

LEBANESE CRISIS AND PEACE PROSPECTS

Introduction

The crisis in Lebanon is complex and multidimensional. The first and immediate cause of the crisis is the confrontation between the Muslims and the Christians, a feature of Lebanese politics since its inception. It is not a straight forward civil war between two rival politico-religious groups for control over the country. The irony in Lebanon is that the Arabs fight the Arabs, the Muslims fight the Muslims and the Christians fight the Christians. The sectarian conflicts in Lebanon dates from its Medieval past. After the emergence of modern Lebanon in 1920, the Christian Maronites, who settled there before the spread of Islam, saw Lebanon as an integral part of West European civilization. But the Muslims always saw Lebanon as an integral part of the Arab Nation and insisted on its Muslim and Arab identity. The power sharing between the Muslims and Christians was balanced according to the National Covenant¹ adopted in 1943. But there was a lack of consensus over it. The Christians treated it as a final document which must be observed by

1. National Covenant may be treated as Lebanon's unwritten constitution. It laid down that :

(a) Lebanon was a country with an Arab "face" and Language and apart from the Arab world with a special character. Despite its Arabism, it would not cut off its cultural and spiritual ties with Western civilization.

(b) It was to cooperate with all the Arab States and to become a member of the Arab family, but in its Arab relations Lebanon should not side with one group against another.

(c) Public offices would be distributed equitably among the recognised confessions, but in technical positions preference would be given to competence without regard of confessions. The President of the Republic would be a Maronite Christian, Prime Minister a Sunni Muslim and the Speaker of the Parliament a Shia Muslim.

all in perpetuity, while the Muslims treated it as a transient arrangement that could be replaced by a better one.² Though the Christian leadership of Lebanon did try to shield the country from the critical developments in the region, it failed to keep the sectarian conflicts within the country unaffected. The major events in the Arab World had significantly influenced the religious instincts of the Lebanese Muslims and made them more Arab oriented. Also the progressive revolutions in Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Yemen and Iran had deeply influenced the internal politics of Lebanon. The intrusion of about 500,000 Palestinians with 6,000 armed personnel had furthermore complicated the scenario. The Muslims welcomed the Palestinians hoping that with their help the Christian dominance could be diminished. Clashes among the various factions had become a common phenomenon in Lebanon. Attempts at reconciliation between the Lebanese government and the PLO guerillas failed, and a civil war³ broke out in Lebanon in 1975-1976 among the various rival groups. Though the situation was brought under control by stationing 30,000 Syrian forces as Arab Deterrent Force, the crisis was not solved. Major Saad Haddad's Israeli supported "Free Lebanon" in South Lebanon exacerbated the problem. Thus the PLO intrusion, Israeli military raids, the presence of Syrian troops and the activities of extremist groups, all combined to sharpen the persistent identity crisis in Lebanon.⁴

In June 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon, occupied more than half of its territory, besieged West Beirut and demanded total PLO and Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon. The Israeli aggression caused

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2. J. Bayo Adekson; "Political Ethnicity and Military Disintegration; Comparative case of contemporary Cyprus (1960-1974) and Lebanon (1943-1975)". *IDSJ Journal*. Vol. XIII, No. 2, (Oct-Dec. 1980), p. 260.
 3. *Kessing's Contemporary Archives* Vol. XXII, (1976), pp. 28117-28124.
 4. Cf. Moshe Ma'oz, "Homogeneity and Pluralism in the Middle East; The case of Lebanon", in Willem A. Veenhoven (ed), *Case Studies on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms; A World Survey* 5 vols. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, for foundation for the Study of plural Societies, 1976), Vol. 3, pp. 183-192.

enormous loss of life and property. With the intensive diplomatic efforts of US special envoy Phillip Habib and with the help of the Arab League and the United Nations, the PLO guerillas were withdrawn from Lebanon, under the supervision of a Multinational force.

The Phalangist leader Beshir Gemayel was elected president of Lebanon only to be assassinated shortly thereafter, followed by renewed clashes among various rival groups and with the Israeli forces. It seems that the root of the crisis is much deeper than expected. Therefore, the obvious question is, what will be the political future of Lebanon and what possible role may Israel play there? Other important questions are ; Does the military defeat of the PLO liquidate the Palestinian problem, as the Israelis would like to see it? Or, would the PLO's military defeat in Lebanon increase its commitment to a renewed struggle for a homeland? What will be the implications of Lebanese tragedy for Middle East as a whole and for PLO as particular? These are the pertinent questions that need to be scrutinised to obtain a comprehensive ramifications of the Lebanese crisis.

The present paper is an attempt to analyse the cause of the Lebanese crisis and its possible solutions. The article is divided into two parts. The first part deals with the historical background of the Lebanese crisis, emergence of various political groups and parties, their inter-relationships, sectarian conflicts, PLO and Syrian presence and Israeli invasions in Lebanon. The second part deals with the peace prospects in Lebanon; the viability of a future government in Lebanon, the possibility of long-term Israeli presence, the USA and Arab involvements in solving the crisis.

Part 1

Inter-Sectarian Conflicts.

Lebanon, a new state with an old land,⁵ has suffered inter-sectarian conflicts since ancient times. Together with the Palestinians

5. The present Lebanon was established in 1920. During Ottoman Empire it was only a group of districts which became a privileged area under the Maronite Christian-dominated Council.

the estimated population in Lebanon 3.7 million,⁶ is divided into two major religious groups—the Muslims and the Christians. But both these groups are divided into various sects. The Christians are divided into Maronites Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, American Orthodox, American Catholic, Roman Catholic, Roman Orthodox and Protestants. The Muslims are divided into three major sects; Shia, Sunni and Druze. According to the census of 1932, which was the first and last census of Lebanon, the Maronite community constituted 29% of the total population, Greek Orthodox 9%, Greek Catholic 6%, Sunnis 22%, Shiites 20% and Druzes 7%. The remaining 7% comprised of smaller Christian denominations⁷. But since the birth rate of the Muslim community is higher than that of the Christians, now it is assumed that with the presence of about half million⁸ Palestinians the Muslims will constitute the majority of the total population of Lebanon. Ethnically more than 90% Lebanese are Arabs and about 6% are Armenians⁹.

The Maronites and the Druzes¹⁰ were the two major religious groups in the territory of Lebanon in the Medieval period. In early sixteenth century, when the Turks occupied a vast Arab territory and established the Ottoman Empire the Druzes favoured them, but the Christians always sought European assistance. With the help of the Druzes the Egyptians occupied Lebanon in the early nineteenth century, massacred the Christians and established a Muslim dominant government. In 1840 with the landing of British, Turkish and Austrian

6. *Political Handbook of the World* 1979, edited by Arthur S. Banks, p. 267.
7. David R. Smock and Andrey C. Smock; *The Politics of Pluralism; A comparative study of Lebanon and Ghana*. (New York; Elsevier Scientific Publishing Co., 1975) p. 76.
8. *Monday Morning*, May 1980, p. 32.
9. J. Bayo Adekson; *op. cit.*, p. 256.
10. The Druzes, an offshoot of the Shiites, live in the villages that are scattered throughout Southern Syria, Lebanon, Israel and Jordan. They trace their origins to the times of the Fatimid Caliph of Egypt, al-Hakim, the founder of the religion. Their religious beliefs developed out of Ismaili teachings. They are regarded as the most extreme of Ismaili sects. But as the whole Middle East population is in transition, so also is in the Druze society.

forces on the Syrian coast Lebanon became the centre of struggle for power between the Muslims and Christians with undertones of social conflict. With the growth of European influence over the minority Christian groups, the Muslims became increasingly aware of their own weaknesses. The economic condition of the Muslims worsened when European goods flooded the Arab market and replaced the products of local craftsmen. As prosperity came to the Christians and Jews, the plight of the Muslims worsened.

In 1860, a civil war broke out between the Druzes and Maronites.¹¹ The Ottoman government sent a Commissioner to Lebanon and an European Commission was set up to discuss the future of Lebanon. Under pressure from the European powers an autonomous province was created embracing the coastal plain and Mount Lebanon to be governed by a Lebanese Christian, subject of the Ottoman Empire, appointed by and responsible to the Ottoman Sultan but subject to the approval of the European powers. The new province was administered by a Council consisting of 12 members: 4 Maronites, 2 Greek Orthodox, 1 Greek Catholic, 3 Druzes, 1 Sunni and 1 Shia.¹²

After the revolution in Turkey in 1908, Arab nationalistic feeling gained credence and various political groups both open and clandestine, were organised in Lebanon and Syria. The Muslims demanded an improved status within the Ottoman Empire and some local autonomy which, later, gave way to a desire for independence and the establishment of a Syrian or Arab State in the territory of Lebanon. But the Christians, particularly Maronites and Catholics, wanted an Independent Lebanon with extended frontiers under French protection.

During the First World War, the Egypt-based British forces and a French contingent jointly occupied Palestine, Syria and Lebanon. The Christians and Jews in Lebanon welcomed the occupation. while

11. *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, 30 vols. Macropedia, 15th edition, 1979, Vol. 17, p. 955

12. *Ibid.*, p. 957

a large portion of the Muslims remained loyal to the Ottoman Empire, the rest supported the British and French to create an independent Arab State. According to the Paris Peace Conference, France got Mandate over Lebanon and Syria, and in 1920 Greater Lebanon was formed comprising the Bekka Valley, Sidon, Tripoli and Beirut, a gerrymander never recognised by present-day Syria. The new Lebanon was populated predominantly by Sunnites, Shiites and Druzes; but among these three Muslim sects only the Sunnites raised serious objections to being included in the Lebanese state. Under the pressure of the Lebanese people in 1926 a constitution was adopted for Lebanon in which Greater Lebanon became the Lebanese Republic. But clashes among the various religious sects were so serious that in 1932 the Chamber of Deputies was dissolved and the constitution suspended.

In 1941, independence status was granted to Lebanon. The Christians and the Sunni Muslim leaders reached a gentlemen's agreement on cooperation in the country after independence. The Muslims accepted the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Lebanon and ceased the demand of union with Syria, the Christians admitted Lebanon's Christian identity and agreed to cooperate with the Arab States to the greatest possible extent.¹³ Even the seats in parliament were distributed on a 6:5 ratio with 30 seats for the Christians and 25 for Muslims out of a total of 55.¹⁴

Though the National Pact in 1943 was signed between the Muslims and Christians, the ensuing events such as the influx of about 90,000 Palestinians in 1948-1949 the revolution in Egypt and the rise of Nasser's Pan-Arabism produced a serious reaction amongst the Lebanese Muslims against the isolation and the Western orientation of the Maronite dominated government. The Maronite government was also aware of the internal developments in Lebanon and

13. *Ibid.*, p. 959

14. J. C. Hurewitz, "Confessional Democracy; Lebanon", in his Middle East politics; *The military dimension* (London; Pall Mall Press, for American Council on Foreign Relations, 1969), pp. 380-382.

in 1956, after Anglo-French-Israeli aggression in Egypt when all the Arab States broke off diplomatic relations with Britain and France, Lebanon refused to cut off relations with them and later, the government endorsed the "Eisenhower Doctrine" on Middle East. The Muslims were dissatisfied and the country was close to a civil war in 1958, spared only by the timely US military intervention in Lebanon.¹⁵

Meanwhile, in the 1960s the relation between the Muslims and Christians were comparatively better because the then Christian leaderships proceeded to remove longstanding Muslim grievances by incorporating them in the administration and by attending to neglected peripheral areas where Muslims predominated.

The left-wing Lebanese Muslims welcomed the Palestinians when they were expelled from Jordan in 1970 and supported their raids on Israel from South Lebanon, but the Christians totally opposed it and decided to remove them by military means. This precipitated a sectarian strife in 1975-1976 in which the Sunnis went over to the Shiite side, and it became a war of Christians versus Muslims.¹⁶ Though the Christians were called "Rightists" and Muslims "Leftists", there were Christians who fought on the leftist side and at the same time there were Muslims who did not support the cause of the leftists. The Christians feared that Lebanon's unique "neutrality" was threatened by the Palestinian guerillas and their allies, while the Muslims demanded that the Lebanese people as a whole should support the PLO and its right to carry out operations from Lebanon.¹⁷

15. In 1958, responding to a request from Lebanese President Comille Chamoun, President Eisenhower sent a force more than 14,000 Marines and soldiers to Lebanon to strengthen the Chamoun government against dissidents and to guarantee free elections. These elections resulted Chamoun's defeat, and the US troops were withdrawn.

16. Edger O'Ballance; "Lebanon; still a flash point". *The Army Quarterly and Defence Journal*. Vol. 110, No. 1, January 1980, p. 17.

17. Sam Younger; "Lebanon" *Middle East Annual Review*, 1979, edited by Michael Field, p. 262.

But even within the same religious community there were sectarian conflicts among the various rival groups. The strong Christian groups destroyed the smaller ones to strengthen their own positions. The Muslims themselves had to contend with more than 30 private armies within their own community.¹⁸ The Shiites fought with the Palestinians in South Lebanon in West Beirut with pro-Iraqi groups, communists and left-wing militians, many of whom were also Shiites.¹⁹ Even within the Muslim community there were sects who welcomed Israeli invasion in Lebanon.

The inter-sectarian jealousies and conflicts were so serious that even it did not allow the Lebanese army, divided along sectarian lines, to be expanded. Now Lebanon has 21,000 man army which is widely regarded by the Muslim community as having mostly Christian officers.²⁰

With the intrusion of Palestinians, presence of Syrian forces and continuous Israeli aggressions in Lebanon, the sectarian problems gradually assumed political character. Now all the religious sects have their own political parties and militia groups. Even within a sect, there are several political groups, fighting with one another. So one of the greatest problems of present Lebanon is its mushroom growth of political parties.

Emergence of Various Political Parties and Groups and their Inter-relationships.

The political parties and groups in Lebanon, in real sense, are not same as in Western World or even as in many of the Third World countries. Because most of the political groups in Lebanon were formed not from the nationalist or ideological point of views but from the very narrow religious and sectarian conflicts among the various groups. There is little information on the exact number of

18. *Kessing's Contemporary Archives*, 1981, Vol. XXVII, p. 30917.

19. *Arabia; The Islamic World Review*, July 1982, No. 10, p. 12.

20. *International Herald Tribune*, July 3-4, 1982. p. 1

political groups in Lebanon and their aims and objectives. The seats in the parliament are distributed primarily on religious basis, rather than on a party basis. There is no formal opposition in Lebanon. The political parties and groups are directly or indirectly influenced by various interest groups. There are all sorts of parties in Lebanon including extra rightists and extra leftists. Even there are some political groups which do not recognise the existence and sovereignty of the country. Some are in favour of its merger with Syria, some with Israel and a number of groups demand for total alliance with the Western World. The peculiarity in the politics of Lebanon is that excepting one or two, every former Prime Minister and President has his own faction and group and controls a portion of Lebanese armed forces. Almost all the political parties have their own militia forces and area of influence. As such political reconciliation among various groups is the most complicated task to accomplish.

As has been mentioned earlier, the political parties were first formed in Lebanon in early 20th century i.e. with the National Liberation struggle against the Ottoman Empire. A portion of the Muslims supported the continuation of the Empire, others, the nationalists, were in favour of Greater Syria or an Arab State. After independence the Sunnis cherished the hope of an ultimate union with Syria and the Shiites, although with less favour, shared with the Sunni's hope for changing the inherited political structure and ultimate union with Syria. On the other hand, the Lebanese Christians were determined to maintain a status quo. There was no such thing as "Lebanese Nationalism."²¹ The consensus made in 1943 among the Christian and Muslim political groups, was based on wrong hypothesis and the two groups were always in rivalry. But upto 1975 it was more of religious and sectarian than political nature. Recently two political groups were formed to be popularly known as "Chehabists" and "Chamounists" from their identification with two former Presidents of the Republic. The "Chehabists" were largely Muslims, left of

21. Halim Barakat; "Social and Political Integration in Lebanon: A case of Social Mosaic," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 27, No. 3, 1973, pp. 303-308.

centre, and inclined towards pan-Arabism. The "Chamounists" were largely Christians.

In 1975, during the civil war, the Christians were treated as "Right-wing" and Muslims as "Left-wing". But these terms were extremely misleading because there were Christian leftists and Muslim Rightists. In 1977, the largely left-wing and increasingly pro-Syrian Muslim parties were loosely grouped into a National Front Coalition, while a number of Muslim groups were allied with the Palestinian elements in a leftist National Movement. On the other hand, most of the former "Chamounist" parties joined with the right-wing Lebanese Front. In September 1978, the National Front and National Movement announced to form a Joint Committee for National Action in Lebanon as a "first step towards merger" of the main leftist groupings.²² But it failed because there were extremist groups both in National Front and National Movement who oftenly fought with one another. Only in the National Movement there were 16 Muslim groups; pro-Nasserite, two communist factions, pro-Syrian and pro-Iraqi Baath parties etc. The situation was more complicated in 1979 after the revolution in Iran, when the Shia community in Lebanon developed a new political and military cohesion. The Shiitte political group 'Amal', which was founded in 1974, had gradually increased its numbers of trained militias to mount opposition to Palestinian guerillas active in and around Shia villages in various parts of the country.²³ With the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war, the Shia animosity towards pro-Iraqi elements in Lebanon was increased and clashes were going on between two rival groups. Several Shia leaders were killed in Lebanon and their leader Mousa Sadr was found missing when he visited Libya in 1978. The Shiittes also killed some pro-Iraqi leaders and two Iraqi diplomats were also shot dead in Beirut in early 1981. These tense situation seriously affected the inter-relations among the various Muslim political groups. The Shiittes

22. *Political Handbook of the World*, 1979, edited by Arthur S. Banks, p. 270.

23. *Arabia; The Islamic World Review*, July 1982, No. 10, p. 12.

were also not united in their political view. Within the community, there were two trends; one for secular politics headed by Nabil Berri, another for more religious politics headed by Sheik Mohammad Mehdi Shamsuddin.²⁴ Like the Shiittes, the Druzes—another Muslim sect, were also divided into various political factions. A major portion of them under the leadership of Walid Jumlat supported palestinian cause and helped the guerillas in Lebanon, but the more conservative group under the leadership of Prince Feisal Majid Arslan, supported the Israeli invasion and were in favour of withdrawal of all foreign troops from Lebanon and the formation of a strong government in which they would have sufficient room to play.²⁵

Even the Paestinians, like other groups, were divided into various ideological sects supported by various Arab states and international sources. The fundamental schism was between the Fatah group under the leadership of Yasser Arafat and the "Rejection Front" headed by Gerge Habash of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. The PLO, led by Yasser Arafat, advocated for the establishment of a Palestinian state in the part of Israeli occupied areas but the "Rejectionists" insisted on the "liberation" of whole Palestine including Syria, Lebanon and Iraq by revolutionary means.²⁶

Among the Christian community the most militant and strong political party is the Phalangist party, which was founded in the 1930s with the political reforms in Europe. The Party was established by the young Maronite groups who strongly opposed any compromise with the demands of Muslim Arab Nationalists. In response, the young Muslims in Beirut formed a similar political organization known as the Najda Party, which means assistance or succour, and fulfilled the emotional needs of Muslim community at that period. The Phalange party always played a very active and vital role in the poli-

24. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

25. *International Herald Tribune*, July 12, 1982, p. 2.

26. Abbas Kelidar and Michael Burrell; "Lebanon; The Collapse of a State", *Conflict studies*, No. 74, Aug. 1976, p. 4.

tical life of Lebanon. They were the main provocator of the civil war in 1975-1976 and got all sorts of help from Israel. Israel supplied them 40 American made Sherman tanks and provided with extensive training to the Phalangist militia forces²⁷. But the present leadership of the party believes that the sectarianism will gradually become secondary in Lebanon and reforms will be made assuring liberal democracy. In the last Israeli invasion, the Phalangists supported the Israelis and cooperated with them. But at the same time they tried to keep distance from the occupied forces to get support from the Lebanese people as well as from the Arab World. The Phalange party was involved in clashes with other Christian groups for their domination mainly in East Beirut, where they established "State in a state" since 1976. In summer 1978, the Phalangists attacked the Christian forces of Suleiman Franjeh, murdered his son Tony and his family. They also clashed with the "Chamounists" in 1979. There were no basic differences and points of ideological disagreement between the Phalangists and the National Liberal Party of Suleiman Franjeh. The friction seemed to drive from personality clashes and old blood feuds and from disputes over economic control including the collection of "taxes" in Christian regions.²⁸

Another Christian right-wing militant group was major Saad Haddad's "Republic of Free Lebanon", who controlled over an area of 500 sq. miles with a population of around 100,000 Christians and Shia Muslims in South Lebanon. In 1979 they proclaimed an independent free Lebanese state. Major Haddad commands a group of strong-militia forces whose numbers are around 2,000. They get total support from Israel, even Haddad's militiamen are dressed with the Israeli army uniform.

Meanwhile, many Christian intellectuals differentiate between the Lebanese and the Arabs. One such strong group headed by two widely respected Lebanese poets, Said Akl and May Murr. They had an

27. William W. Haddad. "Divided Lebanon". *Current History*, January 1982, p. 33.

28. *Asian Recorder*, 1980, p. 15652.

armed faction known as the "Guard of Cedars", whose member was around 4,000. They were in favour of Israeli invasion in Lebanon and believed that Israel and Lebanon were two twins of civilization, to which the world owed almost the entirety of its civilization²⁹.

There was a continuous power struggle in Lebanon, conservative vs. radical, Muslims vs. Christians, Lebanese vs. Palestinians, PLO vs. Rejectionists etc. The political violences and intersectorian conflicts are still a common phenomenon in Lebanese politics.

The Palestinians in Lebanon

The Palestinians, being homeless, are living in various Arab states and a portion of them are also living in Lebanon. In 1948-49 about 90,000 Palestinians came to Lebanon and their numbers subsequently increased after the Arab Israeli wars in 1956, 1967 and 1973. The Palestinians in Lebanon tried not to be involved in the sectorian clashes. But with the increased strength of Palestinian Resistance Movement, they formed a strong guerilla force in Lebanon, which at the end of sixties were involved in clashes with Lebanese army and the right-wing militia forces. In 1969, a war broke out between the Lebanese army and the PLO guerillas. President Nasser of Egypt, who did not want to find either sight defeated, stepped in and enforced the Cairo Agreement on the Lebanese Government. The Palestinians demanded free movement in Lebanon, right to carry arms and to launch attack on Israel. The Lebanese Government did not completely agree with the Palestinians and they were given right to carry arms only in some parts of South Lebanon.³⁰

When the Palestinian Resistance was expelled from Jordan in 1970-71, Lebanon was their only remaining independent base for military operations against Israel. In 1973, a series of conflicts broke out between PLO guerillas and Christian militias and with the initiative of Syria the Melkart Agreement³¹ was signed to pacify the two

29. *International Herald Tribune*, July 12, 1982, p. 2.

30. Edger O'Ballance; *op. cit.*, p. 16.

31. Abbas Kelidar and Michael Burrell; *op. cit.*, p. 7.

contesting parties. According to that Agreement the Palestinians had agreed to end their ostensible and overt show of force in the streets of Beirut and undertook to remove the heavy weapons in their possession from city's refugee camps. The Lebanese Government acknowledged the cause of their struggle and reaffirmed the concessions for extra-territoriality made to the Palestinians in the Cairo Agreement.

But the right wing Christian militias did not follow the agreements and continued their attacks on Palestinian refugee camps with the help of Israel. In 1972 and 1973, the Palestinian refugee camps were attacked for several times, causing heavy loss of life and property. The culmination of those hostilities began in 1975, when the Phalangists attacked a bus carrying the Palestinian guerillas and a war broke out between the right-wing militia forces and left-wing Muslim forces. From the very beginning of the civil war, the Palestinians managed to maintain a neutral position because they took it as an internal Lebanese affair and not a struggle pitting Lebanese against Palestinians. But they were not able to maintain that status for long. Soon they were attacked by the Christian militias and Syrian forces. With the end of the civil war the Palestinians were totally involved in the internal politics in Lebanon and with the help of the Muslim left-wing forces they successfully resisted the Israeli aggressions in 1978 and 1981. The last Israeli invasion in June 1982 forced the Palestinian guerillas to leave Lebanon. About 6,000 PLO guerillas have been evacuated from Lebanon and scattered throughout the Arab World.

Lebanon was the last PLO headquarter and all military, political and diplomatic activities of the Organization were conducted from there. In a broadcast on the "Voice of Palestine" on Dec. 3, 1981 the PLO chief Yasser Arafat described Beirut as "a heart and soul" for his Organization.³³ But it did not mean that the Palestinians thought Lebanon as their homeland or they would intend to live there permanently. The ultimate goal of the Palestinians was and still is to return to their own land. So the socio-political and military status

32. Sam Younger *op. cit.* p. 261.

33. *Palestine Digest*, March 1982, p. 3.

of PLO in Lebanon was the same as in other Arab States that hosted Palestinians.³⁴ The PLO tried to find out an honorable solution of the Beirut crisis. They requested for retention of a "symbolic" military presence in Lebanon in the form of two armed brigades under command of the Lebanese army. It also requested to maintain their own police forces in the refugee camps within Lebanon.³⁵ But, inspite of Prime Minister Shafiq al-Wazzam's insist on a minimum PLO presence in Lebanon, all these proposals were rejected by Israel and the right-wing Lebanese forces.

The PLO guerillas have been evacuated but it does not mean that the Lebanese problem has altogether been solved. The PLO guerillas were not the only cause for Lebanon's sufferings as many Lebanese claimed. But it is true that their presence had complicated the tense situation in Lebanon and provoked the inter-sectarian conflicts. Some sectarian groups were interested in PLO's presence in Lebanon. The left-wing Muslim political leaders badly felt the need of PLO presence in Lebanon to counteract the strong Maronite forces. Even in 1969 and 1973, many Arab states, through PLO guerillas, helped the Muslim left-wing militias to strengthen their influence in Lebanon. So one thing is clear that the PLO withdrawal will weaken the position of Muslim left-wing forces in Lebanon and very likely that the Christian dominance will be established. And at the same time, the future of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon will be very vexatious. Because it is assumed that a Christian dominated government will run Lebanon, who will always treat Palestinians as their number one enemy and Israel with the help of the Christians may try to destroy the nationhood of the Palestinians. On the other hand, the Palestinians who were the victims of facist Israeli aggressions and their Lebanese allies, will never compromise with the right-wing forces and will exist as a source of threat to the internal security of Lebanon.

34. *Time*, July 5, 1982, p. 30.

35. *Time*, July 12, 1982, p. 4.

Syrian Objectives in Lebanon.

As it is mentioned earlier, the Syrians did never recognise the state of Lebanon and even today the Syrian National Party and the pro-Syrian Baathist Party in Lebanon support for a "Greater Syria." The major Syrian involvement in Lebanon was in the middle of 1970s, when the second Sinai disengagement agreement was signed in 1975. Syria did not support this move and started to help the PLO guerillas in Lebanon with a view to strengthening the Arab struggle against Israel. Thus the initial Syrian intervention in the first phase of the conflict in Lebanon was to protect the viability of the guerilla movement against Christians. The Lebanese leftists with the Palestinian guerillas fought furiously with the Christians and soon it was clear that the Christians were losing and a possibility of Lebanon being partitioned or reconstituted as a left-dominated Palestine-oriented state was increased. But Syria had a two-fold objective in Lebanon: she was afraid of a left-dominated Lebanon and at the same time she did not support the partition of Lebanon. In that situation in 1976 Syria signed a pact.³⁶ (Damascus Pact) through which she tried to influence over Lebanon. But the Lebanese Muslims did not accept it and Arafat, being fearful of the "Rejectionists", refused to cooperate with Syria.

The second phase of the Syrian policy started with her support to the Christians. Syria supplied arms to Christians and prevented the Palestinians from taking strategic points. The situation in Lebanon was worsened and Syria sent her guerilla forces and later on, in June 1976 Syrian military units entered in Lebanon with 450 tanks and 20,000 soldiers to help the Christians.³⁷ This realignment led to two new developments in Lebanon. Firstly, the non-Syrian leftist groups resumed close contacts with the PLO, which they earlier denounced as conservative and ineffectual. This also helped Egypt to bring PLO leadership more closer to Cairo and also get support for Egypt's Arab leadership and the Sinai disengagement agreement with the Israelis.

36. Abbas Kelidar and Michael Burrell; *op. cit.*, p. 18.

37. *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, (30 vols.) Macropedia 15th edition, 1978 Vol. 17, p. 964.

Secondly, the Christians, with the strong support of Syrian soldiers and tanks, began to win in the civil war.

But being strongly criticised by the Arab states soon Syria changed her policy. She gave up the Christians and left them in their strongholds. At the end of 1976, the Syrian forces started to work as a buffer between the PLO guerillas and Christian militia forces. Later on, the Syrian forces in Lebanon were sponsored by Arab League as an "Arab Deterrent Force" (ADF) as a peace-keeping one. In initial stage a few Arab states also sent small detachments to serve with ADF, but soon they were withdrawn. With the presence of ADF in Lebanon the civil war was ended but the city Beirut was divided by "Green line" into two parts East and West. The Christian Phalangists dominated the East one and the West was the stronghold of the PLO guerillas and left-wing Muslims. This partition was continued until the PLO withdrawal from Beirut.

The main objectives of the Syrian forces were to end the civil war and to help the Lebanese army to control over the country. But the Syrians failed to fulfill the objectives of their mission. According to the Arab League sponsorship the ADF would work under the control of Lebanese government, but practically it was totally controlled by Damascus. Syria, though not openly, wanted political control over the largest Muslim Shia community as additional support to counter-balance his hostile Sunni majority in Syria. The Syrian forces were in Lebanon for 6 years but they failed either to disarm the Palestinians or the Christian militias. Because even the leaders of the various militia groups were more powerful than the elected President of the country. Even the Arab Deterrent Force were not able to enter into the areas what called "Haddad land" in South Lebanon. With the Israeli invasion in June 1982, a part of Syrian forces were withdrawn from Lebanon. So neither they were able to fulfill their objectives nor the objectives of Arab League in Lebanon.

Israeli Invasions in Lebanon.

Aggressions towards any sovereign state is not a new phenomenon in Israeli politics. It's aggressions towards Lebanon started in

early 70s when the PLO guerillas were strengthening their positions in Lebanon. In 1978 Israel invaded and occupied a vast territory in South Lebanon. But with the decision of the United Nations Security Council the United Nations' Interim Force³⁸ were stationed in Lebanon and the Israelis were bound to withdraw. But they patronised the right-wing militia group of Major Saad Haddad and gave them all sorts of help to continue the aggressions in South Lebanon. Even the Israeli high officials met several times with the militia leaders in South Lebanon. In one of such meetings, former Israeli Prime Minister Rabin was present to discuss the possible Israeli help to the militias.³⁹ There was also a secret meeting in Cyprus between the Christian leaders and Israeli officials in which Israel agreed to supply the militias with light machine guns, tanks and motor-vehicles.⁴⁰

In 1981 the Israelis wanted to destroy the Syrian positions in the Bekka Valley but with the mediation of US special envoy Philip Habib a cease-fire agreement was signed between Israel and PLO. In early 1982, the Israelis attempted to launch an attack on Lebanon but according to the camp David Accords Israel had to withdraw from Sinai in April 1982 and the US insisted on Israel not going in direct confrontation with an Arab state at that time. In early June 1982, Israeli Ambassador in London was killed, Israel used it as a plea and launched a massive attack on Lebanon. Violating the UN resolutions, it entered into the UN zone in South Lebanon captured almost half of the territory of Lebanon, destroyed the Syrian positions in the Bekka Valley and besieged West Beirut, where the civilians along with the 6000 PLO guerillas were trapped more than a month. The Israeli occupied forces even refused to supply them water, food, medicine and electricity-the basic requirements for human being. The casualties in Beirut is still not known but according to a Lebanese paper about 18,000 people have been killed and more than 30,000 are wounded.⁴¹ The

38. *Emirates News*, June 19, 1982, p. 5.

39. Primakov. *Anatomia Blitznevostosnovo Krigisa (Anatomy of the Middle East Crisis)*. Moscow. 1978, p. 126.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 125.

41. *Bangladesh Times*, Sept. 3, 1982.

genocide committed in Beirut may only be compared with Nazi Germany during the Second World War.

A question may arise what were the objectives of Israeli aggressions in Lebanon and were there any alternatives to attain the goal without the holocaust of Beirut?

The first Israeli objective was to ensure the security of its border in South Lebanon. The PLO guerillas sometimes launched attacks from South Lebanon to Galilee in North Israel. So the destruction of the infrastructure of the PLO in Lebanon would secure Israel from PLO attacks. Many Israelis including Defence Minister Sharon believed that PLO withdrawal from Lebanon would unite them with the Palestinians in Jordan to overthrow king Hossein and create a Palestinian state there, less threatening to Israel. For the PLO withdrawal from Lebanon the Israelis set up two strong demands: Firstly, all the 15 organizations of which the PLO was comprised, would hand over their arms to Lebanese army. Secondly, all members of the organizations would leave Beirut and Lebanon without any expectation.⁴²

To secure the northern border, the Israelis had already declared that they would not tolerate any Palestinian camps South of Sidon. The biggest Palestinian refugee camp, East of Sidon was totally destroyed and about 48,000 refugees in South Lebanon became homeless.⁴³ They levelled the main camps in both Sidon and Tyre, 15 miles to the South. Israeli Minister of Economy said that Jerusalem wanted those Palestinians legally residing at Lebanon to be integrated into the local population rather than living in isolated camps where guerilla activity and Palestinian nationalism can breed side by side.⁴⁴

The Israelis were not in favour of stationing the multinational forces in South Lebanon, they preferred "friendly Lebanese forces" i.e Major Saad Haddad's militia forces. By driving the PLO guerillas from Lebanon, the Israelis are trying to merge the Palestinians into

42. *The Guardian*, July 4, 1982, p.5.

43. *Gulf News*, Aug. 3, 1982, p. 8.

44. *International Herald Tribune*, Aug. 16, 1982, p. 2.

the Lebanese people or to liquidate their national spirit, for the security of Israel. But they will not be able to kill the Palestinian issue with arms. Six thousand guerillas have been evacuated from Lebanon and are scattered throughout the Arab World, but it is sure that wherever they stay, they will continue struggle for their statehood. So by liquidating PLO from Lebanon, Israel can not ensure the security of its border. Already many Israelis are realizing that Palestinian issue cannot be wiped out with arms.⁴⁵

The Second objective was to destroy the Syrian installations in Lebanon and wipe out its influence from Lebanon. The Israelis took the Syrian forces in Lebanon as an obstacle in liquidating the PLO guerillas and establishing their influence in Lebanon. The Syrian missile positions in Bekka Valley were destroyed in the early days of the Israeli invasion.⁴⁶ The Israelis easily liquidated Syrian military presence in Lebanon but it would be very difficult to wipe out the Syrian political influence from Lebanon.

The third Israeli objective was to establish a pro-Israeli Government in Lebanon and to sign a peace treaty with it. The PLO and Syrian withdrawal have been completed but the Israeli forces are still in Lebanon and they will be withdrawn only when a pro-Israeli government will be set up in Lebanon, serving the interest of Israel. The President-elect Beshir Gemayel desired his intention to sign a peace treaty with Israel. But many Lebanese leaders rejected the idea. According to them the hostilities with Israel should be ended but by signing a peace treaty with Israel, Lebanon cannot be hostile to the Arab World on whom Lebanon's economy is fully dependent.⁴⁷

The fourth Israeli objective was to weaken the negotiating power of PLO. The Israelis believed that by liquidating the PLO from Lebanon, it would be able to weaken the resistance movement of the Palestinians in West Bank and Gaza. There was popular uprisings in West Bank and Gaza in protest of Israeli invasion under the slogan

45. *Newsweek*, July 12, 1982, p. 20.

46. *The Guardian*, June 18, 1982.

47. *International Herald Tribune*, Aug. 16, 1982, p. 2.

of their loyalty to PLO. All the elected Arab Mayors in West Bank and Gaza were removed one by one and were replaced by appointed officials more amenable to cooperate with Israeli occupation authority.⁴⁸ Meanwhile, the Bir Zeit University, a centre of Palestinian nationalism, was closed, the students were driven out while many of them were arrested.⁴⁹ So by scattering the PLO guerillas and removing Arab Mayors from West Bank and Gaza, Israel wants to create a ground so that they can impose their own version of "autonomy" in West Bank and Gaza.⁵⁰

Except geo-strategic and political objectives, Israel also has a long term economic interest in Lebanon. They have a long eye on the rich fertile land, mineral and water resources of Lebanon. The Director of Israeli Ministry of Trade and Industry expressed his view that Lebanon would become a major business partner to Israel alongside the top 10 EEC nations with which Israel conducts most of its trade. Only in July 1982, trade with Lebanon exceeded \$ 4 million which was four times the amount of imports Israel received from Egypt, including oil, during the same period. Israel exports to Lebanon mainly food, textiles, plastics and building materials. But in near future Israel has a plan to export high technology, medical diagnostic equipments and other specialized electronic products. Israel already established some information centres in Sidon and Tyre to examine the possibilities of increasing Israeli exports to Lebanon. They are also interested to develop tourism in Lebanon. Some Israeli travel agencies have already opened their offices in various towns in Lebanon and Air Israel is operating several flights with some cities in South Lebanon. A senior Lebanese official charged that the Israelis had looted Beirut International Airport, emptied its duty-free shops and confiscated the big reservation computer of Lebanon's Middle East Airlines. The Israelis also expressed their hope to develop sports and cultural relations with

48. *Arabia; The Islamic World Review*, July 1982, p. 7.

49. *The Gulf News*, Aug. 5, 1982.

50. *International Herald Tribune*, July 10-11, 1982.

Lebanon. So all the evidences show that Israeli objective in Lebanon is not only mere to destroy the PLO military strength and to secure its northern border but a long term economic penetration in Lebanon which is the most developed country in the Arab World and whose currency can freely be exchanged with Western currencies.

Part II

Peace prospects

The PLO guerillas and a part of Syrian forces have already been withdrawn from Lebanon. The Phalangist leader Beshir Gemayel was elected President and shortly after was assassinated. The very result of the election was disputed. Many Lebanese leaders demanded to delay the election as Beirut was occupied by Israeli forces. The Muslims demanded the Israeli withdrawal atleast 5 kilometers from Beirut before election. But all these demands were rejected and the election was held in Aug. 1982 when even the Lebanese Parliament was occupied by Israeli troops.⁵¹ Anyway Israel, United States and West European countries congratulated the newly elected President of Lebanon. But his assassination worsened the ongoing tense situation in Lebanon. The Israelis used it as a plea, they entered into West Beirut and massacred the Palestinian refugee camps. Though the Multinational force left Beirut with the completion of PLO withdrawal but at the request of the Lebanese Government they have returned to Lebanon. But the Israeli forces are still in Lebanon and in South Lebanon with the help of Haddad's militia forces they have already established their own administrative system. Clashes are going on among the various rival groups in Lebanon.

In this situation there are number of very vital problems to solve for peace in Lebanon; atfirst to form a strong central government and to establish its control over the rival groups, to ensure the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Lebanon and to restore its relations with the Arab World and with the Western World for her economic reconstruction. To solve all these problems any

51. *Economist*, July 31, 1982, p. 42.

future government in Lebanon will have to reconcile with the Muslims and other groups by sharing power with them and will have to ensure the security of the Palestinian refugees for getting support from the Arab World. But it will not be so easy because the ruling Phalangist party did never agree to share power with the Muslims, supported Israeli invasions and cooperated with them. The Muslims want a census be taken place, as they are sure that now they are majority. They also favour a constitutional amendment so that their authority can be asserted over the whole country. While the Israelis are pressing to sign a separate peace treaty and at the same time they have reiterated their firm determination not to permit the Palestinian refugees to live in camps. So it is clear that the crisis in Lebanon is very complicated and multidimensional and it will be very difficult to find out a solution acceptable to all parties concerned.

Possibility of Signing a Peace Treaty with Israeli and Long—Term Israeli Presence in Lebanon.

Israel had a long-term plan for signing a peace treaty with Lebanon. Even many Israeli officials openly told that Lebanon would be the second country in the Middle East signing a separate peace treaty with Israel.⁵² But it is assumed that the Lebanese people will not support of signing any separate peace treaty with Israel and will denounce any long-term Israeli presence in Lebanon. Many Lebanese Christians wanted to get rid off PLO guerillas but did not support long-term Israeli occupation. Even the right-wing Muslim leaders, who supported Israeli invasion and demanded PLO withdrawal, denounced Israeli presence in Lebanon. The Lebanese Prime Minister Shafiq al Wazzam accused Israel for trying to impose a separate peace treaty with Israel and for flooding the Lebanese market with Israeli goods undermining the economy ruined by Israeli aggressions.

52. *Israel; Face of a People*, 1979, p. 102.

But the long-term presence in Lebanon will also have a serious implication for Israel itself. A large number of Israelis did not support the assault in Beirut, massive demonstrations were held in Tel Aviv protesting the Israeli invasion and demanded immediate withdrawal from Lebanon. Many Israeli army veterans did not support Sharon's plan to invade Beirut and demanded his resignation. In Tel Aviv, many Israelis are asking themselves the question ; in previous Middle East wars they fought to defend their homes in Jerusalem but why they are fighting in the streets of Beirut ? Many Israeli officers refused to fight with the Palestinians in Beirut. For example Col. Eli Geva, a hero of past Israeli campaigns and an immensely popular leader of his man, preferred to be discharged from the army rather than to command a deadly assault in West Beirut.⁵³ Israeli opposition leader Shimon Peres also said that his Labour Party would oppose any government plan to maintain troops in Lebanon for an indefinite period.⁵⁴

The war in Lebanon has also seriously affected the Israeli economy. According to estimates by officials of the Bank of Israel, the war has cost Israel \$ 1 billion in outright expenditures, which is about 7% of Israeli GNP.⁵⁵ To compensate the war expenses the Israeli government has already increased taxes and the price of basic commodities such as bread, milk, margarine, eggs, poultry and public transportation have been increased. The inflation has been increased by 117 per cents.

Moreover, as long as the forces will be in Lebanon, international pressure on Israel will be tremendous to withdraw its troops from Lebanon. Even the United States, the only reliable partner of Israel, will hardly support any long-term Israeli presence in Lebanon, while the Europeans were already differed with USA on Lebanese issue and had shown signs to consider possible sanctions against Israel. The USA will have also to consider the psychology of the moderate Arab States including Egypt on Lebanese issue.

53. *Asia Week*, Aug. 13, 1982, p. 8.

54. *International Herald Tribune*, Aug. 11, 1982, p. 2.

55. *Ibid.*

US Involvement in Lebanese Crisis.

The United States are not interested to be involved directly in the Lebanese crisis. The presence of US Marines in Lebanon in 1958 was strongly criticised all over the world. So this time the United States will be very cautious about their involvement in the Lebanese crisis. Many Americans did not support Israeli offensive in Lebanon. A recent survey of public opinion in the United States shows that the majority of the Americans did not support the Israeli act in Lebanon. According to the survey, 60% of the Americans did not support Israel's military offensive in Lebanon, 43% wanted military aid to Israel suspended or stopped, 48% believed that US should hold direct talks with PLO.⁵⁶

Many American generals are also against US's direct involvement in the Middle East crisis. General David Jones, who retired recently as a Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff, opposed the presence of US Marines in Lebanon. According to him US should do something in the region but without US troops there.⁵⁷ Former US commander of Middle East force Mr. J. Hanks, in an article in Los Angeles Times, strongly criticised the direct US involvement in Arab-Israeli dispute. According to him the Israeli military victory in destroying the organized armed capability of PLO and cowing the Syrians, is only a temporary victory, the long-term consequences will bring severe losses for Israel and for the United States. At the same time, Moscow, who has been arguing for years to expose the United States as the sole "hand maiden of Zionist imperialism" will use the presence of US Marines in Lebanon to undermine US role in Middle East.

Even if the United States want the US Marines can not stay in Lebanon for a long time, because as long as they will be in Lebanon their very security will be endangered. Because the US Marines,

56. *Bangladesh Times*, Aug. 10, 1982.

57. *Gulf News*, June, 18, 1982, p. 5.

along with the Multinational forces, are too weak to prevent any sectarian clashes in Lebanon. Even the 7,000 strong United Nations' Interim Force failed to stop the hostilities in Lebanon. So there are all evidences that the USA will not be involved directly in the Lebanese crisis for a long-term period.

Possible Arab Role in Solving the Lebanese Crisis.

The radicals, who have already been cornered in recent years, can hardly play any role in Lebanon. The moderates, particularly Saudi Arabia, can play a very vital role in solving the sectarian conflicts in Lebanon. In 1975-1976, during the civil war, the moderates played a very constructive role and sponsored the Arab Deterrent Force in Lebanon who managed to end the war. In 1981, during the missile crisis, the Saudis very actively cooperated with US special envoy Philip Habib and as a result a cease-fire agreement was signed between Israel and PLO.

But overall Arab response to the Lebanese crisis in June 1982, was much less intense than any other previous crisis in the Middle East. Even within a month of starting the invasion, the Arab leaders failed to hold a meeting to discuss the situation in Lebanon. There were various factors, which seriously affected the Arab unity and their collective response to the Lebanese issue ; such as the Iran-Iraq war, which not only complicated the inter-Arab relations but also threatened the internal security of many Arab States. Majority of the Arab States are facing threats from various dimensions : Shiitte radicalism, Muslim fundamentalism, Iranian revolutionary agitation and Soviet invasion in Afganistan. Many Arab states considered the Iranian revolution and the Khomeni regime more dangerous and immediate cause of threat than the Zionist aggression in Lebanon.

The PLO leader, trapped in West Beirut, accused the moderate Arab states for maintaining deadly silence on the destruction of an Arab capital by Zionist enemy.⁵⁸ But later on, the Arab efforts were

58. *Asia Week*, July 9, 1982, p. 10.

intensified to find out a solution of the Lebanese crisis. Saudi Foreign Minister along with Syrian Foreign Minister visited Washington as an Arab League delegation to find out the solution of the crisis in Lebanon.⁵⁹ The Christian Phalangist leader Beshir Gemayel was also invited in Taif to attend an Arab League Meeting and efforts were made to woo him back to the Arab World, but the bid failed.⁶⁰

Syria, who had a very close relation with Lebanon and whose 30,000 soldiers were there for a long time, could play a very vital role in solving the crisis in Lebanon. But most of the Lebanese people are suspected about the Syrian objectives in Lebanon and her role since 1976 is also very controversial. Egypt is still isolated from the Arab world. Another problem is that already the Arabs are identified in the eyes of the Christians as the supporters of the Palestinians and left-wing Muslim forces in Lebanon. But still the Saudis and the Arab Gulf states have sufficient room to play in Lebanon because they are the supplier of a lion's share of Lebanon's foreign assistance and for her massive reconstruction work Lebanon may need more help from them. Moreover, diplomatically they are in a better position as they have a good communication with all parties concerned. But the future relations with the Arab world will depend on how the Lebanese Government will ensure the security of Lebanese Muslims and Palestinian refugees there and its relations with Israel and the PLO.

Conclusion.

In conclusion, it may be stated that the crisis in Lebanon is very deep-rooted and complicated which can not be solved in a day or two. What is most essential in present Lebanon is forgiveness, tolerance, patience and cooperation of all groups and parties.

Any future government of Lebanon will have to face a lot of problems and its success will depend on the socio-political integration of various groups in Lebanon. Any future Lebanese President must have to consider himself as an Arab leader and to seek all sorts of

59. *Newsweek*, July 2, 1982, pp. 12-14.

60. *Arabia : The Islamic World Review*, Aug. 1982, No. 12, p. 12.

cooperation from the sectarian groups and parties existing in Lebanon. And at the same time, the security of the Palestinian refugees must be ensured. Otherwise, if any body wants to hold power with the help of foreign troops or to make coalition with a particular sectarian group against others, the possibility of a long-term civil war will be increased and the Lebanese people will have to pay an ocean of blood who have already paid a lot.

But in global perspectives, permanent peace and total solution of the Lebanese crisis will not be possible unless and until the Palestinians will have their own state and the refugees in Lebanon will be able to return back to their homeland. Because Lebanese crisis is not an isolated issue in the global politics of the region, it is an extension to the overall Middle East problem, which was started in 1948 with the creation of the Zionist state Israel. So without solving the key question to the Middle East i.e. the statehood of more than 4 million Palestinians, the Lebanese crisis can not be solved with its totality.