

Reply to Cherine

Dear Cherine,

As per our facebook conversation, kindly find in attachment the document I told you about.

As for the text you posted, of course with all appreciation for your professor's interest in Lebanon, allow me please to say the following:

He says: the Taif agreement is unfair to the Lebanese Muslims:

in fact, it is the opposite: just because a Muslim can't be President doesn't make this clause true: I hate and don't want to seem talking like a far-right sided Christian,

but First, Taif raised the number of deputies in the Parliament from 6 Christians / 5 Muslims to 50/50 (OK great); if this still seems unfair because Muslims represent 60% of Lebanese demographically, if Lebanese descendants would be allowed to retrieve their Lebanese nationality according to solid proof of course (and this is a universal right that almost all countries adopt), this balance would shift clearly towards Christians, who represents 80% of those descendants. Muslims refused for a long time this law to be ratified and accepted it 2 years ago because they thought they could benefit from a Lebanese Muslim majority in African countries still in contact with Lebanon to do the procedure whereas most descendants in USA / Canada / Australia / Latin America r of Christian origin and have almost lost contact with the motherland; hence they realized this law could benefit them more. Add to that the historical course of events where a third of Christians perished between 1915 and 1917, and a third was forced to emigrate between 1880 and 1914, and almost all Christians perished during the Muslim invasion in 1305, not to mention the earlier Muslim conquest. All in all Christians retain a historical right.

Second, Taif changed the Lebanese order from Presidential (like in USA where the President has a lot of power at his hand) to parliamentary (like Italy etc) where the president is almost devoid of any power, all that being transferred to the "Cabinet United" according to Taif, but practically in the hand of the prime minister, and to the head of Parliament (both of whom r Muslims). Last 25 years have shown the abyss in which the Christians have fallen.

Third, why would he say that over-representation was the price for peace if they (Christians) were defeated (and indeed somewhere / somehow they were)? Why would u buy someone's acceptance for his defeat? you wouldn't care... you would walk over him; this is how it has happened throughout history. The 50/50 was a step towards the 40/60 but such a step would lead a separation of the Christian areas to form a new independent country especially that Christians pay 80% of Lebanon's taxes (yes indeed).

Fourth, The Taif implemented electoral laws that have allowed Muslim voters to decide, for more than 40 seats out of 64, who would be the Christian deputies, by defining electoral geographical

units that would sink Christians in Muslim majority areas (as u know, kawanine al bostat (the busses) or ma7edil).

Fifth, why would he even consider the half a million Palestinians a flaw in representation? Should they be nationalized and thus vote? or should they return to their territory or at least be redistributed to vast and rich neighboring Arab countries (excuse me but stating this is less degrading than the conditions of the refugee camps here in Lebanon where the whole population does not have any economical power to sustain them, even if they had all possible jobs, in a country where pop density is $> 500/\text{sq km}$).

So yes, we are re-thinking the TAIF agreement in order to have a proper constitution for a pluralistic country where communal belonging supersedes patriotic feeling, or else, majorities will benefit to change the laws in favor of their communal habits and ways, only to drive, at least unwillingly if not willingly, to a clash again, or to an emigration of minorities, because smelting the communities that make up the Lebanese people is impossible.

We are aiming for federalism, like the Swiss or Belgian order.

Last but not least, he says that Lebanon's showed that sectarian wars can end, and that power can be shared, somehow: Well perhaps the bulk of the Lebanese military war has ended in 1990, yet the cold war remains and can spark up anytime; if it is calm, it is because USA and international community wanted it so and allowed Syria to occupy Lebanon for 15 years; after 2005, we have witnessed at least 30-40 explosions/assassinations/ clashes (May , 2008), kidnappings, and even pushing Hariri's cabinet in 2009 to resignation under threat of ministers back then (mainly Junblat's, who a year before saw 70 of his partisans be killed in the May 2008 skirmishes with Hezbollah) (the black shirts).

Also, power is being shared now because of the feudal system that has long inflicted Lebanon. Feudal lords (most of them now warlords as well) use the confessional clashes to retain their power, transmit it to their descendants, and rob the country's wealth. So at some points, they clearly try to share power, disregarding political dilemmas, when lack of doing so may put them at threat of fall ex: before Hariri nominated Aoun this year, last year, when they still hated each other, they were trying to set up a plan to divide the country's trash and make money out of it... Aounists hated and still hate Berri, Hariri hasn't made up with Berri besides obligations, yet Berri was also the third party along with those two; this applies to all parties / feudal / communal groups.

To wrap it up, I am sorry if I don't seem to coincide with your professor's point of view, but I really appreciate his endeavor and his aim to understand what is going; the POV he presents is the classical well known one that majorities and dictatorships in the middle East have long been trying to promote, yet with the Arabic Spring, all these ideological concepts have fallen apart; the world is moving to systems where minorities r respected in federal systems with a tendency to city-state basis.

I hope you find in my reply here above an element of peace and aim to find the best solution for everyone, without any material incentive. I am ready to discuss any point you or he wishes.

Regards,

Mark