

PART SEVEN

*THE WAR YEARS (1975-1991) IN
LEBANON AND THE
VARIOUS ROLES PLAYED BY
THE ARMENIANS OF LEBANON AND OF
THE DIASPORA*

The *Ta'ef* Agreement and the Lebanese-Armenians

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Introduction

The socio-political structure in Lebanon has a unique and complex configuration that is based upon consociational democracy.¹ The religious and ethnic communities in Lebanon are organized in a fashion that reinforces their conflicts in a system that promotes sectarian identification.² Lebanon is one of the few countries whose population is so pluralistic that it makes every ethno-religious group or sect by itself a minority. The state has officially recognized seventeen of these sects and has broadly divided them between Christian and Muslim denominations.³

This multi-confessional system recognized the primacy of religious communities and perpetuated the power of traditional elites in Lebanon.⁴ As a result, a continuous debate between Christians and Muslims concerning power sharing, political representation and participation has erupted. When Lebanon achieved independence from France in 1943, two popular Lebanese

¹ Consociational democracies, according to Arend Lijphart, share four general characteristics. First, political elites representing all significant segments of the plural society must participate in some form of grand decision-making coalition. Second, a mutual veto must exist, allowing elites of each group to challenge decisions detrimental to their particular groups. Third, proportionality must be the standard principle of political representation, civil service appointments, and the allocation of public funds. Fourth, each segmental group must be allowed to run its own internal affairs. See Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in plural societies: a comparative exploration*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1977; Milton J. Eastman, *Ethnic politics*, Ithaca, New York, Cornell University Press, 1994; Brenda Seaver, "The Regional sources of power-sharing failure: the case of Lebanon", in *Political science quarterly*, June 2000, pp. 247-271.

² Decision No. 60/L.R. of March 13, 1936, sets forth the Lebanese sects as follows: "Christians are composed of the Maronites, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholics, Armenian Gregorian, Armenian Catholics, Syrian Orthodox, Syrian Catholics, Nestorians, Chaldeans, Latin, and Protestants. The Muslim sects are made up of Sunnis, Shiites, Druzes, Alawites and Ismaelites. The Jewish sects are composed of Aleppo, Damascus, and Beirut synagogues. The unrecognized sects are Seventh-Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Bahais." See Latif Abdul-Husn, *The Lebanese conflict: looking inward*, Boulder, CO, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998.

³ Latif Abdul-Husn, *ibid*.

⁴ For in depth analysis of the Lebanese elites see, Hrair R. Dekmejian, *Patterns of political leadership: Israel, Lebanon, Egypt*, Albany, N.Y., State University of New York Press, 1975.

elites, Bishara Al-Khoury Maronite President, and Riyadh Al-Sulh, a Sunni Prime Minister, devised an unwritten Lebanese National Pact, incorporating into the political system a confessional split stipulating that future Lebanese Presidents be Maronites, the Prime Ministers be Sunni Muslims, and the Speakers of the Parliaments be Shiites. It was further agreed that Christians and Muslims would be represented in the Parliament according to a 6:5 ratio based on the 1932 census, and that the civil service appointments and public funding decisions would also be made on a sectarian basis.⁵ These arrangements in the future allocated public offices among confessional groups according to demographic and political weight.⁶ Thus, sectarianism and the sectarian system (*al-nizam al-ta'ifi*) accentuated by the debate about the power sharing arguments between these sects mainly contributed to the escalation of the Lebanese conflict to an unprecedented level of destruction and loss of life before 1990.⁷

In this socio-ethnic consociational system, the Armenian community strived throughout the decades to cope with this reality and tried to impose itself in Lebanon and be recognized as one of the religious sects, and consolidated its communal distinctiveness by identifying itself with the Armenian Church at the Catholicosate of Cilicia at *Antelias*, Lebanon, and formed political parties, with disengaged ideologies from the Lebanese political milieu.⁸

However, on the Lebanese political arena, the Armenian community, nevertheless, was well represented with active Parliamentarians from the early days of the First Republic and onward with different proportionalities.⁹ Its participation in the Lebanese cabinets, however, was not encouraging, particularly during the decades before the *Ta'ef* Agreement.¹⁰

⁵ Brenda Seaver, *ibid.*

⁶ Simon Haddad, "Cultural diversity and sectarian attitudes in postwar Lebanon," in *Journal of ethnic migration studies*, Vol. 28, No. 2, April 2002, pp.291-306.

⁷ Sami A. Ofeish, "Lebanon's Second Republic: secular talk, sectarian application," in *Arab studies quarterly*, p. 97, Vol. 21, No.1, winter 1999; Sana' Abu Shaqra, "Al-Dimoqratiyyeh wa azmat nizam at-tawa'ef", (in Arabic for "Democracy and the crisis of the sects") in Joseph Fadel, ed., *Salam wa istishraf: Loubnan afaq* (in Arab., for *Peace and harmony: Lebanese horizons*), Jounieh, Lebanon, Al-Matbaa Al-Boolisiyyeh, 1993.

⁸ The three active Armenian political parties in Lebanon are: The Social Democratic Hentchak Party (Hentchak), the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Tashnak), and the Liberal Democratic Party (Ramgavar). See also, Latif Abdul-Husn, *ibid.*

⁹ For the names of the Armenian MPs in different Parliaments in Lebanon, see Appendix, pp. 433-35.

¹⁰ For the names of Armenian Ministers in the Lebanese governments, see Appendix, p. 436.

The Lebanese Civil War

Numerous books and articles have been published about the Lebanese Civil War and particularly about the events marking the beginning of the Lebanese Civil War.¹¹ One version of political thought points out that the Civil War started with the February 25, 1975, demonstrations of the Lebanese fishermen's union in *Sidon* protesting the establishment of President Camille Chamoun's Protein Company. The demonstration provoked the Lebanese Army, which began firing upon protesters, fatally wounding Ma'arouf Sa'ad, the Sunni Muslim leader of the Popular Nasserite Organization of *Sidon*.¹² During the following two weeks, demonstrations convulsed virtually all of Lebanon's major cities, with the most intense fighting occurring between troops and gunmen in *Sidon*.¹³

Another account asserts that the Lebanese Civil War erupted on April 13, 1975, when Pierre Gemayel, the leader of the Maronite-dominated Al-Kataeb Party (the Phalangists) attended the consecration of a new church in the Christian Beirut suburb, *Ayn Al-Rummana*, where unknown assailants approached the church in two cars and opened fire, killing three Christians. Within a matter of hours, a group of Maronite militiamen at *Ayn Al-Rummana* retaliated by ambushing twenty-six Palestinians in a bus who were on their way to the *Tel Al-Za'atar* refugee camp after attending a gathering in *Sabra*, a Palestinian stronghold in Lebanon at that time.¹⁴

Following the outbreak of Civil War and Syria's intervention in 1976, social scientists and Middle East specialists attributed the Lebanese regime's breakdown to a variety of internal factors, including the demographic shift that favored the Muslims over the Christians,¹⁵ the confessional split that granted a privileged status to the Maronites over the Muslims, and the rise of

¹¹ Elizabeth Picard, *Lebanon: a shattered country*, New York, N.Y., Holmes & Meier Publishers, 2002; Itamar Rabinovich, *The war for Lebanon: 1970-1983*, Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell University Press, 1984.

¹² Brenda Seaver, *ibid.*

¹³ Itamar Rabinovich, *ibid.*; Brenda Seaver, *ibid.*

¹⁴ Marie-Joelle Zahar, "Peace by unconventional means: Lebanon's Ta'if Agreement," in Stephen J. Stedman, Donald Rothchild & Elizabeth M. Cousens, eds., *Ending civil wars: the implementation of peace agreements*, London, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002; Elizabeth Picard, *ibid.*; Itamar Rabinovich, *ibid.*; Robert Fisk, *Pity the nation: the abduction of Lebanon*, New York, N.Y., Thunder's Mouth Press, 2002.

¹⁵ There is no official census in Lebanon since 1932. However, in 1977, a French family planning study put the ratio of the Lebanese people at 55% Muslim and 45% Christian. Thus, Muslims started asserting claims that they are in the majority in Lebanon since the early 1970s, contributing to tensions preceding the 1975-1976 civil strife and during the Civil War, demanding more powerful Muslim voice in the government. See, *Department of State Bulletin*, December 1988, p. 48.

a radicalized intelligentsia who supported sociopolitical change and promoted Pan-Arabism in Lebanon.¹⁶ The political tension between the warring parties throughout the Civil War rendered Lebanon's economy to its lowest levels. By 1988, the Lebanese national product was half its 1974 level and inflation hit a record high above 700%.¹⁷

In the midst of these strains and hostilities, the Lebanese-Armenian community declared its neutrality as to the pressing issues of the warring factions, expressing its belief in the principle of dialogue and understanding in order to alleviate the tensions and solve the Lebanese conflict.¹⁸

The Lebanese-Armenian proposals before the *Ta'ef* Meeting

Although the Lebanese Civil War started with the shooting of Ma'arouf Sa'ad and the *Ayn Al-Rummana* incident, it escalated to engage the regional powers, such as Syria and Israel, both of which had stakes in the Lebanese Civil War.¹⁹ However, the war in Lebanon was fought over a number of issues including the balance of power in government, the role of the armed Palestinian groups, the redistribution of wealth, and Lebanon's foreign policy orientation. The divisions among the Lebanese prevented them from trying to solve their internal problems by themselves through open dialogue, and prompted foreign intervention, namely by the Syrians and the Americans, to solve the crisis.²⁰ Damascus further tried to prevent any other regional power

¹⁶ Brenda Seaver, *ibid.*

¹⁷ Richard Murphy, Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, of the Department of State, "Address at Citadel on March 22, 1988," in *Department of State Bulletin*, June 1988, p. 43.

¹⁸ *Ararat daily*, October 8, 1983, p. 1; and see the Joint Resolution of the Lebanese-Armenian Denominations on October 7, 1983 (Appendix, pp. 438-39).

¹⁹ In May 1976, the first Syrian troops entered Lebanon and legitimized their presence a few months later at the League of Arab States' Riyadh Conference that established the Arab Deterrent Force. Two years later, in March 1978, the Israel Defense Forces entered Southern Lebanon in retaliation for a guerrilla attack on a bus near Tel Aviv. The UN called on Israel to withdraw and the UN Interim Forces in Lebanon (UNIFIL) were sent to replace the Israelis as they pulled back. Nevertheless, Israel re-invaded Lebanon in 1982 and occupied Southern Lebanon until 2000. Robert Fisk, *ibid.*, 2002.

²⁰ Richard W. Murphy, Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, of the Department of State, in a speech before the American University of Beirut (AUB) Alumni Conference in Orlando, FL., October 29, 1988, stated: *We [the U.S.] worked hard on helping the Lebanese reach an agreement on reform, especially from February through April of this year [1988]. It was an awkward, thankless, and ultimately unsuccessful effort; it became a U.S. shuttle between Beirut and Damascus rather than the Lebanese themselves negotiating directly with one another. Our efforts nonetheless resulted in two key areas: power-sharing and de-confessionalization.* *ibid.*, p. 45; Abdallah Bou Habib, *Ad-Daw' al-asfar: al-siyasah al-amerikiyyeh tijah Loubnan* (in Arab., for *The yellow light: the American policy towards Lebanon*), Beirut, Lebanon, Sharikat Al-Matbou'at Liltawzi'h Wa An-Nashr, 1991.

(that is Israel, Iraq or Saudi Arabia) from gaining influence in Lebanon, at any cost.²¹

Hence, the Lebanese Civil War revolved around three basic issues: (a) reform of the political order implying an amendment to the power-sharing agreement of the National Pact; (b) the question of national identity of Lebanon, entailing settling on a view of the country's relations with the Arab world, particularly Syria; and (c) the sovereignty of the state and the presence of foreign troops on Lebanon's soil.²²

Attempts to resolve these issues began in the early months of the war and resulted in a number of draft documents and agreements throughout the duration of the Lebanese Civil War.²³ Among the most important proposals were:

- a. The comprehensive reform program presented by the Lebanese National Movement, headed by Kamal Jumblatt, on August 18, 1975;²⁴
- b. The Constitutional Document announced by President Suleiman Franjiyyeh in 1976;²⁵
- c. President Elias Sarkis' 14-points National Entente Program of March 5, 1980;²⁶
- d. The National Dialogue Conferences in Geneva and Lausanne of October 1983 and April 1984 respectively;²⁷
- e. The Tripartite Agreement of December 28, 1985 between Elie Hobeiga, Nabih Berri and Walid Jumblatt with the approval of Syria's Abdul Halim Khaddam;²⁸
- f. The Lebanese Peace Initiative of 1986;²⁹
- g. The Hariri Paper of 1987.³⁰

²¹ Paul E. Salem, "The wounded republic: Lebanon's struggle for recovery," in *Arab studies quarterly*, Vol. 16, No. 4, Fall 1994, p. 47; Simon Haddad, *ibid.*, pp. 291-306.

²² Latif Abdul-Husn, *ibid.*

²³ George Bikasini, *Asrar At-Ta'ef: min aahd Amin Jmayyel hatta souqout Al-General* (in Arab., for *The secrets of Ta'ef: from Amin Gemayel's reign until the fall of the General*), Beirut, Lebanon, Dar At-Ta'awouniyyeh At-Tibaiyyeh, 1993, p. 38.

²⁴ Latif Abdul-Husn, *ibid.*

²⁵ George Bikasini, *ibid.*

²⁶ George Saadeh, *Qissati ma'a At-Ta'ef* (in Arab., for *My story with Ta'ef*), Beirut Lebanon, 1998, p. 38.

²⁷ George Beshir and Phillip Abi Aqel, *Oumara' al-tawa'ef: min Geneva ila Lauzanne* (in Arab., for *The princes of sects: from Geneva to Lausanne*), Beirut, Lebanon, Wakalet Al-Anba' Al-Markaziyyeh, 1984; Elie A. Salem, *Violence and diplomacy in Lebanon*, New York, N.Y., Tauris Publishers, 1993.

²⁸ Elie A. Salem, *ibid.*, pp. 189-219.

²⁹ George Saadeh, *ibid.*, p. 345.

³⁰ Elie A. Salem, *ibid.*, p. 250; George Bikasini, *ibid.*, p. 48.

- h. The April Glaspie Proposal of March 1988;³¹
- i. Prime Minister Salim El-Hoss's Proposal of 1988;³² and
- j. The Hussein Husseini Paper presented to Patriarch Nesrallah Sfeir on July 12, 1989.³³

These proposals divided the parties to the Lebanese conflict into two major camps: those advocating reform and those wanting to protect the status quo.³⁴ The reformists struggled to change the political system and make it more accommodating to social and political deviations, and the status quo defenders fought to preserve and maintain the system.³⁵ Accordingly, each group presented reform plans based on its own perspective.

The *Ta'ef* Accord was the culmination of the abovementioned proposals made during the 1980s. The Lebanese-Armenian community in its turn presented two different proposals with two different sets of demands. The first official proposal was made in 1983, at the Geneva talks,³⁶ and the second, which was entitled the "Lebanese Peace Initiative" was presented three years later in collaboration with other Christian denominations, namely the Independent Maronite Parliamentary Bloc, the Al-Kataeb Party, the Al-Wataniyyoun Al-Ahrar Party (Liberal Nationalist Party) and the Lebanese Forces.³⁷ This initiative was presented on March 6, 1986, immediately two months after the signing of the Tripartite Agreement between Elie Hobeiqa, Nabih Berri and Walid Jumblatt, throwing the Lebanese-Armenian community into one of the camps in the Lebanese conflict.

³¹ April Glaspie was stationed at the U.S. Embassy in Damascus at a time and then took a leading role in the Middle East section in the Department of State, and later became the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq just before Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait. Aaref Al-Abed, *Loubnan wa At-Ta'ef: taqato' tarikhi wa masar gheir mouktamel* (in Arab., for *Lebanon and Ta'ef: historical crossing and unfinished track*), Markaz Dirasat Al-Wahdeh Al-Arabiyyeh, 2001, p. 182; Elie A. Salem, *ibid.*

³² Prime Minister Salim El-Hoss demanded an increase in the powers of the Prime Minister, an amendment of the electoral law to ensure parity in the parliamentary representation between the Christian and the Muslim blocs, and some administrative decentralization.

³³ George Saadeh, *ibid.*, p. 38; George Bikasini, *ibid.*, p. 40.

³⁴ Most Christian factions were keen to maintain the status quo, while the Muslims demanded immediate reforms. Latif Abdul-Husn, *ibid.*

³⁵ Michael Hudson, "Lebanon after *Ta'if*: another opportunity lost?" in *Arab studies quarterly*, Vol. 21, No. 1, Winter 1999; Augustus Richard Norton, "Lebanon after *Ta'if*: is the civil war over?" in *The Middle East journal*, Vol. 45, No. 3, Summer 1991, p. 457.

³⁶ For the English translated text of the Lebanese-Armenian Proposal at the Geneva Talks, see Appendix, pp. 440-45.

³⁷ For the English version of the Lebanese Peace Initiative of 1986, see Appendix, pp. 446-57.

Reform

The first important matter of contention amongst the Lebanese was the issue of reform of the political order in Lebanon, which implied an amendment to the power-sharing agreement of the National Pact of 1943. The Lebanese-Armenian community was very sensitive to the issue of sectarianism in Lebanon. It advocated maintaining the status quo of the consociational system in Lebanon. Therefore, during the Geneva talks in 1983, the Lebanese-Armenian Parliamentarians³⁸ presented a proposal which in its pertinent parts stated:

*The preservation of the sectarian form which still has its vital role at this stage. However, it has to be based on mutual respect and recognition among all religious sects, and the relationships and dealings between them ought to be solid, deep, stable and loyal. Furthermore, there should be equality of rights and obligations in a fair and balanced distribution.*³⁹

To inculcate this sectarian system, the Lebanese-Armenian Parliamentarians went further to propose an amendment to the Lebanese Constitution to memorialize the unwritten Lebanese National Pact, by setting apart confessional affiliation to the Presidency of the Republic to the Maronites, the Presidency of the Cabinet to Sunnis, and the Presidency of the Parliament to the Shiites.⁴⁰ They also proposed the creation of a Senate where all Lebanese religious sects would be represented in order to preserve equilibrium between them.⁴¹ They, as most other denominations, proposed an increase in the number of MPs and the adoption of the principle of equality in the distribution of seats between Muslims and Christians in the Parliament as

³⁸ The Armenian MPs elected in 1972 for the Lebanese Parliament were: Khatchik Babikian, Melkon Eblighatian, Souren Khanamirian and Ara Yerevanian from the Armenian Orthodox denomination; Joseph Chader from the Armenian Catholic denomination, who later died in 1977, and was not replaced. Antranik Manougian was elected representing the Protestants in Lebanon, however, he became a member of the Lebanese-Armenian Parliamentary Bloc.

³⁹ See Paragraph 2 of sub-heading "Political and Administrative Reforms" of the Lebanese-Armenian Proposal at the Geneva Talks, Appendix, p. 442.

⁴⁰ See Paragraph 5 of sub-heading "Political and Administrative Reforms" of the Lebanese-Armenian Proposal at the Geneva Talks, Appendix, p. 442-3.

⁴¹ See Paragraph 3 of sub-heading "Political and Administrative Reforms" of the Lebanese-Armenian Proposal at the Geneva Talks, Appendix, p. 442.

well as Cabinet.⁴² Much of these proposals were adopted in the *Ta'ef* Agreement.⁴³

In 1986, the Lebanese-Armenian Parliamentarians, along with the other Christian denominations, reaffirmed the demand to have an amendment to the Constitution for the allocation of three presidencies: the Presidency of the Republic to a Maronite, the Presidency of the Parliament to a Shiite and the Presidency of the Cabinet to a Sunni.⁴⁴ They also reiterated the idea of equal allocation of parliamentary and ministerial seats between the Muslims and the Christians by increasing the number of MPs to 108. However, a new variable in this formula came into existence: the demand for proportionality within each group.⁴⁵

The 1986 initiative recommended an interesting twist to the Executive Branch of the government. The Lebanese-Armenians in collaboration with the Maronites made a new suggestion to create the office of the Vice Presidency of the Republic, which was to be composed of six people who would represent the major sects in Lebanon except for that of the President.⁴⁶ This proposal, however, was not adopted at the *Ta'ef* meeting.

National identity

The second crucial and essential topic that the Lebanese factions disagreed upon was the problem of the Lebanese national identity. The Arab-Israeli conflict generated enormous pressure on Lebanon in this regard, which was supplemented by a number of successive "coup d'états" in the Arab countries influenced by the rise of Egypt's Gamal Abed Al-Nasser.⁴⁷ This very issue polarized Lebanese politics and brought the Christian-Muslim divide over the identity of Lebanon to the front. Lebanon's national identity

⁴² See Paragraph 4 of sub-heading "Political and Administrative Reforms" of the Lebanese-Armenian Proposal at the Geneva Talks, Appendix, p. 442.

⁴³ For the English translation of the Lebanese National Reconciliation Accord, the "Wathiqat Al-Wifaq Al-Watani Al-Lubnani" see Paul E. Salem, "The new constitution and the *Ta'ef* Agreement", in *The Beirut review*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Spring 1991; Elie Salem, "The national conciliation document: a critique," in *The Lebanon report*, The Lebanese Center for Policy Studies, Vol. 2, No. 1, January 1991.

⁴⁴ Chapter Three, Section 1 of the Lebanese Peace Initiative. See Appendix, p. 450.

⁴⁵ Chapter Three, Section 2 of the Lebanese Peace Initiative. See Appendix, p. 450.

⁴⁶ This proposal suggests that the anticipated six Vice Presidents of the Lebanese Republic would have been a Sunni, a Shiite, a Druze, a Greek Orthodox, a Greek Catholic, and an Armenian Orthodox. See Chapter Three of the Lebanese Peace Initiative (Appendix, p. 449-57).

⁴⁷ Augustus Richard Norton, "Lebanon's conundrum," in *Arab studies quarterly*, Vol. 21, No. 1, winter 1999, p. 41.

divided the country's communities and became a prism through which the two communal blocs viewed the Palestinian cause and Lebanon's relations with the Arab and Western worlds differently.⁴⁸

The Lebanese-Armenian community tried to keep a neutral stand on this very issue. At the Geneva Conference, the Lebanese-Armenian Parliamentarians presented a very cautious language on this matter. They proposed:

*Preservation of the distinguished proper identity of Lebanon and its consolidation, as well as the preservation of its international relations and their consolidation, namely its close and harmonious ties with the Arab countries on the basis of full respect without undermining its independence, sovereignty and regime, and within the framework of the UN Charter as well as the Arab League Charter.*⁴⁹

In the 1986, Lebanese Peace Initiative, the Lebanese-Armenians registered a major shift in their neutral standing as to this issue by agreeing, "Lebanon is an Arab country."⁵⁰ This understanding, later, was modified to state in the Ta'ef Accord that *Lebanon is ... [an] Arab country by identity and affiliation and a founding and active member of the Arab League fully committed to the League's Charter.*⁵¹

Both proposals did not mention the issue of Lebanon's ties with the Arab World, nor did they make any references about Lebanon's relationship with the neighboring Syria.

Sovereignty

With the presence of foreign troops including Syrian, Palestinian, Israeli, Iranian, and multi-national forces in Lebanon throughout the years, accented by the disagreements over political reforms and national identity, the Lebanese internal dispute elevated from local conflict to a regional, rather an international controversy which attracted the attention of the superpowers at one time. Both camps considered Lebanon's sovereignty, integrity, and

⁴⁸ Latif Abdul-Husn, *ibid.*

⁴⁹ Paragraph 1 of the "Political and Administrative Reforms" heading of the Lebanese-Armenian Proposal at Geneva Conference (Appendix, p. 442).

⁵⁰ Chapter One, Paragraph 2 of the Lebanese Peace Initiative (Appendix, p. 447).

⁵¹ Paul E. Salem, *ibid.*, 1991.

independence inviolable, but they differed in their interpretation of what constituted a breach of the country's sovereignty.

The Lebanese-Armenian community tried to distance itself from being engaged in regional and international discords by maintaining its neutrality. To reaffirm this stance, the Armenian political parties along with religious leaders reconfirmed the Lebanese-Armenian community's neutrality in a joint resolution in October 1983, by broadly stating:

*We declare that each citizen has the duty to contribute in making the country stronger and able to spread its authority throughout the country; this cannot be realized unless all foreign forces are removed, and the Lebanese army is deployed in order to support the nation's unity, which is a fundamental principle that should not be meddled with by schemes to divide the country.*⁵²

To keep their "positive neutrality" the Armenian Parliamentarians did not even touch upon this hot topic at the 1983 Geneva and the 1984 Lausanne Conferences.

A major shift, however, in the Lebanese-Armenian community's political stance was recorded when Khatchik Babikian and Melkon Eblighatian on behalf of the Lebanese-Armenian Parliamentary Bloc signed the Lebanese Peace Initiative with the Al-Kataeb, the Al-Ahrar and the Lebanese Forces demanding the liberation of the Lebanese territories in full from foreign troops and restoration of Lebanon's sovereignty on all its territories and execution of the UN resolutions, particularly Security Council Resolution No. 425 and most importantly the revocation of the Cairo Agreement.⁵³

A new era started with a bunch of new political demands by the Lebanese-Armenian Parliamentarians, which produced an immediate reaction by the other camp, resulting in several assassinations of the members of the Armenian community in Western Beirut.⁵⁴ To confine the dominated bad political situation between the Armenian community and the local political

⁵² Paragraph 7 of the Joint Resolution of the Lebanese-Armenian Denominations of October 7, 1983 (Appendix, p. 439).

⁵³ The Cairo Agreement was signed by the Lebanese authorities and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in Cairo, Egypt in 1969. It legitimised the bearing of arms by the Palestinian refugees on the Lebanese territories. For the Armenian demands, see, Chapter One, Paragraph 6 of the Lebanese Peace Initiative (Appendix, p. 447).

⁵⁴ "Vodjrayin michateb Sana'ai metch," (in Arm., for "A criminal event in Sana'ai") in *Aztag daily*, May 27, 1986, p. 1.

parties in West Beirut and to stop further assassinations of members of the Armenian community in May 1986, the leadership of the Hentchak Party in Lebanon was obligated to meet immediately with several Lebanese political figures, including Walid Jumblatt and Nabih Berri of the Socialist Progressive Party and the Amal Movement respectively, whereas a high ranking delegation comprised of members of the Central Committee of the Hentchak Party went to Damascus to meet with Syria's Vice President Abdul Halim Khaddam, who was in charge of the Lebanese portfolio in the Syrian Government at the time, to request from the latter an instantaneous interference in the matter.⁵⁵

Armenian MPs on the road to *Ta'ef*

During the last year of President Amine Gemayel's term, the situation in Lebanon reached an unprecedented political deadlock. With Gemayel's six-year presidential term expiring in September 1988, the Syrian President, Hafiz Al-Assad, started to exert political and military pressure as early as January to select a Lebanese president who would promote the Syrian interests in Lebanon.⁵⁶ Damascus attempted to impose the election of Suleiman Franjiyyeh who had previously served in the same post from 1970 to 1976.⁵⁷ Western governments including France and the United States were adamantly opposed to such proposition.⁵⁸

President Gemayel and other Christian leaders such as Samir Geagea were equally opposed to Franjiyyeh's return to power.⁵⁹ To offset these two Christian leaders, Franjiyyeh commenced intense consultations and behind the scenes negotiations on the local, regional and international levels in 1988, which included several meetings with the Armenian MPs including Melkon Eblighatian and Antranik Manougian.⁶⁰ President Gemayel on the other hand, responded to Franjiyyeh's political maneuvers by meeting with Deputy

⁵⁵ Personal interview by this researcher with Mr. Avedis Demirdjian, ex-Chairman of the Central Committee of the Hentchak Party on July 2, 2005.

⁵⁶ Augustus Richard Norton, *ibid.*, 1991, p. 457.

⁵⁷ Richard W. Murphy, Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, of the Department of State before the Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East of the House Foreign Affairs Committee on October 13, 1988. *ibid.*, p. 41.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Kareem Pakradouni, *La'net al-watan: min harb Loubnan ila harb Al-Khalij* (in Arab., for *The curse of a nation: from the Lebanese war to the Gulf war*), in Aabr Al-Sharq Lilmanshourat, Beirut, Lebanon, 1991.

⁶⁰ Suleiman Franjiyyeh met with Melkon Eblighatian and Antranik Manougian on January 8, 1988, in *Zgharta*. See, "Franjeh tashawara maa Manougian wa Eblighatian," (in Arab., for "Franjiyyeh deliberated with Manougian and Eblighatian") in *An-Nahar*, January 9, 1988, p. 3.

Souren Khanamirian to confer with the latter about the political situation at that time and explored the possibility of postponing the presidential elections in Lebanon.⁶¹ To challenge such concerns, Melkon Eblighatian in a news conference announced later that there were no real reasons to postpone the presidential elections.⁶²

By mid-1988, as President Gemayel was aiming at having a renewal of his term for two additional years,⁶³ Suleiman Franjiyyeh met with Khatchik Babikian, who affirmed that Franjiyyeh was the only capable person to lead Lebanon out of the unstable political and military conditions at the time.⁶⁴

When Franjiyyeh officially announced his candidacy for the presidency, the Armenian Parliamentarians Khatchik Babikian, Melkon Eblighatian, Souren Khanamirian and Antranik Manougian held a meeting on August 17, 1988, just a day before the election, to discuss the next day's presidential elections but could not come to a unified stand as to the candidate.⁶⁵ Later the same day, Babikian and Manougian met with Patriarch Sfeir.⁶⁶ Except for Souren Khanamirian, the Armenian MPs were unable to attend the Parliament

⁶¹ President Gemayel met with Souren Khanamirian in Baabda Palace on January 14, 1988. See, "Al-Jemayel tashawara maa nouwwab fi al-tatawourat wa maa Aoun shuoon al-mouessesseh al-askariyyeh," (in Arab., for "Gemayel deliberated with MPs about the situation and with Aoun about the military institution") in *An-Nahar*, January 15, 1988, p. 2.

⁶² Eblighatian, "Al-intikhabat fi mawidiha," (in Arab., for "The elections are as scheduled") in *An-Nahar*, January 24, 1988.

⁶³ On June 9, 1988, the plane carrying President Amine Gemayel coming from the Arab League summit in Algiers landed in Paris, France, where the French President Francois Mitterrand's National Security Advisor, in the presence of Fouad Al-Turk, the Lebanese Ambassador to France at the time and Minister Joseph Al-Hashem, offered him a renewal for another two years. See, George Bikasini, *ibid.*, 1993, p. 11; Kareem Pakradouni, *ibid.*, 1991, p. 10.

⁶⁴ Khatchik Babikian met with Suleiman Franjiyyeh on July 31, 1988 in *Zgharta*. See, "Franjeh ya'arod al-istihqaq al-destouri maa Babikian," (in Arab., for "Franjiyyeh discusses the constitutional deadline with Babikian") in *An-Nahar*, August 1, 1988, p. 1. Just 3 days later, however, the Armenian Catholicos Karekin I accompanied by Archbishop Ghevont Chebeyan meets with President Amine Gemayel in *Ba'abda* on August 3, 1988, to discuss the upcoming presidential elections. "Karekin Al-Thani: al-intikhabat satouberhen anna Loubnan baqen bi mou'assasatihi wa shar'iyetihi," (in Arab., for "Karekin II: the elections shall prove that Lebanon is there to stay with its institutions and legitimacy") in *An-Nahar*, August 4, 1988, p. 2.

⁶⁵ *An-Nahar*, August 18, 1988, p. 2.

⁶⁶ "Istaqbala ketlat nouwwab Al-Armen: Sfeir 'arada al-istihqaq," (in Arab., for "Sfeir hosted members of the Armenian Bloc of the parliament and conversed about the elections") in *An-Nahar*, August 18, 1988, p. 3.

meeting at Beirut's *Mansour* Palace on the Election Day, and no president was elected because there was no quorum.⁶⁷

The political impasse continued until the last days of President Gemayel, who tried one last chance by going to Syria on September 21, 1988, accompanied by Elie Salem and Ghassan Tueini to meet with President Hafez Al-Assad to no avail.⁶⁸ The stalemated presidential election and the inability of Gemayel to agree with Assad marked the beginning of the end of the First Lebanese Republic and gave rise to two rival governments on September 23, 1988, when his term expired.⁶⁹

As Lebanese Army General Michel Aoun took over the *Baabda* Palace, the Lebanese crisis reached another unparalleled political and military escalation, leading the Arab foreign ministers to hold an emergency meeting in January, 1989, in Tunisia to discuss the Lebanese crisis. The emergency Arab League meeting established a six-member committee to negotiate with the Lebanese parties for a political solution. General Aoun demanded the withdrawal of foreign troops from the country as a precondition to any negotiations, whereas Prime Minister Hoss and Speaker Husseini insisted on the primacy of internal reforms.⁷⁰ The decision of the Arab Foreign Ministers

⁶⁷ There was an understanding between President Gemayel, Samir Geagea and Army General Michel Aoun to boycott the Parliament meeting on August 18, 1988, by putting checkpoints on the streets to prevent the MPs from reaching the *Mansour* Palace where the Parliament was supposedly to convene. Daniel Simson of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut took the task of informing the MPs about the decision. See, Sarkis Na'oum, *Michel Aoun: houlm em wahem*, Beirut, 1992, p. 50; Souren Khanamirian in an interview conducted by Dr. Sona Demirdjian on March 21, 2005, asserted that he was able to make it to the *Mansour* Palace on the election day, because he was coming from West Beirut, whereas the other Armenian MPs were not allowed by the Christian militias to cross the green line.

⁶⁸ "Qimmat Al-Jmeyyel-Al-Assad: ittifaq fi Dimashq" (in Arab., for "The Gemayel-Assad summit: agreement in Damascus") in *An-Nahar*, September 22, 1988, p. 1.

⁶⁹ President Gemayel issued Presidential Decree No. 5387 appointing the Lebanese Army General Michel Aoun as the Prime Minister for the Transitional Government, and issued another Presidential Decree No. 5388 at 11:53 midnight (7 minutes before his time was up) appointing the following as members of the Cabinet: Michel Aoun (Maronite) Prime Minister; Issam Abou Jamra (Greek Orthodox); Edgar Maalouf (Greek Catholic); Nabil Qoreitem (Sunni); Loutfi Jaber (Shi'ite); Mahmoud Tay Abou Dargham (Druze). No Armenians. After the appointment of these military officers, the Muslim members of the Cabinet quit. *An-Nahar*, September 23, 1988, p. 1; Nikoula Nasr, *Intikhabat rabi'h 2005: ma qabel wa ma ba'ad. Rou'ya wa tahzir* (in Arab., for *Spring 2005 elections: what's before and what's after. Vision & speculation*), Beirut, Lebanon, Dar Al-Mourad, 2004, p. 19; Kareem Pakradouni, *ibid.*; George Saadeh, *ibid.*; George Bikasini, *ibid.*

⁷⁰ Arab League Summit for Foreign Ministers convened in Tunisia in January 1989, and formed a committee comprising of six (6) foreign ministers: Chairmanship of Kuwait, and membership of Algiers, Tunisia, Jordan, United Arab Emirates, and the Arab League. See, George Bikasini, *ibid.*; Marie-Joelle Zahar, *ibid.*, p. 567.

concerning an equitable outcome of the Lebanese crisis was delivered to the Lebanese-Armenian community, through the personal representative of Speaker Hussein Husseini and Prime Minister Selim El-Hoss in a meeting attended by Catholicos Karekin II, Khatchik Babikian and Melkon Eblighatian on January 25, 1989.⁷¹

As the Six-Member Arab Committee continued to negotiate with the Lebanese parties, General Aoun declared the "Liberation War" from the Syrian occupation on March 14, 1989.⁷² In the light of an unmatched military escalation between the Lebanese and Syrian armies, Patriarch Sfeir called for an emergency meeting on April 18, 1989 of 22 Christian Parliamentarians in *Bekerki*. Among the attendees were Khatchik Babikian, Melkon Eblighatian, Antranik Manougian and Souren Khanamirian.⁷³ The Armenian MPs in conjunction with the rest of the Christian Parliamentarians denounced Aoun's irresponsible conduct and called upon the warring factions to stop the heavy fighting immediately.⁷⁴

Luckily, the military intensification in Lebanon and the Armenian and Christian uproar to stop the violence drew international attention. A few weeks after the *Bekerki* meeting, in a summit on May 6, 1989, in Moscow, the foreign Minister of the Soviet Union and the Secretary of State of the United States issued a joint communiqué demanding that the fighting in Lebanon be stopped immediately, and that the warring factions convene for a dialogue and further expressing the willingness of the superpowers to do everything possible to facilitate such dialogue.⁷⁵

As an immediate reaction to the international outcry, an Arab League Summit was held in Casablanca on May 23, 1989, where the infamous Tripartite Committee was born with the membership of King Fahed bin Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia, King Hasan II of Morocco, and President Al-Shathili Bin Jdid of Algeria.⁷⁶ The Tripartite Committee was successful in

⁷¹ "Husseini yev Hossi nergayatsoutsitche gaytsele Antelias," (in Arm., for "Representatives of Husseini and Hoss pay visit to Antelias") in *Aztag daily*, January 26, 1989, p. 1.

⁷² George Saadeh, *ibid*; Albert Mansour, *Al-Inqilab ala At-Ta'ef* (in Arab., for *The revolt against Ta'ef*), Beirut, Lebanon, Dar Al-Jedid, 1993; Kareem Pakradouni, *ibid*; George Bikasini, *ibid*.

⁷³ "Bkerkeyi joghove zinatouli yev hamagetoutian garchelou gotch goughe," (in Arm., for "*Bekerki* meeting calls for cease fire and cohabitation") in *Aztag daily*, April 19, 1989, p. 1; George Saadeh, *ibid.*, p. 33.

⁷⁴ George Saadeh, *ibid.*, p. 32; Kareem Pakradouni, *ibid*.

⁷⁵ Aaref Al-Abed, *ibid.*, p. 203.

⁷⁶ For the seven-point truce plan, see *An-Nahar*, September 18, 1989, p. 3; George Bikasini, *ibid*.

formulating a seven-point truce plan that stipulated a cease-fire to come into effect on August 29, 1989, followed by a meeting of the Lebanese parliamentarians outside of Lebanon.⁷⁷

The Lebanese-Armenian MPs, particularly Khatchik Babikian, were the forerunners in the negotiations with the Tripartite Committee, as Patriarch Sfeir had called upon the formation of a committee comprising six MPs: Rene Mouawwad, Michel Saseen, Nasri Al-Maalouf, Boutros Harb, George Saadeh and Khatchik Babikian, that was later identified as the *Bekerki* Committee, to discuss the proposed reconciliation document that the Tripartite Committee formulated in order to end the Lebanese Civil War. This Committee met nine times with Patriarch Sfeir during August and September 1989, where Khatchik Babikian was one of the most active negotiators.⁷⁸

While the *Bekerki* Committee was engaged in negotiations on behalf of the Christians and the Armenians, the Arab League representative Lakhdar Al-Ibrahimi met with all the Lebanese factions including the Armenian Parliamentarians in an effort to prepare the groundwork for the *Ta'ef* meeting.⁷⁹ As Babikian negotiated with the Al-Kataeb, the Al-Ahrar and the Lebanese Forces, Manougian and Eblighatian went to *Baabda* to meet with General Aoun to iron out some details about the *Ta'ef* meeting.⁸⁰ And on September 29, 1989, three out of five Armenian MPs, namely, Khatchik Babikian, Melkon Eblighatian and Antranik Manougian went to *Ta'ef* on board Middle East Airlines from Beirut International Airport.⁸¹ Souren Khanamirian was expected to fly from Canada to Paris and then to *Ta'ef*, however, he cancelled the trip for "personal reasons."⁸² Ara Yerevanian also stayed in Canada.⁸³

⁷⁷ George Saadeh, *ibid.*

⁷⁸ George Saadeh, *ibid.*, p. 58.

⁷⁹ Arab League representative Lakhdar Al-Ibrahimi met with Khatchik Babikian, Melkon Eblighatian and Antranik Manougian on September 26, 1989. *Ararat daily*, p. 1, September 27, 1989, p. 1; *Aztag daily*, September 27, 1989, p. 1.

⁸⁰ *An-Nahar*, September 27, 1989, p. 2.

⁸¹ In an interview conducted by Dr. Sona Demirdjian on March 21, 2005, Souren Khanamirian indicated that he could not attend the *Ta'ef* meeting because he was sick. Khanamirian further asserted that he had presented a medical report on that issue to Speaker Hussein Husseini; *An-Nahar*, September 30, 1989, p. 3.

⁸² *An-Nahar*, September 29, 1989, p. 3.

⁸³ According to George Saadeh, Ara Yerevanian did not have to attend the *Ta'ef* Meeting, because the latter was represented by the three Armenian Parliamentarians. See, George Saadeh, *ibid.*, p. 65.

Mathematics at *Ta'ef*

The constitutional changes introduced in *Ta'ef*, in October, 1989, were meant to balance what the Muslims considered the exceeding powers of the Christian Maronites in Lebanon's constitution and political system.⁸⁴ *Ta'ef* was supposed to pave the way for phasing out the sectarian order, under the provision of "the abolition of political confessionalism."⁸⁵ Instead, it deepened the sectarian division lines. As initially 63 members of the Lebanese Parliament attended the *Ta'ef* meeting, only 62 deliberated in the proceedings.⁸⁶ Amazingly, these negotiators did not represent the parties responsible for either the political deadlock or the military escalation in Lebanon, yet they tried to find a way out of both quagmires. A smaller group of 16, however, conducted most of the discussions, which included Khatchik Babikian.⁸⁷

The architects of the *Ta'ef* meeting had skillfully summoned the Lebanese Parliamentarians to that conference, that it was not a mere coincidence that the 62 participants were evenly split into 31 Christians and 31 Muslims.⁸⁸ They framed the gathering in such a way that it represented the miniature of the future Lebanese Parliaments. They went even further to turn the meeting into a game of numbers and percentages. The attendees were so carefully selected that the *Ta'ef* engineers proficiently crafted the 50:50 split of the major denominations in Lebanon. To manifest the proportionality of the Armenians within the larger Christian denomination, they cleverly fashioned the groundwork so as only three Lebanese-Armenian Parliamentarians would participate at the 9 meetings. The drafters of the future Lebanese Constitution seemed to have reserved only 3 spots for the Lebanese-Armenians within the 31 Christian attendees, rendering their representation to 9.7 % of the total number of Christians present, or 4.8% of the total participants.

⁸⁴ Carole H. Dagher, *Bringing down the walls: Lebanon's postwar challenge*, New York, N.Y., St. Martin's Press, 2000.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ "Lebanese legislators hold talks in Saudi Arabia", in *The New York times*, October 1, 1989, p. 1; *Ararat daily*, October 14, 1989, p. 1; "Breakthrough in Lebanon peace talks", *The Christian science monitor*, October 14, 1989, p. 3.

⁸⁷ Albert Mansour, *ibid.*; George Saadeh, *ibid.*

⁸⁸ Youssef M. Ibrahim, "Christian concern on Syria delaying Lebanese accord", *The New York times*, October 14, 1989, p. 2; "Breakthrough in Lebanon peace talks", *The Christian science monitor*, October 13, 1989, p. 3.

The inclusion of a fourth or fifth Armenian Parliamentarian would have not only substantially changed the percentages, but would also have created an enormous imbalance in the intended equality formula between the Christian and Muslim MPs at the *Ta'ef* meeting (See Table 1).

Table 1: The "Percentage Game" imposed on the Lebanese-Armenians at the *Ta'ef* meeting

	Armenian MPs	Total No. of Christians	Percentage as to Christians	Total No. of participants	% as to the total participants
<i>Ta'ef</i> Meeting	3	31	9.7%	62	4.8%
Souren Khanamirian*	4	32	12.5%	63	6.3%
Ara Yervevanian*	5	33	15.2%	64	7.8%

*If participated at *Ta'ef*

This very percentage of 9.7 has been adopted ever since the *Ta'ef* Agreement to determine the Lebanese-Armenian participation in future Lebanese parliaments and cabinets, such that out of 64 Christians (half of the current 128 members) 9.7% MPs are allocated to the Lebanese-Armenian representation equaling six members only.⁸⁹

Table 2: The "Percentage Game" of the Lebanese-Armenians at the post-*Ta'ef* cabinets

No. of Ministers	No. of Christians	% of Armenians	Armenian Ministers
14	7	9.7%	0.7 = 1
16	8	9.7%	0.8 = 1
18	9	9.7%	0.9 = 1
20	10	9.7%	1
22	11	9.7%	1.1 = 1
24	12	9.7%	1.2 = 1
26	13	9.7%	1.3 = 1
28	14	9.7%	1.4 = 1
30	15	9.7%	1.5 = 2

⁸⁹ Out of six Lebanese-Armenian MPs, 5 seats were allocated to Orthodox Armenians and 1 seat to an Armenian Catholic.

In lieu of the ingenious mathematical and percentage formulas adopted by the *Ta'ef* engineers, it was only naïve of the Armenians and the Christians in general, to demand an increase in the number of MPs from 99 to 108 to fix the imbalance of the 54:45 ratios.⁹⁰ The equality between the Christians and the Muslims was only one variable in a multi variable equation, and raising the number of MPs to 108 did not solve it. To maintain the parity and proportionality within each denomination, the drafters needed to increase the number of Lebanese Parliamentarians to 128.⁹¹

As to the Lebanese-Armenian representation in government, the same percentage was adopted to all post-*Ta'ef* Cabinets.⁹² It was stipulated at *Ta'ef* that no cabinet would be formed in Lebanon with less than 14 ministers to accommodate the involvement of the Lebanese-Armenian Community.⁹³ Because of this very percentage, the Lebanese-Armenians would be entitled to a second ministerial post in the government only when the total number of members of the cabinet reaches 30 (See Table 2).

The impact of the *Ta'ef* Agreement on Lebanese-Armenian representation

Numerous books and articles have been published in Lebanon and elsewhere about the impact of the *Ta'ef* Accord on the Lebanese society in general and minorities in particular.⁹⁴ To evaluate the impact of the *Ta'ef* Agreement on Lebanese-Armenian representation, it would be prudent to assess the involvement and participation of the Lebanese-Armenians in

⁹⁰ Michael C. Hudson, *ibid.*, pp. 27-134.

⁹¹ See Farid Al-Khazen, *Intikhabat Loubnan ma baad al-harb 1992, 1996, 2000: dimoqratiyyeh bila khayar* (in Arab., for *Lebanon's postwar parliamentary elections, 1992, 1996, 2000: an imposed choice*), Beirut, Lebanon, Dar An-Nahar, 2000; and *idem.*, *Lebanon's first postwar parliamentary elections, 1992, 1996, 2000: an imposed choice*, American University of Beirut (AUB) publication, 1992, <http://ddc.aub.lb/projects/pspa/elections92.html>.

⁹² For the names of successive Lebanese-Armenian ministers in post-*Ta'ef* cabinets see Appendix, p. 437.

⁹³ According to former Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament Hussein Husseini "[n]o Cabinet could be formed with less than 14 ministers, in order for the Armenian community to be represented." Personal interview with Speaker Husseini, by this researcher on September 13, 2005. See also Nada Raad, "Colleagues remember Antranig Manougian" in *The daily star*, April 12, 2003, p. 1.

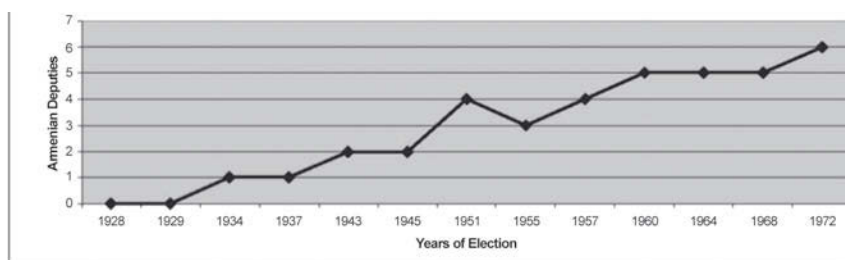
⁹⁴ See Aaref Al-Abed, *ibid.*; Simon Haddad, "The Maronite legacy and the drive for preeminence in Lebanese politics", in *Journal of minority affairs*, Vol. 22, No. 2, 2002, pp. 291-306, and 317-333; Simon Haddad, "A survey of Maronite Christian socio-political attitudes in postwar Lebanon" in *Islam and Christian-Muslim relations*, Vol. 12, No. 4, 2001, pp. 465-479.

different Lebanese Parliaments and different cabinets during the First Lebanese Republic.

In the legislative branch

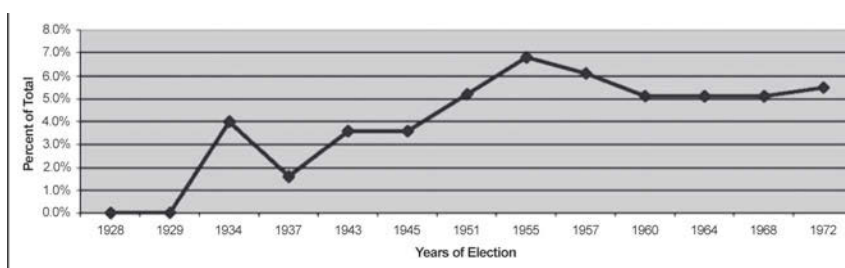
Armenians were represented in the legislatures from the early days of the Lebanese Republic. Deputy Vahram Lylekian, for example, was elected to the Lebanese Parliament even before Lebanon got its independence from France, whereas, Hrachia Shamlian and Movses Der-Kaloustian represented the Armenians immediately after independence.⁹⁵

Graphic 1: Armenian MPs in the Lebanese parliaments before *Ta'ef*



Thirteen different Lebanese-Armenian individuals were elected to the Lebanese Parliaments at different times in a period of 64 years, between 1927 and 1991 with inconsistent numbers and varied percentages.⁹⁶ Graphics 1 and 2 give a vivid picture of the status of Armenian representation in Lebanese Parliaments before the *Ta'ef* Agreement.

Graphic 2: Percentage of Armenian MPs in the Lebanese parliaments

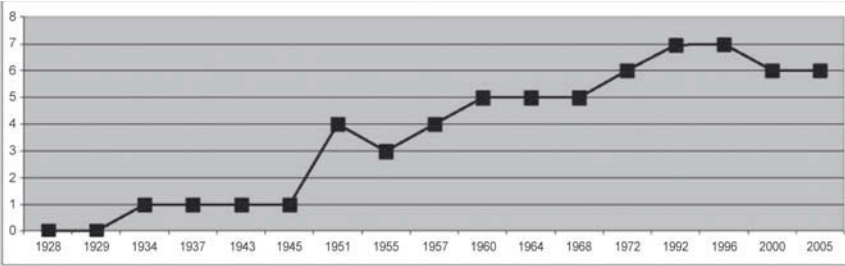


⁹⁵ Abdallah Hajja, *Loubnan taht al-majhar* (in Arab., for *Lebanon under microscope*), Beirut Lebanon, 1984; see also Appendix, pp. 433.

⁹⁶ For the names of the Armenian MPs in the Lebanese Parliaments, see Appendix, pp. 433-35.

As the *Ta'ef* understanding set the fixed percentage to the Armenian representation, only six seats are now allocated to the Armenian Community in the Lebanese Parliament.⁹⁷ Graphic 3 illustrates the variations of the number of MPs throughout the years before and after the *Ta'ef* Accord.

Graphic 3: Armenian MPs in the Lebanese parliaments



Moreover, the *Ta'ef* Accord made a considerable impact on the political affiliation of the Armenian MPs in the new Parliaments. In the last elected Parliament in 1972, before the *Ta'ef* Agreement, most Armenian MPs were affiliated with the Tashnak Party.⁹⁸ In the post *Ta'ef* era, a plurality of affiliation was observed in the Lebanese-Armenian MPs, as the Hentchaks, the Ramgavars and non-affiliated *Tchezoks* were elected.

Table 3: The political affiliation of the Armenian MPs in the Lebanese parliament

	1972	1992	1996	2000	2005
Hentchak	0	1	1	1	1
Tashnak	5 ⁹⁹	3	2	1	1
Ramgavar	0	0	0	1	1
No Affiliation	1	3	4	3	3

In the executive branch

As to the history of the Armenian representation in Lebanese governments before the *Ta'ef* Agreement, it was very poor. Out of 67

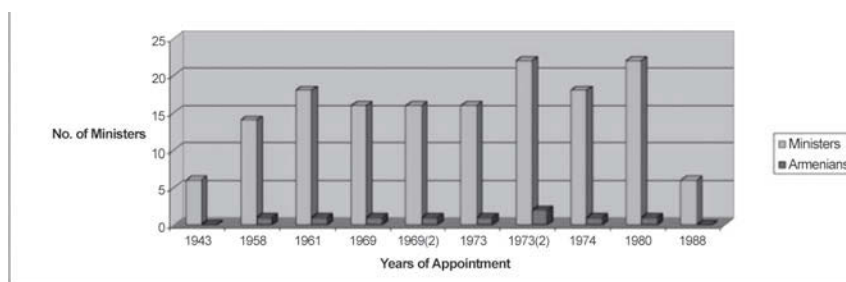
⁹⁷ The 6 seats are allocated to 5 representatives of the Armenian Orthodox denomination and 1 to the Armenian Catholics. In 1992 and 1996 elections, the Lebanese Protestant seat was occupied by Nourijan Demirdjian and Apraham Dedeyan respectively increasing the number of Armenian MPs to 7. See Appendix, pp. 434-35, for more details.

⁹⁸ Nikoula Nasr, *ibid.*

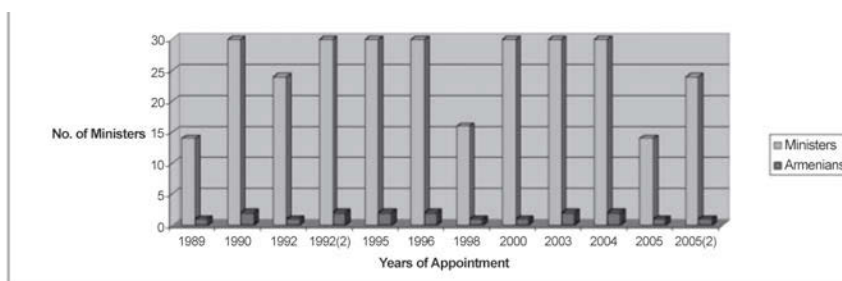
⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

different Lebanese governments, only 8 Cabinets had Armenian ministers. Joseph Chader and Souren Khanamirian were each appointed twice as ministers for very short times, and Khatchik Babikian was appointed five times (See Appendix, p. 436).

Graphic 4: Armenian Ministers in Lebanese cabinets before *Ta'ef*



Graphic 5: Armenian Ministers in Lebanese cabinets after *Ta'ef*



The *Ta'ef* Agreement changed the Armenian representation in all subsequent Lebanese governments. Out of the 12 post *Ta'ef* governments, Lebanese-Armenians were represented in all with a 9.7% basis (See Appendix, p. 437).

Conclusion

The Lebanese National Reconciliation Accord signed on October 22, 1989, was composed with the active mediation of Saudi Arabia, discreet participation by the United States, and behind-the-scenes influence from Syria. It was signed by nearly all the surviving members of the 1972 Chamber of MPs, including Khatchig Babikian, Melkon Eblighatian, Antranik

Manougian and Souren Khanamirian. The *Ta'ef* Accord modified the "rules of the game" of the First Republic but did not alter its basic character. Consociational democracy still dominates the political scene in Lebanon and sectarian proportionality dictates representation. According to Michael Hudson "*Ta'ef* in practice deviated significantly from the *Ta'ef* in theory."¹⁰⁰ The "Percentage Game" governed the interaction among religious sects, and as such the Lebanese-Armenian community became the victim of such a dictate.

It remains to the Lebanese people to re-evaluate the provisions of the *Ta'ef* Agreement and start a new dialogue to fix its shortcomings.

¹⁰⁰ Michael C. Hudson, *ibid.* pp. 27-134.

Résumé

L'Accord de *Ta'ef* et les Arméniens libanais

L'accord national libanais de réconciliation, mieux connu sous le nom de l'Accord de *Ta'ef* fut signé le 24 octobre 1989, mettant fin à 15 années de guerre civile. Il est l'un des documents les plus importants de l'histoire moderne du Liban; il a donné naissance à la deuxième République Libanaise et a réglé depuis les relations entre les différentes communautés.

L'Accord de *Ta'ef* fut signé par tous les députés – survivants - du Parlement libanais de 1972, y compris les députés arméniens. Cet accord a modifié la Constitution et a reconnu la communauté arménienne comme étant le septième groupe confessionnel du pays. Il stipulait en outre que tout gouvernement pour pouvoir inclure un représentant de la communauté arménienne, devait être formé de plus de 14 membres.

Ainsi, un groupe de 62 députés élus en 1972, composé de 31 parlementaires musulmans et de 31 parlementaires chrétiens, se réunissait dans la ville de *Ta'ef*, en Arabie Saoudite, sous l'égide de la Ligue Arabe afin de trouver une solution à la crise libanaise. Les députés arméniens Khatchig Babikian, Melkon Eblighatian et Antranik Manougian faisaient partie du groupe. L'Accord lui-même ne fut pas créé à *Ta'ef*, mais a constitué une culmination ou une synthèse des différentes propositions faites durant les années 1980 par plusieurs factions et blocs parlementaires. Une de ces propositions provenait du groupe parlementaire arménien et avait été présentée en 1983 à la conférence de Genève, et un second document avait été préparé par le même bloc, en conjonction avec d'autres blocs de parlementaires chrétiens en 1986. Plusieurs des idées et des suggestions contenues dans ces deux documents font partie aujourd'hui du texte de l'Accord de *Ta'ef*.

Ce chapitre examine le rôle que joua la communauté arménienne libanaise, représentée par ses élus, avant, durant, et après l'Accord de *Ta'ef*.

Il explore le changement de position de la communauté, de sa fameuse neutralité positive adoptée à l'égard de certains faits et événements au Liban et dans la région, à une participation plus active dans la vie politique du pays. Il étudie également l'impact de l'Accord de *Ta'ef* sur la représentation arménienne au Parlement libanais, et montre les modalités de sa participation aux formations gouvernementales avant et après l'Accord.

