss of the militia's

8. Ta'if agreement, part I, title 3, point A.

9. The Lebanese source for this information is an officer at the Ministry of Defence. See *Al-Hayât*, 27 July 1991.

parastate resources, particularly the revenues of the ports of Jiyeh and Khaldeh, as well as the levies on people and merchandise entering and leaving the Mountain via the Yater roadblock. In addition, the army offered higher wages than the *Jaysh al-Sha'bi* — approximately US \$250 per month for a simple soldier. According to the PSP almost half of the militiamen demobilized in spring 1991 were able to resume their old civilian professions without difficulty. Thus, the integration request put forward by the PSP was for 2800 Druzes as well as 500 Sunnis from Iqlim al-Kharroub. Some 800 militiamen were enrolled in the army during the first stage, 160 of whom were attached to the constabulary, the *Forces de Sécurité Intérieure* (FSI), or the customs. At a later stage, probably towards the beginning of 1992, an additional 500 were integrated. This statistic of 1300 integrated members out of a total of 3300 applicants is a considerable achievement in comparison with other militias, especially if the claims of one PSP official that very few applicants left are true.

Thus, 1200 PSP militiamen remained both outside the regular forces and unable to resume their old professions. The party tried to resolve each case individually. It facilitated the departure of 300 to 500 members to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf and placed some militiamen in private firms in the Mountain by using the efficient Joumblatti clientelist system. The militiamen who remained were given fixed sums of money and returned to civilian life. In all cases, the PSP adopted sectarian and even family-based solutions to a social problem, thereby demonstrating the validity of traditional networks of solidarity. By the same logic, Druze officials asserted that they were rarely faced with the problem of delinquency usually faced by former militia members, due to the strength of the Druzes' own confessional structures. When such problems did occur, they were usually attributed to the ill effects of urbanization.

The demobilization of officers was more difficult. About 50 officers from the Druze militia requested integration into the Lebanese Army. Their credentials included instruction at the PSP's military school in Dbayye and, since 1976, in the USSR (about 15 trainees per year). In some cases, officers had acquired experience fighting alongside the Libyan Army during the war in Chad. The leaders of the PSP inflated their competence by reference to the 'Druze military tradition', which

called upon the memory of events in the nineteenth century.¹⁰ However, these officers were nevertheless asked to sit the entrance examination at Fayadiyyeh and to undertake one, and in some cases up to three, additional years of study. Those who accepted to play the game took up their commands in the spring and summer of 1994.

This economic and 'professional' argument contrasted sharply with what may be called the political argument. This was justified by the frustration — felt also by the other militias — resulting from the limited character and seemingly indefinite suspension of the process of integration. Confronted with such a prospect, the community chose to consolidate its internal cohesion while simultaneously negotiating a *modus vivendi* with the state. This attitude is consistent with the strategy followed historically by the Druzes in Lebanon, as well as in Israel and Syria. It allows the community to satisfy its political ambitions through the acquisition of positions of power, particularly in the military, while remaining on the periphery of the political system in order to protect its distinct character and guarantee its relative autonomy.¹¹

With reference to the integration of the PSP militiamen into the Lebanese Army this tendency expressed itself as wariness directed towards both the holders of political power and the army. Whether political power was Maronite, as before the war, or multiconfessional, as after Ta'if, it had long since ceased to be a Druze monopoly and tended to weaken the Druze community's pivotal position among Sunnis, Shi'a and Christians. As for the 'new' Lebanese Army, the Druze leadership suspected its 'dictatorial' and possibly presidential ambitions, especially once it had been redeployed in the Mountain to ensure security and the return of displaced Christians. Walid Joumblatt and his lieutenants insisted instead that the Druze community be

10. Such stereotypes, both negative and positive, were often invoked in wartime Lebanon. For the real facts, see Leila Fawaz's enlightening book, *An Occasion for War: Civil Conflict in Lebanon and Damascus in 1860* (London: I.B.Tauris, 1994), especially pp. 40 and 166.

11. See Thomas Scheffler, 'Hegemony and Communal Cohesion at an Interface Periphery: The Druzes in Lebanon', paper presented to the 23rd Annual Conference of the Middle East Studies Association (MESA), Toronto, 1989; and Robert B. Betts, *The Druze* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

responsible for its own security and stressed the necessity for political decentralization. From this perspective, Druze leaders' participation in post-Ta'if governments, beginning with Jomblatt, was evaluated in terms of costs and benefits (particularly over relations with Damascus) and tempered by scepticism regarding the future stability of both the regime and the country. In its tacit competition for legitimacy with the Lebanese state, the Druze leadership enjoyed strong clannish networks that still ran deep, a positive image (the charisma of Walid Jomblatt who is more confessionally-oriented than his father and almost as powerful) and a still-prosperous partisan structure thanks to compulsory financial participation by the community.

Despite the fact that it had returned its heavy weaponry to the Syrians and wiped out the visible traces of its militarization (titles, uniforms, barracks), the structure of the PSP remained intact and strong — ready for any contingency. It was less than committed to the Lebanese national interest. Nothing illustrates the Druze's deep reluctance to disarm and integrate themselves into the national community better than the dispute over history textbooks, which pitted the civil administration of the Mountain against the Ministry of Education. With good reason, the Minister of Education considered the Druze version of several episodes in Lebanon's history to be harmful to national cohesion, particularly in relation to the events of 1860/1 and the civil war of 1975–90.¹² Other examples were found in the Jomblatti version of history displayed at the palace of the Chehab emirs in Beiteddine, or in the 'battle of the billboards' between Jomblatt and then Prime Minister Hariri on the road to the destroyed Christian villages near Aley and in the Chouf. Billboards publicizing the National Fund for the Displaced — an administration attached to the prime minister's office — illustrated with pictures of Rafik al-Hariri, faced others that proclaimed *na'am li qiyadat Walid!* ('Yes to Walid's leadership!'). Of course this was all part of a political game. Nevertheless

12. Regarding the controversy that paralysed the commission of the Centre for Research and Pedagogic Development, charged with developing a unified history programme, see Adnan al-Amin, *Al-Ta'lim fi Lubnan, zawayah wa mashahid* (Beirut: Dar al-Jadid, 1994) especially pp. 42 ff.; Dany Khayat, *Le système éducatif libanais, un enjeu politique* (IEP thesis, Paris, 1995).

these observations showed that the demobilization of the PSP's militia-men took place only formally. The reservations of the Druze leadership and the precautions it took point to two of the issues that remain unresolved in postwar Lebanon: the structure of the new state (centralized or federal) and the political role of the new Lebanese Army.

Amal: We are the State

Three factors led to the Amal militia's successful disarmament and the integration of its militiamen into the public service (particularly the army). These same factors, however, also underline the frailty of the process and point to obstacles in the reconstitution of the state.

First, even after 1984 when Amal became an anti-establishment partner in the state, the leadership's authority over its militants remained limited. The *'asabiyya* that welded Amal's militants together was unconnected with the discipline and hierarchy of a military organization. As a movement, Amal was a loose association of a multitude of local groups — representing certain city quarters, villages or even neighbourhood blocks¹³ — organized first and foremost to preserve their own security and look after their own interests. More serious was the fact that Amal had been undermined by the creation and growth of Hizballah since 1982, and militarily weakened since the war of the camps between 1985 and 1988. Notwithstanding Syria's indispensable support in terms of heavy weaponry, logistics and strategic command, the movement suffered heavy losses. Hundreds of combatants lost their lives and many others chose to flee an armed conflict they found hard to justify. Later on, Amal was faced with a fratricidal war against Hizballah (February 1988 to December 1990) in areas of the south, where it lost Iqlim al-Tuffah in 1989, and in the Dahiye. There, too, it suffered serious human losses and many more of its members defected

13. There is no serious sociological study of the subject. This theme is addressed by Nabil Beyhum in *Espaces éclatés, espaces dominés: étude de la recomposition des espaces publics centraux de Beyrouth de 1975 à 1990* (PhD thesis, University of Lyon II, France, 1991); Robert Fisk, *Pity the Nation: Lebanon at War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); Elizabeth Picard, 'The Lebanese Shi'a and Political Violence' in D. Apter (ed.), *The Legitimation of Violence* (London: MacMillan, 1997), pp. 189–233.

and joined Hizballah's ranks. Thus, when the government ordered the disarmament of the militias in March 1991, the decision came a few months after Amal had already announced the dissolution of its military force. The movement had no difficulty in offering its formal agreement to the order on 25 April 1991, or in giving notice of its rapid disarmament and the return of its heavy weaponry to its Syrian ally.¹⁴ This is probably why news of the return of a strongly armed Amal to the battlefield only five years later would come as no surprise. On the civil scene, Berry's militia had respected the deal perfectly and its leaders had gained a central position. The recovery of its armaments and its participation in the resistance in the south would not be considered an infringement of the demobilization law but rather the fulfilment of a 'national duty,' even if it was motivated by intra-communal competition as in the worst episodes of the civil war.

What remained in 1991 was a party apparatus with political and administrative cadres having a strong presence in Beirut and in government circles, but much less influence on a local level — except for some places in the south such as Nabatiyye. In addition, Amal was an organization whose political project had given way to electoral pragmatism and had long since been deserted by Shi'a intellectuals. While the homes of its leaders continued to fill up with visitors and supplicants every weekend, militant meetings such as the August commemoration of Musa al-Sadr were attended less and less. Such disaffection contrasted sharply with Nabih Berry's personal popularity, particularly among the postwar generation. Amal remained mainly a powerful clientelist machine with a direct hold over the state, the public service, and foreign donors such as Iran, the Shi'i diaspora and international NGOs. Amal's 'militia' function consisted in basking in the Ta'if Agreement's political 'success' and ensuring that its cadres and old party faithful were either integrated into the security apparatus or the civil service, particularly in the Council for the Development of the South and the administration of the *muhafaza* of Nabatiyye.

Second, the very composition of the militia itself needs to be taken into account. Berry's famous 1984 slogan 'I have a million militants'

14. Since the victory of Amal in West Beirut in 1984, and especially during the war of the camps, Syria provided the militia with light and heavy armaments, including T-54s.

considered every Lebanese Shi'a as a potential 'militant'. In practice, however, the armed forces of Amal relied on the Army's Sixth Brigade, composed of approximately 2000 men, which sided with the militia during its insurrection in West Beirut in February 1984, as well as certain elements of the mainly Shi'i First Brigade stationed in the Bekaa. For financial as well as professional reasons, the majority of these men chose to comply with the conditions laid down by the state for their integration, or reintegration, into the army. A number of militia members who had lived off the *khuwa* — the protection racket imposed on their own neighbourhoods — also sought to join the legal forces due to a lack of alternatives. All in all, interviews in the Haret Hreik area of the Dahiye and in Nabatiyye showed that the militia made good use of the opportunities offered by Law 88 and succeeded in gaining posts for some of its clients and allies, who were not really combatants, in the public service. A distinction should be made here between the military and civil administrations. While a considerable number of ex-Amal officers were able to find career opportunities in the army, the Shi'a were already over-represented in the rank and file. Notwithstanding, out of 6000 'ex-militiamen' incorporated between summer 1991 and autumn 1993, 5000 were Muslim. In contrast, all sectors of the civil administration — especially the diplomatic service — were actively recruiting Shi'a and having difficulty in finding enough qualified candidates.

The third factor that contributed to the successful demobilization of Amal militiamen was the tendency of the majority of the Shi'a since the early 1960s to put their Lebanese identity first, a position that was given strong political support by Amal. In their search for better political and social integration, the Shi'a were willing to give allegiance to the state and to rely on it for their protection and advancement. Regular soldiers, or '*watan*' in popular parlance, were therefore well received in areas previously controlled by Amal, particularly if they happened to be natives of the region. In the political arena, the 1992 and 1996 parliamentary elections confirmed that Amal sympathizers constituted the staunchest supporters of the Second Republic¹⁵ —

15. See Ahmad Beydoun 'Al-Janub: al-masrah wal-riwayah', in the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies (ed.), *Al-Intikhabat al-ula fi Lubnan ma ba'd al-harb* (Beirut: Dar al-

even if their attachment to the state was not truly egalitarian (since they implicitly claim to form the majority of the population), nor truly civic (since the country lacks such a tradition).

In short, the integration of a large number of Amal militiamen took place in a weak democratic environment. Since then, the return to civil peace has highlighted two issues: namely, the nature of the relationship between the Lebanese state and confessional society, and the mediating role played by the militia between both political actors.

Hizballah: The Struggle Goes on ...

Officially, Hizballah's exemption from the process of demobilization was not subject to discussion: its armed activities have been unofficially sanctioned by designating them as a 'resistance' force — a force resisting the Israeli presence in the south. This is the term former Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri himself employed in July 1993 to reject Israel's demand that the Lebanese Army disarm Hizballah. The government used it again in April 1996, not so much for the purpose of gaining international support against the destructive *Grapes of Wrath* operation — reaching as far north as the suburbs of Beirut — as to indicate and strengthen solidarity with Muslim combatants and Hizballah supporters throughout the country. It is no wonder that the reconstruction project of Rafik al-Hariri and the Lebanese business community, already subject to controversy and financial difficulties, was continually hampered by the growing and unresolved conflict in the south. But as months passed and the peace process waned, the perceived legitimacy of Hizballah's military activities gained momentum.

Although understandable in a country whose military record on the regional scene is made up of defeats and compromises, and even of treason, the sacredness of national 'resistance' invoked by Hizballah does not stand up against the weight of reality. Whatever its political agenda in Beirut¹⁶ may be, the party had neither the means nor indeed

Nahar, 1993), pp. 357–416; 'The 1996 Elections by Region', *Lebanon Report* (Autumn 1996).

16. See Waddah Sharara, 'Mujtama' al-harb', *Dawlat 'Hizb Allah', Lubnan Mujtama'an Islamiyyan* (Beirut: Dar al-Nahar, 1997), pp. 253–97. Sharara emphasizes the political instrumentalization of the armed struggle in the south.

the intention of victory over the Israeli forces. Rather, Hizballah's continued attacks against the South Lebanon Army (SLA) and the Israelis served the purpose of the state that bankrolled it, Iran, as well as the state that had control over it, Syria, and even the state against which it was fighting, Israel.¹⁷

Since the return of a unified legal authority to Beirut, and with the continuation of fighting in the south, Hizballah has been militarily reinforced rather than demobilized. Thus, while weapons were no longer visible to the renewed police patrols on the streets of Dahiye and the last Western hostages had been liberated, and even though the Sheikh Abdallah barracks in Baalbek were returned to the army and combatants were only being trained in remote valleys, still Hizballah's level of expertise and equipment markedly improved after the end of the war. In 1996 and 1997, it received new sophisticated equipment, particularly anti-tank missiles, and considerably improved its efficiency. Its 2000 to 3000 combatants have become professionals, separated from civilian life as if they were a true army. The Islamic resistance has never had so many militants.¹⁸ Poorly educated men fearing unemployment were motivated by a generous salary (US \$400 per month in 1992), but also by virtue of their convictions. As was the case with other Islamic movements, Hizballah benefited from the failure of nationalism and Near-Eastern Marxism and gained from the marginalization of the Palestinian resistance after 1982. The 20 years of Israeli bombardments on the villages of the south have created a desire to 'continue the struggle as long as one square metre of Lebanese territory is under occupation'.¹⁹

Yet the prospect of suspending the activities of the resistance, and its subsequent demobilization, is not unlikely. Although very much is dependent on the fate of the Syrian negotiations with Israel, it is not so far off and it is certainly a *sine qua non* for the signing of a Lebanese-Israeli agreement. Many observers considered the progressive normal-

17. H. Agha and A. Khalidi, *Syria and Iran* (London: Pinter, Royal Institute of International Affairs Papers, 1995) pp. 77 ff.

18. Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, Secretary General of Hizballah to al-Shira', 22 November 1993.

19. Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah to the AFP on 3 October 1993.

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ization of Hizballah's relationship with the Lebanese state — its successful participation in the legislative elections of 1992 and 1996 and its commitment to the Elyssar project in the Dahiye — a sign of its willingness to abide by state legitimacy, including the Weberian monopoly of legitimate physical force. However, Hizballah's guerrilla training by Iranian and Palestinian instructors did not prepare its combatants for integration into the ranks of a regular army. In any case, the Lebanese Army has in the meantime already completed its own recruitment and reorganization. The movement itself would have to be responsible for managing the transition of its combatants from military to civilian life. A sizeable majority would be expected to allow itself 'to be corrupted by civilian life' in return for some financial assistance, and making their own way in the ailing economy of Beirut. As for those whose monolithic political socialization prevented them from adapting to ordinary life, they would probably be offered alternative tasks within the Shi'i networks either in *Husayniyyat*, in schools, or in other communal institutions. Radical militancy might then give way in Shi'i society to a Saudi-style fundamentalism by imposing stricter controls over public practices (pertaining to food or clothing) and the return of patriarchal authority over women and children — a strategy to re-Islamize 'from below'.

The disarmament of Hizballah, which could be seen simply as the finishing touch to a transformation that began in the first few months of the Second Republic, might provoke a split within the movement itself, leading a fraction of its members to resort to clandestine action and terrorism. From the first years of the Second Republic a section of the Hizballah leadership, grouped around Shaykh Subhi al-Tufayli (Secretary General of the Movement in 1989–1990), rejected the Ta'if Agreement and criticized Hizballah's participation in the 1992 elections. It also advocated the rejection of any arrangement with Israel, solidarity with Hamas and the liberation 'of Islamic land, including Palestine before the creation of the Jewish State'.²⁰ A few years later, in late 1997, the same group went into armed confrontation with the state around Baalbak and Brital, in the name of the *mustad'afin*, who had been ruined by the eradication of crops of restricted drugs. This

20. Shaykh Subhi al-Tufayli to *Le Monde*, 21 February 1995.

internal dissent exposed the multilevel significance of Hizballah's armed struggle in Lebanon in the 1990s — characteristics also shared by the other militias before they were disbanded. First, the centrality of armed struggle in the collective identity of the group, which would be threatened with dissolution once disarmed. Second, the civil and political stakes hidden by apparent unanimity, particularly competition for leadership, causing elites of the same organization to choose contradictory strategies. Finally, the influence of external interests such as foreign states, in shaping political and military decisions on the Lebanese scene. What remained to be seen was the point at which these Shi'a rejectionists would be marginalized, and the degree to which they would combine their strategy with those of other radical Islamic movements in Lebanon and in the region in opposition to the shaping of the 'new Lebanon', as well as the 'new Middle East'.

Hizballah's reinforcement at a time when the demobilization of the other militias had been completed leads back to the twin questions of the limited sovereignty of the Lebanese state and its monopoly over the use of legitimate force — the latter still divided between the army and the militias active in the south.

The Lebanese Forces: Excluded

The demobilization of the Lebanese Forces militia and the return of its militiamen to the legal status were the most challenging parts of the process the Lebanese state put in motion in spring 1991. The process was difficult both militarily, for it involved resolving the problem of an over-equipped and hardened armed structure, as well as politically, for the hostility of the Lebanese Forces regarding the Ta'if Agreement and the government had gained momentum since the beginning of 1991.

While the operation was underway between February and March 1991, the Lebanese Forces saw itself as neither a victim of the war nor a stranger to the Second Republic. In December 1989, Samir Geagea had announced his acceptance of Ta'if and had urged General Aoun to do the same. Admittedly, the Lebanese Forces had lost an appreciable amount of legitimacy during the intra-Christian conflict of January–June 1990. But this erosion was partly masked — in any case from the eyes of the LF leadership — by the fact that later on, the target of the

accepted; and that it was in the process of completely remixing its brigades. Moreover, the LF was given a very short deadline within which to get rid of its enormous arsenal.²³ It hastily sold part of its arms to Armenia and the Karabakh warlords, to various belligerents in former Yugoslavia, and perhaps even to Algeria, using a network of traffickers that had risen around its leadership in the previous 11 years. Another part of its arsenal was shipped to the strip of territory occupied by Israel, until then the LF's second principal supplier of weapons. Finally the remainder was stowed away in the *jurd* of Kisrwan and Jbeil. The army sought rapidly to surround the LF's strongholds, but the LF resisted since it wanted to safeguard its weapons and trusted that certain sites — such as the *majlis al-harbi*, its general headquarters in Karantina — would be given immunity. As a result of this antagonism, several clashes occurred in the eastern suburbs during the 'demilitarization of Greater Beirut'. The militia's 'civilian' offices were ransacked, many weapons were seized and several arrests were made.²⁴ The list of heavy weapons that remained was not submitted to the army until the final deadline of 30 April 1991, and the LF coastal roadblock at Barbara was lifted only on that day.

The incorporation of the Lebanese Forces into the army was almost a total failure. The demands of the LF were enormous. It asked for the integration of 8600 combatants²⁵ and drew up a list of 650 officers. In addition, it demanded that certain units not be disbanded, but integrated into the regular army as distinct components. Overall, it wished the army to remain organized on a regional and confessional basis. Of the few hundred men who were finally accepted, 50 left voluntarily in the following months. The army's command had the means to discourage undesirable elements by assigning them to barracks that were remote — in all senses of the word — from their places of origin.

23. As late as 1989 it had received from Iraq 40 helicopters, 20 frigates and enough missile launchers to set up a third artillery battalion. See *Al-Nashra al-'askariyya* (the internal bulletin of the Lebanese Forces), 4 March 1991, p. 18.

24. Marie-Joelle Zahar, 'The Lebanese Forces and the Ta'if Accord: A Case of Militia Decision-Making' (MA thesis, McGill University, Montreal, 1993), p. 41.

25. To which one should add some 500 men from various other militias such as the Guardians of the Cedar.

Individual problems continued to occur until 1994, resulting in further resignations. This meant that several thousand Christian militiamen had remained unwillingly — and as many willingly — outside the process of integration. Some, such as the members of special units who had fought Aoun's army in 1990, could not benefit from the amnesty; many others were not admitted into the state's civil service nor even allowed to resume their prewar activity.

Faced with such a dilemma, the LF leadership adopted a two-pronged strategy. For those militia members who were most compromised and whose security was jeopardized in Lebanon, it chose emigration.²⁶ Tens of combatants travelled by sea towards the zone occupied by Israel, and more than 500 emigrated to France, Great Britain, Canada and Australia. The authorities at the airport turned a blind eye to a number of these departures since they constituted a low-cost resolution to the problem of undesirable elements. Upon their arrival abroad, local representatives of the LF welcomed militants, and the militia put at their disposal some of its overseas assets.²⁷ But the majority of LF fighters remained in Lebanon, staying in the regions under the militia's control and within its sphere of influence. The number of men who had applied for integration into the army is a good indication of the number of rejects. Of these men, only a few hundred found new employment in the administration and propaganda services of the Lebanese Forces in Maameltein and Zouk but there were few openings since the militia had lost its parastate resources. Others assumed positions in security: The residence of Samir Geagea in Ghedreis was set within a veritable barrack. For all others, the LF put into action its network of personal contacts. It established an employment agency that canvassed friendly businesses in Beirut and the Kisrwan for assistance in placing militiamen. It also

26. While the Lebanese had special difficulties in getting French visas after the 1986 bombings in Paris, a special procedure seems to have been adopted for the FL (as for Elie Hobeika and his men after September 1986), and tens of them got French nationality with only minimal delay.

27. See, for example, the statement made by Samir Geagea in Yarze on 23 April 1994. He declared that he had given US\$ 100,000 to Ghassan Touma and to other officials in the LF security services to 'start a business abroad and begin a new life'. See the explanation of Touma in *al-Wasat*, 127, 4 July 1994, p. 20.

retained its pension programme for the wounded and the families of 'martyrs' (US \$100 per month). Finally, in 1993, it dismissed the last of those not actively employed with two month' wages — three months in the case of married men.

Within a period of just a few months, the LF had completely reversed its assessment of the demobilization project particularly when it became clear that there would be no further opportunities for integration and that the army was screening new applicants very carefully. This reappraisal coincided with other developments: increasing 'Christian disenchantment' provoked by the signing of the Syro-Lebanese treaty and the nomination of 40 new deputies — all close to the new regime — in May 1991; by the aggravation of the economic crisis in spring 1992; and by rigged legislative elections held between August and September 1992. It was not unrelated to Samir Geagea's failure to normalize his situation on the Lebanese political scene and his relationship with Syrian powerbrokers. In June 1992, the leadership of the Kata'ib party slipped through his fingers in a 53–60 vote that saw victory go to Georges Saadeh around whom Geagea's opponents had rallied. Approaches made to the Shi'ite president of the chamber and the Maronite patriarch, and his condolence visit to Qardaha after Basil el-Assad's death in January 1994 all showed that Geagea did not mean to leave any stone unturned, but his marginalization was inescapable.

This ended the militia's attempts to accommodate itself with the system. However, it did not put an end to the political ambitions of the party even after its legal suspension. The LF began denouncing the 'Army of the Muslims' and the civil authority both of which it accused of playing the game of 'victor and vanquished' — implicitly revealing the frailty of the myth of consensus upon which postwar Lebanon pretended to be built. The ex-militia was dominated by a siege mentality, which encouraged sensationalism: a famous monk from Kaslik predicted a prompt reversal of fortune through divine intervention while the leader of the Lebanese Forces thought more in terms of an Israeli intervention. Already, the time seemed ripe for remobilization, even if the domination of a firmly established state restrained the range of possibilities. Such unfavourable events as the compulsory conscription of the Christian youth were interpreted as opportunities

arising out of misfortune by leaders who trusted it would 'enhance their Christian and federalist convictions' in the face of 'the leadership's excessive centralization and pro-Muslim leanings'. In sum, neither economic difficulties nor opprobrium helped the die-hard members of the Lebanese Forces to face the aftermath of war in a spirit of reconciliation

But one must avoid automatically concluding that the Lebanese Forces *returned* to a military option after their failure to find a place on the Lebanese political scene and in the Lebanese Army. Rather, as Samir Geagea's indictment in the Zouk affair suggests,²⁸ it may be said that they had never really abandoned it. In that sense, the LF was not really an exception. Despite announcements that the war was over and the official demobilization of militias, all the militias retained and concealed some of their heavy weaponry, all continued to shelter ex-militiamen with a suspect past, all persisted in training fighters — scouts, vigilantes or 'karate teachers' — and all continued to adopt their own local strategies for self-defence in an uncertain domestic and regional environment. After 1991, the Lebanese Forces continued to stock up on arms, particularly via South Africa, and to collaborate with the Israeli secret service. They retained in the diaspora a militant network trained in terrorist action, and they were involved in several assassinations and assassination attempts after the promulgation of the demobilization law and the declaration of amnesty.²⁹ Although these activities had a destabilizing effect on postwar Lebanon — leading, for instance, to the postponement of the papal visit and contributing to the disarray and *ihbat* of Christian society — they never really threatened the tightly controlled state. Rather, they contributed for half a decade to the marginalization of the LF, if not its total exclusion.

The incomplete demobilization of the Lebanese Forces needs to be analysed in the context of the unfinished political reconstruction of

28. *Al-Nahar*, 17 June 1994, pp. 4–7.

29. For example in the murder of Father Sam'an al-Khoury in Ajaltoun on 11 May 1992, in retaliation for his alleged cooperation with Aoun's army in 1989 and 1990 and, most notoriously of all, in the bomb explosion in the Sayedat al-Najat church in Zouk on 27 February 1994, which prompted the government to dissolve the LF as a political party.

Lebanon. Since 1994, the LF was not even part of the institutional opposition to the Second Republic. While remaining *physically* present in the country, it was placed *politically* outside the system, and conspicuously marginalized in the 1996 legislative elections. The restrictions, searches, arrests and detentions perpetrated against its fighters and sympathizers since 1994³⁰ were not so much an indication of its continued armed activities (indisputable but nevertheless marginal), as a determination of those in power to place before them two alternatives: submission to the Ta'if compromise, or continued ostracism. With time and the perpetuation of inter-Christian divisions, and also in response to the needs of local Christian society, the Lebanese Forces may choose to re-enter the Lebanese political game, as indicated by the strength it showed in the 1998 municipal elections. Nevertheless, the vindictiveness of the regime has been a strong indication of the LF's fragile legitimacy; its members and supporters were grateful to find a scapegoat on which to pile their shared responsibility for the civil war. This suggests that the 1975–90 war did end with a 'vanquished' party, for the question remains as to whether a victor also exists, thereby ending a taboo long-established in the country.

The South Lebanon Army: Pariahs

The rejection of the Lebanese Forces by the Lebanese polity, and its exclusion from state institutions are a harbinger of what is to come with the demobilization of the South Lebanon Army in the context of a Lebanese–Israeli agreement. Gone are the days of 1979, or even 1983, when Major Haddad, then leader of the Free Lebanon Army, was offered the possibility of reintegration, along with his men, into the regular army as were the other rebellious units. After the Ta'if Agreement and the passing of the law on demobilization, a second chance was offered to his successor, General Lahd, and his men to dissolve the SLA and be integrated into the regular army — this at a time when the Israeli government was contemplating the 'Jezzine first' option. Both Syrian opposition to the deal and exorbitant Israeli conditions for a withdrawal blocked negotiations, leading to the

30. As called for in Article 9, 1 b of Law 84 (26 August 1991).

militia's further isolation in contrast with the growing official status and normalization of the 'Islamic Resistance'.

Nevertheless, a distinction has to be made, within the SLA, between the body of soldiers and their officers. While the former had enrolled mainly for economic reasons (a salary of US\$ 500 in 1995–97 paid by the Israeli government) and tended to operate as a local communal police (largely composed of Shi'a in Bint Jbayl, of Christians in Merjayoun and Rmaysh, and of Druze in Hasbayya),³¹ officers had become close to the Israeli civil administration and the General Security Service. Despite, or rather because of the insistence of the Israeli 'co-ordinator' in Lebanon, Uri Lubrani, and of several Israeli ministers on the officers' reintegration into the Lebanese Army as a condition for the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 425 (1978), it is highly probable that hundreds of SLA officers as well as their families will have no other option than to settle in Israel or to emigrate to the Americas or Australia. Indeed, once demobilized, they risk becoming the victims of a cycle of private vengeance, thereby prolonging the domestic insecurity that has been endemic since 1976. Not even in the zones previously controlled by the Lebanese Forces will their security be certain, while elsewhere in Lebanon they would be considered traitors.³²

As the prospect for a renewal of Lebanese–Israeli and Syrian–Israeli negotiations waned in the late 1990s, the fate of the SLA militiamen clearly illustrated an important characteristic of the Lebanese 'reconciliation'. The post-Ta'if national consensus was intentionally based on a distinction between two realms of war crimes. Political crimes and crimes committed between and within militias, benefited from an amnesty in order to achieve civilian peace on a domestic level and to bury the collective memory of communal conflict. But the crimes of

31. Interestingly, Hizballah suggested several times in 1997 and 1998 that the government pardon the rank-and-file militiamen and reintegrate them into civilian life, or even into the army, in the event of an unconditional Israeli pull-out. Some 70 per cent of the 2500 SLA men are known to be Shi'is.

32. Etienne Saqr, the founder of the Guardians of the Cedar, who had taken refuge in the Israeli-occupied zone, was indicted in 1993 for collusion with the enemy. Antoine Lahd and a number of senior SLA officers were sentenced to death *in absentia* in December 1996.

the Israeli enemy and of those who had collaborated with it would have to remain unforgivable.

A Traumatized Society

On the whole, such a relatively quick and apparently successful operation³³ consisting of demilitarization, demobilization and partial enrolment in the regular forces had, in fact, long-lasting and profound consequences on the entire Lebanese population. It caused painful breaks between sectors of society and accelerated disturbing economic changes. More importantly, it put its own particular imprint on Lebanese political culture in the post-Ta'if era.

At first glance, the demobilization in Lebanon after 15 years of war might be considered a success. Compared with other examples of demobilization and return to civil life, the case of Lebanon in the first decade after war appeared a hopeful exception and one that called into question, yet again, the validity of the paradigm of 'lebanonization'. When studying the modalities and characteristics of the resumption of normality and civil life, it is necessary to question the nature of the social structures that facilitated this return to routine life. But it is also necessary to determine the degree to which such a return has indeed taken place, and see whether there are exceptions to this process. Finally, one must also be conscious of the degree to which the militia phenomenon has been ingrained in the collective consciousness.

Although pictorial representations remain visible everywhere, the militias have disappeared from Lebanon's public landscape, along with internal frontiers and the symbols of their power — barracks, check-points, and unidentified military vehicles. Civilians enjoy free travel and have regained hold of the territory. Many undertook to visit, as tourists, areas from which they had been excluded for over a decade, either by their enemies or even by members of their own communities.

33. If we compare it, for example, with Cambodia's dilatory experiment, Angola's failed operation — which was supposed to last a few months in 1993 — or even with the complications that arose in the case of El Salvador. See Roland Marchal and Christine Messiant, *Les chemins de la guerre et de la paix: Fins de conflit en Afrique orientale et australe* (Paris: Karthala, 1997). Northern Ireland is another case where the question of demobilization is at the heart of the peace process.

Liberating oneself from the militia's rule and from the militia's laws was a first step before meetings and encounters with lost friends and imagined enemies. Such visits were often full of surprises: the other was banal — he was like us. Only a few months after the end of the confrontations, most Lebanese spoke in conciliatory terms, totally at odds with the exclusionist rhetoric of the militias. The majority considered themselves victims of the militias; the majority recalled having kept their distance from militia organizations and harboured an overwhelming desire for the return of state legality. In sum, a civil society that had been kept in check and could not demonstrate except on rare occasions during the course of the war,³⁴ had been emancipated in the space of an instant.

In truth, the proportion of militia members in relation to the overall population remained weak throughout the war. The estimates of Kari Karame³⁵ tally with those of Theodor Hanf³⁶ and both suggest that only one person out of thirty had been a permanent armed member, while the total number of permanent members from all the various militias at any one point was never more than 20,000 to 30,000. Thus the expression, the 'kalashnikov generation'³⁷ was actually a misnomer, concealing the fact that professional combatants were always in the minority and that the majority of militia members were not *only* combatants but retained their own private and professional lives and financial interests outside the militia structure. This is undoubtedly why there survived in Lebanon alongside the totalitarian ethos of the warring militias, a hedonistic and consumerist culture that was secular (that is, detached from religion while remaining confessional), and even cosmopolitan. The best illustration of the pervasiveness of this shared culture, which went beyond the ideologies of the various militias, was the proliferation of radio and television channels in the

34. Ghassan Slaiby, 'Les actions collectives de résistance civile à la guerre', in Fadia Kiwan (ed.), *Le Liban d'Aujourd'hui* (Paris: CERMOC-CNRS, 1993), pp. 119–36.

35. 'Milicien farouche et fils plein d'égard', unpublished paper presented at a workshop on 'Militias and Society: Lebanon and Bosnia-Herzegovina', Paris: Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches Internationales, 31 May 1994.

36. Theodor Hanf, *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon: Death of a State and Birth of a Nation* (Oxford and London: Centre for Lebanese Studies and I.B.Tauris, 1993).

37. 'La génération de la kalashnikov', *L'Orient-Le Jour* (5 and 6 May 1979).

second half of the Lebanese crisis. Beneath the war rhetoric of seemingly hostile stations such as *LBC* or *al-Manar*, lay similar messages promoting the same hedonistic values and reflecting individualistic attitudes and rational economist interests that were virtually identical.

The hegemonic character of the discourse and practices of the militias had long hidden such dynamics and similarities. By inducing a forced polarization of Lebanese society, the militias wanted to negate plurality of identification and solidarity. They attempted to stifle them and to constitute themselves into a *total* social system by organizing their own institutions of solidarity.³⁸ Only when faced with the sudden reduction of their illegal resources at the end of the war were Amal, the PSP and the LF forced to cut back on many of their social, educational and medical services and to withdraw thousands of military and civilian salaries. Serious economic and financial crises characterized the first few years of the aftermath of war, yet although the structures the militias had set up were disintegrating, the state was less able than ever before to take up the slack. Indeed, what came to constitute a safety net for a number of young people looking for reintegration was not so much the communal apparatus that the militias had either compromised or marginalized, but the extended family. Various surveys conducted on the Lebanese Forces, the PSP and Amal confirm the effectiveness of these family networks especially with reference to the issue of the reintegration of ex-militiamen.³⁹ However, due to the ravages of war, the Lebanese family had seen its patriarchal structures shattered, its material means diminished, and its reliance on women and émigrés increased. As a result, it gave individuals more room for manoeuvre, allowed greater opportunities, yet left them more fragile.

With the return of collective security, attempts to improve the self-image of society made use of a variety of diverse and, at times unfore-

38. Judith Harik, *The Public and Social Services of the Lebanese Militias* (Oxford: Centre for Lebanese Studies, 1994), Papers on Lebanon No.14.

39. The survey on the Lebanese Forces was conducted by an ex-LF officer who is a sociologist; comments on reintegration were additionally made to this author by a member of the PSP social services in Beirut in June 1993 and by an independent Shi'i academic in October 1993.

seen, strategies. One such strategy was the reconversion of particularly fanatical and violent elements into fundamentalist religious movements, perhaps as an attempt to expiate their crimes while expressing their frustration over the failure of their earthly projects. Religious neo-communalism⁴⁰ often attracts those who are psychologically fragile and socially isolated. Nevertheless, in the aftermath of war, this tendency has sustained a form of competition centred on the display of religious symbols — from crosses, the proliferation of street chapels, statues of the prophet Elijah brandishing his sword and new mottoes such as ‘the King of the World’,⁴¹ to black and yellow banners covered with Koranic verses and giant portraits of Iranian saints⁴² — all acting as substitutes for military display and as new collective symbols, and all witnesses to the persistence of embattled ideologies.

In addition, society sought to relieve itself by expelling marginal elements — those who, for security reasons, could not seek the protection of their families and who subsequently played the role of scapegoats.⁴³ These elements, however, were a minority in each militia and most of them conformed to a similar socio-cultural profile: their recruitment at a very young age (below the age of 20 and sometimes as young as 15); their lack of professional training, their low level of education, and their rootlessness. All militias tapped into communal groups that had been expelled, displaced and deprived of their economic resources. For example, suburban adolescents from Nab’a who had entered the villages of the south with Amal in summer 1976; and youths from the Christian villages of the Chouf and Iqlim al-Kharroub who chose in 1983 and 1985 to rally to the LF militiamen banished from Bcharre. These men, cut off from their places of origin, often lived off the populations whom they were intended to defend by imposing protection rackets while their leaders looked the other way.

40. Gilles Kepel, *The Revenge of God* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994).

41. Printed under a red cross strongly reminiscent of the LF emblem on every wall of East Beirut and the Eastern suburbs.

42. In addition, Hizballah maintained roadblocks inside Beirut during Ramadan, Ashoura and the April commemoration of victims of Israeli aggression. They were collecting ‘solidarity funds’.

43. As Michel Girard perceptively observed in *La Violence et le sacré* (Paris: Grasset, 1972), if there is to be an amnesty and a collective amnesia, a scapegoat is required.

When suddenly deprived of their former legitimacy as militiamen after the war, some became petty criminals ready to sell themselves, living off illicit activities. But the development of a new criminality was not simply a by-product of demobilization. It was also related to the virulence of the economic crisis and to general unemployment. The crisis was conducive to the continuation of an urban delinquency that was born with the war — the theft of cars, the looting of apartments and eventually the shedding of blood. While the regular Lebanese forces and their Syrian allies were imposing overall order, the press regularly reported the arrest of ex-militiamen who had attempted to burgle a jewellery store or a moneychanger, or who were implicated in drug trafficking or even in a sex scandal. The severity of the sentences⁴⁴ and the publicity surrounding such incidents fed a general feeling of insecurity that was largely subjective and the legacy of 15 years of war.

But it would be wrong to assume that the force of a single decree had caused the militia phenomenon in Lebanon to disappear and become restricted to a few marginal or fringe groups. How could the war culture be rapidly eradicated from a population socialized by the militias for over ten years and unable to manage its security concerns or vital needs outside of the militia context — be it as opponents or sympathizers? Adolescents in particular had not been exposed to any other form of public life and behaviour. They were targeted for indoctrination in schools and even underwent paramilitary training. A few studies undertaken at different times during the war⁴⁵ unanimously drew attention to the receptivity of the youth to the rhetoric of constructing a sectarian *habitus* and their increasing insensitivity towards democratic values. For the majority of young Lebanese Khashan interviewed in 1990, to kill, steal or swindle was not considered an offence, but often a necessary act. More generally, a diminished

44. New legislation adopted on 11 March 1994 broadened the application of the death sentence to include cases of assassination.

45. Halim Barakat, *Lebanon in Strife* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977); Hilal Khashan, 'The Political Values of Lebanese Maronite College Students', *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (34, N°4, 1990), pp. 723–44; Melhem Chaoul, 'La socialisation politique au Liban: Bilan de cinq enquêtes et de témoignages', in L.-M. Chidiac, A. Kahi and A. Messarra (eds), *La génération de la relève: La pédagogie du civisme* (Beyrouth: Bureau pédagogique des Saints Coeurs, 1992), pp. 101–12.

respect for life may be detected in the murderous behaviour of many drivers, or in the outbursts and excesses of football supporters. Moreover, internalized violence was being translated into tension in personal relations, both private and public. Finally, it is important to keep in mind that large quantities of personal weapons were still available. In Lebanon this phenomenon was not new nor was the Lebanese situation exceptional. However, the failure of the disarmament process presented a latent threat since it offered an ever-present pretext for the resumption of hostilities.⁴⁶

The Aftermath of a Militia Economy

The militia system had such a strong impact on the population of Lebanon that its economic role became essential in the last years of war. In keeping with their function as instruments of domination, the militias had heavily taxed their subject populations. They were also redistributors and producers to such a degree that, according to some estimates, a third of all Lebanese revenues was under their control in the second half of the 1980s.⁴⁷ Because of the financial crisis of 1987 and further damage during 1989–90, the economic parameters — inflation, employment, currency reserves, the state of the infrastructure, and the level of business activity — had dropped to an unprecedented low by the time state legality had been reinstated in the country. Contrary to the expectations of a society that had anticipated an automatic and immediate connection between the end of hostilities and the return to prosperity, it was a number of years before recovery began, and in the interim, the value of the Lebanese lira continued to slide. In spring 1992, it had reached its lowest level yet. As a result,

46. Samir Geagea's declared advocacy of Christian self-defence on the very morning of the Zouk bombing in February 1994 illustrated, and perhaps parodied, the widespread sentiment of insecurity and caution.

47. 'Liban: l'argent des milices', *Les Cahiers de l'Orient* 10 (1988), pp. 271–87; Georges Corm, 'The War System: Militia Hegemony and Re-establishment of the State', in *Peace for Lebanon?*, pp. 215–30; 'Hukm al-milishiyât', the *tahqîqât* series published in *al-Hayat*, 31 January–9 February 1990; Elizabeth Picard, 'Liban: la matrice historique', in F. Jean and J.-Ch. Rufin (eds), *L'économie des guerres civiles* (Paris: Hachette-Pluriel, 1996), pp. 62–103.

the militias' suspension of salaries and their withdrawal of benefits and social services from their membership coincided with a rise in unemployment and a drop in the general standard of living. Not only did this hit the lower classes, but part of the middle class was also forced to economize on medical care and education, and sometimes even on everyday consumption. Consciously or not, the end of the militia regime was associated with a fall in the standard of living. This did not help to reconcile society with the parliamentary regime; on the contrary, it led to unrealistic expectations that a timely leader would appear, either a man of strength, or a prosperous benefactor.

The militias' apparatus was forced to readjust to new rules in both politics and business. A common feature all the militias' economic systems shared had been the predatory nature of their operations, which were based on illicit trade and speculation. Once these modes of operation became illegal, Lebanon faced two main questions: how would the militias reconvert themselves in the postwar economy? And what effect would that process have on the reconstruction of Lebanon?

Suddenly, the ex-militias lost an important part of their income based on privileges enjoyed for 15 years at the expense of the state. Such privileges had included the control of public property — buildings and institutions such as telephone exchanges, petrol stations, the airport (Amal) or the ports (the port of Beirut's fifth harbour was under LF control). The ex-militias' income had also been to the detriment of the owners of private property as militiamen 'rented' squats, patrolled parking lots and levied protection taxes on shops. As they had operated within a legal void, many claims among the militias or between one militia and the state were still waiting to be resolved at the time of their dissolution (lawyers, at least, were not unemployed). One such question concerned the ownership of the offices of the Kata'ib party; another was the devolution of the former prison of Baakline, which the PSP had transformed into a 'National Library'. But to keep some of their ill-gotten gains, or to continue to practice certain banned activities, militia leaders had taken care to put them in the name of private individuals. Anonymous holdings had been created and the spoils of war had also been invested in foreign-based companies. For example, in the wake of the dissolution of the militias, tens of military engineers from the Lebanese Forces were relo-

cated in civil engineering companies especially created for their benefit. The computer operators of the *Sunduq al-Watani*, a shadow Ministry of Finance for the militia, came into particular demand, steadily growing on the Beirut market. The fact that economic actors were more self-sufficient and adaptable than their military counterparts signalled the completion of a reversal in the hierarchy of the militias that had already begun in the second half of the 1980s. Henceforth, businessmen would have a greater say than warlords, and all the splits, realignments and alliances within and outside the militias would be due to financial rather than ideological motives. What happened in the realm of the media illustrated such a shift. TV and radio stations, as well as magazines, were often autonomous structures and their independence permitted them to remain intact after the war, and to escape military control. Thus, with the dissolution of the militias, militia leaders lost their advertising revenues as well as their propaganda organs. But this, in turn, did not stop the advertising and news entrepreneurs from making use of ex-militiamen to gain access to circles of power.

One 'venture' in which an ex-militiaman could 'naturally' expect to find employment was security. Security agencies and protection services faced stiff competition, especially since a large number of Lebanese had acquired some expertise in the field. Nonetheless, the field was able to absorb a certain number of ex-militiamen since it grew rapidly due to the existence of reconstruction projects more or less consciously designed to enhance privacy and security.⁴⁸ Ecology also became popular, as were consumer protection, aid to the handicapped, and even human rights — all of which were eligible for financial contributions from Western NGOs and the European Union. Skilful marketing helped restore the image of former militiamen to such an extent that some of them were being considered a decisive component of a 'new civil society'. Observation shows that, on the contrary, if new and genuinely civil associations are born in the aftermath of war, they are ideologically and structurally independent of those organizations born or inherited from ex-militias. As the former sustain the emer-

48. As various residential compounds as well as new shopping malls illustrate.

gence of a unified Lebanese public space,⁴⁹ the latter continue to play on communal divisions and social fragmentation, and tend to privatize collective initiatives.

The conversion of other activities based on the division of Lebanon into quasi-autonomous territories and on the commercialization of rare and/or illicit products, was also necessary. With the abolition of internal customs and the re-establishment of legal taxation at the ports, the militias lost a monopoly that they had jointly exercised. They had played upon price differences between one region and another by creating artificial shortages or by multiplying the intermediaries (and beneficiaries) between producers and consumers. The subsequent re-establishment of the state and its progressive reintegration into the framework of international law dealt a heavy blow to the various lucrative activities in which the militias had specialized and led them to more discreet and transnational types of criminality. These included the theft and import of European cars, the provision of passports, the purchase and sale of arms, the production, refinement and trafficking of drugs and finally, the stockpiling of chemical waste. For example, the surface area used for the cultivation of hashish had increased steadily throughout the war until it had doubled by 1984. By 1989, according to Western sources, it had reached 25,000 hectares or 49 per cent of all cultivated land in the northern Bekaa leading to annual exports of nearly 50,000 tons.⁵⁰ In 1991, the US State Department publicly endorsed the destruction of hashish stockpiles and two successive UNDP missions in 1992 verified it on site. The destruction of hashish was also facilitated by an exceptionally harsh winter. From 1100 hectares cultivated in 1991, acreage was reduced to 175 hectares in 1992, and by the same proportion the following year. With respect to the destruction of the poppy, the process was slower and the

49. B. Curmi, 'Les associations de type ONG au Liban: un service public pris en charge par le privé', *Du Privé au Public: Espaces et valeurs du politiques au Proche Orient* (Beyrouth: Cahiers du CERMOC No. 8, 1994), pp. 133–49.

50. Hassan Makhoul, *Culture et commerce de drogue au Liban* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1994); 'Face à la mafia de la drogue', *Le commerce du Levant* (5307, 20 May 1993); US State Department, *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report* (1990). None of these figures could be confirmed by independent sources.

surface area diminished only by half between 1992 and 1993 since 'it seemed that the poppy was tougher than hashish!'⁵¹

For ordinary farmers it was a genuine disaster. Thanks to a rapid increase in income during the 1980s based exclusively on the sale of drugs, they had built villas and became enthusiastic consumers. The food crops they were now invited to cultivate could no longer compete with the Syrian products that had flooded the local market and aggravated the Lebanese agricultural crisis. The networks the militias put in place did not collapse. Clandestine laboratories received poppy seeds from Iran, Pakistan and especially Afghanistan via Turkey and Syria. Lebanese territory became the area through which cocaine from Colombia and heroin from the Middle East circulated, only to be re-sold in Western Europe, Russia and the USA. The resumption of secret banking practices, the return of foreign airlines to Khaldeh airport, the sudden growth of the deluxe property market in the Lebanese capital were among the converging conditions that helped facilitate the 'regularization' of the illicit drug trade and the recycling of benefits. The same could be said about the arms trade: the skills acquired during the war were used in a rapidly expanding parallel market thanks to the support of reliable Lebanese networks abroad.

Economically, the most interesting and important phenomenon in the aftermath of the war was the participation of entrepreneurs and businessmen who had illegally enriched themselves through their association with the militias. But this involvement was also the most difficult to detect. The integration of the world's financial system is such that the origin of capital is difficult to trace — even if the Bank Association purged its ranks to escape the opprobrium that hit institutions implicated or compromised in currency speculation and money laundering (such as BLC, Prosperity Bank and Bank al-Mashrek). The reconstruction market was enormous. Once valued at 20–30 billion dollars for a country of 3 million inhabitants, it had increased by 50 per cent less than a decade later. Private investors got the lion's share, as witnessed by developments in Beirut's city centre. Despite the lively polemics that accompanied the various stages of its implementation, Solidere saw its shares heavily oversubscribed in the

51. Figures taken from *Le Commerce du Levant* (5307), p. 63.

first few weeks of flotation.⁵² This could have been considered the effect of simple liberalism had the state not been an essential link in this new economy, at once a major partner in reconstruction, the primary borrower on the financial market, and the maker of laws, thereby ensuring that all these operations translated into tangible results. In such a corrupt system,⁵³ the key intermediary between the new businessman and the statesman was the ex-militiaman turned politician; unless, of course, one person simultaneously held two or three of these positions. Indeed, the process of demobilization and normalization primarily had political goals in which the distribution of power and the future of the Lebanese state were at stake.

Reconstructing the State

The stakes involved in substituting a legal civil order for an illegal militia entailed nothing less than the reconstruction of the Lebanese state — a process that should be examined in detail. The continuation of the Syrian–Israeli conflict on Lebanese soil placed limits on reconstruction, while signing the Ta'if Agreement, and a number of subsequent agreements, aimed to redefine Lebanon's relationship with Syria. Within such imposed limits, the Lebanese 'Second Republic' was expected to restore its unity, its authority, and its legitimacy.

At the heart of the project stood the army's reconstruction, a process complementary to the militias' demobilization. In 1991, almost everything needed to be done to make the army more effective: numbers were low, equipment was insufficient, and units 'had become a collec-

52. *Le Monde*, 15 January 1995. According to AFP (7 January 1995), 80 companies linked to the Lebanese Forces and 100 people from the region of Bcharre invested \$350 million worth of capital in *Solidere*.

53. Thus differing from the clientelist system Michael Johnson analysed in 'Political Bosses and their Gangs: Zu'ama and Qabadayat in the Sunni Muslim Quarters of Beirut', in Ernest Gellner and John Waterbury (eds), *Patrons and Clients in Mediterranean Societies* (London: Duckworth, 1997), pp. 194–216. In postwar Lebanon, state authorities sheltered a 'shadow state' that was economically empowered and built on a network of private interests. For a historical model, see K. Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats: The Ottoman Route to State Centralization* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994).

tion of sectarian brigades often hostile to each other'.⁵⁴ To make matters more difficult, about 4000 ex-militiamen had to be reintegrated (the Ministry of Interior absorbed the others) while several hundred officers underwent retraining at Fayadiyyeh. Next, the army needed to regain control of the units that had been under General Michel Aoun's orders. In the first months of 1991, the then head of the army, General Emile Lahoud, initiated a policy of homogenizing the brigades by transferring battalions from one brigade to another and by displacing officers. This was done with the Tenth and Eleventh Brigades that had faced one another in Souq el-Gharb. Lahoud even deployed the Sixth Brigade⁵⁵ to the eastern regions of Beirut. The commander-in-chief also decided to offer early retirement to those officers who had been particularly compromised by collaboration with a militia (in all units, officers and conscripts had sympathized with the militia of their original communities), or by loyalty to General Aoun. Nothing illustrates better the precarious nature of the concepts of legality and legitimacy in postwar Lebanon than the presence of officers who had been Aoun loyalists until the very end of 1990, in the midst of Emile Lahoud's headquarters.

Crucial to the reintegration of ex-militias and the reconstruction of the army was a search for the financial resources required for such an operation. Inflating the army's numbers was not only seen as a means to absorb militiamen; it was also envisaged as a first step towards creating a more active role for itself than before the war. To begin with, the army had to be deployed throughout the country and needed seven more brigades. By 1994, it had increased its numbers to 40,000 men and these had risen further to nearly 60,000 three years later. The cost of financing such growth was prohibitive for an institution similar to every other instrument of the state — on the verge of financial ruin. In the late 1980s, Michel Aoun had appealed to some NGOs and to a famous Lebanese businessman to cover his soldiers' salaries. Right after the war, the army's financial requirements were estimated at

54. Tabitha Petran, *The Struggle over Lebanon* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1987), p. 348.

55. In February 1984, the predominantly Shi'i Sixth Brigade had contributed to the seizure of control of West Beirut by Amal and the PSP.

about half a million US dollars⁵⁶ and negotiations on military cooperation opened immediately with Saudi Arabia, France and the USA.

The touchstone of the new unified national defence approach was the reinstatement of a mandatory military service for a period of one year. Since 1975, two abortive attempts were made to accomplish this same objective. By 1993, the army had already enrolled 2000 conscripts. With the appropriate infrastructure, this number soon reached 3000 a year. The young recruits received a brief period of military training and a number of them were then assigned to take on 'development' tasks — escorting the displaced back home, restoring the country's archaeological heritage, caring for cedar forests and other environmental resources, assisting in social projects and training youth.⁵⁷ Without explicitly saying so, the army intended to forge a relationship of respect and loyalty directly with Lebanese society while bypassing the confessional elite and the civil apparatus of the state. It therefore made its presence and its vigilance felt, either directly through its visible presence on streets and highways, or indirectly through billboards, posters and press releases. Taking advantage of its efficiency as a hierarchical system, it tended to outdo the other actors on the Lebanese scene in establishing a new civic order and building a new national identity. As a result, with the dangerous stalemate in regional peace talks, the reduction in economic growth, and the re-emergence of virulent personal competition in state leadership, suspicion arose concerning the political and eventually presidential ambition of the army's leader. From being a symbol of and an instrument for reconstruction and unity the army risked becoming the central force in an authoritarian regime, a model largely inspired by its Arab neighbours. However, three factors limited the possibility of a drift toward Bonapartism in Lebanon. First, a very large number of

56. According to the declaration of Minister of Defence Michel el-Murr, 21 April 1992, and negotiations with a delegation from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 4 May 1992. See *Maghreb-Machrek* (137, July–September 1992), p. 93.

57. General Lahoud to *al-Jaysh*, February 1994; The Lebanese Army, *De la stabilization securitaire a la stabilization nationale* (leaflet published on the fifty-first anniversary of the country's independence) (no publisher, 1994), 18 pp; and General Sami el-Rihani, 'Al-jaysh al-lubnani, 'amil istiqrar wa tawazun fil-bilad', *Majallat al-difa' al-Watani* (7 January 1994), pp. 37–59.

young people were still avoiding conscription because of the erratic nature of the process and because of the persistence of the hidden practice of *badal* (for approximately US \$1000). Second, the doctrinal training it offered was unable to withstand the segmented confessional socialization inculcated in the familial or ex-militia surroundings. One of the objectives that the army leadership had adopted, particularly in an attempt to reintegrate successfully so many ex-militiamen as conscripts, was the development of a corpus of civil education. We have already mentioned the resistance of the Lebanese to the patriotic rhetoric of the army. This resistance is even more natural in the absence of consensus over the objectives for, and methods of, the defence of national territory as well as over the Lebanese national identity both among the population and the political leadership. Third, and most importantly, international restraints placed on the independence of an army that is much stronger than it was before the war have limited its capacity to intervene politically.

But the reconstruction of the army is only one element in the reconstruction of Lebanon. It plots its course with reference to the operation of the entire political system after Ta'if and particularly with reference to the nature of the state. Going back to Charles Tilly's analysis of the intimate relationship between war and the construction of the state,⁵⁸ the experience of demobilization should help us detect the effects of 15 years of war on the Lebanese state. But have the militias — disarmed, marginalized and faced with charges of illegality and illegitimacy — truly disappeared from the political system since the end of the war? Or have they rather been brought into the heart of the state, contaminating political practices on the one hand and combining private and the public interest on the other?

Militia Mediation

The corollary to the dissolution of the militias as institutions was the return of the rule of law and the rehabilitation of state institutions,

58. Charles Tilly, 'War Making and State Making as Organized Crime', in P. Evans, D. Rueschemeyer and T. Skocpol (eds), *Bringing the State Back In* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, reprinted 1992), pp. 169–91.

thus requiring elections to be held. The election process constituted both a symbolic and an actual transition from the logic of war to the logic of politics as witnessed by the Cambodian experience, or even those of Mozambique and El Salvador. This was equally true in the case of Lebanon⁵⁹ and it explains the haste of leaders in organizing elections — even if under questionable constitutional conditions — as well as the importance given to their results. To those who considered the elections to be legitimate, the new deputies henceforth became substitutes for partisan or confessional militia leaders. On the other hand, to those who denounced the exercise as illegal, the resolution of the war was still to come and demobilization remained incomplete. In this context, the controversy surrounding the organization, conduct and results of the legislative elections of 1992 revealed what was at stake: the legitimization of *de facto* forces by a truncated electoral process and the recomposition of the Lebanese political system.

Right after the adoption of the Ta'if Agreement, and even before the dissolution of the militias, the new Constitutional Law of 1990 re-established and reinforced confessional representation at the highest echelons of power. Its implementation on 24 December 1990 with the formation of the country's first postwar government under Omar Karamé gave indications of a marked change in the character of the country's leadership. It was not simply a matter of the generational renewal of the political elite after 15 years of war, symbolized by the very young Sulaiman Franjiyyeh — the son of Tony and grandson of President Sleiman. Nor was it only a question of entrepreneurs and representatives of the business bourgeoisie — many of whom had made their fortunes abroad — joining the political classes.⁶⁰ It was, first and foremost, a question of including the leaders of militia organizations, first in government, and then in parliament as a result of the

59. See Richard Norton, 'Lebanon after Ta'if: Is the Civil War Over?' *The Middle East Journal* (45, N° 3, 1991), pp. 457–73.

60. Farid El-Khazen and Paul Salem (eds), *Al-intikhabat al-ula fi lubnan ma ba'd al-harb. Al-arqam wal-waqa'e' wad-dalalat* (Beirut: LCPS-Dar en-Nahar, 1993). Joseph Bahout, 'Les élites parlementaires de 1996', in J. Bahout and Ch. Douayhi (eds), *La vie publique au Liban* (Beyrouth: Cahier du CERMOC N° 18), pp. 17–34.

nomination of 40 deputies on 10 May 1991,⁶¹ and later the controlled election of the 128 deputies in the summer of 1992. Finally, leading members of the militias entered the administration with the nomination of the 120 senior civil servants in spring 1993. Alongside the leaders of the three large confessional militias, Nabih Berry, Walid Joumblatt, Elie Hobeika — and briefly, Samir Geagea — were also representatives of the Marada of Zgharta, the 'Greater Syria' SSNP, the Alawite militia of Tripoli, the Popular Nasserist Organization of Sidon, the Ahabash and, of course, Hizballah. General Amnesty Law N° 84/91 of 26 August 1991 made it possible for all these people to parade in the corridors of power disguised as civilians.

Might the integration of militiamen into the state system be analysed as part of the *civilianization process* (*Verhöflichung*) Elias described — the installation of tamed warlords at the royal court and their progressive adoption of civil manners?⁶² Nothing is less certain, especially in the absence of any interest by the powerbrokers in Lebanon and the region to promote such a civilianization. The militiamen-turned-politicians conceived of the *res publica* in a way that differed from the traditional *zu'ama*. Their main objective was not to gain the consensus of the elite, but to manage the interests of those sharing their own particular *'asabiyya*. For example, in 1991, Walid Joumblatt demanded that a 'Ministry of the Mountain' be created, which would benefit his Druze constituency much as the Shi'a had profited from the 'Ministry of the South' created in 1984 through the effort of Nabih Berry. Instead, Joumblatt was given the Ministry of the Displaced in the Hariri government of 30 October 1992 — namely, control over part of the public and private subsidies that would permit Christians to be reinstated in their villages in the Chouf.

Also, the majority of ex-militia leaders had hardly any technical or administrative skills and the presence of some of them in sectors concerned with services or culture was questionable. Posts were bestowed as a reward for partisan affiliation, or even military success. They were

61. One deputy per 'small' militia, and two to three deputies per 'large' militia (Amal, the Progressive Socialist Party, and the Lebanese Forces).

62. Norbert Elias, *Über den Prozess der Zivilization* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhr Kamp, 1997, first printed 1949), chapter IV, pp. 351–69.

the stakes in bitter bargaining among the troika of presidents — Elias Hrawi, Nabih Berry and Rafik el-Hariri — each of whom was more interested in finding positions for his own men and rewarding his own clientele than in consolidating the institutionalization of the state. Thus, in 1993 the list of ‘nominees’ to higher management positions in the administration reflected, alongside confessional equilibrium, the hidden influence of the respective ex-militias within the state. It combined the names of a few competent, upright and skilled civil servants with those of former gang leaders and other *apparatchiks* who actually had more in common with each other than with the traditional leaders of their respective communities. In the top echelons of the state, unending and mostly courteous negotiations had given way to barely-disguised pressures, aggressive declarations, zero-sum games and even the brandishing of arms, common-place occurrences despite the implementation of the law disarming the militias.

Each was the potential rival of everyone else, there was no longer a single authority capable of coordinating, or taking charge, to prevent the bidding from getting out of hand at the slightest cause. The weakening of the presidential safety net made the political life of the state subject to dissension, about-turns and instability. The balance of power, in the crude and military sense of the word, which should only have been a temporary situation to be transcended at the earliest opportunity, turned out to be a permanent fact of political life.⁶³

Not only did the success of the militia’s neo-communalism exacerbate disputes over the legitimacy of the state, it also raised questions regarding its legal and regulatory functions at a time when they were highly necessary. In truth, this observation must be qualified, for at that time, privatization appeared to be an adequate remedy for the shortcomings of neglected public services such as the telephone or electricity networks, while criticism of the ‘excessive degree’ of state intervention in the Lebanese economy since 1975 was voiced in a

63. Waddah Charara, ‘Deux ans de réunification nationale: une libanization gigogne’, *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* (4, June 1992), p. 168.

white paper by the Association of Lebanese Industrialists.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, the foundations of Lebanese prosperity, and the conditions for the reconstruction of the country, had changed profoundly in the previous 15 years of war, notwithstanding the success of neo-liberalism and economic globalization. This was for a variety of reasons, the first being developments on the regional stage. The Lebanese could no longer find lucrative positions in the Gulf states, which had become more developed and less wealthy. Beirut was no longer the indispensable centre of mercantile, financial and technological exchanges between the Arab East and the European West. What Lebanon now needed was to substitute its economy of trade and circulation for an economy of production — taking up where it had left off on the eve of the war.⁶⁵ The new and immediate requirements were to define a national space, develop a market, and pay attention to the consumer. Moreover, wartime destruction has led to specific needs in housing, training, rehabilitation — especially for the displaced — issues that are more social than economic in nature. Second, new problems emerged in the 1990s, for example, those dealing with ecology and, above all, those related to the adaptation of the Lebanese economy to the requirements of any future Arab–Israeli peace. All of these issues are more the responsibility of those holding political power than of economic actors. Finally, the economic and financial crisis that broke out after the political and military crisis and that continued after the cessation of hostilities was principally a crisis of confidence. All of these factors demand a strengthened state and pose the question of its ability to defend the public interest.

The economic practices of the militias did not simply fade or adapt

64. Rassemblement des Chefs d'entreprise du Liban, *Livre blanc de l'économie libanaise*, cited by Fouad Houry-Helou, 'Le livre blanc de l'économie libanaise', *Al-Mouaten*, (May 1997, p. 12. The economist Kamal Hamdan notes that 'the [administrative] apparatus had become heavier and more expensive, and less productive and efficient' since the state's budget represented 40 per cent, even 50 per cent of GDP. Kamal Hamdan, 'La classe moyenne dans la guerre du Liban', in *Le Liban d'aujourd'hui*. p. 201.

65. Roger Owen, 'The Economic History of Lebanon, 1943–1974: Its Salient Features', in Halim Barakat (ed.), *Toward a Viable Lebanon* (London: Croom Helm, 1988), pp. 27–41.

to the return of civil rule. They were often carried straight to the heart of the state through the intervention of warlords who had become part of the political system and helped to make economic choices with weighty consequences. A distinction should be made here between the clientelist practices of the confessional elite before the civil war and the model that governed the reconstruction of Lebanon in its wake. For prewar confessional 'patrons', it was important to evade state control and to promote, therefore, a weak and ultra-liberal state that was open to private initiative. In the reconstruction phase, the state was not simply a stake in power, it was mainly seen as a source of economic accumulation. The participation in government, and the presence of individuals who explicitly represented private interests in the highest ranks of the public service, inevitably transformed the search for the public good into the protection of these interests. Whether it was the construction of a hospital in the southern suburbs of Beirut, the reunification of the Lebanese University into one large and modern campus, or the recovery of the military port of Jounieh by the national navy, 'national' interest too often became a screen for hidden stakes of a confessional and segmented nature. In most cases, the solution adopted was the result of an inter-confessional balance of power. Not only did such logic encumber the reconstruction process, it also endangered the country's structural balance.

Without underestimating the benefits of a return to peace and security over nine-tenths of the country, and without denying the progress made, the question remains as to the nature of the state that the Ta'if Agreement's supporters intended to establish, and the transformation of politics in postwar Lebanon. The Lebanese government, while articulating a rigorous security policy, lacked vision on economic development and displayed a revealing negligence on the question of the Lebanese collective identity. In this respect, post-Ta'if Lebanon is comparable with former Yugoslavia and the Caucasus, both of which have been torn apart by communalism. In such a fragmented social space, even if the semblance of international legality has been safeguarded, the state has become less of a structure that forges national identity and a place for political restructuring than a field for competing interests in a contest that menaces its very existence.

Amnesty and Collective Memory

As suggested at the beginning of this text, one of the key reasons for the failure of the demobilization process may be found in Lebanon's regional situation. Since 1990, Lebanon has been trapped between an ongoing war in the south and an elusive regional peace. These obstacles to Lebanon's sovereignty have accentuated the state's innate weakness and induced it to reinforce the instruments of its security. Domestically, this has led the state to rely on the mediation of members of the militias for fear that it would collapse under the weight of potential disputes. It has also prevented it from becoming the sole and legitimate interlocutor of the society, as it lacks sufficient authority to arbitrate between competing interests.

The fragility of the Lebanese state in the aftermath of war is more readily explained with reference to the philosophy that prevailed during its reconstruction and to the strategies of its new leaders. In other words, one needs to ignore the decades of history that preceded the war and the circumstances that led to it and to consider the war as an aside. One needs to think of it as an event brought on by external causes over which the Lebanese had no control and for which they should not be held responsible. Once demobilization was implemented, and in view of the difficulties and limitations outlined above, there was a legitimate need to turn the page by issuing a general amnesty. While this amnesty was designed to foster national reconciliation and to favour the regeneration of a common and peaceful political culture, it was also implemented in a problematic manner since the demobilization process remained unfinished. Moreover, it was selective, and thus hampered the task of social reconstruction.

It is impossible to engage here in the complex juridical debate over what criteria qualified actions falling under the Amnesty Law.⁶⁶ It is enough to recognize that it posed a number of problems in principle and practice. With regard to principles, it erased a number of crimes committed across communal lines, much like memories of the *events*

66. 'Qanun raqm 84 yarmi ila manh 'afu 'am 'an il-jara'im il-murtakaba qabla tarikh 28 adhar 1991 wifqan li shurutin muhaddada', *Al-Jarida al-rasmiyya, Mulhaq khass*, 27 August 1991, pp. 1-3. The law was retroactive to 28 March 1991.

of 1860. Memories of the civil war that happened over a hundred years ago are discouraged — perhaps even historians will be dissuaded from raising them. The inordinate number of exceptions to which the Amnesty Law made reference simply became excuses for contradictory interpretations. Moreover, on the practical side, the circumstances under which the law was discussed and adopted — at a time when General Aoun was being granted asylum in the French embassy — weighed heavily on its content. Its interpretation has since been subject to hot debates within the judiciary, especially after the attack on the Kata'ib's offices in Saifi on 21 December 1993 and the explosion at the church in Zouk Mosbeh on 27 February 1994, when retroactive accusations were made against members of the Lebanese Forces.

On this point, however, the situation in Lebanon was unremarkable. The granting of amnesty after a civil war is a political act *par excellence* that aims to reintegrate the greatest possible number of people by ignoring their crimes. As a corollary, however, it excludes from the process of reconciliation the losers in the civil war, now demoted to the level of the enemy, and settles a new definition of national identity on a more restricted basis. In the Lebanese case, the dividing line between those who benefited from the amnesty and those excluded from it, far from rehabilitating and reaffirming the basis of the new national identity, on the contrary, ran the risk of deepening the cleavage between irreconcilable conceptions of national identity. It also increased the temptation of those groups that profited from the amnesty to use such exceptions to the law to settle old scores. Yahya Shamas's unrestrained confession to the Lebanese Parliament on 24 November 1994, while primarily touching on economic crimes not covered by the Amnesty Law, gave some indication of how the amnesty process can drift out of control when a political network takes over a state and mismanages the independence of the judiciary. This reminds us that what separates certain warlords (who are pursued by justice) from others (who have become the guarantors of the rule of law) is not so much the nature of their crimes as their respective positions in a postwar system which, without admitting it, distinguishes between winners and losers.

Amnesty is unable to live up to its vocation, which is to pacify

from a culture of war, based on the fear of exclusion, to a culture of peace, based on exchange and negotiation. It is this that separates the totalitarian and divisive projects of illegal militia groups from the respect for pluralism under the armed protection of a state based upon the rule of law.

hearts after they have been torn asunder, in any lasting way. It has no deep impact on memories. The forgotten event is forgotten simply by the law. One cannot, however, force anyone to forget by decree, and the memories associated with an event will unconsciously survive, ready to re-emerge at any moment. Amnesty allows us to go forward together, for a moment, by reaffirming the unity of the nation. In this sense, it is necessary. But it resolves neither the question of division, nor indeed the question of crimes.⁶⁷

To be complete, demobilization must not only affect the armed forces and political behaviour at the highest level of the state. It must also operate within a society long immersed in the culture of discord produced by the militias. However, through an understandable collective and individual psychological reaction, the amnesty decreed by the state immediately after the end of the war in Lebanon operated in the context of an amnesia that was at once general and selective. Each individual considered the crimes and misdeeds of which he had been the victim as anathema, but concealed those of the group to which he belonged. This selective forgetfulness, far from helping to overcome trauma, blocked social communication and the renewal of social links. Memory is such a thorny question in Lebanon! For the 'right to remember',⁶⁸ however laudable it may be, does not always bring peace, as Ahmad Beydoun⁶⁹ reminds us and the defence of identity often remains a weapon of war. Between the myths and interpretations of memory, and the precise and rigorous scrutiny of history, lies the necessity to distinguish between the sensitivity of 'masses' manipulated by political actors, and the reason of civil society guided by its intellectuals. It is such a distinction, too, that marks the transition

67. Stéphane Gacon, 'L'oubli institutionnel', in Dimitri Nicolaïdis (ed.), *Oublier nos crimes. L'amnésie nationale: une spécificité française?* (Paris: Autrement, 1994), pp. 98–111.

68. *Le droit à la mémoire*, proceedings of the conference 'Costs of internal conflicts and construction of a collective memory in Lebanon', Beirut: Lebanese Foundation for Permanent Civil Peace, 1988.

69. Ahmad Beydoun, *Identité professionnelle et temps social chez les historiens libanais contemporains* (Beirut: Librairie Orientale, 1984).