

## Chance for a federation

isdiction and that each unit must assent before the constitutional compact can be changed.

On balance the advantages of such a federal system outweigh its disadvantages. In the main, federalism appears to be more rational than the existing consociational system. First, federalism guarantees the country's unity while allowing citizens to participate directly in the development of all regions equitably and comprehensively. Second, federalism shifts the public demands from national to the communal level. The issue would not be that of dominance but one of accepting religious diversity and coexistence. Third, a federal arrangement might encourage both Moslems and Christians to be confessional and secular, Arab and Lebanese, without creating any danger of their opting for isolation or compromising Lebanon's sovereignty to any party in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Federalism thus offers the possible benefit of enabling Lebanon to secure its neutrality in dealing with regional disputes. This in turn requires a national consensus as well as an international agreement as a prerequisite.

### Some conditions

Admittedly, there is no *trouble-free solution* to the problem in Lebanon. A federal Lebanon requires fulfillment of a number of conditions. To begin with, it requires a transition period during which all communities should engage in measures to build confidence and reduce tensions. For this to occur, the Christian

forces must realize that — given the Moslem demographic power — political/military development is not on their side; they must adopt a more flexible approach towards the Moslem demand for an equal share of power; and they must recognize the impossibility of translating a "Christian Lebanon" into a reality. For their part, the Moslems must realize that their extremist millennium has no chance of realization, that Lebanon is a land of rival sects, and that that country is not an ideal site for a great "movement of redemption." Second, a federal Lebanon requires either the disengagement or the disappearance of all external actors from the scene. For this to happen, Israel and Syria must refrain from the use of military force and terminate their interference in Lebanon's affairs; they must realize that Lebanon is not the best place to settle their differences; and they must learn that their occupations of that country have only the potential of crippling peace efforts in the entire region. For instance, Syria's recent failure to secure the election of former President Franjieh on August 18, 1988, was but another indication of the fact that Damascus is unable to bring about the "Syrianization" of Lebanon.

Finally, it seems unlikely that Lebanon's political personality will be restored unless territorially-based communities are recognized. In other words, unless federalism is regarded as an optional formula to Lebanon's multidimensional problems and becomes a tangible reality, the "terrible beauty" of the Middle East will become yet more terrible. □

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## Coping with breakdown

### Humanitarian assistance and disaster relief

# Cutting refugee production

by David A. Lenarcic

One of the more salient features of the global scene today is the extent to which natural and man-made disasters are intertwined. Drought, famine and floods exist side by side with civil and interstate conflict. More than this, each feeds off the other: war is a breeding ground for impoverishment, destitution a fillip to hostilities. The relationship is fully reciprocal, mutually exacerbating, and increasingly widespread.

The result may be a breakdown of political and social order requiring special emergency assistance. Inevitably, then, emer-

gency relief becomes inextricably bound up in the fundamental political issues of war. In 1971, attempts at furnishing aid to millions of Bengali refugees were complicated by, and entangled in, first a civil war within that country and later full-scale hostilities between Pakistan and India. Similarly, during the height of the recent African famine, the Ethiopian government strove to prevent relief from reaching rebel-held areas in that country in a move calculated to starve the opposition into submission. The possibility of emergency operations fulfilling their ultimate purpose — to provide succor and sustenance to suffering populations — is often directly proportional to the severity of a conflict raging simultaneously.

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