1.231: Airport Systems Planning and Design

Term Project

Beirut Rafic Hariri International Airport (BRHIA),
A Hub for the Middle East Once Again

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1. Introduction

A hub airport is “an airport that an airline uses to transfer larger numbers of passengers between flights.” [1] The concept of hub airports has always been and will always be attractive to almost every city, country or geographical region in the world which desires to economically flourish, expand and, to a certain extent, be visible and influential on the world map. Such an ambition creates considerable competition between rival airports as well as airlines. Though it seems that it is everyone’s dream, it is not easy to establish a hub airport, as it should satisfy a minimum number of criteria in order to become a successful hub. [1] In this sense, Beirut Rafic Hariri International Airport (BRHIA) in the Republic of Lebanon is no exception especially that it was once the premiere hub airport in the Middle East region with four Lebanese airlines operating from it and most of the international airlines including it on their route network as their first choice in the Middle East. As a result the nostalgia to recover its leading hub position never faded away and still exists strongly despite the fierce competition in the region.

Given the fact that the newly reconstructed BRHIA is less than a decade old and has modern airside and landside facilities with abundant capacity and good service, this paper explores the possibility of retrieving its leading role as a hub airport in the Middle East. It briefly narrates the history of the airport since it was opened in 1954 and the role it played in the aviation industry until it lost its glamour and role it once had with the outbreak of the civil war. Afterwards, it presents the reconstruction and expansion of the airport in the 1990’s after the end of the civil war up to date. Then argues why it is important for BRHIA to become a
hub once again and discusses the factors that are essential in creating a successful and competitive hub at BRHIA. Finally it draws a conclusion with some remarks.

2. **Historical Background**

   The first airport in Beirut was built in 1938 in an area south of the city known as Bir Hasan; currently the site houses the Camille Chamoun Sports City. The growing Lebanese economy at that time and the emergence of two Lebanese airlines Middle East Airlines (MEA) and Air Liban in 1945 contributed to the success and growth of Beirut Airport that was used as a major stop by most of the international airlines such as Air France’s service to Indochina that was later extended up to Hanoi, Lufthansa’s route between Berlin and Tehran and LOT’s route between Warsaw and Tehran. In 1953, the cargo airline Trans-Mediterranean Airways (TMA) was established. The growing size of air traffic dictated building a larger airport further south of the city in Khalde around 9Km from Beirut. The new Beirut International Airport (BIA), which was considered the region’s biggest and most modern airport, opened in 1954 for air operations. BIA was the hub for four Lebanese airlines MEA, Air Liban, TMA and Lebanese International Airways (LIA) which was created in 1956. [2] The 50’s, 60’s and early 70’s represented the golden age in the Lebanese aviation industry with a record of 2.5 million passengers in 1975.

   In 1963 MEA and Air Liban announced a merger and the new airline was named MEA-Air Liban which became Lebanon’s national airline and flag carrier. In October 1966, Intra Bank, which held 65% of MEA’s shares, collapsed. In December 1968, the Lebanese aviation sector saw a major setback when an Israeli commando raided Beirut International Airport and blew up fourteen planes on ground, ten out of the fourteen belonged to MEA.
After this aggression, TMA was able to recover quickly whereas LIA went bankrupt and was acquired by MEA at a later stage. In the 1970’s, MEA was able to renew its aircraft fleet by introducing the B707, B727 and B747 which served the Beirut-London and Beirut-New York routes. [2] In 1975, the fifteen years violent civil war started and consequently BIA lost its glamour and role as the lead hub airport in the Middle East. The airport was frequently closed due to critical and dangerous security situations. It lost all its international airlines where by October 1985, MEA and TMA were the only two airlines operating from BIA and passenger traffic went down to only 1300 pax. per day, the lowest level since 1953. [3] In 1982, the airport’s terminal building and the airfield were severely damaged during the Israeli invasion. As a result, the airport was closed for hundred and fifteen days during which MEA lost six of its B727s. Another long closure took place in 1984 extending to hundred and fifty four days which turned out to be catastrophic to MEA and the Airport. [2], [3] In order to survive, MEA leased most of its aircraft fleet and crew to other airlines in the region. [3] The latest long airport closure was during the July 2006 war which lasted for thirty six days followed by a twenty two days blockade where MEA flights to and from Amman, Jordan only were allowed to take-off and land in the Airport and finally in May 2008 the airport was closed because of labor standoff blocking the main airport access road for eight days.

In 1985, after the hijacking of a TWA plane in the Airport, the United States put a ban on air travel to Lebanon including restrictions on the purchase of airline tickets with itineraries including Lebanon, the use of BIA by US carriers and US registered aircraft, landing rights in the US by MEA and cargo originating in Lebanon. [4] The ban was partially lifted in 1995 by easing the purchase of air tickets [4] and in 2007 by permitting US air carriers under contract to the United States Government only to travel to Lebanon.
3. The Reconstruction of BRHIA

Between 1975 and 1990, some efforts were made to reconstruct what was damaged during the war. The terminal building was renovated in 1977 after the first two years of the civil war and the two runways were rehabilitated between 1982 and 1984 after the Israeli invasion. The major reconstruction effort started in the last quarter of 1993.

After the end of the civil war in 1990 and the reconciliation between the People of Lebanon, the Government started its impressive reconstruction program to alienate the effects of the various wars that stormed Lebanon in the last fifteen years and most importantly to stimulate the national economy. Recognizing its important role in revitalizing the devastated economy and re-establishing the country as an International Business Center, the reconstruction of the Airport was a priority on the Government’s agenda. As a result, an airport master plan for 16 million annual passengers in year 2035 was developed in 1991. This master plan is to be implemented in phases based on the air traffic demand.

After approving the master plan, the airport underwent a ten year reconstruction program between 1994 and 2003. It was rebuilt as a modern facility with an annual handling capacity of 6 MPax per year which was supposed to be reached in 2003. The first phase of construction started in November 1993 and comprised the construction of a new east runway designated 03-21 east of the existing runway which was later converted into a taxiway. The new runway 03-21 is 3,800 m long and 45 m wide with 7.5 m wide shoulders on each side. Works on this runway were concluded in 1997. The second phase comprised the construction of a new west runway designated 16-34 (previously known as 17-35). It is 3,400 m long with 1,900 m protruding into the sea, built on reclaimed land and 45 m wide with 7.5 m shoulders.
on each side. In addition to the construction of this new runway and its associated taxiways, the existing terminal building and control tower were demolished and a new modern tower and four-storey passenger building with eighty four check-in counters, twenty one contact gates and two bus gates were constructed. The capacity of the new terminal building is six million passengers per year. A number of support facilities were either rehabilitated or constructed such as the rescue and fire fighting station, utility complex, civil aviation safety center and maintenance workshops, radars and meteorological buildings, a building for sorting mail, catering facility in addition to a complex of landside road system including interchanges, underpasses, bridges, terminal curbside facilities and an underground car park. The east side of the new terminal building with its jetty was inaugurated in 1998, followed by the inauguration of the west side in 2002 and the west runway in 2003.

The expansion of the airport also included a construction of a state of the art general aviation terminal building with associated apron to accommodate VIP passengers and charter flights. It was opened in 2005 and is considered the most advanced in the Middle East.

4. Why Transform BRHIA into a Hub?

The Government of Lebanon, since the end of the civil war in the early 90’s, is continuously trying to put Beirut back on the world map as a business and financial center and a dynamic marketplace in the Region, attract international investments and reclaim its position as the gateway to the East. In order to achieve such an ambitious goal, Lebanon should have, among many other things, a strong transportation system in general and a strong airport in particular. BRHIA is the main port of entry to Lebanon and is the hub for Middle
Term Project
Beirut Rafic Hariri International Airport: A Hub for the Middle East Once Again

East Airlines (MEA), the cargo airline Trans-Mediterranean Airways (TMA) which recently resumed operations and the new startup charter Menajet.

Accordingly, there exist a couple of reasons as to why it is important for BRHIA to resume its role as a hub in the region.

First, the Government has to recover the value of the investment spent on the rehabilitation and development of the airport which cost it a significant amount of $ 450 million in year 1998. The project was financed by loans mainly from the Kuwaiti Fund for Arab Economic Development and the European Bank for Investment. [6] In order for the investment to be justified, the level of passenger traffic, cargo and aircraft movements has to increase to the levels that this facility was planned and built for. Currently the airport is operating with abundant capacity with the number of passengers expected to slightly exceed 4 million passengers this year.

Second, the key indicator of a city’s economic greatness in the twenty first century is that “all airlines land here”, as was the claim that “all roads lead to Rome” the key indicator of the greatness of Rome in ancient times and ports and rail stations were indicators of the success of a number of cities such as Chicago and Singapore in the last century. [1] [7] Nowadays airports and the aviation industry in general are considered as engines of economic development in the targeted city or region. It is evident, based on a number of studies that an economic boom usually comes about in a hub city due to the fact that airports attract foreign investment, businesses, trade, retail, hotels, restaurants, convention centers, show rooms, exhibitions halls, tourism and manufacturing which in turn lead to increased levels in employment and in the numbers of visitors and tourists who will spend more money in the
city. [7] A notion which is considered essential in the economic life cycle of any city or region. Therefore, in the case of Beirut, transforming BHRIA to a hub is expected to be coupled with significant economic and public benefits, revenues, more jobs and foreign investment to Lebanon in general and Beirut in particular.

Last but not least, a hub airport provides numerous travel options for the consumer, connects small communities to distant markets and the global marketplace and allows airlines to offer an extensive network of flights at a lower cost. [8]

5. **Criteria for a Successful Hub**

Lebanon has a strategic location, an open liberal economy, a historical and cultural heritage, a skilled literate workforce, and a very strong services and financial sector which attract businesses and tourists from around the world to come and do business and enjoy what Lebanon has to offer.

BRHIA was selected by Airtrax magazine as the second best airport and aviation hub in the Middle East after Dubai International Airport in 2009. For BRHIA to be a successful and competitive international hub, it has to satisfy a number of criteria as detailed in the following sections.

**Right Geographical Location:** The location of BRHIA is considered ideal for a hub airport as a good connecting point. On the macro level, it is strategically located on the cross roads between Europe, Asia and Africa. Its central location allows it to serve a wide market for transfer traffic between Europe and Asia, between Asia and Africa and even between Africa and East Europe. On the micro level, it is ideal for
origin/destination traffic. It is located at only 9 km south of Beirut City Center which makes it easily accessible in a short travel time not exceeding 15 minutes with inexpensive ground transportation.

**Highly Developed Airport Facilities and Infrastructure:** BRHIA has modern airside and landside facilities and passenger building less than 10 years old. The airfield consists of three concrete runways designed as ICAO Code 4E with suitably located rapid exit taxiways to help clear the runways of landing aircraft in a short period of time in order to minimize the runway occupancy time. The two main runways 16-34 and 03-21 are instrumental runways equipped with Instrument Landing System ILS CAT II. They have an open V configuration. The prevailing direction of operations for 75% of the time is from North to South which makes the two runways converging. With such a configuration, Runway 16-34 is the main landing runway and Runway 03-21 is the take-off runway. The available length for Runway 03-21 is 3,800 m which is considered sufficient for the take-off of the A340-600 which is considered the most critical aircraft demanding a long runway. Runway 16-34 was designed and built with 1,900 m out of 3,400 m protruding into the sea. Such a layout relieved Beirut from the aircraft noise generated by the aircraft flying on their final approach path to the airport and increased safety. As a result, the airport operates 24 hours with no noise curfew.

In addition to its three runways, BRHIA has a comprehensive taxiway system serving the runways and aprons along with a ground service equipment road network, fire fighting and rescue facility, equipment and ULD staging areas, stormwater drainage system, primary radar, airfield lighting, airfield marking and signing, meteorological equipment and navigational aids.
The passenger terminal building has a pier configuration with two fingers perpendicular to the main building. The east finger has twelve contact gates and the west finger has nine contact gates and two bus gates. Six out of the twenty one contact stands cater for wide body aircraft ICAO Code E. In addition to the contact apron, there are two remote aprons, one built for three ICAO Code D aircraft and the second for ICAO Code E aircraft. The airport lacks a sufficient number of wide body gates especially that MEA’s planned fleet consists of at least four A330. The west finger is used by MEA and its alliances such as Air France while the east finger is used by the other airlines. The terminal configuration and the split of the fingers among the airlines minimizes the delays and unreliability while making connections where passengers can move easily between flights in a short time provided that ATC smartly schedules the transfer gates to reduce walking distances and passenger confusion. [1]

The disadvantage resides in the case where there is a transfer between MEA and other airline parking in the east finger; a case expected to be very rare. In this case the passenger will have to go through security in the departure level and checks in to catch his flight in the east finger.

The main building has four levels with its basement connected by a pedestrian tunnel to a three storey visitors’ car park with a capacity of 2,350 parking spaces. The arrival and departure levels occupy the ground and first floors respectively. It has a duty free conveniently situated after immigration in the departure level between the two boarding fingers, three business class lounges, cafes and restaurants and bank. It also houses the Civil Aviation Authority offices. In order to speed up the check in and transfer process and produce a reliable passenger data transfer, the CUTE (Common
Use Terminal Equipment) system was installed in the airport to automate the passenger processing operations in 1998.

The airport is connected to Beirut by a dual three highway. Currently, the airport lacks proper public transportation service, but there are plans to start a regular scheduled bus service between the airport and Beirut and other cities in Lebanon. The layout of the curbside already took into consideration the provision of such a service. The airport is well served by a comfortable and reliable Taxi fleet operated by the airport.

In 2005, a General Aviation terminal along with its dedicated terminal was inaugurated. It is considered one of the most advanced general aviation terminals in the Middle East and has state of the art facilities. It is very successful ever since. The MEA flight training center which was established in 1960, inactive during the civil war is currently under construction. This center will serve the aviation industry in Lebanon and the region.

*Sufficient Demand and Available Capacity*: Since 1997 up to 2002 passenger traffic has been increasing steadily at an average rate of 6.75%. In 2003, passenger traffic saw an abrupt increase of 19.59% from year 2002 because of the Government’s policy to deregulate air travel and the implementation of the open skies policy in Lebanon. Because of the unstable political situation and the assassination of Prime Minister Rafic Hariri in 2005, passenger traffic had negative growth of (-)1.5%. In 2006, due to the July war, the closure of the airport and the Israeli blockade, traffic plummeted down by (-)11.22% almost reaching the traffic levels achieved in 2002 and slightly above that of 1975 traffic. In the following two years 2007 and 2008, the passenger traffic saw a strong recovery with an annual growth rate ranging between 16% and
20%. This year’s traffic is expected to surpass 2008 traffic. It was reported that for the first 8 months of 2009 BRHIA recorded 3.3 million pax.; a 25% increase in passenger traffic compared to 2008 which recorded 2.6 million pax for the same time period with expectations that the number of passengers at the end of 2009 will exceed the 4.5 million passengers. If security and political situation remains stable in Lebanon, passenger traffic is expected to steadily increase based on historical trends. With a passenger building capacity of only 6 million a year, BRHIA may find itself short of terminal capacity in the very near future. Figure 1 illustrates the passenger traffic historical trend at BRHIA.

![Figure 1: Annual Pax. Traffic at BRHIA](image)

*Source: Central Administration for Statistics/Lebanon Civil Aviation Authority*

The historical growth trends in cargo at BRHIA are illustrated in Figure 2. Unlike passenger traffic, the volume of cargo handled at BRHIA did not see steady growth but rather frequently fluctuated during the last 12 years. This can be explained by the fact that cargo is more susceptible to economic and political changes than O/D local passenger traffic. However, records for the last two years and the first eight months of
2009 show that the volume of cargo handled is gaining momentum and is steadily increasing with total volume of the shipped cargo via the airport amounting to 47,221 tons in the first eight months of 2009, an increase of 9.6% compared with the same period last year. At the end of 2009, TMA, the Lebanese cargo airline which recently resumed operations covering Europe, Middle East, Africa and Far East; an additional factor which may contribute to larger volumes of cargo passing through BRHIA in the future years.

![Figure 2: Annual Cargo at BRHIA](image)

*Source: Central Administration for Statistics/Lebanon Civil Aviation Authority*

Similar to passenger traffic as can be seen in Figure 3, the aircraft movements (landing and take-off) saw a steady growth until 2004 after which started declining where in 2006 it plunged due to the July war. After 2006, aircraft movements grew rapidly at rates equals to 18.44% and 16% for 2007 and 2008 respectively. In 2009 and for the first eight months only, the total number of the operated flights via the airport Due to the lack of information on the peak hour conditions in the airport, an approximation was made to estimate the peak hour operations. Such estimation revealed a peak hour
demand of 15 to 18 OPS/HR. With the runways configuration and the natural terrain obstacles represented by the high mountains bordering the airport, the estimated runway capacity is around 50 OPS/HR under IFR conditions. Therefore, currently the runways at the airport have plenty of capacity and can handle increase in aircraft operation.

![Figure 3: Annual Aircraft Movements at BRHIA](image)

*Source: Central Administration for Statistics/Lebanon Civil Aviation Authority*

The backbone of the customer base of BRHIA is mainly composed of the local passengers, foreign visitors, tourists and Lebanese living abroad visiting Lebanon during the summer and to a lesser extent during holidays. This customer base forms the slashing majority of the passenger traffic. The share of transfer traffic is very negligible as can be seen in Figure 4. Despite the increase in traffic at BRHIA, transfer traffic is declining at an average rate of (-)30% between 2004 and 2008.
Term Project
Beirut Rafic Hariri International Airport: A Hub for the Middle East Once Again

Figure 4: Annual No. of Transfer Pax. at BRHIA

Source: Central Administration for Statistics/Lebanon Civil Aviation Authority

Presence of a Strong Airline: Building an airport without having a successful strong airline operating from it does not guarantee transforming it to a successful hub. An air service creates the dynamics of an airport. Since hub airlines are typically national carriers, it is quite natural to start by examining MEA’s standing. Before the civil war in Lebanon, MEA was a strong airline with its planes dominating the skies and Beirut International airport being the base of its operations. At the end of the civil war, the airline was burdened with heavy losses accumulated to $323 million at the end of 1997. In 1997 alone, the losses amounted to $87 million. The Central Bank of Lebanon stepped in and acquired 99% of the shares of the company. After which a three years restructuring plan started having in mind to privatize MEA. As a result, MEA rationalized its network by reducing the number of destinations from 34 to 22 destinations with 4 additional seasonal destinations, shed off 1400 employees, modernized its aircraft fleet and is always opting to utilize new technology in its operations and service such as the adoption of the complete payment and acquiring
solutions regarding on the counter operations, internet payment for online bookings, etc…. “In the expert circle, MEA is presumed to be one of the technological forerunners in the Middle East area.” [13] It currently operates direct scheduled flights to Europe, Middle East and Africa. The only published future plans for MEA is the expansion of its aircraft fleet to 16 planes, improved frequencies to existing destinations and the resumption of flights to Berlin and Baghdad, a historically important destination.[9] Currently MEA dominates the traffic at the airport with a share equaled to 35.61% in 2008 (see Figure 5). The airline is still focusing on building and modernizing itself where in 2007 MEA announced the increase of its capital to $367 million and the purchase of 10 Airbus aircraft (4 A330 and 6 A320). Despite the unstable economical, political and security situation in the world and the region, MEA was able to make a profit of $92 million in 2008. [9] MEA expressed its interest in becoming a SkyTeam associate member under Air France’s sponsorship in early 2006 at a press conference in New York. [14]

With all the improvements, still it is not clear whether MEA has plans to convert BRHIA into a hub. Just by looking at the passengers historical data (Figures 1 and 4), one can deduce that such a plan may not be the focus of MEA in the near future. The transfer traffic contributed to only 1% of total passenger traffic in 2008. BRHIA is obviously currently not a transfer hub for MEA but rather a focus city serving the Lebanese local market.

Such a reality opens the doors in front of other airlines for creating a transfer hub at BRHIA benefiting from its commercial and operational advantages, location, modern facilities, and capacity. Last summer, Air Arabia, a low cost carrier based in Sharjah
UAE, expressed interest in establishing a third hub between its two existing hubs in Sharjah and Casablanca. BRHIA was said to be the favorite location as it is ideally located between the two hubs, have abundant capacity and plans for expansion, balanced traffic demand from both Europe and the Arab Gulf countries which makes it an ideal hub to link these two markets. Such a notion will result in a network making Air Arabia directly compete with long haul carriers between Europe and MENA countries. [15] Unfortunately, in September 2009 despite all the earlier talk about preferring BRHIA, Air Arabia chose Egypt to host its third hub. [16]

In trying to analyze Air Arabia’s decision, one can only link it to the protection policy and air passenger transport exclusive rights given to MEA till year 2012 (more details under Government Policy). MEA is not privatized yet. It is still a state asset owned by the Central Bank of Lebanon. It is bringing profits to the government since it was restructured back in 2003. On November 12, 2009, the Minister of Transportation said to the Daily Star Newspaper that he is “thinking of how to keep protecting the national carrier after this date” i.e. year 2012.
Source: Central Administration for Statistics/Lebanon Civil Aviation Authority

Possibility for Expansion: The airport has ambitious plans for expansion to handle 16 million annual pax. in year 2035. In addition to increasing its passenger capacity, the expansion plans include a Free Zone, a four star airport hotel, cargo handling buildings, twelve hangars for the general aviation terminal and seven new gates to accommodate wide body aircraft including the A380. An economic feasibility study for the Free Zone and the A380 operations and its impact on the airport as well as general aviation activity projection is underway as part of the airport Development Plan.

These ambitious plans face a number of constraints. The first is the limited land for expansion. The land around the airport is almost fully developed. The airport is surrounded by heavily populated areas. Any expansion plan especially for the proposed Free Zone will include expropriation of land most probably the area falling between runways 16-34 and 17-35. Building a new passenger terminal or concourse to
increase the passenger handling capacity may involve relocating some airport facilities such as part of the cargo terminal in the east side of the airport or the airforce base in the west side. Second, the airport has constrained airspace. It is surrounded by high mountains from the east and north. Third, substantial improvements to the airfield and terminal building will be necessary to receive the A380 such as widening at least one runway, selected taxiways, taxiway intersections, increase separation distances between runway and its parallel taxiway and secure an aircraft stand large enough for the A380 to park.

In addition to BRHIA expansion plans the Government is studying the development of the Quleaat Airport and Free Zone in the North and Riyak Airport and Free Zone in the East.

*Government Policy:* After the Israeli commando on the airport in 1968, the Lebanese government gave MEA the exclusive rights for passenger air transport until 1989 and was consequently renewed until 2012. [2] In the late 1990’s, the Government started a campaign to liberalize air transport and remove the restrictions on foreign carriers. In year 2000, it adopted the “open skies” policy which lifted restrictions on aircraft capacity and frequencies relating to Third, Fourth and Fifth Freedom traffic rights with objective to increase air passengers and cargo to help improving the national economy. [10] In addition to open skies policy, the government launched a restructuring and reforming plan of MEA to prepare for its privatization, approved market access to all airlines and the licensing of new charter airlines, approved the new civil aviation bill by separating the regulatory body from the airport operation body and reduced airport charges by a third. [11]
Since then, Lebanon has signed a number of bilateral agreements with UAE, Malaysia and Bahrain. Lebanon and the EU concluded the negotiations and were about to sign an open skies agreement that “will open the airspace in Lebanon and Europe to all airlines” as the Director General of Civil Aviation in Lebanon told reporters in November 9, 2004. MEA objected on the agreement in order to maintain the government protection that was endowed onto it through its exclusive rights for air passenger transport justifying its objection by unequal treatment meaning it is suffering from not being allowed to enter into some European and Arab domestic markets. [12] As a result no new agreements were signed.

It is not easy to assess the “open skies” policy which is now nine years old because of the political and security instability represented by the July war and the paralysis that hit Lebanon’s political life in the last five years. The increase in passenger traffic in the last two years is attributed mainly to the influx of Arab tourists and Lebanese immigrants and to a lesser extent to Europeans. [10]

6. Conclusions

The basic economic structure of Lebanon is based on a long tradition of free market economy which makes it attractive to local and foreign investment and businesses in addition to a rich historical and cultural heritage that attracts tourists from all over the world. However, Lebanon’s complicated political structure and the security instability in the region have severe impact on its aviation sector which will always be considered a “Disrupted Venture”. [17] This fact frequently keeps key international players out of the Lebanese market.
If we assume that the nation lives in relative peace, then BRHIA has the potential of becoming a successful regional hub once again serving the tourism industry, the business interests throughout the Middle East and the large Lebanese Diaspora. [17] However, it may not serve as a transfer hub in the near future despite the technical attractive characteristics that it has in terms of location, modern infrastructure and facilities, abundant capacity and modern liberalization laws. It needs a strong airline able to compete in a fierce regulated and subsidized market that is willing to convert it into a transfer hub. Based on the few MEA’s published plans for expansion and the almost negligible transfer passengers that they carry, it is not evident that MEA will be the strong airline at BRHIA in the future. In addition to the strong airline, there should be the political will and commitment to enforce the liberalization laws in order to promote competition at the airport. This can be achieved by lifting MEA’s exclusive rights to transportation of air passengers and eliminating the monopoly at the airport. However before doing this, the government shall ensure that MEA is equally treated on the principle of “treatment in kind” so that MEA will not suffer from entering other European and Arab countries local markets. Special attention shall be given to the expansion plans as the airport is already constrained in land as well as airspace.

In conclusion, the window of opportunity is open but needs stable political and security situation and the will to implement the reform laws.
Term Project
Beirut Rafic Hariri International Airport: A Hub for the Middle East Once Again

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Term Project
Beirut Rafic Hariri International Airport: A Hub for the Middle East Once Again

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