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C-SPAN

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Dear Mr. Brian Lamb:

I am a Lebanese citizen studying in the U.S. since 1983. My Christian family live in Beirut where no news is the only good news. I've been a loyal friend of C-Span because it is the finest, most honest, and best balanced journalistic program.

I am aware of the difficulties and complexity of Lebanon's civil war and the Arab-Israeli conflict. However, I strongly believe they could be satisfactorily resolved to the benefit of all. Perhaps it is the bias of being an engineer. We typically see two types of problems: the ones already solved, and the ones being resolved.

I enclosed what I believe to be creative ideas for comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Lebanese war. In 1988 I wrote a paper entitled "Gorbachev and the rest of Europe" predicting almost accurately what did recently happened in Eastern Europe, including the fall of the Berlin wall. My eminent political science professor explained to me at the time that the break-up of Eastern Europe cannot happen so fast because there was no democratic infrastructure in place. My answer was that at certain times the underlying forces are stronger than the wishes or ability of any political leader. Events will be dictated by those inner forces.

This Middle East proposal disregards present politicians because I believe that we have arrived to a point where the inner forces in the region will control the political scene. Either for better, or for worse. If the people of the Middle East want peace, politicians will have to comply (i.e., popular demonstrations in the 1970's had a subsequent big impact on nuclear disarmament and environmental policies.)

Following the same principle of structural inner-forces, Cuba should move toward democratic elections in less than two years. The USSR, Switzerland, Sweden, and Eastern European countries will apply to the EEC in less than three years. And the nineties will witness an unprecedented and very beneficial cooperation between Gorbachev and the Vatican on one hand, and the Jewish community and Germany on the other. Unfortunately, while Western Europe will come to terms with the foreign workers situation on its territory, the U.S. will see its inner-city problems explode to catastrophic proportions because up to now they were deal with emotionally and incompetently (by believing that welfare is the answer) without the provision of real solutions.

I wrote this MEPEC proposal in March in the days following the collapse of Israel's coalition government. The purpose was to present new ideas that might provide an alternative to the polarization process in the region that I was certain it would take place. My strategy was first to mail these proposals to U.S. policy-makers, to Palestinian leaders, and to Arab and Israeli ambassadors; and then to compile their replies and mail them to C-Span because I believe that you are a great reporter and have the best informative news program.

Unfortunately, beside responses from the White House (David Newton & Joan Colbert) and brief comments from individuals such as Sen. James Abourezk (ADC), Thomas Friedman, and Tanya Rahall (ATFL) no reply from Israeli or Arab officials or embassies was received.

The situation in the Middle East is getting worse. I am still convinced that MEPEC proposal is timely and deserves further consideration. I will appreciate your help and assistance in bringing Israeli and Arab officials to an honest debate forum, what C-Span does best.

Sincerely,
[REDACTED]

MIDDLE EAST NEW PREDICAMENT
Rethinking the Middle East: A Structural Approach

Now that the world's attention has once again come to focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the shadow of Lebanon's fate is seeping into the scene. Lebanon was once the cradle of Arab democracy and freedom. However, when communities' security was threatened, Lebanese Christians were ready to risk their economic achievement and their civility for their survivability. Ironically, they undemocratically clung to power to preserve the democratic values they instituted. The slide was quick and tragic leading to economic ruins and barbaric actions. Israel is at a crossroad. It has to choose between democratic values and security. Hopefully, it will learn from Lebanon's mistakes.

This paper presents a proposal for a comprehensive solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Lebanese civil war. It is based on three principles. The first is a Glassnost principle that countries need to disassemble before reuniting. The second is a Middle Eastern principle where enemies today can become friends tomorrow. The third is based on a Kissinger strategy stipulating that long term consequences should be carefully analyzed before important political decisions are made.

Kissinger was previously successful in his Vietnamese, Chinese, and Middle Eastern peace talks because during his meetings he would often explain the other side's position first and then explore with his hosts the choices available to them. In his negotiations, he mastered a strategy of threats and promises that made his mediations so effective. Each party was forced to understand the other side's position and interest, and to assess the immediate and long term consequences of any actions they may undertake. Only by recognizing the long term mutual interests of all parties compromises became viable options.

What is the magic solution?

The proposal calls for a confederation between Israel, Jordan, a Palestinian state, and two or three Lebanese states (Christian-Muslim or Christian-Sunni-Chiite). Jerusalem will be a defacto capital of the confederation and would have a special international status. Furthermore, the Golan heights will be returned to Syria as a result of a peace accord similar to Camp David. If Syria plays hard to get, the Golan heights will be unilaterally returned to her in exchange of international guaranties (i.e., USA, EEC, USSR, and United Nations) of the security of the confederation as well as the borders of each individual state. Finally, the U.S. aid package to Israel will be increased and distributed in a per-capita ratio to all the states of the confederation. A substantial portion of the aid package will be earmarked to rehabilitate and integrate the refugee population in their host country. Palestinian refugees will become citizens of the neighboring Arab countries they live in. Europe and Japan would be asked to contribute to the aid funds to rebuild a peaceful and prosperous region. It is a small price to pay to solve the Lebanese and the Arab-Israeli conflicts, to end Middle Eastern terrorism played on European soil, to free foreign hostages from Lebanon, and to secure long term oil supply for Japan and the rest of the world.

What type of confederation?

The term confederation is somewhat misleading. The proposal refers to a Middle East Political and Economical Community, or simply MEPEC.

The federation will not follow the Swiss or U.S. models. It will resemble a mixture of NATO and EEC. In other words, MEPEC member states will agree to work toward common **political** objectives and coordinated **economic** policies. However, each state will remain sovereign in its internal affairs. Ironically, a demilitarized Palestinian state will then be protected by the Israeli army against Syrian or Iraqi threats. Whether the states will decide on a common currency or a unified educational curriculum should be discussed in later phases. However, immediately after signing the MEPEC accords, talks under international auspices should be undertaken by all Middle-Eastern nations, including Iraq, Syria, and Libya, in order to eliminate nuclear and chemical weapons, as well as military ballistic missiles from the region. Cuts in conventional forces should be next on the agenda.

Economic cooperation is needed to insure the viability of a democratic Palestinian state, and to improve the Lebanese and Jordanian economies. History has showed that radical religious and political ideologies are the result of poverty and corrupted governments. Special interest groups that vindictively inject into the subconscious of the West erroneous concepts such as the incompatibility between Islamic and Christian way of life are extremely harmful to world peace because they foster division, misunderstanding and hate that could bring about a self-fulfilling prophecy. Christians and Muslims can coexist in mutual respect and sincere friendship. Muslim communities in Singapore do not only revere Western democratic thoughts and are inspired by the writings of European and American philosophers, but they also haven't totally disregarded Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, and Heidegger's teaching as in the West by continuously redefining the 'being' of their democracy in view of inner and outer factors.

If Israel invests in strengthening democracy and prosperity in MEPEC states, and helps rehabilitate Palestinian refugees, it will be truly working for its own interest by building a real peace resting on a strong foundation. The effectiveness of the security thus provided cannot be matched by any army or nuclear power. It is time for all political leaders to recognize the geographic and demographic realities of this tiny region of the world. People in the region are condemned to be neighbors for generations to come. It should not be surprising to see Israeli government initiating Peace Corp-type volunteer programs to help integrate Palestinian refugees into their new society and assist them acquire the necessary skills for a new productive career. The Middle East is full of potential. Up to now this energy was used to make war and nurture hate. MEPEC will utilize the same creative energy for peace and progress.

Political cooperation is essential because it provides a framework for a 'rapprochement' between Israelis and Palestinians, encouraging them to trust each others and to have a stake in other's success. It is an insurance policy against uncertain future political actions, and a prerequisite for long-

term economic cooperation. Only then would Israel give up the West Bank without giving up its security, and a Palestinian state could agree on a demilitarized status. Political trust is a prelude for initiating disarmament negotiations. The political agreements must clearly coordinate each state foreign polity and define MEPEC political relations with Arab states and with the rest of the world.

Why all these states must be included in MEPEC?

The reasons each of these states must be included in MEPEC are the following:

Jordan should be included in MEPEC because most of its citizens are of Palestinian origin. Jordan also shares the largest common border with Israel.

The Palestinian state should be included because only under a MEPEC agreement could Israel effectively secure its borders. Israel's best guaranty is in the creation of a stable, prosperous, and democratic Palestinian state. Furthermore, an Arab-Israeli community will remain in Israel. It is all natural for them to have strong links and interest in a neighboring Palestinian state. On the other hand, the peace accords will allow the bulk of Israel's military industry to be converted to civilian use. The MEPEC treaty should open all the Arab markets to Israeli's goods. The need for Palestinian workers will grow larger inside Israel. The economic unity will allow the surplus Palestinian labor force to be employed in Israel with adequate compensation and equitable work contracts. It is a win-win situation. Furthermore, similar to German industrialists who saw a golden opportunity of investing in Portugal as soon as Portugal joined the EEC, Israeli industrialists will quickly realize the opportunity of investing in bordering states to benefit from lower wages, and to produce products previously imported from the West to satisfy the huge Arab market. As it has been often mentioned, economic interdependence where all sides benefit is the best promoter and guarantor of peace.

A Palestinian state must be created because it is a fundamental demand and a legitimate right of Palestinians. For Israel to be a democratic Jewish state without giving up the West Bank and Gaza is a simple myth. To fail to recognize the fact that after de Clerk's new South-Africa, Israel will be targeted next by the world community for its human right violations, is a worst camouflage from reality than an ostrich burying its head in the sand. Charles Krauthammer's apologetic essays are ridiculous and dangerous. Similar first degree so-called analytical comparative analysis was used in the past to justify all kinds of dictatorships or fanatic ideologies. Long before the intifada, a Harris poll taken in the Fall of 1980 revealed that over 70 percent of Americans were in favor of an independent Palestinian state. A study published in 1983 by Mark Heller under the auspices of the Center for Strategic Studies in Tel-Aviv and entitled "A Palestinian State" concluded that an independent Palestinian state even if governed by the PLO constituted the best strategic choice for Israel. If that was true in 1983, it is certainly true now.

Lebanon itself will be **cordially and peacefully** divided into two or three states. The division is necessary because it insures

the physical and political security of individual communities and helps preserve and promote their distinct cultures. Lebanese, like Israelis, are ready to pay every price for survivability and for safeguarding their way of life. They sadly sacrificed their economic achievement and civilized behavior for this end. Security is just not a negotiable item in this part of the world.

The Lebanese states should be included in MEPEC for five reasons: common border, large Palestinian refugee population, provide ethnic and cultural balance to MEPEC, have excess ground water resources desperately needed by other states, and above all, the need to end the civil war and elect democratic and legitimate governments. Lebanon civil war could only be solved in a regional context. And only then Lebanese states can elect strong central governments which would guaranty the security of the Palestinian refugees, and start rehabilitating and integrating them into their societies.

How can MEPEC provide peace?

Conflict between communities and countries can be solved either by consensus and agreement or by domination and hegemony. The intifada and the result of twenty years of occupation showed clearly that domination is the wrong way to go. It polarized the conflict, nurtured hate and injustice, and corrupted the life and soul of young and old. Abu Nidal, Kahane, and the Lebanese war criminals are just an early symptom of the disease and a preview of the more serious radicalism ahead.

The Arab-Israeli conflict has two aspects. It is a conflict of people and a conflict of territory. The Camp David Accord, the internationalization of Jerusalem, the creation of a Palestinian state, and the return of the Golan heights to Syria should completely resolve the territorial conflict. However, the more complex problem is to deal with the human tragedy of the Palestinian refugee camps, mostly in Lebanon and Jordan. The fact is that the West Bank and Gaza are already overpopulated. The only realistic solution to the refugee population is in a regional framework, where refugees become citizens of their 'host' country; either Lebanon or Jordan. It is important to note that the majority of the refugees are born in the camps and therefore in the land of their 'host' country. Lebanon and Jordan will receive generous international aid funds earmarked toward educating, emancipating, housing, and adequately taking care of the basic social needs of these victims. It is a feasible proposal because Lebanon and Jordan had long recognized the fact that refugees had nowhere else to go to, and that the camps were there to stay. Integrating the refugees within their local society is infinitely preferable to the tragedy of the refugee camps proliferating misery, militarism, and radicalism; and operating outside the control of the central government. At least through MEPEC accords, they will receive the financial assistance to integrate the refugees and help them become productive citizens. The refugee population will be quite helpful in providing the labor force needed to rebuild Lebanon. An educated youthful generation eager to succeed is an asset to any state.

An important factor in the equation is that because Lebanese Christians would have their own state, they should not object to Palestinians becoming citizens of their neighboring Muslim

state(s). The Christian-Muslim demographic balance will no longer be affected. The Muslim Lebanese state(s) should welcome the financial assistance to help integrate their brethren who suffered much, and by doing so, get rid of the dreadful refugee camps environment, an open sore and a source of shame to the Arab community. Palestinians prosper whenever opportunity is provided.

Of course under the MEPEC treaty, all former refugees can visit Israel and do business with it whenever they wish. This plays an important psychological role in breaking the cycle of hatred and misunderstanding. Psychology remains a discipline shaped by Jewish scholars. No Israeli effort should be spared in re-educating and rehabilitating the young generation that has only known war, misery, and a hostile environment.

MEPEC accords should completely resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict. After the creation of a Palestinian state, the return of the Golan heights, and the resolution of the refugee problem no Arab state would be justified in refusing to normalize its relations with Israel. The end of the conflict should come as a relief to all Arab states. Due to the drop in oil prices, the costly Iraqi-Iranian war, and the political changes in Eastern Europe and the USSR, Arab states can no longer afford the exotic weapons at the expense of domestic needs. The PLO were the first to be awakened to the new realities of the Middle East. They decided to recognize Israel and expressed their wishes to negotiate for peace. The internationalization of Jerusalem should reconcile Israel and the Vatican. MEPEC will personify the coexistence between Muslims, Jews, and Christians. Jerusalem will symbolically become the spiritual capital of the world.

How about foreign aid?

Israel receives annually 1.8 billion dollars in military aid and 1.2 billion in economic assistance. Although the influence of Israel's supporters in the congress can preserve the aid package intact, this could only be achieved at a high political cost and a risk of alienating the American public. Israel, Egypt, Philippines, Turkey, and Pakistan receive most of the fourteen billion U.S. foreign aid budget. Israel is the highest recipient, Egypt the second highest. However, the comparison per capita is quite startling. While each Israeli receives about 750 dollars per year from the U.S., every Egyptians gets less than 40 dollars. In ratio terms, Israelis obtain 18 times the aid Egyptians get. Israelis also get at least 150 times more aid than East Europeans, Filipinos, and Pakistanis. The picture gets even more dramatic if we compare Israel to the poor nations of the earth. Each Israeli gets much more than 1500 times the aid given to black Africans, Latin Americans, and the poor countries of Asia. In other words, Israel a country of five million citizens receives more aid than the countries of Black-Africa, South-East Asia, Latin America, and Eastern Europe combined.

The Congress support for Israel is not only the result of AIPAC genius tactical campaigning efforts, as popularly claimed. The support is more rooted in economic realities. Congressmen from most influential states recognize the fact that Jews are not only prominent on university campuses and in the news media. They also constitute the creme of the professional community and the most enterprising group of businessmen, real estate magnates, and

developers. The number of jobs provided by Jewish businesses and the taxes paid by them cannot be ignored by any politician. The Jewish community remarkable leverage in election campaigns and its influence in the news media are primarily the reflection of their economic prowess, competence, and organization. They are structural factors capable of withering all temporary crisis.

The Jewish community in the U.S. is slightly more than two percent of the population. According to Charles Silberman book "A Certain People", about one American doctor in five is Jewish. The ratio is even higher for dentists and psychiatrists, and equally intimidating for lawyers and executives. He also mentioned that Hollywood was mainly a Jewish invention, with more than three out of five members of the extravagantly wealthy 'movie elite' being Jews (see also the book of Neal Gabler). His most impressive statistic is that one quarter of the 400 richest Americans are Jews, controlling a fortune of over 70 billion dollars. In other words, one hundred American Jewish individuals control more money than the budget of all the countries of Black-Africa combined, and equal to more than six years of Saudi Arabia's current oil revenues. Furthermore, the richest Jewish families don't live in the U.S. They are the Reichman of Canada and The Safra of Brazil. And the wealthiest Jewish communities live in South Africa and Latin America. Jewish monies are not wasted on exuberant lifestyle nor on bad investments. They benefit from the expertize of the best financial minds and investment firms in the world, which happened to be Jewish (e.g., Lehman Brothers, Goldman Sachs, Kuhn Loeb in the U.S.; and S.G. Warburg, Rothschild, and Oppenheim in Europe). Furthermore, the best private art-works in the world belong to Jewish families. Since the beginning of this century, the art-collections of the Schloss and Rothschild families alone were as impressive as any first class museum.

Jews all around the world are by far the richest people on earth. At present, they are the most prosperous, resourceful, and privileged community in all of our human history. State persecution is thing of the past. Many of the new leaders in Eastern Europe, where few Jews remain, are themselves Jewish. Like Miklos Haraszti in Hungary, Peter Roman in Rumania, Rita Klimova in Czechoslovakia, Yacovlev and Posner in Russia, and Mavriks Vulfsons in Latvia. Austria and Germany that produced Hitler were themselves recently lead by Jewish politicians. Bruno Kreisky was the chancellor of Austria and Helmut Schmidt was the chancellor of West Germany (his father was Jewish as written in the memoirs of French president Giscard d'Estaing). Even Gregor Gysi (whose father was the culture minister in the 1970's) the present head of East Germany's Communist Party is of Jewish origin. Equally indicative, Wagner's Bayreut Festival that was formerly directed by Wilhelm Furtwangler and Herbert von Karajan is at present under the direction of Daniel Barenboim. We are unmistakably living the Jewish golden age. Jewish contributions to the universal culture, be it in science, philosophy, poetry, music (performers, conductors), art, medicine, etc, is unmatched by any people or country. A superb achievement bordering on the surhuman.

For Israel to keep pursuing an isolationist policy and to expect the U.S. to fund its military occupation and settlement projects is just foolish. Regardless of Congress wishes, American

public opinion, if ignored, could cause a backlash with potential serious consequences to all supporters of Israel. The momentum of the backlash would put the Jewish community in the defensive posture, causing many so-called Jewish friends to reveal their true colors. The congress support for Israel is a mile long but only an inch deep. The Israelis should not test the limits of its resilience. They better learn from the mistakes and illusions of Lebanese Christians who believed that the Western world will jump to their defense at any cost.

The intifada horror stories are graphically played on nightly news in the midst of American living rooms. Americans have witnessed on T.V. some of the 250 Palestinian houses being demolished by the Israeli army. They watched soldiers shooting at children and beating old women. They have seen settlers taking the law into their own hands, reminiscent of brutal regimes of the sixties. And they were shocked to see Palestinian workers forced by Israeli authorities to wear identification cards on their shirts, action with serious emotional implications. On the other hand, Americans are well aware that Ethiopians are dying from hunger and that Africa is bankrupt. They also recognize their country moral obligation in helping emerging democracies in Latin America and Eastern Europe. Regardless of budgetary constraints, Americans would welcome helping Israel if it will mean a total and comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, but certainly not to finance the emergence of a new South Africa.

The three corner stones of the MEPEC treaty are: The creation of a democratic and prosperous Palestinian state, the end of the Lebanese civil war and the election of democratic governments, and the rehabilitation and settlement of the Palestinian refugees. The funds needed by MEPEC to achieve those objectives are about ten billion dollars a year, diminishing by one billion every year (and transferred to enhance democracy in poor countries). The U.S. would be expected to provide five billions; and Europe, Japan, and the Arab Golf countries would contribute the other half. In all, a small price to pay for a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the settlement of the refugees, and the release of the hostages. With the MEPEC accords Israel will no longer need the 1.8 billion dollars in military aid. It will still receive 1.2 billion in economic aid, and maybe some of its old debts would be written off. The rest of the aid package will be roughly distributed as follow: Two billions will be earmarked to resettle the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and Jordan. Two billions to help rebuilding Lebanon. Two billions reserved to establish the institutions of the Palestinian state. The rest will be economic aid divided between Lebanon, Jordan, and The Palestinian state. The foreign aid program will decrease gradually and ends in ten years. Nothing is worse than a dependence on foreign help. Over ten years, MEPEC will cost the U.S. significantly less than what it would have paid Israel alone. The funds saved should be spent on the Earth real problems, namely limiting the population explosion, and developing viable economies in poor countries.

Foreign aid to poor countries often ends up in the pockets of the powerful and corrupted. As far as the aid to MEPEC is concerned, an innovative organizational system will be put in

place to supervise the use of the funds. The aid package to each country will be divided and earmarked to specific projects. A joined committee formed by trusted and competent locals and international administrators will have to review and approve the work-progress every three months before new funds are released. The administrators will work directly with local institutions and organizations. The role and influence of politicians and community leaders in managing the aid-funds will be extremely limited and carefully watched.

Would MEPEC Work?

There is every chance that the MEPEC accords will be accepted by the concerned countries, and would be effective in formulating a lasting peace in the region. The reason is that MEPEC accords respond to people's aspirations; not only in political terms, but also in social, economic, and psychological aspects. All states will benefit from MEPEC. With democracy flourishing in the most obscure places in the world and with the cold war heated to evaporation, it is the right time for Arab and Jews to finally solve their problems. The world community is truly fed up with the Middle East. The world interest has shifted from politics to economics and environment protection.

People want peace and security. Israel coalition government collapsed because it had to choose either peace or security. The proposal main advantages is that it provides both in the only realistic way. Furthermore, MEPEC has no losers. The territorial conflict will be solved. Israel will be secured and democratic. Palestinians will have their state. The refugee issue will be dealt with. The status of Jerusalem will be decided along the only acceptable and reasonable choice. And the Lebanese tragedy will be resolved and foreign hostages released. Equally important are the disarmament talks that must follow MEPEC accords.

Lebanese, Jordanians, Palestinians, and Israelis are all Semitic people with strong historical and cultural links. MEPEC will provide genuine balance in its cultural and ethnic composition. The federation will have roughly equal numbers of Christians and Jews on one hand, and Sunnis and Chiites on the other. All these communities have suffered devastating wars and many have emigrated to the West, where they have prospered and acquired more moderate views of the conflict. Palestinians and Lebanese are the best educated communities of the Arab world. They are often referred to as the Jews of the Arabs. Before the civil war, Lebanon was a cultural oasis of international standing. All Lebanese of every background are nostalgic to the old days. The recent religious and ideological radicalism in the region are the symptoms of prolonged conflicts, hopelessness, economic collapse, not to mention the zeal of Iranian 'missionaries'. But with MEPEC accords all this will change. The energy and dynamism of the young generation, up to now spent on hate and war, will be channeled into positive constructive use.

Can MEPEC members trust each others?

It is important to remember that when the Israelis entered Lebanon in 1982, they were warmly welcomed by the Chiites who viewed them as liberators. Druze in Israel are loyal Israeli citizens, even serving in the army. Before the war, Sunnis in

Lebanon were indistinguishable from Christians in their secular democratic orientation, and economic and political liberalism. Despite the turmoil, most of the intelligentsia and the new generation of leaders in the region espouse secular Western democratic sentiments. Many of them were educated in the West. However, they may keep these sentiments under the surface for local and political expediency purposes. Rafsanjani policies in Iran provide an example of the balancing act they have to master in order to produce change. All leaders can see the fate of communism and the results of Iranian radical fundamentalism.

On the other hand, 'Arab' Saphardi Jews are now outnumbering the European Askenazis, despite the recent emigration of Soviet Jews. In many ways, MEPEC communities share common ethnic, cultural, and historical heritage. Arabs and Jews can certainly work together in peace. They can trust each other's commitment to start a new chapter of cooperation. If the Lebanese-Israeli peace accords of 1982 fell apart, and if the current Israel-Palestinian talks are stalled, the reason is that one side clearly dominates the negotiations. On the other hand, Camp David agreement is still standing despite the many setbacks because it was signed between equal partners and with U.S. commitment and money.

Centuries ago, during the golden age of the Islamic empire, Arabs and Jews worked together to produce a highly civilized and integrated culture, where Jews like Maimonide became the private doctors and financiers of Arab rulers. It was mainly Jewish scholars who translated to the West books written in Arabic about the science and philosophy of the Greeks and Arabs. This enabled Europe to step out of the dark-age into the 'renaissance' epoch. Now it is once again time for Arabs and Jews to join hands and combine their resources and expertise to reproduce the glorious culture that formerly was the envy of the world. MEPEC states complement each other in many perspectives.

It is not a choice for the Middle East. The region has lost its strategic importance and the world is getting tired of its labyrinths. The lack of trust has led Israel to develop a nuclear offensive capability, and some Arab states responded by obtaining ballistic missiles and by seeking nuclear potential. The Middle East is turning into a ticking bomb ready to explode. Whoever believes in a military solution or a peace based on a balance of terror is obviously forgetting about fanatics like Kaddafi and is rather ignorant of recent world history. If Jews and Arabs won't find a quick solution, they will create the golden age of radicalism and hate. That will poison the mind of generations to come. The fate of Lebanon will then become the fate of the region. Lebanon had ignored reality and by pursuing short term gains has faced a tragic death. Hopefully, the states in the region will learn from Lebanon mistakes, and will choose life over an agonizing death.

Can Lebanon end its civil war?

There are many reasons for Lebanon's civil war. However, the main causes can be summarized in one word: **Survivability**. The Middle East is a tough place. Various communities and many religions peacefully coexisted as long as security was not in question. However, when events turn sour, any price is paid to insure survivability.

Shakespeare once wrote: "First we kill all the lawyers". If Shakespeare had lived in Lebanon, he would have unmistakably said: "First we kill all the politicians". Lebanon was a fiscal paradise. People did not pay taxes and did not expect much from the government. Lebanese counted on themselves, and most have prospered. In a way, Lebanon was an American dream, a liberal democracy with minimum government interference.

Lebanon was truly a unique phenomenon, a wonder shed in mystery, a state forged on dialectics. The tiny nation boasted the highest mountains in the region, abruptly receding into some of the prettiest beaches. The green hills of Lebanon vividly contrasted with the surrounding deserts. The country was an Arab state with a Christian president. Its secular inhabitants built cathedrals on mountain tops and sculpted churches inside rocks.

Most remarkable is the Lebanese spirit that synthesized and adapted past and present cultures from all corners of the earth. Lebanon is a loyal witness of history. The Pharaohs did business with its sailors. King Solomon used Lebanese cedars to build his temple. The Greeks and Romans left gigantic ruins melting with the Landscape of the country. Even Jesus performed his first miracle in South Lebanon. Lebanese society was an exotic mixture of French 'joie de vivre', Arab hospitality, Jewish talent for business, Italian indifference toward authority, American liberalism, German romanticism, Eastern mysticism, and Mediterranean boldness and spontaneity. Stravinsky would have been inspired by its oriental music played on western instruments and western music played on oriental instruments. Hemingway would have loved the 'cafe-trottoirs' of Beirut. Some were reserved for philosophers, other for writers or poets, few for nihilist, existentialists or positivists. The city abounded with self-proclaimed prophets. The streets were filled with thinkers wanting to redefine man, religion, politic, and society. Human nature stood naked in Beirut reveling its inner secrets. Beirut was the city of love and hate, arrogance and humility, pretension and competence, sincerity and hypocrisy, and foe and camaraderie.

Religion was everywhere and nowhere. Religion was life with all its imperfections. Politic was a circus. Communists claimed to be more inspired by Rousseau and Voltaire than by Marx and Engels. Other sought a theocratic democracy (a contradiction in terms). Most agreed on a Western-Arabic society but no one could define its meaning. Lebanon was an experiment, a song, a dream. It was order behind chaos. It was the waves but not the sea. For those who believed that Life is a verb and not a word, that overcoming is more rewarding than arriving, that the path (present) is more meaningful than the final state, that Godliness is more important than Deity, and that efficiency is sometimes undesirable would have loved Lebanon and its labyrinths. Sadly, one day the sea dried out and all waves ceased to exist.

Lebanese political leaders were first class statesmen in comparison to politicians from developing countries. The corruption grew in the system along with the oil boom and the region's increasing strategic importance. Parliamentary votes quickly became a commodity sold to the highest bidder. In a country build on compromises and pragmatism, few could resist the temptation of million of dollars offered by an endless list of secret services and foreign governments. The Arab-Israeli

conflict created huge armies in all surrounding states. Lebanon refused to have a real army, trusting its security in its financial usefulness to the region. Its free press, its democratic system, and its hospitality for refugees were quickly abused. Lebanon became the scene Arab politics was played and Arab wars were fought. Lebanon had a young but real democracy. Unfortunately, it did not follow Switzerland and Sweden examples by defending its democracy with a strong army.

Lebanon prospered because it found itself in the midst of euro- and petro-dollar waves. Its banking secrecy laws attracted Arab funds, and like Switzerland, helped recycle legal and illegal monies. Lebanon's economic success was the result of the merchant and enterprising mentality of the Lebanese, inherited from the time of the Phoenicians. Its democratic system of government, despite its shortcomings, provided the catalyst for progress. It was a model of liberalism and coexistence. Lebanon allowed political parties from the extreme right to the extreme left. Its press was by far the best and most independent in all the Arab world. The women in Lebanon had the right to vote before the women in Switzerland. Even today, all Lebanese have made it clear that they want the democratic institutions to stay, along with the liberal economic system and the freedom of the press.

Lebanon's civil war is a microcosm of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. With security at stake, people are willing to put democratic and civilized behavior aside. They live in a dream and cannot accept demographic nor geographic realities. The self-delusion of the Western-oriented Christian community, who brought democracy to Lebanon, combined with feelings of insecurity and suspicious of an imminent awakening of Islamic fanaticism were the triggers to a downward slide that led to economic ruins and barbaric acts. Ironically, what the Christian community attempted to avoid, was brought about by the destruction of the economy, wars, and lawlessness that created the perfect environment for all kind of fanaticism to flourish.

The structural reasons leading to Lebanon's civil war are:

- Feelings of insecurity and lack of trust between communities
- Christians fear for democracy as a consequences of losing power
- Lack of check and balances to monitor politicians' integrity
- Corrupting foreign bribes from all sources
- Futile battle against Christian-Muslim demographics
- Christian and Sunni dominance of government institutions
- Israeli raids in Chiite's South-Lebanon excluding their region from economic benefits and prosperity by inhibiting international trade and the development of the service sector
- Iranian revolution mobilizing disinherited Chiites
- Spill from Arab-Israeli conflicts (militarism, secret services)
- Palestinian refugee camps spreading social radicalism in a capitalist liberal country

The oil boom is over. Iranians are moderating their polity. The Middle East has lost its strategic importance. And the MEPEC accord will solve all other above-mentioned problems. This is achieved by peacefully dividing the country into secure but dependent states, solving the refugee problem, electing truly democratic governments, and instituting an equitable taxation system along with a rigorous system of check and balances. The

provision of international economic aid will help educate and employ the destitute and disinherited, benefiting mostly the Chiite community and the young victims.

Lebanese are merchant people. By nature they are accustomed to compromise and coexistence because peace and stability are prerequisite to economic activities. However, when a community security is at stake, people quickly forget their democratic spirit and return to their tribal heritage. And in the process risking all assets and civility in the illusion of preserving their security. That is why they tolerated all kind of militias which they never liked nor trusted. They were the lesser evil.

If the USSR has realized that it must disassemble before it could reunite, it is time for Lebanon and Israel to do the same. Once Lebanon is peacefully divided under international supervision, communities' security will no longer be a concern because it will be guarantied by MEPEC accords and by the world community. Lebanese will quickly get rid of old politicians and war criminals. War-profiteers will be severely prosecuted because they are the country's most hated group of people. The emphasis will then switch from preserving security to rebuilding the institutions, developing the economy, and healing old wounds. Lebanese are very good at this, they have proven to be resourceful when needed. They also benefit from the resources of the Lebanese communities spreading all over the world. Canada alone has offered a generous refuge to ten percent of Lebanese Christians. Many will welcome the opportunity to go back and revive the democratic institutions that once characterized Lebanon in that part of the world. The international aid will assist in educating, employing, and rehabilitating the young generation that has only known war.

Israeli author Meir Zamir in his book entitled "The Creation of Modern Lebanon" described brilliantly the demographic routes of the Lebanese civil war. He draws parallels with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The crisis is caused by an evolving process of self-delusion where people simply reject reality and turn to fanaticism. Instead of adjusting to a new situation, they are ready to risk everything they achieved to preserve their kind of democracy. They pay any price to avoid an uncertain future. Christians in Lebanon don't seek power to dominate others. Ironically, they undemocratically hold to power to secure the democratic institutions they helped create to insure their political and economic survivability in an unfriendly environment. An astonishing parallel with the present dilemma facing Israel.

Nonetheless, it is important to differentiate between Lebanese, Jordanians and Palestinians on one hand, and countries like Syria, Iraq, and Libya on the other. Lebanon's civil war and the Palestinian intifada are the result of prolonged deadlocked conditions. If the obstacles are removed, the situation will return to normal. Lebanon has never espoused an aggressive behavior toward its neighbors. It never build a real army and paid the price by not being able to control the early incidents of the civil war. In the past, Lebanon was the only voice in the Middle East preaching against the diversion of the region's resources to buy the most destructive armaments. Since 1949, Lebanon did not participate in any Arab-Israeli war. However,

countries like Iraq, Syria, and Libya have their own agenda independent from security concerns. They cannot be part of MEPEC, at least not at the present time.

Is this the right time for MEPEC accords?

Some may say that MEPEC-type accords may have been possible before 1982. Since then many events had a serious adverse impact. The Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the Sabra massacre, the economic collapse of the Lebanese economy, the intifada, and the Christian-Christian struggle in Lebanon have significantly changed the equation. The answer is that now is the best time ever for MEPEC. All these dramatic events have awakened people. There is no more illusions to the seriousness of the situation. The status-quo is no longer an option. Now everyone understands the moral and political consequences of a lack of peace. David Shipler's book "Arab and Jews" insightfully describes the dramatic transformations in Arab and Israeli societies. The early indications of this awakening are the PLO recognition of Israel and the Israeli labor party willingness for compromises.

As mentioned earlier, a Harris poll taken in the Fall of 1980 revealed that over 70 percent of Americans were in favor of an independent Palestinian state. If that was true in 1980, it is certainly true now after two years of intifada. All communities want peace but cannot compromise their security. MEPEC provides a framework where peace, security and democracy can be guaranteed.

Now the threats:

MEPEC fulfill Arab and Jewish aspirations in the only realistic way. However, if this course is not pursued, it is doubtful that other agreements will be comprehensive enough to deal with all the facets of the conflict (i.e., territories, Jerusalem, refugees, Lebanon civil war, Golan heights, disarmament talks, and the viability of the Palestinian state). Alternate agreements might be signed for political expediency without erasing suspicion and hate, and would not insure the viability of the Palestinian state nor the end of the civil war in Lebanon. Those agreements could be a temporary relief, but not a cure to the basic and structural causes of the conflict.

The PLO has come a long way. The Lebanese have lost all illusions in their leaders. The Jordanians are clearly in favor of a negotiated settlement. It is time for Israel to end its isolation and realize that it can only be democratic and prosperous if it is at peace with its neighbors and in good terms with the Palestinian state. The Palestinian state cannot be economically viable without a close cooperation with Israel. Palestinian refugees in Lebanon cannot be secured without the end of the civil war. And Lebanon civil war could only be solved in a regional context. In any case, Israel is the most to benefit from MEPEC accords, both economically and politically.

The time is running out. The end of the cold war and the reforms in South-Africa have turned the world attention to Israel's violations of human rights. Israel is in danger of not only losing the American support, but also of facing world sanctions including sanctions from the USA. Thomas Friedman in his award-winning book "From Beirut to Jerusalem" alluded to the gulf being created between the American Jewish community and

Israel. And Michael Thomas in his novel "Hanover Place" indirectly reflected on what many Americans are asking regarding the inconsistencies between Jewish sermons and actions. Fictitious characters like Miranda Warrington could unfortunately be incarnated in many individuals if greedy profiteers and organizations like AIPAC keep on 'influencing' the decisionmakers into actions not warranted by the American people, and by labeling any criticism of Israel by anti-semitic slogans. The Ukrainian peasant revolt of 1648 killing thousand of Jews should serve as a good example of the fate of Jewish collaboration with oppressors against the wishes and interest of the people.

If Israel can make the desert blossom, it can certainly insure MEPEC success. Jews have to cease portraying themselves as the world's only victims by reviving holocaust horrors and portraying all nations as conspiring against them. Israel isolation is a man made isolation. If Israel wants to be part of the Middle East it has to work hard for this end by helping the poor and meek of the region. It is uniquely qualified in terms of resources and technology to do so like no other can.

As far as Lebanon is concerned, the writings on the wall are very clear. Lebanese are being transformed into the barbarians of the twenty century. They also created a generation of fanatics and criminals willing to pursue the war for decades to come. The intellectuals and the moderates had long left the country. The war-profiteers, the corrupted leaders, and the so-called rednecks are now ruling the communities. But all this did not kill the Lebanese spirit. The Lebanese communities around the world that produced top-class politicians, technocrats, and humanitarians can certainly produce an honest and competent leadership capable of reviving an enlightened Lebanon and rebuilding its democratic institutions. But first the civil war and the vicious cycle of hate and destruction must be stopped.

Palestinians live the most critical period of their national history. Last year their leaders made the right movements toward peace. However, once the Palestinian state is created, they will have only one chance to make it work. Up to know they were on the opposition side. It is a relatively easy position compared to the efforts needed to build a democratic country. India was harshly ruled by Great Britain. However, the British Empire did everything to raise the standard of living of Indians by introducing technology, higher education, science, and modern medicine. Indian leaders criticized the British harsh discipline imposed at them. Tragically, when the British left, there was tremendous outburst of violence unequalled in India's history where tens of thousands were massacred. In comparison, British rule seemed like a Sunday picnic. Palestinian leaders have to be very careful. The world is watching and applauding their struggle for independence. However, creating a real democracy and reeducating the youngs is not an easy job. They cannot afford to make mistakes. The creation of the Palestinian state is relatively the easy part. Making the state democratic and prosperous is the challenging part.

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