

## Term

# Taif Accord

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### Definition

The Taif Accord (10/89) was concluded under the auspices of the Arab League and signed at a meeting of Lebanese parliamentarians in the city of Taif in Saudi Arabia. The Accord brought about the official end of the Lebanese civil war, reformed the Lebanese political system, and was supposed to define the parameters of the presence of the Syrian Army in Lebanon.

### Content of the Accord<sup>1</sup>

The Accord coalesced against the backdrop of 15 years of civil war in Lebanon, during which the various confessional and ethnic groups fought over governmental authority and influence. The goal of the Accord was to re-arrange the power relationships among these groups, to bring an end to foreign influence in Lebanon and to enable rehabilitation of the country.

The Accord was in essence a revision of the “National Covenant” of 1943, which dealt, among other things, with the division of parliamentary seats according to confessional, ethnic and geographical criteria. As a result, the ratio between Muslims and Christians (of various dominations) was 6 to 5 in favor of the Christians. The National Covenant also determined that the President of Lebanon would be a Maronite Christian, the Prime Minister a Sunni Muslim and the head of Parliament a Shi’ite Muslim.

The arrangements in the National Covenant were based upon the 1932 Lebanese census. Since then, due to religious and ethnic issues in Lebanon, no census has been carried out.

**Part One: Principles and Political Reforms** – The Taif Accord included several reforms that re-divided political, civil and military authorities in Lebanon, as follows:

- **The Parliament:** The number of representatives was increased from 99 to 128. In light of clear patterns indicating a demographic increase in the number of Muslims in relation to Christians, it was agreed that parity of representation would be instituted and that the Shi’ites would receive increased parliamentary representation. The ethnic and confessional divisions in the political system continued, despite the fact that in the new electoral law representatives were to be chosen “on a national and not a confessional basis”;
- **The President:** The President remained the supreme commander of the Army, although his powers and authorities were reduced in favor of increased powers for the Prime Minister;
- **The Prime Minister:** While the Prime Minister received increased powers and authorities, the dominance of the President remained.

**Part Two: Strengthening the Lebanese Government’s Sovereignty throughout Lebanese Territory** – One of the goals of the Taif Accord was to bolster Lebanese sovereignty. The main provisions in this context are as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> See English translation of the text of the agreement at [http://www.intelligence.org.il/sp/3\\_05/taif\\_ag.htm](http://www.intelligence.org.il/sp/3_05/taif_ag.htm).

- Dismantling of all armed organizations in Lebanon;
- Reconstruction of the Lebanese Army and return of all security-related authorities and powers to the state;
- Syria-Lebanon relations – The Syrian forces in Lebanon were intended to aid the Lebanese security forces to enforce the authority of the Lebanese government over a two-year period (1989-1991). At the end of this period, the parties were to discuss continued Syrian presence in Lebanon.

**Part Three: Liberation of Lebanon from Israeli Occupation** – The Accord called for the complete implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 425 (1978), which provides for Israeli withdrawal from the security zone in southern Lebanon and the enforcement of the cease-fire between Israel and Lebanon (1949). At the same time, the Lebanese Army was supposed to deploy along the border with Israel.

**Part Four: Regulation of the Relations between Syria and Lebanon** - The Accord stated that Lebanon and Syria have a common history and interests, and are obligated to protect each other's security interests.

## Implementation

In spite of the opposition to the Accord by various Lebanese elements<sup>2</sup>, it brought about an end to the Lebanese civil war, together with political reforms that initiated the rehabilitation of the central government.

The Accord was included in the changes to the Lebanese Constitution in 1990. Most of the armed organizations in Lebanon were disarmed (mainly the anti- Syrian groups), except for Palestinian groups that operated in the refugee camps and the Hizbullah.<sup>3</sup>

The process of bolstering Lebanese sovereignty and rehabilitating the Lebanese Army was carried out only partially, due to the continued presence of Israel and Syria in Lebanon and the continued operations of armed groups.

The Accord did not succeed in liberating Lebanon from foreign influence. Israel continued to control southern Lebanon until 2000. After the Israeli withdrawal, Hizbullah took over the area and prevented the Lebanese Army from deploying there.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Michel Aoun, the Christian commander of the Lebanese Army who was also appointed Prime Minister, refused to recognize the legitimacy of the Taif Accord. The Syrians, on their part, supported “their” Prime Minister, Salim Al-Hos, who was appointed by the new President Harawi. Following an extended siege, the Syrians managed to force Aoun to flee Lebanon (10/90).

<sup>3</sup> The claim relied upon by Hizbullah and the Palestinian organizations for their refusal to disarm, was the continued Israeli presence in southern Lebanon. These groups refused to disarm on the basis of their claim for self-defense, which they retained even following Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon (on the grounds that since there were still open issues between Israel and Lebanon, the time was not yet ripe for disarmament). Nonetheless, UNSC Resolution 1559 (9/04) and the Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon (4/05) strengthened the demand to disarm these organizations. To date, the demand has not yet been fulfilled.

<sup>4</sup> Only following the second Lebanese War (8/06) did the Lebanese Army deploy along the international border in accordance with UNSC Resolution 1701 (8/06).

In addition, in contrast to the declared goal of the Taif Accord to minimize foreign influence in Lebanon and to bolster the government, Syrian influence only increased. Moreover, the Syrians imposed the “Lebanon-Syria Treaty of Cooperation”<sup>5</sup> (5/91) and “Lebanon-Syria Defense and Security Agreement”<sup>6</sup> (7/91) which effectively turned Lebanon into a Syrian protectorate.

Syrian influence in Lebanon began to weaken only in the wake of the IDF’s withdrawal (5/00) and the acceleration of the rehabilitation process that the country underwent. An expression of this may be found in UN Security Council resolution 1559 (9/04), which strengthened Lebanese independence and sovereignty and called for the withdrawal of foreign forces and the dismantling of armed organizations.

These processes continued to erode Syria's power up until the assassination of Prime Minister Rafik Al-Hariri which finally led to a Syrian commitment to withdraw all of its forces to the Beka’a valley in accordance with the Accord, and eventually to the international boundary between Syria and Lebanon (4/05).

End.

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<sup>5</sup> See English translation of text at <http://www.mideastweb.org/syrialeb1.htm>.

<sup>6</sup> See English translation of text at <http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Parliament/2587/def.html>.