

to say about the Arab-Israeli conflict after 1948, the US-Soviet Cold War, or the various inter-Arab Cold Wars."

In addition to perceiving Lebanon's regional role differently, the Lebanese also held divergent views of Lebanon's *raison d'être*. Charles Rizk suggested that one reason for "Muslim" allegiance to the new Lebanese state hinged on elevated political status, which was more acceptable than it had been under the French Mandate. The confessional political system instituted power-sharing based on the demographic weight of each confessional community.⁴

Because of their enhanced status, many Muslims -- especially the predominant Sunni community -- saw national allegiance to Lebanon as a means of ensuring their rights and political participation. As already mentioned, the conservative Christian elements pledged allegiance to Lebanon for "security" reasons. These differing perceptions of the purpose of the Lebanese state sharpened in the years leading up to the war. For reasons that will be discussed later, the early war years found conservative Christian protagonists preoccupied with the question of Lebanon's sovereignty and security, whereas "progressive" protagonists were concerned with issues of political reform. In fact, one of the primary reasons for the failure of conflict-settlement attempts in the early years stems from the inability of Lebanese elites to agree on whether security or reform should take priority.

Socioeconomic Imbalances: The Seeds of Discontent

Although the free-enterprise economy was highly successful, Lebanon's "miraculous" growth benefitted neither all Lebanese nor all of Lebanon. Participants discussed four sources of socioeconomic discontent: an absence of "social content" in Lebanon's economic

⁴ Under the French Mandate, Christians enjoyed the status of a political majority; whereas Muslims were the political minority. The confessional system, with its emphasis on the sect, blurred this Christian-Muslim political divide (that is, Maronite Christians came first, followed by Sunni Muslims, Shi'ite Muslims, Greek Orthodox Christians, and so on).