

Hoover Institution, May 13, 2005

## **Lebanon's future as a democracy discussed by Middle East analyst**

In his remarks on "Lebanon's Independence Uprising: A Sequel to Global and Regional Geo-Political Developments," Adib Farha, a Middle East analyst, discussed the assassination of Lebanon's former prime minister Rafic Hariri and its consequences for Lebanon. Farha, a member of Hariri's staff during the time he served as prime minister, noted that, with Hariri's death, "the slowly but silently deteriorating Lebanese-Syrian relations had suddenly been catapulted into a frenzy of articulated anger."

Although Syria withdrew its troops from Lebanon as part of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1559, Farha is not convinced that Lebanon's sovereignty and independence are secure. Now, Farha believes, Lebanon is "witnessing a dangerous and critical period in its history."

There are two factors, Farha said, that will affect the future of Lebanon. The first is "the ability of the opposition to maintain its solidarity and add new groups to the existing coalition. The second factor has to do with external support." He went on to say that "the critical question is, how committed are the friends of democracy in the world, particularly the United States, to Lebanon's independence, sovereignty, and the restoration of its democracy and how will they translate their commitment?"

The question of commitment by the United States Farha raised is based on the distrust many Lebanese feel toward the United States. Although Farha believes that post-9/11 United States differs significantly from pre-9/11 United States, he says many Lebanese remain skeptical.

Farha went on to say that "while pressure from the international community emboldened the opposition and expedited the Syrian pullout, the Lebanese people must undertake the implementation of the remaining Security Council demands on their own." He cautioned that other involvement by the international community might be perceived as a "new form of foreign interference."

In conclusion he said that his "other concern is whether or not the United States might end up trading off its support for the cause of Lebanon's democracy for its interests elsewhere in the Middle East." "These factors," Farha said, "could very well determine the course of Lebanon's future, which would itself affect the cause of democracy and moderation

in the turbulent Middle East."

The remarks by Farha were made during a media fellow seminar that took place Tuesday, May 10.