

**THE MARONITES AND THE BEGINNING OF THE
CIVIL WAR IN LEBANON (1975-1976)**

**Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University in partial
fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the degree of**

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY



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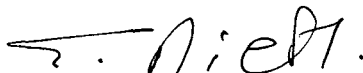
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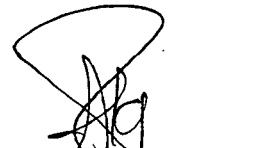
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We recommend this Dissertation to be placed before the examiners for evaluation.


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To

My Loving Family

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Tsupokyemla

Glossary of Abbreviations Used

| | |
|--------------|---|
| INM | Independent Nasserite Movement |
| LAA | Lebanon Arab Army |
| LF | Lebanese Front |
| LNMI | Lebanese National Movement |
| NM | National Movement |
| NUF | National Union Front |
| PDFLP | Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine |
| PFLP | Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine |
| PLO | Palestine Liberation Organisation |
| PPS | <i>Paarti Populaire Syrien</i> |
| SSNP | Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party |
| UAR | United Arab Republic |

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CHAPTER I

Chapter I

Introduction

Lebanon is a small, Levantine state located on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean, suffering at present, from internal disorder and before from the military encroachments of Palestinians, Syrians, and Israelis. The residue of its most recent period of civil war-proxy militias caught in a syndrome of attack and reprisal, occupation forces on patrol, and politicians retreating to separate communities – has left the state in a condition of incoherence and dependence. At present the Lebanese are beginning to recover from fifteen years of civil war and are attempting to rebuild their country.

During the past two decades, the Lebanese have experienced a terrible time; civil war; military intervention; occupation; and the interminable bloodletting of snipers, assassins and car bombers. From the 1830s to the 1860s, the people of an even smaller jurisdiction than the present Republic were periodically embroiled in domestic turmoil combined with external intervention. A half century later, their descendants experienced blockade, starvation and invasion during the First World War, at which time their Turkish rulers were replaced by the French. They were subjected once again to violence and military intervention during the Second World War when the French were forced to exit and the independent republic was established. Major upheavals – the Nasser-Chamoun struggle in 1958, the bitter civil war of 1975-76, the Syrian intervention and bombardment in 1977, the Israeli invasions of 1978 and 1982, and the continued limbo – have since shaken the Lebanese and nearly deprived them of their state. With so many

factions commanding firepower, with so many different levels of politics, local, regional, and international, being played through Lebanon; it indeed was burned to ashes for a period of time.

Lebanon is one of the most unusual states in the world. It is a conglomeration of paradoxes and contradictions. Since it became independent of France in 1943, it has struggled from one crisis to another. The heterogeneous nature of Lebanon with distinct history has made Lebanon a unique country.

This study attempts to understand the root cause of disharmony and whether the Lebanese state arose out of a genuine national movement with its own goals and aspirations or whether it was created artificially to serve French colonial interests, and to understand the strategic evolution of the conflict in 1975, both internally and externally.

Lebanon is divided, historically, along sectarian, regional and family lines. Not only is there chronic suspicion between Christians and non-Christians; there is also incessant rivalry among the various sects within each of the two religions. Local communalism antedates the establishment of the present territorial entity in 1920 by the French, and even today there is tangible cultural distance between the people of the three outlying provinces (North Lebanon, the Bi'qa, and South Lebanon), which were grafted onto traditional Christian Mount Lebanon by the French Mandatory. No sect or region, or family coalition commands a majority of the population; in fact it cannot be scientifically or legally ascertained whether Christians or non-Christians predominate in the contemporary Lebanese state.

The political system in Lebanon embodies a confusion of elements that render it extremely difficult to classify according to the usual typologies. Lebanon is a democracy,

but it is also an oligarchy. Reform movements are as routine as corruption. Cabinet crisis are chronic. The party system is feeble, yet public opinion is politically volatile.

It is understandable, therefore, that the student of Lebanese politics should look away from single-nation models in search of a theory that will explain the Lebanese situation. The field of international politics offers a model that seems to explain the Lebanese political situation: the classical balance-of-power system. In Lebanon, as in the international system, there is no ultimate arbiter of conflict and no monopoly of the instruments of force. This observation may seem strange drawn from a state that possesses full legal sovereignty, international recognition, and a modern army, and police force. The fact remains, however, that central government control is a tenuous thing, dependent on the agreement of powerful local leaders who themselves command sizable deterrent forces and who can take advantage of certain geographical, cultural, and historical conditions to assert their autonomy if their interests are threatened. Furthermore, in Lebanon, as in the international system, there are several actors; none of whom is strong to control the entire system.

The balancing process is observable at four levels: sectarian, regional, personal, and institutional. In a society divided almost equally between Christian and Muslim inhabitants and subdivided along sectarian lines within each religion, Lebanon's domestic tranquility is based upon a perpetual stand-off among the sects. If, in the normal course of politics, one sect demands and receives additional representation in the Cabinet, other sects will demand it too, resulting in either an enlarged Cabinet or withdrawal of the original sect's advantage.

At the level of notables and personalities, the balancing process is clearest. Lebanon's intricate clique politics are reminiscent of eighteenth-century England, characterised as they are by alliance building on the part of semi autonomous personages. One alliance will call into being a counter alliance, as there are enough families with varying degree of power and ambition in any region to coalesce against the dominant group. The electoral process, at both the municipal and the parliamentary levels, simply legitimizes and institutionalises this struggle. A prominent example of the balance-of-power struggle among notables occurs in the Druze community between the leaders of two traditional factions.; it has not only involved the enlistment of other notables on each side but has also used British-French rivalry, Arab-Lebanese tension, and even the conflict between capitalism and socialism.

It is the institutional level, however, that the most spectacular balance-of-power plays of recent years have occurred. The president of the republic has been striving constantly to enhance his power at the expense of other institutions. On two occasions, in 1952 and 1958, such assertions have triggered countermoves by an alliance of parliamentarians and notables with the army.

It will be noted that the main actors in the balance-of-power system may be classified as parochial rather than as modern and that even those, like President and Parliament, that carry no parochial titles are operating essentially from communal power bases. Nor will it escape the attentive eye why the successful Lebanese politician is pragmatic and unfettered by ideology or program. The logic of the balance-of power situation requires him to be flexible above all, to make and break alliances with a minimum of

embarrassment, and to promote his self-interest, which is tied with traditional bonds to the interest of his local constituency.

One of the most inextricable cases is the Lebanese labyrinth in which religion, identity culture, and many other factors melt into a multidimensional crisis, where the claims and even identification of those behind them are not easily discerned.¹ In reality the War of Lebanon can be traced to specific occurrences in history. Functional approach to Lebanon's conflict may shed some light in two ways. First analysis should include a review of the internal structure of the conflict. Next, one must examine the closely related external structure of the conflict. These perspectives reveal that the fundamental causal explanations of the war reside in permanent factors related to history, religion, ethnicity, and nationality. "Ethnic affiliation" indicates the intermingled religious-nationalist identity of the various Lebanese groups. Paul Starr wrote in this regard that "because of the ascribed nature of sectarian identities in the Middle East, and because the members of religious groups consider themselves alike due to their common ancestry and are so regarded by others, then terms 'ethnic group' and 'ethnic identity' will be used."²

The Lebanese conflict (historical and modern) is an ethnic conflict that pits two major national-religious groups, the Christian and the Muslim communities, against each other. This assertion is widely accepted despite external factors. Enver Khoury, a political scientist, writes that "the primary divisions in Lebanon are along religious lines. Sectarian

¹ See for example Hanna Kassis's formulation of the Lebanese case complexity in his article "Religious Ethnicity in the World of Islam: The Case of Lebanon," *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 6, No. 2, (1985), 222-223.

² Paul Starr, "Ethnic Categories and Identification in Lebanon," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 7, No.1, (April, 1978).

feelings are intense.”³ Since Lebanon’s independence in 1943, political tensions and crisis mounted with increased confrontations over issues like Arab League membership in 1945 or the onset of Arab-Israeli conflict in 1948. The first armed internal conflict erupted in 1958 between those backing Arab Nationalism (embodied by Egyptian President Nasser) and those who saw themselves as part of the West, in alliance with France and Great Britain. Other clashes were spurred by the presence of Palestinian guerrillas from 1968 through 1973. By far the largest conflict occurred in the mid-seventies, with the onset of full-scale internecine warfare.

In the context of this confrontation, the Lebanese Christians proffered what to the West was a new articulation of their political agenda. Harold Vocke described the Lebanese Christians as “endangered community.” In reality the new claim was a resurgence of past revindication, expressed by the nebulous groups of the “Lebanese Christian resistance.”⁴

Lebanon is one of the lucid examples of a conflict with an undeniable connection to its historical background. The historical roots of the Lebanese Christian resistance begins in Lebanon, in the middle of the seventh century, with the formation of a local resistance to the Arab invasion in the area known as Mount Lebanon. In one of the conflict’s major actors, the Christian community, one finds preceding political behaviour and a perception of the future largely based on preceding centuries.

³ In *The Crisis in the Lebanese System*, (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1976).

⁴ In Harold Vocke, *The Lebanese War: Its Origins and Political Dimensions*, (New York: St Martin Press, 1979).

Since the eruption of conflict in Lebanon in 1975, the Christians have actively demonstrated their attachment to their identity and the unique position they have held in Lebanon and the region.

CHAPTER II

Chapter II

Fractured Political Setup of Lebanon

1. The Beginning

The history of Lebanon's recurring problem has been one of discord and civil war generated not only from within by socio-economic and religious friction but also, to a corresponding measure by regional tension and international intrusions. The problem of Mount Lebanon, the area in which it was geographically confined during the 19th century became a source of contention between France and Britain as a result of the Syrian Wars of the 1830's and the ensuing Levant crisis of 1840-1.

France and Britain were on the verge of clashing over the promotion of their interests for domination of the economically and strategically important eastern Mediterranean lands, of which the mountain formed a part. In evidently therefore France and Britain came to be similarly deployed in the fractious confrontations of the Maronite and Druze communities of Lebanon. Thereafter the opposition of French and British interest in West Asia remained a major aspect of the Lebanese problem. The two European countries in their own imperialist dispositions and conquest around West Asia during the 19th and 20th century contributed to the shuffle by carving and reorganising a number of countries or other administrative configurations out of the Ottoman Empire.¹

¹ See John.P.Spagnolo, "British and France Rivalry over Lebanon", in Nadim Shehadi and Dana Haffar Mills, ed., *Lebanon: A History of Conflict and Consensus* (London: I.B.Tauris and Co.Limited, 1988), p.13.

French and Britian's Interests in Lebanon

The operation of Franco- British relations in the affairs of Lebanon was a function of the involvement of two powers in the eastern question. The question was raised by the uncertain fate of the Porte's imperial hegemony threatened by heightened tensions in the varied social composition and administrative organisations of the Ottoman Empire, the effects of which were reflected in Lebanon. In Lebanon as elsewhere the various elements of the Ottoman mosaic of semi autonomous communal organisations and regional administrations maintained a delicately balanced coexistence over which the Ottoman Porte exercised a centralising influence that often amounted to little more than loose hegemony. The success of the Porte therefore, in holding this empire together over the centuries had depended on its regulation of centripetal and centrifugal socio-economic and religious forces that, depending on prevailing local circumstances, tended to bring different communities together or drive them apart. The Ottomans presided over not only a balance of regional administrations, but also a balance of communal interests. Consequently, when the European powers included the affairs of the weakened Ottoman Empire in their foreign policy calculations, they were, by nature of things, forced to address themselves both to the whole and to its parts, to the centre and to the periphery. Of course, in dealing with the prevailing structural tensions in the Ottoman dominions, they tried to contrive differently apportioned accommodations, favouring the inner core or parts of its outer layers, as best suited their current interests in upholding or dermining the situation of the Ottomans, or in steering a course between the two alternatives.²

² For an examination of the historical record, see Marwan Buheiry, "External Interventions and Internal wars in Lebanon: 1770-1982", in Lawrenc I. Conrad, ed., *The Formation and Perception of the Modern Arab World Studies* by Marwan R. Buheiry (Princeton, 1989).

From the time of the wars of Francis I and the Hapsburgs, early in the 18 century, the French welcomed the involvement of the Ottoman Empire in the European balance of power against their common enemy. They perceived it in their interests to court the friendship of the Porte even though they were betraying an obligation they themselves believed to have inherited from the crusades of warring against Islam for the sake of Christendom and its holy places. During their initial involvement with the interplay of institutions and peoples that made up the ottoman mosaic, France's general attitude was to maintain good political relations with the Porte and to develop a substantial interest in the commerce of the empire. The application of its influence to the pursuit of regional interests in this instance, Christian policy for Lebanon, took on a real, but secondary importance.

France's diminished status in the hierarchy of European powers at the conclusion of the Napoleonic wars produced commensurable effects on the continuity of French policy with lasting repercussions on the affairs of Lebanon. Defeat imposed constraints on both the character of French's relative situation to Britain. The British having taken pains to cripple Bonaparte's Egyptian expedition accorded him the backhanded compliment of investing West Asia with a geopolitical importance that they above, all others, would later hold to be axiomatic. Having stolen the march on France they were able to follow up this advantage with political influence at the Porte, and a broadly based economic presence in the West Asia- assets against which the French were forced thereafter to measure themselves.

The particular nature of the Ottoman-governed mosaic of regions and societies, with a built-in potential for polarisations, was becoming susceptible to changes³. It is not surprising that the British and the French were both preoccupied in the eastern Mediterranean with the fate of the Asiatic and African provinces of Ottoman Empire. During the greater half of the 19th century the advantages the British enjoyed inclined them towards the preservation of the status quo in the Ottoman Empire. The Porte was able to benefit from their espousal of its rights to the control of the Straits and the shorter land and sea routes to India, if not always under its direct administration, then at least within its hegemony. However the French were interested in exploring what benefits could be gained from their connections with centres of change that could offer a counterweight to ottoman authority in the very regions Britain had come to prize. Through their contacts with the Maronites and other smaller communities in Lebanon, the French were associated with a region of increased activity where education, demographic change and commerce were leading to a redistribution of merchants, and even peasants were in different ways challenging the established socio-economic order of land based notables. Nevertheless in the brief period before Britain and the Concert of Europe acted to help, the Porte expelled the Egyptian forces from Lebanon and its Syrian environs; the French demonstrated a marked degree of continuity in giving preference to their “greater interests”⁴ in Egypt over their lesser one in Lebanon. In the event the British helped the Lebanese revolt with their own forces to steal once again the march on France, particularly when they forged links with the Druzes so also constraining French influence

³ Spagnolo, n.1., p.38.

⁴ Edward E. Azar, “Lebanon and its Political Culture: Conflict and Integration in Lebanon”, in Edward E. Azar, Paul A. Jureidini, R.D. McLaurin, ed., *The Emergence of a New Lebanon. Fantasy or Reality*, (New York, Praeger Publishers, 1984), p.29.

in Mount Lebanon. The Levant crisis of 1840-1 left the French in such disarray that in their eyes the Maronites, with whom they had belatedly patched up relations, assumed the importance of a fall-back position whose interests they could now little afford to ignore. The two powers had neutralised each other, however by the same token helped deprive it of any government strong enough to deal with internal communal tensions accompanying the incongruous effects of change. France was mindful of the constraints the British imposed on its actions in Lebanon through the protection of its Druze allies. The compromises resulting from this accommodating stand off gave the mountain a constitutional settlement that, in time, proved to be a hallmark, albeit controversial of the Lebanese system of government.

The flexibility of France's Lebanese policy was short lived. The conditions governing its management of the Lebanese problem were irreversibly changed when the second empire collapsed in 1870 before the German onslaught. Therefore up to 1945, the preoccupation of the French with German produced a circuitous chain of consequences that both rekindled Franco- British rivalry and complicated the affairs of Lebanon. France's European preoccupation left it at a permanent strategic and geopolitical disadvantage in the eastern Mediterranean upon which the British naturally, if at times unintentionally, capitalised. This was unfortunate for French who remained handicapped throughout the closing half century of ottoman history and the First World War, a critical time for aspiring heirs to Ottoman hegemony in the eastern Mediterranean.

Phenomenal changes like the Bulgarian massacres and the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-78 favoured the position of the British. The British responded by arranging for the occupation of the Cyprus and in 1882 they also occupied Egypt where the strategically

situated Suez Canal was rapidly becoming Britain's major interest in the eastern Mediterranean. The British occupation of these two ottoman provinces, important in the history of imperialism for helping to trigger the 'scramble' for Africa was also a notable spur to French interests in the Arab east, the partition of which by the allied rivals after the First World War added new dimensions to the Lebanese problem.⁵

In the 1870's the only likely alternative to France's 'greater' ottoman interest remained its much 'lesser' presence in Lebanon, which the French were now determined to preserve at all costs. It heightened a sense of urgency among the French in their links with the Maronites reminiscent of the early 1840s after the Levant crisis. A special prepared contingency proposal even suggested that Mount Lebanon was the fortress from which in the event of the Porte's collapse French forces could be expected to uphold France's claim to its rightful share of the ottoman legacy against rivals. This claim was also to become the justification for a sphere of influence vaguely defined geographically as 'Syria'.⁶ It extended from the emerging commercial centres of the ottoman coastal province of Beirut across the mountain into the two Syrian provinces of Damascus and Aleppo.

The fragility of French claims to the Lebanon and Syria became the most serious problem for Franco-British relations in West Asia, despite the fact that Germany's threatening pre-eminence in the ranks of the great powers brought the two veteran empires together in the 1904 entente and that in 1912 the British conceded France's publicised claim to a zone of influence in Lebanon and Syria.⁷ On the eve of the First

⁵ Kamal, Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions: The History of Lebanon Reconsidered*, (London: I.B.Tauris and Co.Ltd., 1988), p.232

⁶ David C. Gordon, *Lebanon the Fragmented Nation* (London: 1980), p.19.

⁷ n.6., p.22.

World War, warning signs of trouble was Britain's growing dependence on its Veiled protectorate in Egypt to sustain its presence in the eastern Mediterranean after it found itself in the unaccustomed position of sharing influence at the Porte with Germany as a lesser among equals. For the French this was a worrisome form of sub-imperialist threat. French fears were compounded by the example of Britain's informal government of Egypt which enabled the British to carry influence in Syria uncluttered by anything as restrictive as France's catholic policy or its North African colonial reputation.

Egypt's reawakening interest in its Arab identity, and its multifaceted links to the Syrian Arabs, offered the British some useful indicators of the prevailing direction of political activity in their rival's backyard. The entente notwithstanding a contest of views repeating the same flaws became by the eve of the First World War, the single imperial circumstances which carried Franco British rivalry to its twentieth-century climax.

France was initially encouraged by their assurances in the Sykes-Picot agreement (1916), on the partition of the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire, of an equitable division of the spoils but by the end of the war, execution of the document already more often breached than observed, seemed altogether threatened by Britain's pervasive military presence in West Asia. Consequently when the war incapacitated the Porte and made the age-old determinants of the eastern question void, regenerating them, Britain was already there before the French exercising then law of possession. Britain substituted a greater Arab interest in its management of the Lebanese problem to its earlier Ottoman interest. The political and social geography of the twentieth century Lebanon and the initial stage of its independent existence were conditioned by even deeper rifts in Franco-British relations. These confrontations became inevitable after Britain's Arab interest was first

superimposed over France's remaining zone of influence. France with its eyes firmly fixed on Europe was ill prepared to assume authority in Lebanon and Syria when Britain with help from the Hashemite led Arab revolt occupied the region.⁸ In the wake of the retreating ottoman forces the British and the Hashemite made a way for the recasting of Syrian and Lebanese political constituencies favourable to Arab activity into a Syrian arable nationalist movement aspiring to get independence that was even more minimal to French interest than previously. France was able to deny the option of a higher degree of integration of the mountain with its Syrian social and geographical environment. This was when it had obtained from Britain its minimum demands of assistance in occupying Beirut, the Levant coast and Mount Lebanon.

The period between 1920 and 1926 witnessed a clear difference between Muslim and Christian attitudes towards the establishment of the new entity. Since the annexation by the French of four provinces (Beirut, Bi'qa, Akkar, and jabal-a'mel) to Mount Lebanon, the Muslim population of these areas resisted integration to the new state. Despite the declaration of greater Lebanon on 1 September, 1920, and the establishment of a local Lebanese administration under the auspices of the French mandate, most of the muslim leadership boycotted the French backed bureaucracy. Kamal Salibi wrote: "when in 1920 the Lebanese territory was enlarged in order to include the regions of the littoral and the inland adjacent to Mount Lebanon, the Muslim majority of the annexed regions opposed the annexation and refused to accept it as a final arrangement."⁹

⁸ Abdo I. Baaklini, *Legislative and Political Development: Lebanon, 1842-1972*. (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1976).

⁹ Kamal Salibi, *History of Modern Lebanon*, (New York: Caravan Books, 1977), p.210.

It thus remained for many years almost exclusively controlled by Christians. The traditional Sunni political families remained attached to the mainstream Syrian movement, fundamentally opposed to French rule and the Christians who they felt were their "local Christian surrogates".¹⁰ By opposing the new realities, the Muslim political forces did not contribute to the internationally recognised entity and remained excluded from the building of the state.

Some of Lebanon's Muslim communities moreover associated their struggle with that of the Arab nationalist movement in Syria. Muslims from Lebanon supported Arab uprisings in the Syrian mainland, and Arab nationalists from Syria often infiltrated Lebanon to wage guerrilla warfare with locals against the mandate (and the Christians). The peak of Lebanon's Muslim communities' involvement in anti-French, anti-greater Lebanon activities was during the great Syrian revolt in 1925, known as Al-thawra as-Suriya al-Kubra. Extending a large military uprising launched in various Syrian provinces, mainly in the Jabal al-Duruz, Druze and other nationalist forces crossed the borders into then Bekaa and southern Lebanon, participated in ambushes against French units, and raided many Christian villages in the area.¹¹ In sum, since the early twenties, many of the Muslims of Lebanon, along with their Syrian brethren, was in a situation of open war against a Christian-dominated Lebanon and the French mandate.

The major revindication of the Muslims in Lebanon was the reunion with Syria. They called for a detachment of the four districts from Mount Lebanon and their union with the hinterland. The Muslims' fears were based on the threat that a Christian-

¹⁰ Walid Phares, *Lebanese Christian Nationalism*, (London, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1995), p.79.

¹¹ Salibi, n.9., p.212.

dominated Lebanon would compel its Muslim population to sever its natural ties with the Arab Muslim world and make them second-class citizens.

In Lebanon, leaders across the political spectrum concentrated their efforts in two directions. Many Lebanese preferred a French protectorate. The famous King-Crane Commission formed by the U.S government to inquire about the attitude of the various Lebanese communities toward the future of Lebanon, concluded that the majority of the Christian communities, regardless of their different nuances, wanted a separate Lebanese entity- an independent Lebanese state- and rejected any form of Arab hegemony or union with Syria.¹² In the case of a mandate, the Maronites and other catholic communities preferred the French presence for religious, cultural, and economic reasons.

In reality, it was the economic factor that was behind the historical argument. On the one hand, the memory of starvation during the First World War, which decimated one-third of the population, pushed the leadership and the Maronite church, in particular, to ask for additional agricultural lands to be added to the proposed Lebanese borders. On the other hand the Christian financial elites and the entrepreneurs of Mount Lebanon and Beirut argued that an independent state would need ports and urban trading centres to ensure the economic survival of a modern Lebanon. Politically, despite the demographic shifts a large Muslim population would bring the Maronite leadership and assumed that the cultural and political superiority of their community would maintain a Christian dominance in the country. The presence of the French and their role as a world power

¹²See "Confidential Appendix to the Report on Syria", *The King-Crane Commission*, Volume XII, (1920) and John P. Spagnolo, *France and Ottoman Lebanon*, (London: Ithaca Press, 1977), chapters 9 and 10.

reinforced that attitude. The victory over Arab nationalist at Mayssaloun, moreover, strengthened this conviction.¹³

Although most of the Lebanese national movements opted for a larger Lebanon, a minority continued to argue for a smaller Lebanon. Their arguments were articulated around demographic realities. An extension of territories with dense Muslim populations would inevitably change the nature of Lebanon's identity. At the political level shortly after the declaration of greater Lebanon in 1920, Christian leaders and French officials were confronted with a hard-line Muslim attitude calling for unity with Syria and a struggle against the French mandate. In spite of a French proposal during 1922 and 1923 to detach the Sunni city of Tripoli from the newly declared state of Lebanon, the Christian dominant class and the Maronite patriarchate remained strongly attached to "each inch" of greater Lebanon. Later, sources affirmed that the patriarch's militancy for the annexation of predominantly Muslim areas to Mount Lebanon was generated by the fact that many high-ranking authorities in the Maronite church possessed large agricultural lands in the added territories.¹⁴

The way to independence for the Lebanese was cleared when Franco-British relations reached the nadir in the Second World War. When Germany occupied France, the French were helpless to prevent the British from taking advantage for the last time of the extreme distortions in their relationship. During the Second World War after the Vichy Frenchmen in the Levant had given vent to their long simmering enmity towards Britain in the eastern Mediterranean and while the Free French who had helped liberate Lebanon and Syria were at the mercy of British assistance, in November 1943 Britain

¹³ Baaklini, n. 8. p.132.

¹⁴ Phares, n. 10., p.72.

took the unusual step of issuing the French with an ultimatum. The French were forced to take steps that would lead them to recognise the independence of Lebanon and by 1945 abandoned their last and 'lesser' West Asia interest in Lebanon and Syria for the benefit of what remain they hoped would be its 'greater' Arab interest.

2. Legacy of the Rulers: The National Pact

While the First World War had established France in the Levant, the Second World War accelerated the anti-imperialist process and terminated the French presence in Syria and Lebanon. It was the British representative Edward Spears who brokered the Christian-Muslim agreement for the distribution of parliamentary seats, paving the way for the elections held in August 1943. This agreement provided the framework for the National Pact (Mithaq al-Watani) that constituted the basis for the coexistence of the two major religious groups in an independent Lebanese republic. The National Pact may not have materialised had it not been for external involvement and encouragement for both Lebanese parties. As alluded to in his memoirs, Bechara al-Khoury (a Maronite Christian) sought and received Syrian and Egyptian encouragement to pursue independence for a pro-Arab Lebanon.¹⁵

Riyad al-Sulh (a Sunni Muslim), on the other hand, was one of the few prominent Muslim politicians to advocate cooperation with Lebanon's Christians against the French and expressed support for an independent Lebanon in late 1943. He was the first to use the expression 'Lebanon's Arab face'¹⁶ in acknowledging support for independence.

¹⁵ Caroline Attie, *Struggle in the Levant*, (London: I.B.Tauris, 2004). p.27.

¹⁶ George Qaram, "The Lebanese Civil War in Perspective," *The Jerusalem Quarterly*, No. 12, Summer 1979.

While the pact provided a formula for political cooperation among Lebanon's different confessional leaders, it was not an instrument of integration nor was it meant to foster a sense of national identity. In fact, it constituted recognition of Lebanon's pluralistic society, and reflected the influence of the political thinker and architect of the Lebanese constitution, Michel Chiha, who was the brother-in-law of Bishara al-Khoury. Chiha proposed a political system that maintained the existing differences of Lebanon's confessional communities within a unified political framework. According to Chiha, 'Lebanon is a country of associated confessional minorities. All minorities must find their place there and obtain their rights. That is the *raison de'être* for this country and is its uniqueness'.¹⁷ Fully aware of this situation, two Lebanese leaders, Bishara al-Khoury and Riyad al-Solh drafted the National Pact of 1943 with the help of the British.

The National Pact institutionalised a distribution of political power along confessional lines, based on each group's proportional size in the census of 1932 which found that Christians to be a majority and Muslims a minority. Thus the president would always be a Maronite Christian, the prime minister a Sunni Muslim, the speaker of the chamber of deputies a Shi'a Muslim and the deputy speaker a Greek orthodox Christian. The ministry of foreign affairs went to Greek orthodox and the ministry of defence to a Druze. Similarly representation in the parliament and in the cabinet was allocated along confessional lines-six Christians for every five Muslims.

The system was designed in large part to alleviate Christian fears that their regional minority status would somehow impinge on their historical national majority

¹⁷Nadim Shehadi, "The Idea of Lebanon: Economy and State in the Cenacle Libanais 1946-54," in Caroline Attie, n.15.

status in Lebanon. In return for some advantages in internal affairs the Christian agreed to membership in the Arab community with special reservations.

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The National Pact is neither a single written document nor a well-defined agreement. It is merely a number of guidelines found in the speeches of Bishara (1947) and the first ministerial statement prepared by Riadh when his cabinet received the unanimous vote of confidence of the parliament. There is no mention in the ministerial statement or the speeches about the sectarian distribution of the offices of the government, or the distribution of the members of the chamber or the various sects. Yet, the mechanics of this sectarian distribution became the essence and the core of the political manifestations of the national pact and the main subject of controversy between its supporters and critics.¹⁸ The only time it mentions sectarianism is when it rejects the spirit of sectarianism as being detrimental to national unity and solidarity. They aimed to eradicate sectarianism since it obstructs national development and destroys the good name of Lebanon at the international level. Furthermore it poisons the relationship among the various spiritual groups, which constitute Lebanon.

What is and was debated is the nature of the political system that can combat the spirit of sectarianism and the nature of the political system that the ministerial statement called for. Regardless of which system was called for in the ministerial statement, the controversy continues around the motives of establishing such a system and the interests such a system came to serve.

¹⁸ For a study of the National Pact, see Frid el-Khazen, "The Communal Pact of National Identities: The Making and Politics of the 1943 National Pact," October 1991, *Papers on Lebanon*, no.12, Centre for Lebanese Studies (Oxford), p.29.



The other principles of the National Pact as enunciated by the ministerial statement and the al-Khouri's speeches and declarations are less controversial than the sectarian issue. These principles include the complete independence of Lebanon under the constitution with the chamber of deputies representing the people as the final authority in the country. It called for close cooperation with the other Arab countries that should be assured of the good intentions of an independent Lebanon as an ally. It also called for closer ties with the West, particularly France, Great Britain and the United States.

One important point that the National Pact cautiously avoids is the question of nationalism. There is no mention of a distinct Lebanese nationalism. The emphasis was placed on an independent Lebanese country (watan,) on a system of government (an-nizam), on a geographical political entity (kiyan) and not on Lebanese nationalism. Stressing the Arab face, character and history of Lebanon dismissed the question on nationalism; a move intended to satisfy the pro-Arab Muslim segment of the population. Whatever the national pact really meant to al-Khouri or to al-Solh, since 1943 a system of government allegedly embodying its general and vague principles has come into existence. As one scholar succinctly noted, the pact was based on the faulty assumption that 'the balance of power in the region would remain unchanged in the sense that it will always reflect the value system of the first generation of conservative pro-western Arab nationalist.'¹⁹

¹⁹ Charles Winslow, *Lebanon: War and Politics in a Fragmented Society*. (London: Routledge, 1996). p.85.

The major flaw of the national pact of 1943 was that it did not consider whether intentionally or otherwise what should be done in the event of a change in the proportional balance in the country.

Would demographic change determine the distribution of power? These questions have been so sensitive that no official census has been taken since 1932 and no doctrine has been developed to address the matter of this Christian fear.

Related to these issues is the problem of “representatives”. Does the president represent his nation or his religious community? Does the prime minister represent the Sunni interests or those of the whole country including the Maronites and the Druze?

And what about members of parliament –how do they vote when an issue hurts their community but serves the national interests? The conflict between serving as a representative of one’s religious group and serving as a representative of one’s national district, combined with the high priority placed on the preservation of a government by consensus has had paralyzing effects.

3. Test of the Pact

The first major crisis to threaten the existence of the Lebanese state erupted in 1958, under the combined pressure of domestic and regional developments. There were three major episodes shaking West Asia between 1956 and 1958. These were the Suez crisis 1956, the Eisenhower Doctrine initiated in 1957, and the formation of the United Arab Republic in 1958. In each of these episodes, the Lebanese government felt vulnerable to dangers from both inside and outside the country. The upsurge of messianic Pan-Arab nationalism under the leadership of Gamal Abdel Nasser set the regional scene for the

explosion. Nasserism offered an external focus of loyalty for Lebanon's Muslims, to the detriment of their attachment of the Lebanese state. Nasser's international stature developed rapidly after he negotiated the British withdrawal from the Canal Zone in 1954, bought arms from the Soviet Bloc in 1955, attended the Bandung Conference as a neutralist the same year, and then seized the Suez Canal in 1956. President Camille Chamoun experienced a shock in 1954 when a shipment of Eastern Bloc tanks destined for Damascus was unloaded in Beirut. The Syrian radicals then received more tanks than were "officially" placed under Soviet protection in 1955. Egypt received Czech arms at that time, and Nasser's policies began to loom large as an Arab, not merely an Egyptian cause.²⁰ These dramas placed President Chamoun on the cusp between Arabism and Lebanonism. In an emergency conference called by Chamoun himself, he managed to call for Arab solidarity and at the same time avoided breaking off relations with either Britain or France. When Britain and France invaded Egypt in 1956, Chamoun refused to sever diplomatic relations with the two European powers. The rulers of Lebanon, Nasser declared later, "stabbed us in the back during our time of stress."²¹ This move had repercussions leading to the resignation of two Sunni ministers, Sa'ib Salam and Abdullah al-Yafi, which brought down the government. This was a course of action they had promised to take if the President tried to get through the crisis without breaking relations with the Britain and France.

The merger of Syria and Egypt into the United Arab Republic (UAR) under the leadership of Nasser resulted in two opposing reactions in Lebanon. Among the majority of Muslims, the merger was cheered as constituting the dawn of Arab unity. Nasser,

²⁰ Winslow, n. 19, pp.112-5.

²¹ Attie, n. 15, pp78-79.

moreover, was identified as an idol and his pictures were displayed in all public places. Among the Christians, on the other hand, the UAR was conceived as a threat to the existence of Lebanon. It was feared that the UAR was planning to annex Lebanon and that Muslim elements were working towards this goal. In this context, it was noted, “the old dormant spectre of ‘Christians in a sea of Muslims’ was revived”.²² Chamoun, in the last three years of his rule, was faced with increasing difficulty in maintaining the traditional Lebanese policy of neutrality in inter-Arab politics. He was under pressure to align his policy with that of the UAR. Chamoun believed that Lebanon would be in a subordinate position if aligned with the UAR, for he considered that Nasser wanted “the domination of the Arab East, if not its unification, under his leadership, and the establishment in the satellite countries of regimes similar to his [Nasser’s] own”.²³ Ultimately, Chamoun chose not to submit to Egyptian pressure, but to follow an independent pro-Western policy.

In response Chamoun moved closer to the West, in general, and the United States in particular. In this context, Lebanon adhered to Baghdad’s treaty and tacitly accepted Eisenhower Doctrine in exchange for military assistance.²⁴ Chamoun’s opponents believed that, by aligning Lebanon with the West against Egypt and Syria, the president had violated not only Beirut’s traditional neutrality but also the delicate balance among the various Lebanese factions. As two of the opposition leaders, Kamal Jumblat and

²² M.S. Agwani, *The Lebanese Crisis, 1958: A Documentary Study*, (Bombay, 1965), pp.137-144. This account is taken from Charles Malik’s presentation before the UN Security Council in which he attempted to document the “broadcast war” by neighbouring states against Lebanon during the 1958 period of civil strife.

²³ Caroline, n.15, p.108.

²⁴ Dwight D. Eisenhower, *The White House Years, Vol.2: Waging Peace 1956-61*(New York, 1965), p.20.

Shaykh Jisr, put it, the 1958 *intifada* was a direct response to foreign influence and to Lebanon's dependence on the West.²⁵

Contrary to popular perceptions, American military intervention in Lebanon did not reflect any strategic commitment by Washington to the Lebanon's agenda or to Lebanon's future. In addition, Beirut was not the main target of U.S. action; rather, Cairo and Moscow were. Shocked by the success of the July 1958 Iraqi revolution, although accepting it as a *fait accompli*, American officials used Lebanon as a theatre to project their military power and demonstrate their will to protect their vital regional interests, mainly the supply of oil.²⁶ As one U.S. policymaker put it, "Lebanon was a test case in the eyes of the others." Although no specific U.S. documents relating to Washington's influence on the 1957 parliamentary elections have been released yet, recently declassified sources hinted that the United States "played an active role."²⁷

The realignment of Lebanon with the West was strongly opposed by the Muslims who had coalesced into the National Union Front (NUF). The NUF called for cooperation with the Arab states; rejection of military aid which compromised Lebanese neutrality; and opposition to a constitutional amendment that would allow Chamoun to seek re-election. Clearly by late 1957, the opposition was mobilised to damage the government. The Chamoun government countered with tighter control the dissident areas, deporting thousands of Syrians and extending curfews over the Palestinian camps.

Many charges and counter charges were made during this prewar period of struggle, and at least two governments fell before open rebellion finally broke out.

²⁵ www.home.iprimus.com.au/fidamelhem/ssnp/

²⁶ Roger Spiller, "Not War, But Like War: The American Intervention in Lebanon", (Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute, 1984), p.18. Eisenhower was extremely skeptical about testing out the new strategic doctrine, the "New Look Defense Policy," on the Lebanese situation.

²⁷ See chapter 5 of Attie, n.15, pp. 128-153.

Though there were several issues involved, the main one driving the government's behaviour was a concern for its own survival. It sought non-interference from Syria and Egypt (the UAR after February 1958) as well as acquiescence from those who demanded reform and share of power. While the opposition battle cry called for neutralism in Arab affairs, the driving force behind their activity was to do whatever was necessary to prevent the President from engineering an election to a second term.

The U.S. intervention halted Nasser's offensive into Lebanon, but couldn't save Chamoun's position. An agreement was reached through mediators in which the president would leave the palace within few months. Yet the Christian community considered the terms of the settlement unfair. The new government was to be controlled by the pro-Nasser insurgents, and Arab nationalists threatened Lebanon's identity. Christian circles rejected this first agreement, and armed elements went back to the streets. A civil war broke out between Chamoun's supporters and his opponents, most of who were Muslims. This conflict mainly involved Phalangist militias and the Lebanese Syrian Nationalist Party (a radical party advocating a united Greater Syria, but acting at that time to defend the Lebanese entity against the onslaught of Pan-Arabism). The Lebanese army, led by Fu'ad Shihab, maintained a neutral line. The fighting ended with the landing of American marines in Beirut, while the political war subsided after another historic compromise had been devised. Chamoun renounced reelection, and Shihab was elected President. Under the slogan "no victors no vanquished," it was decided to restore the status quo.

Conclusion

The conflict demonstrated the weakness of the Mithaq Al-Watani of 1943. The National Pact was a pragmatic, yet unworkable entente between two groups with different visions and intentions. George Naccache, a French-educated journalist wrote, “a state is not the sum of a double negative.” By this he meant that National Pact was based on Muslims dropping the desired union with Syria and Christians abandoning their traditional French protection. The “Arab face” formula provoked more misinterpretations instead of internal stability. The 1958 crisis had manifold causes, but the overriding issue was undoubtedly, foreign interference. The external variable of foreign intervention was instrumental in intensifying the conflict and extending the duration. In this sense it can be compared with the civil war in 1975, although the latter was much more intense for it lasted 15 years and devastated the country. Unlike in 1975, when external intervention was the major catalyst for the civil war and its perpetuation, in 1958 external intervention was limited, for when Nasser withdrew support for the rebels in late June he significantly diffused the crisis. Therefore, Lebanon’s stability is closely related to the role played by the regional and international powers. Shifting regional forces often upset the balance of power among Lebanon’s communities and political leaders. The compromise that ended the struggle had important consequences in the following years.

CHAPTER III

Chapter III

Political Parties and Militias

1. Introduction

The course of Lebanon's modern history can, as we have seen is interpreted as the inevitable outcome of conflict between contending concepts of the Lebanese entity and the Lebanese state. Alternately it can be viewed as the product of a permanent effort to maintain subtle balance among domestic and external forces, a balance often preserved by external protection (the European powers until 1914, France during the mandatory period) and intervention (the United States in 1958). But in independent Lebanon, it was primarily the political leadership that had to keep domestic and external balanced. The balance was upset temporarily in 1958, restored during the Shihab presidency, and maintained against increasingly difficult odds through the 1960s and early 1970s. It was then shattered by the continuous influences of the domestic and external changes that converged during Suleiman Faranjiyya's presidency.

It was the political parties and militias that gave wings for the foreign actors to play intractable game in the domestic politics of Lebanon. (details in the next chapter). The most obvious indication of government paralysis was the growth of private militias and paramilitary groups, particularly in the Lebanon-centered, mostly Maronite camp, matched by the growing dependence of the Arab-centered Lebanese and the National Movement on Palestinian military forces.

The weakness of the Lebanese central government encouraged the creation of independent militias for the self-defence of the particular communities. On the one hand there were the various Maronite political groups each with its own militia: the Kataib Party (al-Kataib al-Lubnaniyya)- the Phalanges, led by the Jumayyil family; the National Liberal Party led by Camille Chamoun; and the group led by Suleiman Franjiyya, who at this time, in the early 1970's still served as the President of Lebanon. These three groups were the fulcrum of the status quo forces that opposed all political change and tried to constrain as much as possible the activities of the Palestinians. On the other hand, many, primarily Muslim groups were seeking change in the status quo. They included the Nasserites with their militia- the Murabitun, the Communist Party, the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (PPS) and the Progressive Socialist Party. The emerging leader of this camp was Kamal Junblatt, the Druze feudal leader who led the Progressive Socialist Party. These groups formed a loose coalition- the National Front. Conversely, confessional groupings tended to act as if they were political parties.

2. The Status Quo Coalition

The status quo coalition relied on the Maronite leaders, for neither the Maronite community as a whole nor all other Christian communities supported its political line. In the summer of 1976, these Maronite leaders formalised and institutionalised their cooperation by establishing the Lebanese front.

1. The Phalange

The Phalanges Libanaises (kataib) was clearly the single most important actor among Lebanon's Christians in the events leading to the crisis. The party was established by

Pierre Jumayyil in the mid-1930s as a radical, vigilante youth movement in defense of the Lebanese entity.

For more than forty years the erect and impressive figure of Pierre Jumayyil has dominated the party he has led. In the early 1950s, the Phalange became a parliamentary party and a participant in the traditional game of Lebanese politics. But the party retained its militia and constructed an elaborate party hierarchy and bureaucracy that set it apart from most other Lebanese parties. The Phalange remained an essentially Maronite party though it advocated a lebanonism that would transcend Christian-Muslim rivalries and recruit non-Christian and non-Maronite members. Political expediency required that this issue remain latent but in times of crisis when Lebanon's future was to be decided, the ambivalence would be set aside and the historical role as the armed protector of a Christian Lebanon, haven and fortress in the midst of a hostile Muslim environment assumed once more.

In the 1958 civil war, the Phalange fought on the side of President Camille Chamoun and later did not shy away from a showdown with his successor, Fu'ad Shihab, when it seemed that the latter had deviated the rest of Shihab presidency, he enjoyed the party's support and cooperation. The similarity of outlook was reinforced by the Phalange drive for a share in power and political influence.

If the Phalanges cooperation with President Shihab and Pierre Jumayyil's quests for the presidency in the 1960's portray the phalanges as devoted to the pursuit of power and influence, the crisis of the early 1970s show it in its original vigilante role. As the Lebanese state, army and political system seemed increasingly incapable of dealing with challenges posed by the Palestine Liberation Organisation and domestic opposition

groups, the Phalange became, “the supervigilantes...builder, surrogate and defender of the state.”¹ Phalange conduct in the early 1970s, particularly after the army’s abortive effort to check the PLO in May 1973, mirrored the party’s split personality. It continued to participate in Lebanese politics, took part in the governing coalition, and maneuvered for the presidency in 1976. But it also began to prepare militarily for a clash with the Palestinians, which by then seemed to be unavoidable. It was indeed a skirmish between the phalange and radical Palestinians that marked the beginning of the civil war. The phalanges militia recruited and trained new members and acquired additional and heavier weapons, which enabled it to bear the brunt of the fighting on behalf of the status quo coalition in the spring and summer of 1975.

In the course of the civil war, the Phalange had to make two crucial decisions, radical departures from the traditional party line. In the late summer of 1975, when it appeared that the preservation of Christian hegemony and of the traditional political system in Greater Lebanon was no longer feasible, the party, or at least its radical wing, opted temporarily for the less desirable goal foreshadowed in the early 1970s- a smaller Christian Lebanon based in east Beirut, the northern part of mount Lebanon, and the coastal area north of Beirut. The temporary change in the party’s goal was reflected in an interesting pamphlet which expressed disenchantment with the experience of a pluralistic Greater Lebanon and recommended a retreat to the homogeneity, security, and comfort of a smaller Christian Lebanon.²

¹ Michael C. Hudson, *The Precarious Republic: Political Modernization in Lebanon*, (Boulder and London: Westview Press, 1985), p.142.

² Itamar Rabinovich, *The War for Lebanon, 1970-1983*, (London: Cornell University Press), p.63.

The other change cornered the party's attitude toward Syria's intervention in Lebanon. The Phalange took a position between Faranjiyya's eager cooperation with the Syrian Ba'th regime and Chamoun's deep-seated distrust and hostility. Phalanges willingness to acknowledge Syria's supremacy and to cooperate with its regime against common rivals was a radical departure from tradition for a party that began its career as a staunch defender of Lebanon's territorial integrity against those who sought to submerge Lebanon in a greater Syria, but the Phalanges did not lose sight of the precarious and temporary nature of their new and strange alliance with Syria.³ Syrian and Phalanges visions of Lebanon's long term future were incompatible, and the phalanges were prepared for the inevitable parting of the ways.

There was no unanimity on these matters among the Phalanges. In the years preceding the outbreak of the civil war, three distinct orientations crystallised in the party's hierarchy: a conservative one, which upheld the party's traditional line on domestic and external affairs; a reformist one, which hardly resembled the stereotyped phalanges outlook. Pierre Jumayyil himself stood above these divisions, an appropriate position for such a historic leader and one befitting his own pragmatism. The school of thought represented by Jumayyil's elder son, Amin believed that Lebanon's Christians could only survive by coming to terms with their environment, and it therefore sought an accommodation with Syria, within Lebanon's Muslims, and with the larger Arab world.

The other school of thought was exemplified by Amin's younger brother Bashir, who in the summer of 1976 became commander of the party's armed forces. This school

³ Avi-Ran Reuven, *The Syrian Involvement in Lebanon Since 1975*, (Beirut: Modern Press, 1991).

skeptical of Arab and Muslim willingness to tolerate a Lebanese Christian entity in their midst, believed in the need to develop that entity in their midst, believed in the need to develop that entity's resources- an alliance with Israel mobilisation of the Lebanese Christian Diaspora, and American support. But in 1976, a period of satisfactory Syrian-Phalanges cooperation, and in view of American and Israeli reluctance to become more involved, the difference in outlook remained obscure.⁴

2. The National Liberal Party

The Phalanges principal ally in the Lebanese front, Camille Chamoun's National Liberal Party and its tigers militia (numur), was a markedly dissimilar political formation.⁵ The National Liberals apart from representing Chamoun's constituency in the Shuf region, in Mount Lebanon to the south and east of Beirut, attracted a more patrician, and smaller, group of members unlike the Phalange which not only appealed to the lower and middle Maronite classes as a protector but also as a movement responding to the social and economic dislocations of the time.

Chamoun a consummate pragmatic politician sought an accommodation with Lebanon's Muslims and their coreligionists across its borders. His preferred version of Arab nationalism was the conservative Hashemite brand, and kept a close relationship with the Hashemite regimes in Iraq and Jordan.⁶ In 1952, Chamoun played a dominant role in terminating Bishara al-khouri's corrupt administration and was elected his

⁴ Maurice Deeb, *Syria's Terrorist War on Lebanon and the Peace Process*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p.58.

⁵ Maurice Deeb, *Lebanese Civil War*, (New York: Praeger, 1980), pp. 25-28.

⁶ Caroline Attie, *Struggle in the Levant*, (London: I.B.Tauris, 2004).

successor. Within five years, he had become a controversial figure in domestic politics, a bitter opponent and critic of Pan-Arab nationalism, and the only Arab ruler who accepted the Eisenhower doctrine.

Chamoun remained active in Lebanese politics after his presidential term, but his successor, Shihab, and the latter's supporters sought to ostracise him for his excessively pro-western and anti-Arab nationalist position and for violating the rules of Lebanese political game. Chamoun's influence increased with Shihab's departure and Helou's accession to the presidency in 1964. His cooperation with the Phalange and Raymond Edde's National Bloc in the 1968 parliamentary elections resulted in strengthening of the Maronite representation in parliament and subsequently in Faranjiyya's election to the presidency. His role in the war was many sided; a central figure in the government, a chief protagonist in the conflict, he was also the leader of his party⁷ and of the militia it had to build in order to remain an influential political force. The militia was in fact was led by his two sons.

3. The Suleiman Faranjiyya Camp

Suleiman Faranjiyya's pre-civil war presidency discloses the main components of his political makeup- a traditional Za'im relying on his family's and his own following in the Zugharta region, a willingness to resort to violent and unorthodox methods to protect his own and his community's position, a long standing rivalry with the Sunni politicians from Tripoli, and a recent but significant relationship with Syria's president Hafiz al-

⁷ John P. Entelis, *Pluralism and Party Transformation in Lebanon: Al-Kata'ib 1956-70* (Leiden: Brill, 1974), p.78.

Asad and his family. Once the civil war broke out, Faranjiyya's ability to use his position as president to influence the course of events was severely curtailed.⁸ He was more active through the status quo coalition and his family's militia, Zugharta Liberation Army. The militia was formed in 1969, during one of the early conflicts with the Palestinian organisation.

Faranjiyya's personaliy and conduct became a focal point in the crisis in February 1976, when rebellious army officers and other opponents of the status quo made their demand for his resignation as one of their main grievances. The president was saved from the humiliation and repercussions of such a forced resignation not so much by his maronite colleagues as by his Syrian allies. The military intervention by units of al-Sa'iaqa, the pro-Syrian Palestinian organisation, to counter Ahmed al-Khatib's attempt to force Faranjiyya's resignation was infact the first unmistakable indication of Syria's about-face in Lebanon.⁹ The growing Syrian political and military presence in Lebanon and Asad's efforts to form a distinctively pro-Syrian political bloc led to a still closer cooperation with Faranjiyya during the final months of his presidency, as well as upon his return to Zugharta.

The personalised style of Syria's relationship with the Faranjiyya was accentuated by the special nexus between Rifat, Hafiz al-Asad's younger brother, and Tony Faranjiyya. Rifat al-Asad was commander of the Defense Detachments, a military formation designed to protect the Syrian regime, which developed into a full fledged

⁸ Meir Zamir, *The Formation of Modern Lebanon*, (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1988).

⁹ J.C., Hurewitz *The Middle East Politics: The Military Dimension* (New York: Praeger, 1969).

army division with special privileges and something of the status of a Praetorian Guard. His role in the Ba'thi regime has gone beyond his unorthodox military position; he also helped formulate and execute Syrian policy in Lebanon. Rifat al-Asad's activities contributed substantially to domestic criticism of the Ba'thi regime, which proved to be a very significant by-product of Syria's intervention in Lebanon.¹⁰

4. The Maronite Religious Establishment

The political saliency of the Sunni Mufti and Shia Imam, a novelty of the 1970s Lebanon, was matched by the conspicuous role the Maronite clerics came to play at the other end of the political spectrum. This was less true of the Maronite patriarch, Bulus Khureysh. His three predecessors, Huwayyek, Arida, and Ma'ushi, had been active and influential in Lebanese politics, usually in a discreet fashion, but occasionally as visible and forceful participants. Khureysh, a humbler figure, had not acquired the same position and had not been very active in politics before the crisis. His limited political activities and pronouncements after the outbreak of the civil war disclosed a moderate line, close to that of Raymond Edde.

It was Father Sharbal Qassis, head of the order of Maronite monks and chairman of the Association of Lebanese Monastic Orders, who took the activist and militant line, within the Maronite church. He advocated a "pure Lebanon" and rejected the notion of Lebanon's "Arab face," which had been incorporated into the compromise formula of the 1943 national pact. Qassis was also more outspoken than other Maronites in voicing his

¹⁰ Itamar Rabinovich, "Syria," in C. Legum and H. Shaked, eds., *Middle East Contemporary Survey 1976-77* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1978), pp.604-21.

opposition to the Palestinians and demanded, among other things, that their numbers in Lebanon be restricted. Quite naturally the Maronite leaders preferred Sharbal Qassis to the patriarch and his circle. Qassis was chosen to represent the church in such all-Maronite forums as the Maronite summit (December 1975) and the Lebanese Front. The Maronite Monastic Orders were the main intellectual and financial contributors to the Maronite academic and intellectual center in Kaslik. As the owners of a sizable portion of Lebanon's agricultural land, the Monastic Orders provided financial help to Maronite militias.

The line he took and the activities he pursued made Qassis a controversial figure. His critics charged that despite his professed allegiance to the patriarch, he was making "cracks in the unity of the church" and that by storing weapons, ammunition and food for Christian militias in Maronite monasteries he was undermining their sanctity.¹¹ Qassis was later replaced as head of the Monastic Orders in the Lebanese Front by father Bulus Na'aman, another powerful, militant cleric.

5. Communal Maronite Groups

The Maronite League was a militant militia headed by Shaker Abu Suleiman, an ardent supporter of Qassis. Like the Guardians of the Cedar, it was purely Maronite militia without the inhibitions of the politically sophisticated Phalanges and National Liberals. It therefore chose to fight alongside those groups rather than to merge with them.

The Guardians of Cedar manifest more tension between the notion of a supracommunal movement to defend supracommunal Lebanese entity and the reality that the movement's

membership has been largely Maronite. Although they advocated a nonconfessional ideology, the Guardians have in practice been among the fiercest fighters for the Maronite cause. The political and military leader of the Guardians of Cedar, Etienne Saqr, worked for the Faranjiyya administration in the early 1970s.

Although there were non-Maronite and non-Christian members in its ranks, the militia of the Guardians of Cedar functioned in the predominantly Maronite quarter of Ashrafiyya and represented the most militant brand of Maronite political opinion. There were, among other things, atypically frank about the Maronites' relationship with Israel. While the Phalanges and the National Liberals sought to conceal their relations with Israel and avoided public discussion of them, the Guardians of Cedar argued publicly in 1976 that Syria's intervention fail, the Lebanese should turn to Israel to ask it to save what was left of Lebanon. Like the Maronite League they maintained their separate organisation but fought alongside the larger militias.

The Tanzim was a small secretive organisation formed and led by George Adwan, which appeared soon after the outbreak of the civil war in 1975. Adwan and his colleagues rapidly concluded that the severity of the crisis called for a new kind of Maronite effort and organisation.-hence the name tanzim (organisation). Despite their small number, the members of the tanzim played an important role in the fighting in Beirut their numbers dwindled later in the 1970s, and the organisation split in two, but it retained its position as one of the four partners in the Lebanese Front.

6. The Lebanese Army

¹¹ Qassis was replaced by Father Bulus Na'aman.

The Christian leadership within the army can be considered an important component of the status quo coalition. The Lebanese army's refusal to take sides during the crisis of 1952 and 1958 was a rare phenomenon in the post-World War II West Asia, where political history has been largely shaped by military intervention and domination. But the Lebanese Army did play a role in and was certainly the object of political conflict prior to 1975.¹² For one thing the confessional system operated in it and communal balance was carefully monitored. The higher echelon of the professional officer corps was predominantly Christian and the arm was seen as one of the ultimate guarantors of both the Lebanese political system and its Christian character. In the 1950s and the 1960s, Muslim politicians repeatedly demanded a national service law that would transform the army into a predominantly Muslim force, but it was essentially a political ritual. Of greater political significance was the discrepancy between the army's contrived image as an arbiter, standing above petty partisan squabbles, and its actual activity, both within the formal political system and as an alternative system of power and influence. The issue was first brought to the surface by Raymond Edde in the mid 1960s; it was publicised in great vivid detail when President Charles Helou purged the *deuxieme bureau* and when the army's supreme commander, General Emile Bustani, fled to Syria in 1972.¹³

Other political developments and events in the late 1960s and early 1970s---growing Muslim pressure to modify the system, confrontations with the Palestinians, Israeli preemptive and punitive raids, and the proliferation of armed militias defiant of the state---had an unsettling effect on the Lebanese Army. Its officers still viewed the army as

¹² Hurewitz, n. 9, p.89.

¹³ Rabinovich, n.2., p.90.

the arbiter of national politics, whose intervention would resolve the impending crises. The supporters of the status quo were less certain, and after 1973 the Phalanges began to build its own military force to perform the task the army seemed incapable of. The army played a very limited role during the early period of the civil war, and by the time it became vital for it to step in, the army had disintegrated, and its self-designated roll was taken over by the Syrian army.

In the summer of 1976, the Lebanese army was divided into three distinct groups: Ahmed al-Khatib's rebellious Lebanese Arab Army, which was integrated into the Leftist anti-Syrian militias; the vanguards of Lebanon's Arab Army, a thinly disguised pro-Syrian military force, organised in the Bi'qa Valley; and the bulk of the army, which was positioned in Beirut and the center of the country. The officers in these units were mostly Christian, and their sympathies were in the Lebanese Front. The competition for their support and loyalty figured in the next phase of the Lebanese crises.

7. Accommodationist Christian Leaders

Somewhere between the status quo and revisionist coalitions there stood another group. The moderate Christian politicians and public figures who sought an accommodation with the opponents of the status quo were far from possessing the coherence of an actual political school or bloc. Leaders of these blocs were willing to concede a large share of power in the Lebanese system to the Muslim communities and to find a *modus vivendi* with the Palestinians in order to preserve the framework of a Lebanese state. They strongly opposed the notion of partition.

In the spring of 1975, Elias Sarkis, the former Shihabi politician, emerged as the most prominent representative of the accommodationists. Until then that role had been played by Raymond Edde, the son of the former president. In an interesting shift of political legacies, the Phalanges adopted, albeit temporarily the traditional line of Emile Edde, while his son pursued a policy close to that of his father's great rival, Bishara al-Khoury.¹⁴

Raymond Edde made his mark on Lebanese politics as an opponent of President Shihab and a vehement critic of the army's and intelligence services' interference in the political process.¹⁵ Their common opposition to the keepers of the Shihabi legacy facilitated the cooperation in 1968 between Edde's National Bloc and the two other large Maronite parties. But the new alignment soon foundered owing to political and personal differences, particularly Edde's and Jumayyil's rival bids for the presidency in 1970. During Faranjiyya's presidency, Edde drew closer to such traditional Sunni politicians as Sa'ib Salam and Rashid Karami, as well as to Kamal Junblatt., so that Edde and his former partner drifted further apart.

Edde's initial role in the civil war conformed to the policies he had formed in the early 1970s. He did not take part in the fighting but advocated compromise and moderation. He was particularly opposed to partition, which he denounced as an American Zionism design. In 1976, Edde became the most prominent and persistent opponent among Lebanon's Christian politicians of Syria's intervention and ensuing

¹⁴ M.W. Suleiman, *Political Parties in Lebanon*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967). p. 66.

¹⁵ Deeb, n. 4, pp. 30-31.

supremacy. In May, he tried to compete with Sarkis, the Syrian candidate, for the presidency, but he had no resources to counter the great resources of the Syrians. In the summer of 1976, he formed the National Unity Front, which agitated for Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon. The Front had an auspicious beginning, because apparently Edde's Sunni friends had joined it. But in the end the Front was little more than a platform for its founder. After Syria's presence in Lebanon had been sanctioned by Arab consensus and following a number of assassination attempts against him¹⁶, Edde like several other prominent opponents of Syrian hegemony left Lebanon and settled in Paris.

It was ironic that Sarkis a politician closely identified with the Shihabi who searched for a new Lebanese consensus, became President in circumstances that defined him as the representative of a narrow and controversial segment of the 1976 Lebanese political spectrum. Many of the erstwhile supporters of the Shihabi Nahj were active and bitter opponents of Syrian policies in Lebanon and refused to cooperate with a president imposed on Lebanon by the Syrians. The Lebanese Front was then cooperating with Syria, but in reality it could not reconcile itself to Syria's long-range plans for Lebanon and was wary of Sarkis, a veteran opponent of the Front's leaders and attitudes.¹⁷ Upon assuming office, President Sarkis did try to work for national reconciliation. He presented a plan for Lebanon's political and economic rehabilitation and sought to bring the rival Lebanese factions to a "round table conference."¹⁸ This may have been an altogether impossible task and it obviously was beyond the reach of the controversial president of an

¹⁶ Suleiman, n. 14., p.54.

¹⁷ L.W, Snider, "The Lebanese Forces: Origins and Role in Lebanon's Politics," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 38, 1984, pp.55-65.

¹⁸ Rabinovich, n.2, p.74

emasculated state. Nor was he helped by his patrons the Syrians, who having first delegitimised him by treating him as their instrument, continued to undermine his position by scrutinising his cabinet and allowing him minimal freedom of action.

8. The Lebanese Front

Parallel to the development of a unified military force was the creation of the Lebanese Front, which is a directory council for all the Christian leaderships in Lebanon and in that capacity it defines the broad lines of the general policy that are implemented and enforced by the Lebanese forces. Lebanese Front is a directory council for all the Christian leaderships in Lebanon and in that capacity it defines the broad lines of the general policy that are implemented and enforced by the Lebanese forces.

In December 1975, when major changes in the Lebanese system were being discussed seriously and a Muslim summit was convened to formulate a joint position, a comparable Maronite summit was called. The major Maronite leaders of the status quo coalition-Jumayyil, Chamoun, Qassis, and Shaker Abu Suleiman among them met in the Ba'abda presidential palace. Faranjiyya himself did not participate in the meetings, though he was briefed on their course and outcome, but the use of the presidential palace for partisan meetings was added to his opponents' list of grievances.¹⁹ The assembled Maronite leaders had no difficulty in defining the crisis as a Palestinian-Lebanese conflict

¹⁹ Snider, n.17., p. 45.

rather than a civil war. The Palestinians they charged had joined forces with the Lebanese left in order to provoke a sectarian crisis in Lebanon.

In the spring of 1976, the Maronite summit was renamed the Kafur summit after the new location chosen for the meeting. In September 1976, the unification efforts met with a measure of success when the Lebanese Front was established. Camille Chamoun was chosen president of the Front. It became the political backbone of the status quo coalition. A joint military command was formed for the various militias, whose new collective name was the Lebanese Forces. The Lebanese Forces were made up of four militias. The Phalanges, Chamoun's Numur, the Guardians of Cedar and the Tanzim. Each was represented in the forces' command by two members. Despite the nominal parity, it was clear that the Lebanese forces were dominated and controlled by Bashir Jumayyil. Still, the formation of an apparently nonpartisan, all-Maronite forum proved very useful for the further development of the status quo coalition.

The composition of the front has remained fairly stable with the exception of the withdrawal of Suleiman Franjiyya. Franjiyya had stopped attending the meetings of the Front in May 1978 reportedly because of his opposition to turning to Israel for military and political support against the Front's erstwhile ally Syria. He became estranged from the Front altogether after the killing of his son Tony by Lebanese Forces gunmen at the Franjiyya's summer residence in Ehden on 13 June 1978.

Historically, then, what emerged as the Lebanese Forces initially represented the Maronite Christian community. However, the language, the policy orientation and some of the activities of the Front suggest a view of Lebanon's problems, politics and approaches to post-war recovery that speak to a much broader constituency than just to

the Christians. It is to a description and evaluation of the Lebanese Forces as a potential national movement that we now turn.

3. The Revisionist Coalition

Most of the fighting on behalf of this camp was carried out by Palestinian organisations and Muslim and leftist militias. Until January 1976, the leadership of the PLO had formally refrained from taking part in the war, but groups under its authority did join the fighting in earlier stages. Syria's intervention in 1976 contributed most to splitting the revisionist coalition. Its two most substantial elements, the leftist parties and the PLO, reacted differently to Syria's role and policies. The PLO leadership was free from personal animosity that characterised Kamal Junblatt's attitude and at various times showed a desire to come to terms with Syria. Later, some of the coalition's supporters shifted their allegiance to Syria and became a rather weak third or central camp. A proliferation of other organisations mostly ephemeral, also followed the revisionist split: Raymond Edde's National Unity Front; the National Islamic Front, formed in the summer of 1976 by Khatib's supporters (who claimed it was above the conventional left and right); the revolutionary Druze Organisation, which rallied some of Junblatt's opponents within his own community; and the Shia Revolutionary organisation.

In an effort to arrest the disintegration and to counterbalance the formation of the Lebanese Front, the Lebanese left sought to bolster the leftist national front which had existed since 1969.

1. Kamal Junblatt and his Party

Kamal Junblatt was undoubtedly the dominant leader of the established leftist groups, and his ascetic figure is one of the central most intriguing personas in the history of the Lebanese crisis and civil war.

His effectiveness increased as the system grew weaker. In 1969, he formed the National Front to provide leftist and Palestinian organisations with a common framework. In 1970, as a minister of the interior, he published a decree legalising the Ba'th, the communist, the Syrian nationalist, and other transnational parties. These parties although illegal under previous Lebanese law, had been tolerated in part; Junblatt's action was therefore largely of symbolic significance. In the same vein, Junblatt lost the working relation he had with Pierre Jumayyil and other status quo politicians, and his political activities pivoted more and more around his relations with other leftist and Palestinian groups.

Junblatt's major demands for a reform of the Lebanese system were presented in a document published by Lebanon's leftist parties in the summer of 1975. They were the abolition of the confessional system; a constitutional amendment that would change the relationship among the branches of government; a new electoral law; the reorganisation of the army; and an amendment of the citizenship law.²⁰ These demands, which constituted in fact the platform of the Lebanese revisionists were strictly political and constitutional and made no mention of social and economic reforms. But even so, opponents from both ends of the spectrum tried to denigrate Junblatt's program, pointing

²⁰ Rabinovich, n. 2., p.58.

to its limited scope and arguing that it was actually designed to enable him to gain the presidency.

The reform document of February 1976, which Syria endorsed, was rejected by Junblatt and his refusal to comply with Syria's ambitions and to resign himself to the Bath regime's pragmatism led to a bitter conflict. He was defeated militarily by Syria and politically by Arab world that recognised Syria's supremacy in Lebanon. In March 1977, he was assassinated. Junblatt's importance in the conflict with Syria was political rather than military. His militia had a limited local significance, and the firepower of his camp was provided by the Palestinians and by other indispensable to the preservation of a united anti-Syrian front, as the effect of his assassination showed.

2. The Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party

The *parti populaire syrien* (PPS), the original name for this party, is one of the oldest and most intriguing political parties in Lebanon. The party's structure, organisational patterns, and to some extent, ideology were influenced by the ultranationalist and fascist movements of the 1930s, but the most important elements of its doctrine were formulated in response to the social and political conditions in Lebanon and the fertile crescent. Antun Sa'adeh the founder of the party argued that Greater Syria was a national entity, the home and creator of a Syrian nation.

Between the late 1940s and mid 1950s the party had undergone two transformations. In the mid-1950s its hostility to Pan-Arab nationalism turned it into a pro-western movement and a defender of the Lebanese state. It fought alongside President Chamoun and the Phalanges in the 1958 and in 1961 staged an abortive coup

d'état against president Shihab, who's domestic and foreign policies were opposed. A decade later, the party was transformed yet again, its militancy once more directed against the Lebanese state and system but this time in league with leftist and Palestinian groups. It renounced its opposition to Arab unity-then a waning ideology-and supported Asad's regime in Syria and its ambitions in Lebanon.

The PPS's relationship to the Ba'th party has a curious and ironic history. Both parties were founded by leaders trying to solve the problems of minority communities in a fragmented, pluralistic society and both used the secularist approach of Christian proponents of Syrian-Arab nationalism in the Levant in the 1860s and the 1870s. The two parties were popular among Alawi youth in Syria during the 1940s and the 1950s, but in the mid-1950s, as the Ba'thi regime led Syria toward neutralism, socialism, and union with Egypt, the PPS acted as the rear guard for conservative pro-western forces.²¹

By the early 1970s, the old rivalries became meaningless, and many Lebanese members of the PPS came to view Asad's regime and its regional ambitions as the first real opportunity to implement the party's original vision of Greater Syria.

3. The Sunni Establishment

The outbreak of the civil war brought the established political leadership of Lebanon's Sunni community-face to face with an inescapable dilemma. During previous decades, Sunni politicians like Sa'ib Salam, Rashid Karami and Abdullah al-Yafi had recognised that their interests overlapped with those of their Maronite counterparts. In the late

²¹ Naomi Joy Weinberger, *Syrian Intervention in Lebanon: The 1975-1976 Civil War*, (Oxford University Press, 1986).

1960s and early 1970s, this community of interest eroded, and Sunni leaders were demanding a greater share of power for their own sake and in response to the mood and pressure of their constituents. Still they stopped short of adhering to the far-reaching demands of the National Movement, fearing a crisis like the one which finally erupted in 1975. This crisis polarised Christian–Muslim relation and forced leaders like Salam and Karami to embrace the cause of their more radical colleagues, even though they did so reluctantly, realising that the tremors of radicalism were undermining their own position as well.

Without endorsing violence the Sunni religious leaders supported the reform proposals raised by the National Front. The Mufti argued that no just demands should be withdrawn just because they were raised by the Marxists. The Mufti new role and political saliency were illustrated by the convening of the Islamic Summit at his residence in Aramun in December 1975. Other Muslim leaders, Sunni politicians, as well as Yasir Arafat, leader of the PLO, participated in the meeting. According to Asad these participants requested Syria to intervene in Lebanon. That intervention widened the gap between the conservative and pragmatic Zu'ama and the radical Muslims, who refused to come to terms with Syrian policies.²² The radicals defeat at the hands of the Syrians and the indefinite prolongation of the 1972 parliament then helped the traditional politicians to preserve a measure of political influence, which at the height of the civil war seemed to have been eliminated by the radicals and their militias.

²² Arnold Hottinger, "Zuama and Parties in the Lebanese Crisis," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 15, No.2 (1961), pp. 78-90.

4. The Communist Party

The Communist Party has existed in Lebanon since the late 1920s, and its appeal to members of the intelligentsia and to disaffected minority communities has provided it with a comparatively large membership.²³ Its base was further broadened by the party's control of several trade unions. However in the turn of events around the 1960s they were reduced by schisms and by the attraction of noncommunist Arab leftist organisations. The party tried to reverse the trend by assuming the character of a party of the masses and by pursuing the strategy of popular fronts. It cooperated with the groups attractive to its potential constituency- the Palestine organisation, the Ba'th party, the Nasserite groups, and Junblatt's party. The communist party realised, too, the revolutionary potential of the Shia community and recruited new members from its ranks. Like several other political groups in Lebanon, the communist party in the end decided in the early 1970s that without an armed militia it would lose its political relevance. Its militia, the People's Guard took part in the civil war.

5. The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO)

It is misleading to speak of one PLO role in the Lebanese civil war, which was significantly influenced by divisions and disagreements within the organisation.²⁴ Rather distinctions should be made among three Palestinian groups: the PLO establishment, George Habash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), and the Zuheir Muhsin's al-Sa'iqa.

²³ Rabinovich, n. 2., p.78.

From the PLO establishment's perspective, embodied in the policies of the Fatah and to a lesser extent the Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PDFLP), the situation in prewar Lebanon was optimal. The Palestinians had an autonomous territorial base contiguous with Israel, and the Lebanese government was too weak to restrain them. And Israel, although it made raids into Lebanon, did not launch an all-out offensive because of Lebanon's close ties to the West. Thus, despite their criticism of the Lebanese political system and their affinity with its domestic foes, until January 1976, these Palestinians resisted being dragged into the fighting. Their reluctance was strengthened by the lessons learned after September 1970, when meddling in Jordanian politics had brought the PLO to the verge of catastrophe. Furthermore, in the summer and fall of 1975 the organisation was engaged in a political offence that had already achieved impressive results in the United Nations and promised additional gains in January 1976 Security Council discussions of the Palestinian issue. Involvement in the civil war was therefore officially shunned and the organisation publicised its policy of non intervention and sought the statesman-like roles of mediation and ceasefire supervision.

However, in reality things were complex. Units affiliated with the organisation did take part in the fighting and the PLO leadership itself took advantage of the gains made by its Lebanese allies to improve the terms secured in the 1969 Cairo Agreement. The policy of nonintervention collapsed in 1976. Syria's intervention in Lebanon and its conflict with the Palestinians produced an entirely new situation. The issue at stake was no longer Lebanon's political future and PLO diplomatic ventures but the Syrian

²⁴ Salah Khalaf "Changing Forms of Political Patronage in Lebanon," in E. Gellner and J. Waterbury, eds., *Patrons and Clients in Mediterranean Societies* (London: Duckworth, 1977), pp.60.

challenge to PLO autonomy and its status as “the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.” The Syrian Ba’thi regime had asserted that Syria was not just another Arab state extending support to the Palestinians but that it had a special nexus with the southern part of the Greater Syria that is, Palestine

The PLO obstruction of Asad’s policy in Lebanon provoked Syria to assail the PLO position and was a justification for Syria’s determination to punish the PLO leadership. Asad referred to this leadership in July 1976 as “those who are now speaking in the name of Palestine, who are absorbed in their imagination, and ignore all the efforts that we have invested on their behalf.” In the same speech he denied the PLO’s right to take unilateral decisions on how and where the struggle for Palestine should be waged: “The Palestinians fighting in Mount Lebanon are by no means fighting for Palestine. . .” And finally, “all talk about war, about liberation of Palestine without Syria, is ignorance and misleading of the masses.” According to Jumblatt’s testimony, Asad had told Arafat that “you do not represent Palestine more than we do... and don’t you forget one thing- there is no Palestinian people and there is no Palestinian entity-there is Syria.”²⁵

In the spring and summer of 1976, Arafat was in a dilemma. Syria had claimed a special role in Lebanon, regarding the Palestine issue, had challenged ‘Arafat’s status. Furthermore, it had acted in apparent concert with the United States. The PLO was finally saved by Saudi Arabia, which exerted a moderating influence on Syria and summoned the conference that brought an end to the fighting. The Riyadh conference also prepared

²⁵ Kamal Jumblatt, *I Speak for Lebanon*, (London: Zed Press, 1982).

the ground for a new effort to produce a comprehensive Arab-Israel settlement in which the PLO and the Syrian-PLO connection would play crucial role.

The notion of “conspiracy” and “liquidation,” which Arafat and the PLO establishment adopted after the Syrian invasion, were formulated at the outset of the crisis by George Habash, the leader of the PFLP and his rejectionist colleagues. This being the case they argued, they had to fight the war alongside their Lebanese partners. But their whole-hearted participation in the war had still deeper root: most of the Marxist elements in the PLO believed in the ultimate futility of a political and military regime had to be overthrown before the full resources of the Arab worlds could be mobilized for the decisive battle against Israel.

The PLO’s predicament was compounded by the activity of al-Sa’iqa, its large constituent organisation, which was controlled directly by Syria. It fought on the side of the Syrians and its leader, Zuheir Muhsin, faithfully echoed the political line in Damascus. He even went beyond his Syrian masters when he told a Dutch interviewer:

Between Jordanians, Palestinians, Syrians, and Lebanese there are no differences. We are part of one people, the Arab nation...only for political reasons do we subscribe to our Palestinian identity...Palestinians must work together with Syria in the first place, and only after that with the other Arab states.²⁶

Among Palestinians, al-Sa’iqa was regarded as merely a tool of Syrian policy, but for the larger audience watching the Syrian-Palestinian conflict, al-Sa’iqa’s challenge to the

²⁶ Legume and Shaked, n.6, p.185.

PLO's establishment leadership added yet another question mark to a very confusing story.²⁷

6. The Lebanese Forces

The Lebanese forces were a political movement whose avowed aim was to liberate Lebanon from Syrian, Palestinian, and Israeli occupation, and restore control of Lebanon's political destiny to the Lebanese. Their creation and expansion as a political movement was basically in response to the vacuum created by the collapse of the central government, and particularly in response to the total absence of internal security and other essential government services. In fact many activities undertaken by the Lebanese forces began as efforts to persuade or pressure various government bureaucracies to perform the services which by law they are charged to provide.

The Lebanese forces are not a political party even though they are usually confused with the Kata'eb Social Democratic party (Phalanges). The Lebanese forces began as a coalition of Maronite political and paramilitary groups, and it is largely the creation of late Bashir Gemayal to provide him with a power base that was independent of the Kata'eb. The parties that formed its original nucleus retain their independent identities and capacity for independent political action. However, this will not inhibit the Lebanese forces from fielding their own candidates for public office- including that of the presidency- if the Lebanese forces leadership decides this is the only way the interests of their principal constituencies-the Christian communities can be protected. As long as

²⁷ Whalid Khalidi, *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*, (Cambridge Mass., Harvard Centre for International Affairs, 1979), pp.79-82.

Bashir gemayal was alive this posed no problem since he was Lebanese forces' candidate for president.

The Lebanese forces emerged in response to the increasing inability of the Lebanese government to carry out the tasks imposed upon it by its own mutually antagonistic elites, by various segments of the population and by pressures from the external environment.

Because Lebanese have fought on both sides and because the fighting has been confined to Lebanese territory, the conflict is usually viewed as a sectarian civil war. However, when the focus shifts to the national composition of the principal forces fighting on each side, it is seen that the war has been fought mainly between the predominantly Maronite militias (later absorbed into the integrated formations of the Lebanese forces), on one side, against a coalition of Sunni and Shi'a Muslims, and some Christians plus the Palestinians and Syrians on the other, with the irregular forces of the National Movement (NM) playing a definitely subordinate role as an appendage of the Palestinians forces. This is evidenced by the diversity of forces of which the NM is composed.

The NM was organised in 1969 by Kamal Junblatt, a Druze feudal chieftan, who was its principal leader until his assassination in 1977. This group was a coalition of mostly Lebanese Muslim forces which supported the Palestinian Resistance Movement in Lebanon and branded as "isolationist" those Lebanese who were opposed to the expansion of Palestinian power and extraterritorial privileges on Lebanese territory. Its principal Lebanese military muscle consisted mainly of forces loyal to Junblatt and the Mourabitoun, the military arm of the Independent Nasserite Movement (INM) led by

Ibrahim Qulailat and which was supplied and equipped by the Palestinians. Junblatt's Druze militia, an extension of his Popular Socialist Party, seldom fought outside the Druze's ancestral homeland, the Shuf. In addition the NM fielded what might be called the Palestinian mixed forces led by Salah Khalaf (alias Abu Ayyad), the number two AmIn in the al-fatah. It was Kahalf who declared that the road to Palestine ran through Jounieh, the predominantly Christian city north of Beirut.

As for its Lebanese constituency, the National Movement's program for political reform appealed mainly to the Sunni, Shi'a and some Christian communities but very little to the Druzes or Maronites. Thus the NM's supporters and opponents cannot be said to correspond very directly to the Muslim and Christian communities respectively.

Conclusion

The creation of political parties and militias and expansion as a political movement was basically in response to the vacuum created by the collapse of the central government, and particularly in response to the total absence of internal security and other essential government services. The various parties emerged in response to the increasing inability of the Lebanese government to carry out the tasks imposed upon it by its own mutually antagonistic elites, by various segments of the population and by pressures from the external environment.

Considering the various parties with different ideologies it is evident that the possibility of sustaining the nation as a sovereign entity is difficult indeed. Indeed, factionalism was the dominant characteristic of Lebanese establishment politics and is deeply rooted in Lebanese culture; and events after the end of the Chehabi regime in

1964 revived it, with all its virtues and defects, as the predominant decision-making process. Lebanese commentators often describe their factionalism as an endless game of musical chairs, in which notables compete incessantly for power and prestige. Because factional loyalties are so impermanent, they provide for a widespread sharing of power within the establishment. The fluidity of factional loyalties also presents some obvious drawbacks to political system performance. Overall the most striking aspect of the Lebanese establishment is its lack of modern political organisations. The personalities and groups described are highly sophisticated but parochially organised. In general, the prevailing political organisation in the establishment is the personal clique.

CHAPTER IV

Chapter IV

Foreign Intervention and the Civil War (1975-76)

1. Introduction

The origins of the destruction of Lebanon are to be found, not in the events of February and April 1975, but in those of 1960's. The inter-play of politics among Israel, Syria and the Palestinians with peripheral players like Jordan and the United States has placed Lebanon on the strategic pivot of the global balance of power. In 1963, radical Ba'thist regimes had come to power in both Syria and Iraq. Nasser, a slightly tarnished figure following the demise of the United Arab Republic (UAR), was involved in Lebanese affairs. Palestinian guerrilla organisations grew in size, number, and prominence as the refugees began to assert their independence of the Arab regimes. They were beginning to assert their own nationalism both in Jordan and Lebanon while receiving arms to conduct operations against Israel. As for Israelis, they were also engaged in a new assertiveness. Israeli plans to acquire a larger portion of the scarce water in the area were some of the most publicised secrets in West Asia. Israel not only intended to divert water from the River Jordan, threatening to harm irrigation in the West Bank, but also had designs on the Litani River.¹ Lebanon was in the fight whether she wanted to be or not. These events led to a polarization of Lebanese society, the disintegration of the government's authority, and civil war.

¹ It is important to remember that, at this time, the West Bank was still part of Jordan and an essential source for agricultural products sold in Lebanon.

2. Palestinians

In pre-war Lebanon, the Palestinian presence in Lebanon provoked deep communal divisions, intense political debate, and ideological controversy. From the late 1960s, no issue did more to militarize the country, mobilize communities, political parties and leaders, and split public opinion than the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) military presence. And when the war broke out in the mid-1970s, what prolonged it and turned it into a full-fledged regional conflict was the direct involvement of the PLO.²

The Palestinians are not voluntary refugees in Lebanon. Nor did the Lebanese actively seek to deal with them, either initially as refugees, a few years later as enemies (at the time of the PLO guerilla activities), or today as an unwanted burden. Historically, there is no legacy of enmity between the Lebanese and the Palestinians. Palestinian-Lebanese relations before 1948 were orderly, involving a significant movement of people and a flourishing trade. But in the 1948, Lebanese and Palestinians had to deal with a situation not of their own making. They had to draw on scarce political and economic resources, and to operate under regional and international circumstances over which they had little control.

On 5 June, 1967, the Israelis attacked Egypt, wiping out its air force and pushing Egyptian forces from the Sinai. Syria and Jordan also entered the war and, with their aircraft neutralised, were forced to give up sizeable chunks of territory: for Syria, the Golan Heights and for Jordan, the West Bank. Even Iraq, technically at war with Israel but not engaged in this case, saw its air force destroyed on the ground.

² Farid El Khazen, "Permanent Settlement of Palestinians in Lebanon: A Recipe for Conflict," *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Vol.10, No.3, 1997, pp.32-40.

Lebanese President Charles Helou had managed, for the most part, to keep out of the war, and Lebanon was the only country bordering Israel that did not lose territory. But an Arab loss to Israel had never been beneficial for the Lebanese; it destabilised the country's delicate communal balance, making it vulnerable to civil strife. This crushing blow delivered to the Arab states tended to strengthen the sentiment for a Palestinian nationalism separate from Pan-Arabism.

Though Lebanon stayed out of the 1967, yet Lebanon was sucked into the maelstrom and not as an innocent bystander. The assassination of Kamal Mroweh and fall of Intra Bank demonstrated that the Lebanese, along with the Palestinians in their midst, had already been involved. In accommodating the guerrillas, the Lebanese had also gotten themselves entangled with the Israelis.

The pressing problem facing the PLO after 1967 was the lack of geographic and political space in which to operate. That space had to be carved out by force and not by negotiation. This meant inevitable confrontation with existing Arab regimes. In the late 1960's, Lebanon's and Jordan's relations with the Palestinians was replaced by virtual Palestinian autonomy, which defied Jordanian sovereignty and threatened the survival of the Jordanian state. Jordan had become the PLO's principal territorial base, and the Jordanian-Israeli border and ceasefire lines became an active front during the 1968-70 Arab-Israeli War of Attrition. From 1968-69, Lebanon gradually became a *de facto* confrontation state with Israel, though by default and not by a decision made by the Lebanese government. In Lebanon, the severity of the PLO challenge to the existing order was revealed in December 1968: Palestinians from Beirut attacked El Al planes, and an Israeli commando unit retaliated by raiding Beirut's international airport. The raid

on Beirut's airport was to demonstrate to Lebanon the price it would pay for the freedom of operation given to or seized by the Palestinians. But the Israelis should have realised that the Lebanese state was too weak to resist the pressure of PLO supporters. The Cairo Agreement only legitimised PLO freedom of action and did little to protect Lebanon's interests.

In 1970, the respective courses of Jordan's and Lebanon's relations with the Palestinians diverged. In September 1970, Jordan's military and political elites decided to stop the corrosion of their state's authority by the Palestinian organisation. Thus any Palestinians expelled from Jordan moved through Syria to Lebanon. As events in December 1968 and their sequels show, this new reality was a manifold challenge to the Lebanese state. The PLO used Lebanon as its major base to engage in an armed struggle against Israel that brought in its wake havoc to the Lebanese polity.

As a result, Lebanon was turned into a battleground for Palestinian-Israeli warfare, first along its southern borders, and subsequently in other parts of the country. What aggravated an already explosive situation was the 1973 Arab-Israel war. It accelerated the disintegration process in Lebanon and deepened its marginalisation. The military disengagements between Israel, Egypt and Syria that followed the 1973 war, and later the divisions between Egypt and Syria turned Lebanon into the last active battleground for the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict. When war broke out in 1975, it became difficult, if not impossible, to disengage Lebanon from the Arab-Israel conflict.

After 1969, Lebanon and the PLO were locked in a zero-sum game. To prevail one had to neutralise the other. From 1969, when Cairo Agreement between the Lebanese government and the PLO was signed, until the outbreak of war in 1975, Lebanon's major

political crises- four severe cabinet crises, the longest in Lebanon's history were linked to PLO militarism and to Palestinian-Israeli warfare. Coexistence between Lebanon's *'raison d'etat'* and the PLO's *'raison de revolution'* could at best be temporary. Nor was a negotiated settlement possible between a revolutionary movement seeking to expand and earn international recognition, and a state seeking to contain it. The inevitable outcome was military confrontation which took place in 1975.

It was not by chance that Lebanon provided the setting for the most acute manifestations of the problematic relations between Syria and the Palestinians. Both sides had vital interests and common enemies there. At the same time, a fierce struggle sprang up in Lebanon for the independence of the Palestinian movement in the face of Syria's ambitions to gain custodianship not only over the Palestinians but all of Lebanon.³

From the very onset of the civil war in Lebanon, Syria unrelentingly moved to exploit the Lebanese crisis as a lever to cast its patronage over Lebanon, promote its own interests there, and ultimately impose a 'Syrian order' in Lebanon. The Palestinians also had vital interests in Lebanon. For them, Lebanon served as a staging and organisation ground such as was unavailable in any other Arab country. Among Lebanon's attractions for the Palestinians were: the second largest Palestinian population in the Arab world (250,000-300,000), who for the most part lived in refugee camps, were deeply frustrated and alienated from the Lebanese and were treated by them as second class citizens; the country's geographical proximity to both Jewish and Arab population centers in northern Israel; topographical conditions which facilitated military deployment and sabotage activity against Israel; a weak central government in Beirut unable to impose its authority

³ Eliahu Elath, "Phoenician Zionism in Lebanon," *The Jerusalem Quarterly*, No.42, Spring, 1987, pp.60-63.

on the fedayeen, the ready availability to the fedayeen of allies among the Muslims and the Left; and the existence of a communication and propaganda center in Beirut from which the tenets of the 'Palestinian revolution' could be disseminated. Yet overriding all of these factors, Lebanon provided refuge from oppressive Syrian custodianship, an arena where organisational efforts could be undertaken without close Syrian supervision, and where a sense of independence and freedom of action could be cultivated. Thus, Arafat and the other Palestine leaders came to prefer Beirut over Damascus as a base, maintaining contact with the latter via emissaries and frequent visits.

Until 1970 Syrian-Palestinian relations in the Lebanese arena were characterised by a marked degree of understanding and cooperation. The five years preceding 1970 had seen the building of the current Palestine infrastructure in Lebanon with the support of the Ba'th regime in Damascus. The latter viewed the entrenchment of the Palestine in Lebanon as a means for harassing Israel and for toppling the 'reactionary' regime in Beirut in favor of a 'progressive' Muslim-socialist government.⁴ In practical terms, Syria in this period provided the fedayeen in Lebanon with intensive aid in the form of arms, supplies, training and political backing against their enemies in Lebanon. Syria put itself as a barrier against attempts by the Christian camp and the Beirut government to check the process of fedayeen consolidation in Lebanon. Finally, the Lebanese government was forced to yield to Syrian pressure and recognise the legitimacy of the Palestinian presence in the country in the Cairo Agreement 1970, and the Melkart Agreement 1973.(under the provision of this document the Palestinians had been accorded a greater degree of autonomy than some Lebanese citizens had.)

⁴ Marius Deeb, *Syria's Terrorist War on Lebanon and the Peace Process*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p.3.

It was after the expulsion of the Palestinian from Jordan and Asad's rise to power in 1970 that the conflict between Syria and Palestine began to surface. The causes of this development were twofold: First, being expelled from Jordan, the Palestinians seized on Lebanon as their permanent arena of action; the last territorial base on which they could enjoy relative freedom, and the only confrontation border across which they could operate against Israel. A Syrian takeover of their command centers would have spelled the end of their independence. Abu Ayyad writes in his autobiography: "the fedayeen after having been driven from Jordan had no other place to go but Lebanon. If we had to yield the gains made in decades of struggle would be lost. Of course, the Palestinians revolution would ultimately survive, but a decisive defeat in Lebanon would compromise it for years to come."⁵ The Syrians however took a dim view of the growing fedayeen independence in Lebanon, fearing it would weaken their influence over the Palestinians and entangle Damascus in a military confrontation with Israel at a time and under circumstances it found inconvenient.

Second, Syria under Asad opted to support the continued existence of the traditional Lebanese regime headed by Suleiman Frangiyeh, a personal friend of Asad's family, resisting the idea of toppling that regime and replacing it with a leftist Muslim government under the Druze leader Kamal Jumblat. In the Syrian perception, it was precisely the weakness of the traditional regime which could serve as a means for Damascus to increase its influence in Lebanon, whereas a revolutionary leftist regime enjoying fedayeen support was liable to erode Syrian power in Lebanon, expand fedayeen freedom of action, and perhaps even pose an internal threat to the Syrian regime

⁵ Helena Cobban, *The Palestinian Liberation Organisation: People, Power and Politics*, (Cambridge University Press, 1984), p.54.

itself. The fedayeen, by contrast, forged an alliance with the Left and its leader Jumblat, who consistently strove to oust the traditional Lebanese regime Syrian objections notwithstanding.

Ultimately, the Lebanese Left acted as a catalyst which during the Lebanese civil war caused the divergence of outlook and conflict of interests between Syria and the fedayeen to swell into a political rift and then a full-fledged armed conflict. For the fedayeen the alliance with the Lebanese Left was of outside importance given the lesson they learned from the events of September, 1970. The conclusion they drew was that they had been ill-served by their tenuous hold among the civilian population in Jordan and within the political establishment in Amman. As Arafat explained to Karim Pakraduni, (a member of the Phalangists political bureau and a liaison between them and the Syrians) 'our defeat in Jordan was not military but political. We maintained our resistance in Amman for some weeks but we lost our political base, and no political personage was able to confront King Hussein.'⁶ Hence the fedayeen attached great importance to their alliance with Kamal Jumblat and the Lebanese Left, perceiving their association as according legitimacy to their military and political activity in Lebanon, and utilising it as a channel of communication to the Lebanese government and the civilian population in the areas under fedayeen control. Beyond this, the radical Marxist-oriented fedayeen organisations identified with the ideology espoused by the Lebanese Left and backed its aspirations to effect a basic change in the political and social fabric of the Lebanese polity. For all these reasons the fedayeen regarded themselves as duty-bound to assist the

⁶ Charles Winslow, *Lebanon: War and Politics in a Fragmented Society*, (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 173.

Lebanese Left in the civil war even when their course of action held out the acute risk of a clash with Syria

3. Israeli's Interests

The Israeli position on Lebanon has always been dictated by the dynamics of the Arab-Israeli conflict and by the role played by Lebanon in that conflict.

The existence of a Maronite community claiming to have a separate identity was recognised by the Zionist leadership even before the establishment of the state of Israel. The grandiose conceptions of an Israeli-Maronite alliance were ultimately not decisive in the formation of Israeli policy towards Lebanon; of prime importance rather, were the logic and dynamics of the general Arab-Israeli conflict. The Arab-Israeli conflict has also been viewed in Israel largely through the strategic-military prism. On the first level, the Israeli interest was that Lebanon should not become a part of a war coalition against Israel, nor serve as a base for the forces of another Arab country involved in a war against Israel. On the second level, the Israeli interest was that terrorist attacks against Israeli targets should not be carried out from Lebanese soil.

Till 1967 the Israeli-Lebanese border was quiet. However, after the Six Day War the Palestinian organisation particularly Fatah began establishing themselves in Lebanon. On 17 May, 1968, mortar shells fell on Manara, an Israeli kibbutz. An Israeli El-Al passenger plane was attacked in Athens. Israel- acting on the assumption that the attack was engineered by the PLO in Lebanon, retaliated heavily by attacking Beirut airport, destroying 14 Lebanese civilian carriers.

In the period 1967-70, Israel was forced to contend with threats and security problems much graver than those facing it from Lebanon. Nonetheless, as a consequence of the defeat in Jordan in 1970, the headquarters of the Palestinian organisation moved to Beirut. This was the beginning of Palestinian operations against Israel from Lebanon. Israeli retaliation took several forms: artillery shelling of Palestinian bases, penetration of Israeli ground units into south Lebanon to strike directly at terrorist bases, and air strikes. One of the most outstanding actions was the spectacular commando raid on Beirut international airport in 1968. Another commando action was conducted in 1973 when PLO headquarters were attacked. The developing situation led to the emergence of one vital security interest for Israel- the neutralization of south Lebanon and its conversion to a buffer zone. Israeli concern was to deny the PLO access to Israeli settlements in the border area. This interest lay within the framework of 'current security.' Of similar importance was the Israeli interest in denying the presence in south Lebanon of the regular army of a hostile Arab state. This was considered as a threat to 'basic' security. The obvious possibility was that of a Syrian military deployment. South Lebanon could be used as a springboard for a Syrian attack against Israel or for launching a variant of a stationary war of attrition.

Following 1967, and even more after 1973, an additional strategic consideration emerged concerning south Lebanon, namely, to keep it open for a possible Israeli offensive designed to outflank heavy Syrian deployment in the Golan. An Israeli in advance could move through south Lebanon into the beqa'a, and proceed from there in an outflanking sweep towards Damascus and even central Syria.

The Rabin government which came to power in mid-1974 focused its attention on two contexts: Israeli-US relations and further attempts at Israeli-Egyptian accommodation. When the civil war broke out Israel was in the midst of the painful breakdown in March-April 1975 of the negotiation of the Sinai II agreement with Egypt. Thus Israel had to concentrate all its foreign and defence policy efforts on these two crucial areas. Against this background, the Syrian and the Jordanian contexts were considered to be of lesser importance, and Lebanon occupied an even lower ranking in the list of Israeli priorities. Furthermore, the civil war increasingly diverted PLO attention from the border with Israel to the Beirut area. Therefore, until September 1975, when Sinai II was signed, Israeli interest in and concern about developments in Lebanon was limited and relatively marginal.

With the signing of the Sinai II, the Israeli political and strategic position improved considerably. Relations with the United States regained their previous warmth and closeness. Egypt appeared to be moving closer to a 'political' rather than a 'military' approach to the conflict; and last but not the least, the division within the Arab agreement hastened to consolidate its newly emerging association with Jordan. At the same time, its relation with Iraq deteriorated. In this context, the heavy fighting in Lebanon and the signs of Syrian interference led to increased Israeli attention to developments there. Of particular importance was the emerging Syrian intervention, and Israeli's reactions to developments in Lebanon must be seen in the light of its perceptions of Syrian attitudes and behaviour.

The deteriorating situation in Lebanon, and the threat of Syrian military intervention, presented Israel with a complex political and military challenge. A special

forum was created in order to deal with the Lebanon issue. The Israeli policy and decision making process in regard to Lebanon during this period, and throughout 1976, kept the politico-strategic priorities clearly defined. The Israeli-US and the Israeli-Egyptian context were given more priority and as dictating behaviour in other less critical areas. There was an attempt to identify direct security threats that might emanate from Lebanon and appropriate remedies were investigated. The policy and strategies adopted were primarily 'reactive.' Israel reacted to developments initiated by domestic groups inside Lebanon and by Syria. Rabin was careful to avoid deeper commitments to groups within Lebanon.

1. Lebanon and Israel

A living example of the dictum, 'My enemy's enemy is my friend,' is the relationship between Israel and various Lebanese elements notably the Maronite community. By the early 1930's, a spontaneous commercial interaction was already developing, centering around two main points: lands offered for sale to prospective Jewish settlers, and the growing number of Palestinian-Jewish vacationers who were frequenting Lebanese resorts. Many Christian Lebanese perceived their community as a beleaguered island of 'civilisation' on the fringes of the 'desert' and as a link between the West and the Orient - perceptions easily echoed by many Palestinian Jews about their own community.

When Maronite and other Christian elements sensed that the delicate balance of power inside Lebanon was turning against them after the installation of the PLO in the early 1970's, they secretly began cooperating with the Israelis. This cooperation, which became increasingly overt, was more than just tactical or momentary. As we have seen,

its bases lay in a wider harmony of interests; a shared world view, and contacts which began five decades ago.

In 1972-76, several events had an unsettling effect on Lebanon. Besides, the establishment of the PLO's principal base, other events was the oil embargo and the consequent accumulation of immense financial resources in some Arab countries. The collective power of the Arab world and, within the Arab world, the influence of Saudi Arabia and other distinctly Islamic oil-producing states- grew. Thus Islam and Islamic solidarity assumed a clearer political role. The mood was accentuated by a growth of Lebanon's Muslim majority as well as by the altered position of the Western Powers in the region. In 1958, when the United States landed marines in Beirut, Lebanon perceived the intervention as a manifestation of the West's commitment to the preservation of Lebanon's political status quo. Fifteen years later, however, the repercussions of the 1958 intervention had faded and the position of the United States and its attitude to Lebanon had changed considerably. The United States were seeking friends and influence in other parts of the Arab world and were not likely to jeopardize these interests for the sake of the vague notion of a Christian Lebanon.⁷ The Oil Revolution in West Asia in 1973-74 also added to social and economic tensions in Lebanon.

Another change stemmed from Syria's newfound political stability, which was the basis for an ambitious foreign policy, with Lebanon as one of its main targets.⁸ Syria had never given up its implicit claim over Lebanon, or at least the parts added to it in

⁷ Edward E. Azar and Kate Shnayerson, "United States-Lebanese Relations: A pocketful of Paradoxes" in Robert J. Pranger and Paul Jureidini, eds., *The Emergence of New Lebanon: Fantasy or Reality?* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1984), pp.244-245.

⁸ See Itamar Rabinovich, "The Limits of Military Power: Syria's Role," in P.E. Haley and L.W. Snider, eds., *Lebanon in Crisis: Participants and Issues*, (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1979). pp. 55-73.

September 1920. The emergence of a comparatively stable and effective regime enforced this ambitious policy. Syria had both political and security concerns in Lebanon. Lebanon, as a political society, was a threat to the closed political society of Syria. And Lebanon could be used militarily by Israel to outflank Syria's defenses or by Syria to open a new front against Israel.

But Syria's leaders also fitted Lebanon into a larger design, intended to capitalise on Egypt's declining position in the Arab world and to develop an independent power base for Syria that was to rely on its military strength and the extension of Syrian influence over the immediate environment: Jordan, Lebanon, and with the Palestinians. Syria also developed peculiar interests in Lebanon's Shia community. This was not merely the single largest community, but one that could have a soothing effect on Syrian domestic politics. The Syrian regime calculated that if Lebanon's Shia leaders acknowledged the Alawis as part of the Shia sect, it would help Syria's minority Alawi rulers legitimize their rule. Lebanon's Shia leader, Musa al-Sadr, not only recognised the Alawis in Lebanon as part of his community but accused Syrian Sunnis of trying to monopolise Islam.⁹

The means employed by Damascus to interfere in Lebanon and to exert pressure on the government were commensurate with the importance attached by the Hafiz al-Asad regime to its Lebanese policy. Syria could mobilise the support of at least some of the Palestinian organisations, its Shia community, the pro-Syrian wing of the Lebanese Ba'th party, and Lebanon's half-million Syrian workers. The cumulative effect of Syria's presence, pressure and intervention became visible by 1973. Syria had intervened

⁹ Itamar Rabinovich, *The War for Lebanon, 1970-1983*, (London: Cornell University Press, 1984), p.37.

discreetly in the Lebanese elections in 1972. A year later, Damascus replaced Cairo as the external centre of allegiance and guidance for Lebanese Muslims and acquired virtual veto power over major decisions concerning Lebanon's domestic and foreign policies.

Syria's influence accelerated a related development in Lebanon's domestic politics- the political mobilisation and radicalisation of its Shia community. The complex and delicate mechanisms of the Lebanese polity depended on the leadership and political wisdom of the communal leaders; the political system was ill equipped to deal with the changed mood of the Shia community. The system had functioned through manipulation and intrigue, the eternal tools of the weak, during the presidency of Charles Helou (1964-70). His predecessor, Shihab, never quite relinquished hopes for reelection and sought to perpetuate his influence and to preserve his political base of his own, sought to maximise the powers of the presidency against the Sunni prime minister, Helou's successor, Franjiyya, though beginning auspiciously, found it increasingly difficult to get his Muslim partners to cooperate in forming cabinets and maintaining a parliamentary majority, especially after the 1972 parliamentary elections, in which Syria's influence and the rising power of the Lebanese left were apparent. Faranjiyya resorted to a variety of unorthodox measures, such as the nomination of a second-echelon Sunni leader Amin al-Hafiz to lead the cabinet, in defiance of the traditional Sunni leadership. But rather than solve the problem, these measures only aggravated frictions within the political establishment and inflamed communal tensions.

Furthermore, the politicians traditional bickering over the daily business of government was symptomatic of much graver underlying problems. Their preoccupation with preserving or achieving influence and position evidenced a failure to read the

writing on the wall and incomprehension of the qualitative change that had taken place in Lebanese politics. A show of unity and restraint by Lebanon's traditional politicians may not have stemmed the tide, but its absence compounded the difficulties and added a mournful touch to the course of events that in retrospect is seen as a prelude to the civil war

4. Syrians

The Alawi regime in Syria never had any intention of making peace with Israel, because perpetuating the conflict in the name of Arab nationalism gave it legitimacy and kept it in power. Being a regime founded on a coup d'état and Alawi-being a minority sect, it was very precarious. It needed an ideological cause to fight and found it in the Arab-Israel conflict. By maintaining a continuous low-intensity conflict with Israel, in the last quarter of the century, through its proxies and primarily via Lebanon, the Syrian regime was able to claim that it was the only Arab country that was fighting with Israel. This confrontation ...'legitimises' the Alawi minority, which has been regarded by the Sunni majority in Syria as heretical in character. It justifies the continuous military dictatorship and the large budget allocated to the military, which in turn reinforces the 'Alawi domination of Syria because the Alawi minority is so socio-economically backward that it could not keep its domination if Syria were to be transformed into an economically and politically free society.

Syria dominated Lebanon not to end its internal strife but to use it for the low-intensity conflict with Israel. Syria's role in the peace process of West Asia has been,

since 1974, an unabated war against all attempts to resolve peacefully the Arab-Israeli conflict and to perpetuate a war waged against the Lebanese polity.

It was a golden opportunity for Asad to legitimize his regime when Egyptian President Anwar Sadat secretly approached him to launch a war against Israel in October 1973. Despite the fact that the Israelis reoccupied the Golan Heights and even occupied more land than in June 1967 pushing the Syrian army to Sa'sa on the road to Damascus, the October War has remained in the annals of the Syrian regime as the glorious and heroic war. The Golan Heights Agreement 31 of May, 1974 which followed after the war was itself a watershed because it revealed that having Syria as a confrontation state against Israel constituted the *raison d'être* of Asad's regime and thus was vital for his survival. Another matter of paramount importance from the Golan Heights Agreement was Asad's acceptance that guerilla operations would not be permitted against Israel across the Golan Heights.¹⁰ This promise created a problem for Asad, namely, if Asad's legitimacy was based on confronting Israel, and this could no longer be done across the Syrian-Israeli border, then Asad had to find another border from which to confront Israel. Guerrilla operations from Egypt across the Sinai were out of the question. It was also difficult to launch operations across the Jordan River along the Israeli-Jordanian border since King Hussein had evicted the guerrillas of the PLO by July 1971. By a process of elimination the ideal territory from which Asad could sponsor guerrilla operations against Israel was the Lebanese-Israeli border. Already the PLO fighters were operating there in accordance with the Cairo Agreement signed in November 1969 between the Lebanese government and the PLO, which had allowed the latter to have its guerrillas in the region

¹⁰ Deed, n.4 p.6.

of southern Lebanon called al-'Arqub. Therefore it was not surprising that when the opportunity availed itself in Lebanon for Syrian intervention and mediation, Asad took advantage of it to use Lebanon's territories to confront Israel as he was unable to do so anywhere else.

5. Civil War (1975-76)

1. Syrian Mediation in Preparation for a Military Intervention in Lebanon

On his official visit to Lebanon on 7 January 1975, Asad reiterated the view that Lebanon and Syria were one people and one nation, and declared his "willingness" to oblige with military and political assistance. This was primarily aimed at creating closer ties with Lebanon similar to those established with Jordan (August, 1975) in an obvious attempt to spread his influence over all Arab parties involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

During his visit to Lebanon, Asad had already planned his grand strategy that involved Jordan as well as Lebanon, where the PLO had created a state within a state. Asad's role in fomenting the conflict in Lebanon remains a mystery. For instance, the incident that sparked that took place on 26 February 1975, involving the fatal wounding of Ma'ruf Sa'd (a former deputy who was a prominent politician in the city of Sidon) has remained unsolved. Who actually shot Ma'ruf Sa'd? Is Syria responsible? According to a recent claim, the finger points at Syria. It seems that Ma'ruf has expressed in a conversation with Michel Aoun, on 25 February 1975, his "exasperation" with some armed Palestinian organisation in Sidon. The next day he was assassinated by "an operative of Syrian intelligence."¹¹ Similarly, the incident that took place on 13 April 1975, involving the shooting by unidentified gunmen, of three bodyguards of the Phalanges leader Pierre

¹¹ Deeb, n.4, p.8.

Gemayel in the vicinity of a newly inaugurated Church in Ain-al Rummneh, and the ambushing, in retaliation, of a bus of Palestinian guerrillas by the Phalanges militia, has also remained shrouded in mystery. Was it Syria pulling all the cords to ignite conflict? Consequently, parties to the conflict sought Arab mediation and particularly Syrian mediation which provided opportunity for Syria to intervene in Lebanon. Khaddam, the Syrian foreign minister, played a role in the replacement of the military cabinet, formed by President Franjiyya on 23 May 1975, by a new cabinet presided by the Sunni leader from Tripoli, Rashid Karami. Khaddam also sponsored a Palestinian-Lebanese cease-fire, declared on 1 July 1975. This agreement was the outcome of a joint Lebanese-Syrian-Palestinian meeting attended by Lebanese Prime Minister Karami, PLO leader Arafat, the commander of the Lebanese army General Iskandar Ghanim, and the head of the military department of the PLO, Zuhair Muhsin, who was also the head of the pro-Syrian al-Sa'iqa Palestinian guerrilla organization. Thus, Khaddam's visit to Lebanon on 17 June, and 29 June to 2 July, led to formation of the Karami Cabinet, and was the beginning of Syrian intervention in Lebanese internal politics.

Although Syria's role in Lebanon was, from 1975 May until 1976 January that of a diplomatic mediator, Syria was not strictly neutral during this period between the two parties to the conflict, that is, the Lebanese National Movement (LNM) and the PLO on the one hand and the Christian parties on the other hand. The fact that the head of the military department of the PLO, which was deeply involved in the Lebanese conflict, was Zuhair Mushin, the leader of al-Sa'qa organisation, which was under complete control of Syria, cast doubts about the neutrality of the Syrian government. This unique combination of the ostensible public role of Asad as a mediator, and concomitantly his

covert role to change the military conditions on the ground by one side against the other would characterize Asad's modus operandi in Lebanon from 1975 onwards.

From the very beginning of the conflict in Lebanon, that is, from April 1975 till January 1976 Syria had no direct military presence in Lebanon. Nevertheless, throughout that period Syria provided arms and political support to the PLO and its strategic partner Kamal Junblatt's LNM. Asad was putting his act together by using the PLO, Junblatt's demands, and the traditional Muslim leaders' grievances to weaken the Lebanese state and force it to seek Syrian political support and to regard Syria as the indispensable and sole mediator and arbitrator.

A discernible pattern emerged at that time, which was to be repeated many times over the next quarter of a century: whenever progress was made toward peace by some third party, Asad resorted to violence whether by escalating the conflict in Lebanon, or by engaging in acts of terrorism to undermine the peace initiative. He then blamed the violence on those who had taken the step toward peace. It was after the signing of the Second Sinai Agreement in September 1975, that fighting escalated. President Suleiman Franjiyeh who had good relation with the Asad regime nevertheless, suspected Syria of escalating the fighting and believed that the aim of the conflict was to pressure the Lebanese government to sign political and military agreements similar to those concluded between Syria and Lebanon. The Second Sinai agreement between Egypt and Israel was of paramount importance because Asad used it to claim that fighting in Lebanon escalated to force Syria and the PLO to accept the Second Sinai Agreement. Asad accused Sadat of intensifying the conflict in Lebanon. In reality it was Asad who had increased the military involvement of his proxy Palestinian and Lebanese militias, in

order to put another hurdle on the road to reconvening the Geneva Peace conference as well as to create a wedge between the PLO and Egypt.¹²

2. Asad's Political Calculations

Fully aware from Syria's experience in the 1970 Jordanian-PLO conflict that any military intervention on the side of the PLO (and the LNM) would immediately trigger an Israeli and possibly an American reaction; Asad sought an alternative to dominate Lebanon. Logically if Asad had to intervene militarily in Lebanon, he had to be on the side of those who were fighting against the PLO and the LNM, namely, the Lebanese President Suleiman Franjiyeh, Pierre Gemayel the head of the Phalanges Party, and Camille Chamoun the head of the National Liberals Party, that is, the Christian conservative parties. Asad already had good relations with President Franjiyya, but he also needed the support of the leader of the major Christian political party with the strongest militia, namely, Pierre Gemayel. Zuhair Muhsin, the leader of the Syrian-controlled Paestinian al-Sa'qa was instrumental in inviting Pierre Gemayel to visit Damascus which he did on December 6, 1975. The visit was accompanied by slaying, under mysterious circumstances, of four members Gemayel's Phalangist Party and an indiscriminate retaliatory killing of almost two hundred Muslims. It was difficult to determine who was behind for it could have been perpetrated by radical members of the PLO-LNM who were against Gemayel's visit to Damascus, or those who wanted to intensify the conflict between the Christian conservative parties and the PLO-LNM so there would be more urgency for Syrian mediation.

¹² Marius Deeb, *The Lebanese Civil War*, (New York: Praeger, 1980), p.24.

The Syrian strategy was two pronged. First, to divide the Christian conservative parties, if possible, by courting Phalangist leader Pierre Gemayel and President Franjiyyah, while isolating and pushing the recalcitrant Camille Chamoun who was suspicious of Asad's motives. Second, to continue to support politically and militarily the LNM-PLO alliance, while concomitantly trying to establish a separate coalition of organisations that would be loyal to Syria.¹³

The ideal conditions that would guarantee Syria's military intervention and its ultimate domination of Lebanon were fourfold. First and foremost to prevent any other power from intervening militarily in the conflict, and to avert any collective intervention, that is, what was called then as the Arabisation or the internationalisation of the conflict. Second, in order to enhance Syria's role all other mediators, unless they supported the Syrian role, would have to fail. Third, the Lebanese government and President Franjiyya in particular and his Christian political allies could not be allowed to win the war against the PLO-LNM alliance because then any external intervention such as Syria's would become superfluous, and consequently Asad would miss the opportunity to intervene in Lebanon. Fourth, the Lebanese government, and, in particular, President Franjiyya and his major Christian conservative allies would have to support a Syrian military intervention in Lebanon to legitimise it.¹⁴

Beginning in early 1976, a qualitative change took place in the roles of Israel, Syria and the PLO in Lebanon. As revealed later by Camille Chamoun, Israel began giving substantial military aid to the Phalangist Party and Chamoun in January 1976.

¹³ Ibid., p.39.

¹⁴ Yair Evron, *War And Intervention in Lebanon*, (London and Sydney, Croom Helm, 1987), p.21 and also in Deeb, n. 4, p.12.

Arafat attended the Aramun summit of Lebanese Muslim leader held on 30 December 1975, and his very presence reinforced the active role played by the PLO in Lebanon's internal affairs. Syria's role also underwent a qualitative change from January 1976 onwards. Asad regime reasserted that Lebanon was part of Syria and "we shall take it back if there is any real attempt of partition...either Lebanon remains united or it has to be incorporated by Syria."¹⁵

The increased involvement of the PLO forces in the conflict prompted the Phalanges Party to impose a food blockade on Tal al-Zatar camp on 7 January 1976, bringing into relief the issue of the armed presence of the PLO in Lebanon. The parties of Chamoun and Pierre Gemayel and their allies wanted, as much as possible, to demonstrate that the conflict in Lebanon was basically a Palestinian-Lebanese conflict, maintaining that no changes in the political system could be implemented under duress before the Lebanese territorial sovereignty was restored. After they occupied the Dubai camp on 14 January, they overran, on 19 January 1976, the Maslakh-Karantina slum area near the Beirut Port, and evicted its residents. All this provided Asad with the opportunity to intervene indirectly through the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA) to counter this offensive.

Until 22 January 1976, Zuhair Muhsin considered the relationship between Syria, the LNM, and the PLO as being one of "basic allies." After that date Syria, according to Muhsin, became primarily a mediator trying to put an end to the conflict in Lebanon. The formation of the High Military Committee on 22 January, 1976 pointed to an even-handed mediating role by the Syrian delegaton. By February 1976, Asad had become

¹⁵ Deeb, n.12, p.107.

deeply involved in Lebanon. This was accomplished by the support for Syria of the LNM-PLO alliance, the sending of the Yarmuk Brigade of the PLA, and the direct military role of Syrian-controlled as-Sa'diyat. Syria's involvement was also ostensible in the role of Syrian military officers in the High Military Committee. This culminated in the sponsorship of the constitutional document, which was the result of fruitful Syrian efforts to find an acceptable solution to all sides concerned in the Lebanese Civil War. This mediating role of Syria was taken negatively by the LNM-PLO alliance and they reacted by undermining the Lebanese Army through a rebellion led by Lieutenant Ahmad Khataib, which appealed to Muslim officers and soldiers among its ranks. The rebellion of Ahmad Khataib erupted on 21 January. On 26 January, he named his movement "Lebanon Arab Army" (LAA). There is no doubt that Fatah supported the Kataib rebellion as was clearly demonstrated in the taking over of the Lebanese Army barracks in West Beirut during the period 21 January -12 March 1976. The rise of Lebanese Arab Army led to the complete disintegration of the Lebanese Army. The conservative Christian Lebanese leaders facing the risk of defeat on the battle field, coupled with the disintegration of the Lebanese Army were pushed willy-nilly into the arms of Asad.

The disintegration of the Lebanese Army weakened the Christian conservative parties as well as President Franjiya. They had hoped to use the Lebanese Army to crack down on the LNM-PLO alliance and to reestablish law and order in the country. The emergence of the LAA emboldened Junblatt to call, on 16 March, 1976, for a decisive battle to defeat the conservative Christian parties. Junblatt believed that he could at least defeat the conservative Christian leaders and end the prominence of the Maronite

community. He wished to regain the political leadership in Mount Lebanon that the Druze had held from the seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries.

This intransigence of the charismatic leader of the LNM, Kamal Junblatt played directly into the hands of Asad. Asad persuaded Junblatt on March 27, 1976, to abandon offensive against the conservative Christian militias and accept instead Syrian mediation as the only alternative. Junblatt's fear of a Syrian hegemony became a self-fulfilling prophecy. In other words, it became easy for Asad to intervene militarily in Lebanon against Junblatt and the PLO, because it dissipated Israeli and American objections to the military intervention. The golden opportunity had come because the military offensive by the strengthened LNM-PLO alliance forced the Christian conservative leaders to accept a Syrian military intervention against the forces of the LNM-PLO alliance.

Asad also wanted to prevent an Israeli or a French military intervention. To placate the Israelis it was sufficient for Asad to attack the PLO and its Lebanese allies, the LNM. Except for the supply of arms to the Christian conservative militias, Israel would leave the fighting to these militias and to the Syrian army. Israel was obviously delighted with the clash between Syria and the PLO.

3. The Twist of Events

The presence of the Syrian troops on Lebanese territory was a kind of pressure on the Lebanese parliament to facilitate the election of Asad's candidate, Elias Sarkis; the other candidate for the presidency was Raymond Edde. Junblatt accused Syria of trying to prevent the election of Raymond Edde, a leading critic of both Christian conservative leaders especially President Franjiyya, and of Syria itself. To ensure Syrian domination,

Syria promoted its own candidate for the presidency in Lebanon, Elias Sarkis, who was eventually elected on 8 May 1976. By early April 1976, Junblatt's stand became irrevocably at loggerheads with that of the Asad regime. Junblatt had already revealed on 10 April 1976, that the Syrian armored Brigade 91 had entered Lebanese territory, in addition to the Syrian troops that had already entered Lebanon under the cover of the pro-Syrian al-Sa'iqa organisation of the PLO and the PLA. Junblatt argued with Arafat that the ultimate objective of Syrian intervention was to crack down on the PLO, similar to what King Hussein had done in Jordan in 1970. This became more plausible in Arafat's mind as King Hussein himself, during his visit to the United States in April 1976, lobbied for Syria military intervention and maintained that "only Syria can put an end to strife in Lebanon."¹⁶ King Hussein hoped that Asad would curb the PLO and perhaps its leadership.

Junblatt gave another explanation of Syria's policy. According to him, it prevented the PLO and the LNM from winning because "it aimed to establish a new balance between the two contending parties..."¹⁷ Junblatt accused Syria of conspiring against Lebanon, and pointed to Asad's irresistible urge to interfere in everything that concerned Lebanon. Junblatt predicted that Syria would either annex Lebanon or rule it indirectly through a hegemonic domination, which would undermine its democratic institutions and curb its democratic freedoms.

¹⁶ Deeb, n.12 p.9.

¹⁷ Kamal Junblatt, *I Speak, for Lebanon*, (London: Zed Press), 1980.

4. The Green Signal

The French proposal to send troops to Lebanon in peacekeeping assisted Syria in its intervention. Many Arab parties opposed foreign intervention and preferred an Arab country to resolve the conflict. Nevertheless, Junblatt's LNM and PLO opposed the Syrian intervention.

Raymond Edde, who was the other leading candidate for the presidency in May 1976, and a critic of the Phalanges Party and President Franjiyya, regretted that the Christian Maronite establishment welcomed the Syrian military intervention when Syria's aim was

to destroy completely Lebanese sovereignty pretending that its intervention was to put an end to blood shedding and armed conflict while Syria from the outset had encouraged the economic destruction of Lebanon because it has been in the interest of Syria as the only beneficiary.

Other Lebanese politicians regarded the Syrian military intervention as the only solution because neither the Lebanese Front (then called FFML) nor Junblatt's LNM and the PLO could score a military victory. Syria therefore would bolster the "legitimate" authorities in Lebanon and reestablish law and order.¹⁸ According to Junblatt, the Syrians contrived the attacks on the 'Akkar village of al-Qibiyyat to justify their military intervention. Asad was preparing the Syrian and Arab public for an intervention that would encompass the whole of Lebanon except the area extended by the 'red line' agreement between Israel and Syria.

In contrast, President Franjiyya, whom President Asad had not forced to resign before his term expired, backed fully the Syrian intervention and provided Asad with legitimate justification for the intervention. In a letter addressed to the secretary-general

¹⁸ That was the view of the president of the Chamber of Deputies, Kamal al-Asad, the prominent Druze leader, Majid Arsalan and religious leader of the Shia community, Imam Musa al-Sadr.

of the Arab League, President Franjiyya maintained that he regarded “the Syrian military presence as executing what the Constitutional document had included...with respect to the Syrian guarantee that the Palestinian side would abide by the agreements concluded with the Lebanese authorities.”¹⁹ Franjiyya added that the Syrian military presence would be temporary and would disappear when peace, security and stability were restored to Lebanon.

Asad’s strategy on the inter-Arab level was to make sure that the Arab states would not challenge the Syrian military presence in Lebanon and would eventually endorse it. After warding off and Israeli intervention because of the ‘red line’ agreement which was arranged through the good offices of the United States, Asad managed to get the French to endorse his intervention in Lebanon during his official visit to France in 17-19 June 1976. Raymond Edde had argued that the entry of Syrian troops into Lebanon was unconstitutional because neither the Lebanese cabinet nor the Chamber of Deputies had approved it. Edde added that prior to the entry of Syrian troops President Asad’s armed agents had “plundered ...and promoted the fighting.”

The cooperation between Syria and the Maronites militias was now overt, as the latter took the lead in the offensive. Their main effort was directed at the Palestinian refugee camp of Tel al-Zatar in Beirut, which fell in August after a two month siege. To the Sunni majority in Syria, this was an intolerable collusion by two minority groups, the Syrian Alawis and the Lebanese Maronites, against oppressed Sunni majorities.

On 29 July yet another attempt to reach a Syrian-Palestinian agreement was made, but it too was failed. Subsequently Syria and its Lebanese allies directed their energies to

¹⁹ Deeb, n. 2, p.21.

achieving a military victory before 23 September when Sarkis, whose election to the presidency was secured by Syria in May, was to begin his term of office. Damascus launched a second all-out military offensive against Palestinian and leftist strongholds in Mount Lebanon and the coastal areas. In two weeks the opposition was on the verge of total defeat, but rather than consummate its military victory, Syria attended the Six Parties Summit, convened by Saudi Arabia in Riyadh between 16 October and 18 to find a solution to the Lebanese crisis. The 1976 American presidential elections were to take place within a month, and the new administration should be pressured to pursue a settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict more favourable to the Arabs than Kissinger's step-by-step diplomacy. But to accomplish that, the Arabs should settle their differences and revive the cooperation that had facilitated their achievements in 1973 and 1974. For that purpose, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait invited Syria, Egypt, Lebanon, and the PLO to join them in Riyadh.

Asad went to Riyadh primarily in response to Saudi Arabian pressure. But he also have realised that a total humiliation of the PLO by Syria and its Lebanese allies would be unacceptable to Syrian and Arab opinion. He emerged from the Riyadh conference and its immediate sequel in Cairo with impressive achievements.²⁰ The six participants decided on an immediate cease-fire and a gradual normalisation in Lebanon. Arab troops (the Arab Deterrent Force), some thirty thousand strong, composed mainly of Syrian troops, was to maintain peace and order in Lebanon. It would be under the nominal authority of Lebanon's president and would be financed by the oil-producing states. The Cairo Agreement was to be implemented; all armed forces were to return to their pre-

²⁰ Rabinovich, n. 9, p.56.

April 1975 locations and all heavy weapons put under the control of the Arab Deterrent Force.

Shooting, other acts of violence, political quarrels continued during the next few weeks, but the all-out fighting of the previous eighteen months came to an end. President Sarkis began to form his administration, and in December Salim al- Huss, the Sunni president of the development bank, formed a cabinet composed of four Christian and four Muslim members. These beginnings of political normalisation and the decline in the level of violence encouraged a gradual return to everyday life and the restoration of services, economic activities, and the infrastructure.

Conclusion

Lebanon's inability to remain aloof from the Arab-Israel conflict gave way for external players to play diplomacy in Lebanese politics. Each foreign actor, particularly Syria tacitly dealt the cards to their own advantage and instead of resolving the conflict, they prolonged the war. Palestinians were using Lebanese territory as their main springboard for attacks on Israel. Syria in turn felt an increasing urgency to control Lebanese politics, partly for the purposes of retaining Lebanon as a buffer in any future war with Israel. Syria dominated Lebanon not to end its internal strife but to use it for the low-intensity conflict with Israel. The fact of the matter is that both the PLO and Syria prior to 1982, and Syria alone (with some input from Iran) had prevented, by force or by the threat of force, reconciliation among the Lebanese and putting an end to the conflict within Lebanon and across the Lebanese-Israeli border.

The approach of the Syrian regime was indirect. Asad managed to mislead political leaders in the West, including the United States and Israel. Those leaders misunderstood Syria's intentions because they took at face value Syria's declarations of wanting to make peace with Israel and to end conflict in Lebanon. While Arafat's coalition might have been able to defeat the Lebanese opposition alone, Syria led by Asad, was determined to ensure that Arafat and his leftist allies did not take over Lebanon. Syria wanted a PLO that fought Israel but not one that dominated Lebanon, a prize Damascus sought for itself. Asad also still hoped to seize control over both the PLO and Israel. "You do not represent the Palestinians more than we do," Asad once told Arafat. "Don't you forget...there is no Palestinian people and there is no Palestinian entity. There is only Syria."²¹ This intervention involved escalating the severity and intensity of Israeli retaliatory strikes against targets in Lebanese territory until the government found the political courage to suppress Palestinian guerrilla activities from its territory.

The cumulative effect was total government immobility in foreign and domestic affairs that was intended to preserve Lebanon's fragile democracy without satisfying any of the principal antagonists, inside or outside the country. Unable to satisfy the demands of the Lebanese who wanted the repudiation of the Cairo Agreement and the expulsion of the Palestinians or the insistence of the national movement and the traditional Muslim oligarchs on defense of the Palestinians and an alliance with pan-Arab and progressive forces against Israel, the government could only watch its position and authority crumble to total inaction by 1975.

²¹ Quoted in Rubin Barry and Judith Colp Rubin, *Yasir Arafat: A Political Biography*, (Oxford University Press, 2003), p.45.

CHAPTER V

Chapter V

Conclusion

At the beginning of this work an answer was sought to the question whether the Lebanese state arose out of a genuine national movement with its own goals and aspirations or whether it was created artificially to serve French colonial interests, as claimed by the Muslims and the Arab Nationalists, and it was also attempted to determine the respective roles of the French and the Lebanese Christians in the establishment of Greater Lebanon. Lebanon has indeed had a long history as a separate entity. The founding of greater Lebanon in 1920 was the product of an historical process during which one community, the Maronites, concentrated in Mount Lebanon alongside Druze, successfully resisted assimilation into the surrounding Muslim society, first under the Imarah and later under the Mutasarrifiya. In essence, Lebanese nationalism was a continuation of Maronite Nationalism, and the emergence of Modern Lebanon was the culmination of centuries of Maronite endeavours. It is therefore impossible to separate Maronite history from that of the formation of their independent state and the definition of its borders does not detract from the legitimacy of their national movement, which paralleled the efforts of other ethnic groups in the area- Amernians, Kurds, Jews and Arab Muslims themselves.

For the Lebanese Christians and the Maronites in particular, the appeal to France for help in realising their national aspirations was the natural outcome of their close historical, religious and cultural ties. France had been protecting them for centuries while advancing its own political economic, and cultural interests in the Levant. Yet the

establishment of a politically independent Greater Lebanon was neither the inevitable outcome of this close relationship nor the only way to protect French interests in the area. French archival sources show clearly that between 1918 and 1920 a merely autonomous Lebanese entity with close political administrative and economic ties with a Syrian federation was not unacceptable solution for the French decision-makers and pressure groups, particularly those with economic interests in the Levant.

The success of the Lebanese Christian in realising their national aspirations for an independent state with extended borders, did owe a great deal too external developments which took place during and after the war, particularly the growing pressure and sympathy they succeeded in mobilising in France. The strong rivalry which developed in the Levant immediately after the War between France on the one hand, and Britain, Faisal and the Arab nationalist movement on the other created favourable conditions for the realisation of Lebanese Christian aspirations. With its traditional position in the region contested by Britain and the Arab nationalists, France was forced to rely on Lebanese Christian support to strengthen its claims. The Christians fully exploited this situation realising that in any agreement between France and the Muslims in Syria their own interests would be the first to be compromised. This paved the way for the establishment of Greater Lebanon. But without the constant pressure and lobbying of the Christians in Lebanon, Lebanese emigrant groups and French supporters, it is doubtful whether a separate, completely independent Lebanese state would be established; certainly not within the expanded borders of 1920.

Christian leaders emphasised the importance of an independent Christian leaders repeatedly emphasised the importance of an independent Christina greater Lebanon as the

only reliable base for French interests in the region, although they themselves were primarily motivated by their recognition that only a constant French presence could protect the independence, territorial integrity and Christian character of the state against strong Muslim opposition within its borders and in Syria. The Muslims and the Syrian Arab nationalists, who were involved in a bitter conflict with the French between the two world wars in an attempt to realise the independence and unity of their state, including the areas annexed to Lebanon, naturally preferred to portray the Lebanese state as an artificial entity and the creation of a colonial power rather than as the expression of a genuine national movement.

After 1920 the Lebanese problem took on a new dimension. Christian minority which had traditionally feared political and cultural assimilation and the loss of its national identity in an Arab Muslim society had succeeded in realising its aspirations for an independent state. But in the same process it had created the new problem of a large Muslim minority which itself feared the loss of its national identity and culture in an essentially Christian state. The Christians particularly the Maronites should have established a more viable state confined within Tripoli 'Akkar and Biqa valley. The otherwise decision resulted was a deeply divided society that endangered the very survival of Maronite national establishments.

During the 1930s particularly after the 1932 census some Maronite politicians became more aware of the contradiction between the realities of greater Lebanon in which half of the population was Muslim. The course Lebanon finally took to solve this dilemma was led by Bishara al-khoury and Michel Chiha. They believed that given time and stability it would be possible to create a new Lebanese identity compromising all the

sects. In the meantime they sought to achieve equilibrium by pursuing an essentially confessional system as the basis for the political and administrative structure of the state.

In retrospect this conception proved to be mistaken, as it underestimated the latent strength of the religious, social and cultural barriers between the various sects, especially between Christians and Muslims. The assumption that Lebanon could retain its Western Christian character and still be accepted as a legitimate entity by the Muslims in Lebanon and elsewhere in the Arab world, proved false as well.

The National Pact of 1943 was essentially an attempt to bridge the gap between the two contradictory conceptions of the national identity of the Lebanese state, namely Lebanese Christian and Arab Muslim. Yet neither political sectarianism nor the National Pact has stimulated a strong civic spirit among the Lebanese people. Indeed sectarianism is widely regarded among the Lebanese as detrimental to developing national feeling, and the National Pact cannot but represent a second-best arrangement for the numerous extremists on both the "Arab" and the "Western" sides. The leitmotiv of politics under the independent republic has been the struggle to make these defective institutions work satisfactorily.

The mutual suspicions, fears, prejudices and centuries old hostility were so deeply rooted that they could not be overcome by a compromise between a limited number of bourgeois political and economic elites from the various sects, since they did not necessarily reflect the stand of their communities as a whole. Many Muslims, particularly the Sunnis, continued to regard the Lebanese state as an illegitimate entity unworthy of their allegiance, and while they strove to achieve political, economic and social equality, they sought to transform Lebanon into a truly Arab state, indissolubly linked to

Arab world. Each party, be it the Arab Muslims or the Maronite Christians had the fear of getting engulfed by a Christian character or Muslim character respectively. These fears led the Lebanese Christians to continue to seek allies outside the Arab Muslim world, even after independence. Thus in 1945 after Lebanon joined the Arab league; the Christian Maronite attempted to reach an agreement with the Zionist Jews in Palestine. Again in 1958, when faced with a strong wave of Arab nationalism generated by Nasser, the Maronites turned to the West, to the United States, to defend them. In 1975/6, when they found themselves isolated and abandoned by the West, the Maronites turned to Israel. This has strengthened the belief in the Arab world that Lebanon in its present form is not really faithful to the tenets of Arab nationalism.

Along with the problems of identity that is Arabism and a Western face, there is also the existence of varied parties and militias with their different orientations. The creation of political parties and militias and expansion as a political movement was basically in response to the vacuum created by the collapse of the central government, and particularly the differences among the communities. There was a twin spirit of nationalism. The various parties emerged in response to the increasing inability of the Lebanese government to carry out the tasks imposed upon it by its own mutually antagonistic elites, by various segments of the population and by pressures from the external environment.

Considering the various parties with different ideologies it is evident that the possibility of sustaining the nation as a sovereign entity is difficult indeed. Indeed, factionalism was the dominant characteristic of Lebanese establishment politics and is deeply rooted in Lebanese culture; and events after the end of the Chehabi regime in

1964 revived it, with all its virtues and defects, as the predominant decision-making process. Because factional loyalties are so impermanent, they provide for a widespread sharing of power within the establishment. The fluidity of factional loyalties also presents some obvious drawbacks to political system performance. Overriding power of interests of states by political leaders could bring neither compromise nor dialogue between them and as a result Lebanon has ceased to exist as a sovereign and independent state

Overall the most striking aspect of the Lebanese establishment is its lack of modern political organisations. The personalities and groups described are highly sophisticated but parochially organised. In general, the prevailing political organisation in the establishment is the personal clique.

The chaos in the internal system gave way for the external actors to play a very major role. Each foreign actor, particularly Syria tacitly dealt the cards to their own advantage and instead of resolving the conflict, they prolonged the war. Palestinians were using Lebanese territory as their main springboard for attacks on Israel. Syria in turn felt an increasing urgency to control Lebanese politics, partly for the purposes of retaining Lebanon as a buffer in any future war with Israel. Syria dominated Lebanon not to end its internal strife but to use it for the low-intensity conflict with Israel. The fact of the matter is that both the PLO and Syria prior to 1982, and Syria alone (with some input from Iran) had prevented, by force or by the threat of force, reconciliation among the Lebanese and putting an end to the conflict within Lebanon and across the Lebanese-Israeli border.

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