

II ATTEMPTS AT CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Since 1975, there have been numerous initiatives aimed at settling the conflict. These proposals have been launched by a multitude of internal actors as well as external "mediators" or "sponsors," including Syria, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United States, France, and the Holy See. The latest initiative was signed in October 1989 in Ta'if, Saudi Arabia, and, following an initial increase in hostilities, has been somewhat successful in allowing for the restabilization of large parts of Lebanon.

Participants analyzed the reasons for failure of some of the principal attempts to resolve the conflict prior to Ta'if, including the National Dialogue Committee (1976), the Frangieh Constitutional Document (1976), the Arab League summits at Riyadh and Cairo (1976), President Elias Sarkis' Fourteen Points for National Reconciliation (1980), the Israeli-sponsored May 17th Agreement (1983), the Geneva and Lausanne conferences (1983 and 1984), and the Damascus Tripartite Agreement (1985).

Many of these proposals and "reconciliation meetings" attempted to deal with the underlying issues that had sparked the fighting, as well as with the complications that occurred as the violence continued. These issues and complications included Lebanon's regional identity and obligations; sovereignty and security; domestic political and socioeconomic reform; the regulation of relations with powerful regional actors (especially Syria and Israel); and the disbandment of the militias. Some of the settlement attempts tried to encompass most of these questions, but others focussed only on certain issues to the exclusion of the rest. The internal issue of "security versus reform" became enmeshed with that of Lebanon's regional obligations. And as the number of internal Lebanese actors increased so did the number of external "patrons." The wars in Lebanon were being fought not only over local issues, but also because of regional power struggles as Lebanon became an arena for proxy warfare. Furthermore, as Lebanon's militia-imposed "war system" consolidated, Lebanese powerbrokers developed a vested interest in prolonging the conflict. Violence perpetrated by the militias emphasized the need for reform, but also