

ATILIM UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS MASTER'S PROGRAMME

**LEBANON AND SYRIA, SOVEREIGN YET INTERLINKED NATIONS:
THE LEBANESE-SYRIAN RELATIONS, 1971-2018**

Master's Thesis

Baraa Darwich

Ankara – 2019

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ACCEPTION AND APPROVAL

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ÖZ

Darwich, Baraa. Lübnan ve Suriye, Egemen Güçler Olmalarına Rağmen Birbirine Bağlı Uluslar, Lübnan ve Suriye İlişkileri, 1971 – 2018, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Ankara, 2019.

Bu çalışmanın amacı, Suriye'nin Lübnan'ın iç siyasetine ilişkin hegemonyasını nasıl yürüttüğünü ve bağımsızlığından bu yana her iki ülke arasındaki ilişkinin nasıl geliştiğini derinlemesine gözlemlemektir. Buna ek olarak, Suriye'nin Lübnan'a dair olası çıkarları ve bu çıkarları Lübnan üzerinde güçlü bir etkiye sahip olarak nasıl koruduğu analiz edilecektir. Buna ek olarak, Suriye'nin Lübnan üzerinde güçlü bir etki yaratarak sahip olduğu ve güvence altına aldığı olası çıkarları ve bu denli güçlü etkinin önünü açan faktörler de analiz edilecektir.

Bu amaçla, çalışma her iki ülkenin Büyük Suriye'nin parçası olduğu ve ardından Osmanlı yönetimi altındayken bağımsızlık döneminden geçtiği dönemleri de kapsamaktadır.

Ek olarak, Lübnan İç Savaşı olayları, ilk Suriye askeri müdahalesini işaret eden ve ardından ülkedeki varlığını meşrulaştırmayı başardığı savaş olarak incelenip sunulacaktır.

Tez, suikast dönemini, özellikle de Başbakan Rafiq al-Hariri cinayetini, ardından Suriye ordusunu Lübnan'ın dışına itmeyi başaran Sedir Devrimi'ni izliyor. Ayrıca, Hizbullah'ın oluşumunun ve direniş hareketi olarak gelişmesinin ardından Lübnan parlamentosunda siyasi bir oyuncu olarak bulunmasına da değinilmektedir.

Ayrıca, tez devam etmekte olan Suriye iç savaşının Lübnan'ın istikrarı üzerindeki etkilerini ve Suriye rejiminin halen kendi varlığı için savaşırken Lübnan'a uyguladığı etki derecesini incelemektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Lübnan, Suriye'nin İşgali, Hizbullah ve Suriye, Ulusal Anlaşma, Lübnan İç Savaşı, Arap Baharı, Suriye Çatışması.

ABSTRACT

Darwich, Baraa. Lebanon and Syria, Sovereign yet Interlinked Nations: The Lebanese-Syrian Relations 1971-2018, M.A. Thesis, Ankara, 2019.

The aim of this study is to explore how Syria exercised hegemony over Lebanese internal politics and how the relationship between both countries evolved since their independence up until today. It also analyzes the possible interests that Syria has and secures by exercising a powerful influence on Lebanon as well as the factors that paved the way for such a strong influence.

For this purpose, the study covers the historical era under Ottoman rule when both countries were part of one Greater Syria then passes through the independence period of each country. Additionally, the Lebanese Civil War events are examined and presented as the war marked the first Syrian military intervention and following which it succeeded in legitimizing its presence in the country.

The thesis further observes the assassinations period, particularly the murder of P.M Rafiq al-Hariri followed by the Cedar Revolution that succeeded in forcing the Syrian military out of Lebanon. Noteworthy that the formation of Hezbollah and its evolvement as a resistance movement then as a political player in Lebanese parliament is also laid upon.

Furthermore, the thesis examines the effects of the on-going Syrian civil war on Lebanon's stability and the degree of influence the Syrian regime still exercises over Lebanon while fighting a battle over its own existence.

Keywords: Lebanon, Syrian Occupation, Hezbollah and Syria, National Pact, Lebanese Civil War, Arab Spring, Syrian Conflict.

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LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADF	Arab Deterrent Forces
FM	Future Movement
FPM	Free Patriotic Movement
FSA	Free Syrian Army
IRCG	Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
JN	Jabhat al-Nusra
Kataeb	Phalanges Party
LDP	Lebanese Democratic Party
LF	Lebanese Forces
LNF	Lebanese National Front
LNM	Lebanese National Movement
MM	Marada Movement
MNF	Multi-National peacekeeping Force
MP(s)	Minister of Parliament
P.M	Prime Minister
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organization
PSP	Progressive Socialist Party
SSNP	Syrian Social Nationalist Party
STL	Special Tribunal for Lebanon
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UAR	United Arab Republic
UNIFIL	United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

UNIIC	United Nations International Independent Investigation Commission
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
USSR	The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WWI/II	World War one and World War two
YPG	Kurdish People's Protection Units



INTRODUCTION

The political system of Lebanon is unique in the region for it is based on sectarian division of constitutional powers and administrative positions, ensuring equal representation or power sharing between religious communities constituting the society. The Lebanese have sought to establish a state by combining the heterogeneous type of society with parliamentary democracy following by that the political model of consociational democracy.¹ Despite the fact that this system caused internal disturbances and conflicts, it has also contributed to saving Lebanon from the insurgencies that stroke and keep striking neighboring countries. This system has been shaped by domestic and international factors with a direct impact on the country's internal and regional policies.

The most important domestic factor shaping the Lebanese political system is the political inheritance that defines its basis. This inheritance is normally defined by sectarian, ethnical and geographical factors in addition to family traditions. This has allowed the political families to create states inside the state leading to self-governance. Each political family has its own ministers, ambassadors in friend states and for some of them own military. Additionally, this arrangement has long controlled the structure of the state in terms of its economic and political identities, external relations, allies and enemies. Most importantly, this system has complicated the political and constitutional life and led to civil wars allowing international interventions in the Lebanese domestic politics.

With regards to international factors, the interests of the world's major powers including the US and France as well as of regional powers such as Saudi Arabia, Iran and Syria not to mention the alliances that Lebanese political actors established with those countries had a significant if not radical influence on the Lebanese political scene, with Syria considered one of the main influential actors.

¹ Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Site. Bahout, Joseph. "The Unraveling of Lebanon's Taif Agreement: Limits of Sect-Based Power Sharing". 16 May 2016. 20 January 2019. Path: Search; Lebanese Political System. <<https://carnegieendowment.org/>>.

The relationship between Lebanon and Syria can be described as interlinked since both countries shared a common history as parts of one land and circumstances in each one of them have always caused repercussions on the other. Yet, one cannot say that this relationship is based on an equal power with countries of same sovereignty since many authors, such as Joseph Maila² and Robert G. Rabil³ who refers to Syria as Lebanese government's patron, argue that Syria holds the upper hand. For instance, following its intervention in the Lebanese civil war, Syria kept its forces in the country until efforts were made by the Lebanese people through the Cedar revolution. Those efforts led to the withdrawal of the Syrian military forces from the country. Furthermore, on the political scene, decisions taken have long reflected the Syrian interests in the region through internal political actors. Additionally and most recently, the political, economic and social impact that the on-going Syrian conflict have had on Lebanon cannot be ignored.

In light of these political developments, this thesis will try to focus on these research questions: What is the interest of Syria in Lebanon? How did the Lebanese-Syrian relationship develop through time? What factors allowed Syria to succeed in exercising power over Lebanon? Did Syria really recognize the independence of Lebanon? Did the cedar revolution accomplish its goal of an effective Syrian withdrawal from the country? How strong is the contemporary Syrian effect on Lebanese domestic politics?

The facts that constitute a basis for answering all these questions are deeply examined in a qualitative method of research. The study relies on a literature review comprised of primary and secondary sources. The primary sources refer to speeches of politicians, statements and interviews with live witnesses who were members of the political structure and direct players during the reported period. Additionally, UNSC resolutions, news reports, newspaper articles and documentaries are also used as primary sources. The majority of this study on the other hand is based on secondary sources including articles, books as well as published documents in the form of studies

² Maila, Joseph. "Le Liban en Phase Terminale" *Esprit*, No. 158 (1) (January 1990): pp. 28-32.

³ Rabil, Robert G. *Syria, the United States, and the War on Terror in the Middle East*. London: Praeger Security International, 2006: p.107.

such as theses. Much of this thesis focuses on the dynamics of relationship between Lebanon and Syria and the latter's intervention and strong influence on Lebanon's domestic affairs. What makes it fruitful and unique is the fact that the references and the literature review are based on sources in different languages including Arabic, French and English adding a variety of perspectives to the study.

The first chapter presents a historical overview of both countries covering the period between 1850s and 1971. It explains how Syria and Lebanon were part of one land under the Ottoman Empire called "Greater Syria"⁴ and how the Ottomans ruled the territories during that period of time. The chapter further describes how at the end of WWI both countries were divided through the Sykes-picot agreement and put under the French mandate then how they gained full independence in the aftermath of WWII. Following their independence, the chapter examines the struggle for both countries to establish an efficient political structure and therefore pursue an active foreign policy. In this context, the national pact understanding and how a sectarian division of political positions in the Lebanese parliament was adopted is explained in detail. As to Syria, the destabilizing events that the country went through marked by the ascent of Baath party, the three different republics and the rise of Hafez al-Asad to presidency are closely examined.

The second chapter, on the other hand, goes in depth into the civil war years (1975-1989), the reasons behind its eruption, the main events and turning points as well as and most importantly the Syrian military intervention. It explains how the Syrian military entered the country to support the Christians in defeating their rivals, then how the Syrian army forces were integrated into the Arab Deterrent Forces but refused to withdraw when the mandate of the latter came to an end. The chapter further examines how the Syrian forces remained in Lebanon for an overall period of 29 years, referred to as the Syrian occupation period, and how Syria's influence began to increase especially since after the conclusion of Taif agreement in 1989. In addition, a

⁴ ** The name Syria referred to Greater or geographical Syria until World War I. The name was first given by the Greeks to the city of Tyrus (now Tyre) then applied to the whole area. Greater Syria was referred to by the Arabs as Bilah al-Sham then the term Syria began to be used again in the political and administrative literature of the nineteenth century, referring to greater or geographical Syria. The Ottoman Empire then established a province of Syria, and more than one newspaper using the term Suriyya in its name was published at the time.

short history on the emergence of Hezbollah in Lebanon is laid out. Last but not least, the second part of the chapter focuses on the circumstances that led to the military withdrawal of Syria in 2005, mainly the assassination of P.M. Rafiq al-Hariri and cedar revolution, as well as the aftermath of this withdrawal and particularly the political divisions.

As to the third and last chapter, it lays an eye on the Arab Spring phenomenon that dominated the Middle Eastern scene in the last few years with a special focus on the case in Syria. It explains how the Syrian Arab Uprising started, how it turned into a civil war then a proxy one. The chapter further examines the official Lebanese positions toward the Syrian conflict and goes in deep to focus on Hezbollah's military intervention and support to the Syrian regime. Moreover, this section analyzes the implications of the Syrian conflict on Lebanon's socio-economic, political and security fields.

CHAPTER 1

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1.1. A Historical Overview prior to Independence

1.1.1. Greater Syria under Ottoman rule

Before going in-depth on how Ottomans ruled the region, it is of utmost importance to explain the wide historical and geographical coverage of the term “Greater Syria”. Historically, Greater Syria refers to the territories covering east of the Mediterranean Sea, West of the Euphrates River, north of the Arabian Desert and south of the Taurus Mountains. It includes the contemporary states of Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Palestine and had become under Ottoman rule following its conquest from the Mamluks in the early 16th century.⁵

The Ottoman administration divided Syria into three provinces, Tripoli, Aleppo and Damascus; the provinces were then divided into smaller administrative units called Sanjaks.⁶

When it comes to the religious identity, the community in Greater Syria was by large a heterogeneous one composed of Muslims, Christians and Jewish. The majority of the population was Muslim divided between Sunnis, Shiites, Druzes, Ismailis and Nusayris (referred to as Alewis as well). Similarly, the Christian community was fragmented into different sects including the Greek Orthodox, the Maronites, the Roman Catholics, the Syrian Orthodox and the Syrian Catholics in addition to minor groups who emerged to Greater Syria territories in late 19th century like the Assyrians (Nestorians), Chaldean Catholics and the Protestants.⁷ Sharing a similar religious identity with the Ottoman rulers, Sunnis had an advantageous status unlike compact

⁵ Wikipedia Site. *Ottoman Syria*. 04.06.2008. 26.11.2018.
<<http://www.wikizeroo.net/index.php?q=aHR0cHM6Ly9lbi53aWtpcGVkaWEub3JnL3dpa2kvT3R0b21hbl9TeXJpYQ/>>

⁶ Ismail, Adel. *Lebanon: History of a People*. Beirut: Dar Al-Makchouf, 1972: p.91.

⁷ Sengul, Irem. *The Lebanese-Syrian Relations Between 1989-2005: The Changes and Continuities*. (Unpublished Master's Thesis). Middle East Technical University, July 2011.

minorities⁸. They were mostly located in towns and rural areas of central Syria whereas Shiites were in majority present in Sidon and Biqa districts of today's Lebanon, Alewis mostly in Latakia and Maronites in the northern part of Mount Lebanon. As to the Druzes, they occupied the territories of Suwayda in contemporary Syria in addition to Mount Lebanon.⁹

In the Arab countries conquered by the Ottomans, Muslim inhabitants were obliged to respect the laws of God (embodied in Sharia or Islamic law) and recognize the authority of the Sultan. At the same time and in return for poll tax payment to the state, Christians and other religious minorities were given the right to practice their religion and exercise rituals, in other words, to run their own affairs in accordance with their own religious laws.¹⁰ Arab cities were mostly ruled from the distant Istanbul through partnership with local notables due to geographical factors not to mention the cultural, ethnic and sectarian diversities of the Arab provinces.¹¹ The Ottomans followed a policy of decentralization in the Arab region. It can further be described as non-assimilative as it failed to offer a united political status to its community by lacking the technical, institutional and economic resources.¹²

Faced with many challenges including Arabs' constant attempts to gain independence from the Ottoman Empire, most notably in Mount Lebanon and Egypt, the Ottomans managed to contain the threats and to regain power over the affected provinces until the mid-eighteenth century when "the Ottomans and the Arabs had come to a crossroads."¹³ During the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the Empire had lagged behind the West in respect of military power, administrative efficiency, technological and economic development. The second half of this century was also marked by the increasing number of Arab local leaders seeking for self-rule in

⁸ **Compact Minorities constitute a majority in certain territories and are able to enjoy a certain level of autonomy within those territories.

Rabinovich, Itamar. "The compact minorities and the Syrian state, 1918-45" *Journal of Contemporary History* "A Century of Conservatism, Part 2" 14.4 (1979): pp. 693-712.

⁹ Dam, Nikolaos van. *The Struggle for Power in Syria: Politics and Society under Asad and the ba'th Party*. London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2011: p.7.

¹⁰ Rogan, Eugene. *The Arabs a history*. London: Penguin Books, 2011: p.8.

¹¹ Ibid, p.47.

¹² Hale, William. *Turkish foreign policy*. Oxon: Routledge, 2013: p.10.

¹³ Rogan, Eugene. *The Arabs a history*. London: Penguin Books, 2011: p.53.

resistance of the Ottomans not to mention the increase in European influence in the Ottoman territories. The resistance of local rulers against Ottoman administration and the uprisings were directly linked with the waves of “nationalism” inspired by French Revolution.

Aiming to promote a secular Ottoman nationality to enhance internal cohesion and to establish a balance in rights between Muslims and Christians, the reforms and Tanzimat policies exercised by the Ottomans in the nineteenth century (1839-1867) failed to accomplish its goals. On the contrary, it had widened the gap between the latter and created anti-Christian sentiments from the side of Muslims since those actions of consolidating social and political foundations of the empire were perceived by them as giving superiority to the Christian population. Those sentiments were illustrated by internal conflicts, most notably the 1860 conflict in Mount Lebanon, which paved the way for foreign intervention.

The year of 1860 marked the outbreak of warfare between the Druzes and the Maronites. The tension that helped triggering the conflict was mainly caused by two reasons. First, Druzes and Maronites were not satisfied by the direct Ottoman rule imposed upon them following the downfall of the Shihab regime in Mount Lebanon in 1840. The latter was divided into two administrative units called Kaymakamates with one given to each group. For instance, the Kaymakamate assigned for the Druzes was established over a territory with a Christian majority, mostly Maronites, and therefore the established system could not succeed. Additionally, the second reason behind the conflict can be attributed to the modern influences of the West in the region and particularly in the field of industry. The European products that invaded the Syrian markets deeply affected the country’s economy and created radical social tensions. This had definitely increased the tightness between the Druzes and Maronites leading eventually to the events of 1860.¹⁴

The mentioned events included persecution of Christians and witnessed two massacres one of which was exercised by the Druzes of Shuf and Wadi al-Taym

¹⁴ Salibi, Kamal. *House of Many Mansions: The History of Lebanon Reconsidered*. London: I.B.Tauris & Co. Ltd, 1988: p.15.

supported by co-religionists from the Hawran region in Syria and the second was executed in one day period in Damascus. In both massacres, an estimated number of 23,000 Christians were killed. This conflict dragged the attention of European powers and particularly France who considered itself the savior of the Maronites and landed its forces in Beirut with the intention of supporting the Ottomans in containing the conflict and calming down the situation. As a result, a conference of the European powers' representatives was convened in Beirut where the Ottomans were obliged to reorganize Mount Lebanon. The conference gave light to the establishment of a new system called Mutesarrifate, or administrative region, through which an Ottoman Christian Governor was to be appointed from Istanbul under the guarantee of the European powers. The Mutesarrifate offered a certain level of governmental order and social development advances. It also remained in power in Mount Lebanon until 1915.¹⁵ In addition to the tense events, social changes also took place during the second half of the nineteenth century with the rise of a new ideology embodied in nationalism movements into the Asian parts of the empire with the Arab nationalism movement considered as one of the most important.¹⁶

In November 1914, the Ottomans entered the war on the side of central powers. The most important war-time events to be mentioned are the contradictory agreements concluded by the Entente powers (France, Britain and Russia). The first was included in the British high commissioner for Egypt Sir Henry McMahon's famous correspondences of 24 October 1915; in his letter, McMahon accepted the terms negotiated between him and Sharif of Mecca, Hussein ibn Ali of the Hashemite, regarding the British support of an Arab kingdom establishment in exchange of an Arab revolt against Ottoman rule. The revolt indeed started in July 1916 with the support of the British military advisor, Colonel T.E. Lawrence and contributed to the foundation of an Arab army and a significant progress of the Arab movement in Syria.¹⁷ When Amir Faysal, Sharif Hussein's son and commander of his troops set foot into Damascus on 1st of October 1918, he immediately began to set up an

¹⁵ Ibid, p.16

¹⁶ Hourani, Albert H. *Minorities in the Arab World*. London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1947: p.30.

¹⁷ Fawcett, Louise. *International Relations of the Middle East*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016: p.44.

administration assuming that he was executing the terms negotiated and promised to his father by Britain.¹⁸

The second pledge is the secretive Sykes-Picot agreement concluded between France and Britain and approved on 4th February 1916. According to this agreement, Britain was to establish an administration in Mesopotamia while France was to exercise control over the districts of Mersina and Alexandretta in addition to parts of Syria located to the west of the districts of Homs, Aleppo, Hama and Damascus. As to the territories in between, those were to be divided into spheres of influence of both Britain and France. When it comes to Palestine, it was decided to place it under the rule of international governance. Coming to the third important agreement named the Balfour Declaration which contradicted both of the other mentioned agreements; it gave formal support to the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine by the World Zionist Organization. Those conflicting promises caused serious arguments in the post-war period and left to be settled in Versailles negotiations.¹⁹

1.1.2. From French mandate till independence

France had long claimed interest in Greater Syria and this was demonstrated during the course of the 1st World War when the Chambers of Commerce of Lyons and Marseille funded an expedition that was sent to the region in order to confirm whether it was worth colonizing and its findings were indeed positive. As for the justification of its claims, France used as an argument the defense of minorities including Christians, Druzes, Alewis and Shiites.²⁰

Simultaneously with the arrival of French troops in Lebanon under General Henri Gouraud, the anti-Ottoman Arab revolt troops led by Prince Faisal and supported by Britain reached Damascus. The British involvement was considered by France as a breach of the Sykes-Picot commitments.²¹ The French sought after ending the rule of Faisal in Damascus in order to establish mandate over greater Syria. In July 24 1920,

¹⁸ Cleveland, William L, and Martin Bunton. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. USA: Westview Press, 2009: p.161.

¹⁹ Fawcett, Louise. *International Relations of the Middle East*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016: p.44-45.

²⁰ Traboulsi, Fawwaz. *A History of Modern Lebanon*. London: Pluto Press, 2012: p.76.

²¹ *Ibid*, p.76.

Damascus was sieged by General Henri Gouraud who ended the rule of Faisal over the Syrian Hinterland.²²

At the end of the First World War, The Arab provinces previously part of the Ottoman Empire were divided through the Sykes-Picot accords of 1916, with small amendments decided in San Remo conference held in April 1920, into two well defined zones, the French and the British zones, and were given the status of mandated territories as a preparation step toward independence. The French mandate, as per San Remo conference, expanded to include the vast territory from the Euphrates River to the Mediterranean Coast.²³ As to the Jerusalem region, it was assigned as an international zone. Through the act of mandate signed in London July 24 1922, the relationship between France and the Levant was formalized under the League of Nations.²⁴

In order to maintain her rule over Syria, France used the policy of *divide et impera*. Accordingly, the mandated territory was divided into four district units: Greater Lebanon, the state of Aleppo (including Alexandretta), the state of Damascus (including the Jebel Druze district) and the territory of Latakia (or Alawi territory).²⁵

The district unit of Greater Lebanon was created on an expanded territory; the cities of Tripoli, Sidon, Tyre and Beirut in addition to Akkar, Rashaya, Hasbaya and Ba'albak were added to the territory of the Mutesarrifate.²⁶ While gained the endorsement of some Christian minorities and the Maronites who were considered as France's allies, the plan was opposed by both Muslims and Druzes.²⁷ Following the First World War, Greater Lebanon enjoyed an autonomous status under the protection of France.

²² Lenczowski, George. *The Middle East in World Affairs*. London: Cornell University Press, 1980: p.314-315.

²³ Salibi, Kamal. *House of Many Mansions: The History of Lebanon Reconsidered*. London: I.B.Tauris & Co. Ltd, 1988: p.21.

²⁴ Traboulsi, *ibid*, p.75.

²⁵ Lenczowski, *ibid*, p.315.

²⁶ Traboulsi, *ibid*, p.80.

²⁷ Fawcett, Louise. *International Relations of the Middle East*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016: p.55-56.

The Lebanese republic was established in 1926, six years after being kept under French military governors.²⁸ The law of 1926, drafted as a constitution by the Lebanese representative council and put into effect by the French high commissioner, granted Greater Lebanon western-patterned parliamentary institutions in addition to a president, a cabinet and two chambers. The article 30 of the mentioned law though stressed on the country's dependency to France²⁹.

Throughout the mandate period, Lebanon was able to run its own domestic affairs while the country's foreign relations and defense fell under the full control of France. The institutions of the state however and particularly in 1920s and 1930s became under regular conflict with the mandatory power with the aim of gaining full independence. In this regard, the Lebanese nationals developed national movements and there was a clear friction between their aims. While some opted to end the French mandate and gain full independence, others defended the idea of an Arab state and therefore reattachment to Syria.³⁰

As in the contemporary Syria, following the defeat of King Faisal in July 1920, France had a clear plan of division. The latter had continuously attempted to break Syria into four small units, Damascus, Aleppo in addition to two smaller minority states for Druzes and Alewis and by that explicitly neglecting the Syrian wishes to self-rule. The divide and rule policy adopted by France caused serious disturbances embodied in a national revolt spread all over Syria over a period of two years (1925 – 1927). This revolt ended up with the establishment of the National Bloc which constituted the national forces jointly. This National Bloc negotiated the terms to obtain full independence.³¹

The end of mandate period followed a similar path in both countries, Lebanon and Syria with France making efforts to contain the nationalists through treaties in 1936. Yet, with the outbreak of Second World War in 1939, none of the treaties could be ratified by the French Chamber. With the fall of France to Germany in 1940 and

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Lenczowski, George. *The Middle East in World Affairs*. London: Cornell University Press, 1980: p.315-316.

³⁰ Fawcett, *ibid*, p.56-57.

³¹ Fawcett, *ibid*, p.56-57.

the establishment of dual government in France, Britain increased its influence in the Middle East and favored the full and complete independence of mandated territories. With the Free French declaration of independence for both states in 1941, an end to the French mandate started to come to the fore. Yet, France still tried to impose some treaties before the independence is fully established.³²

In Lebanon, the elections of summer of 1943 brought to presidency Bishara Khuri and led to constitutional amendments per which all entitlements of the mandate were eliminated. The French efforts to regain those entitlements and restore order in the state of Lebanon were met with a nationwide resistance that eventually led to the successful achievement of independence. Similar to Lebanon, Syria attained its independence through constitutional reforms.³³

After 23 years under French mandate, Lebanon was the first to attain its independence in November 22, 1943 while the date of April 17, 1946 marked the independence of Syria and the end of the mandate period in the country. France however did not withdraw its last troops until end of August 1946 under huge national, regional and international pressure including the United Nations and the Arab League.

1.2. Post-Independence (1943-1971)

1.2.1. The Lebanese political structure: the national pact understanding

The summer of 1943 witnessed the birth of an unwritten pact called the “National Pact” which offered an ideal structure for a working democracy and completed the process of the state’s independence. Through this pact, the Muslims consented to the existence of Lebanon as an independent and sovereign state rather than part of a bigger Arab state on the condition that Christians accept its Arab and not western identity.³⁴ Additionally, this pact was established to ensure the inclusion and equality of different religious groups with different affiliations and to grant a fair representation for all in the body of law. For instance, the Maronites were granted the president position of the

³² Khoury, Philip Shukry. *Syria and the French Mandate: The politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987: p. 617-618.

³³ Fawcett, *ibid*.

³⁴ Salibi, Kamal. *House of Many Mansions: The History of Lebanon Reconsidered*. London: I.B.Tauris & Co. Ltd, 1988: p.186.

republic. The Sunnis on the other hand were given the Prime minister position while Shiites were to assign the Speaker of the Parliament. Additionally, the positions of Deputy prime-minister and Deputy Speaker of the Parliament were allocated for Greek Orthodox Christians. As to the Druzes, they were granted the Chief of General Staff position in the armed forces. When it comes to the representation in the Lebanese parliament, the Christians were given a favorable status to Muslims with a ratio of 6 to 5.³⁵

Ever since its foundation, this National Pact has been the bible of politics in Lebanon and is still a model that is being implemented till the moment despite the suspicions that arose regarding its efficiency with the demographic changes that stroke the country since the Pact was agreed upon. Although it had given positive outcome in the short term, by time, the pact proved incompatible with the real social structure of the country and caused dissatisfaction among different groups forming the Lebanese society.³⁶

In addition to the un-written pact, the Lebanese political structure was also established based on the constitution drafted and amended under the French mandate. The constitution gave the right to the Lebanese people to elect the members of the parliament who were given the authority of electing the president. The positions in the parliament on the other hand were being prominently occupied by families who have reigned and played an essential role in Lebanon's domestic politics.

After gaining its independence, and particularly in the 1950s-60s, Lebanon emerged in the Arab world as a successful model. It was guarded as unique for it gave the right for all religious groups to freely exercise their religion and coexist in a country where each religious group recognized the existence and rights of the other. Additionally, in the mentioned period, the Lebanese republic could be described as economically active. For instance, its free economic system, free press, the presence of universities and the fact of being the center of Arab tourism allowed it to develop

³⁵ Hagopian, Elaine C. "Maronite Hegemony to Maronite Militancy: The Creation and Disintegration of Lebanon". *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 11. 4, *Ethnicity in World Politics* (Oct., 1989): pp. 101-117.

³⁶ Salibi, *ibid*, p.187.

efficiently in a timely manner.³⁷ Yet, this prosperous status soon came to an end prior to and with the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war.

Contradictory to Lebanon, Syria's post-independence period was marked with instability and political turmoil embodied in the coups and counter-coups, the rise of nationalism and Baath party. These events managed for a period of time to divert the nationalists' attention from claiming their historical interests in Lebanon. Successively, three different republics were created in Syria, the post-independence republic, the United Arab Republic and the third Baathist republic. The third republic, however, could not solve the ideological and political conflict until the long-term political stability was reached under the rule of Hafez al-Asad.

1.2.2. Politics of Syria: military coups and counter-coups, ascent of Baath party and the birth of the third republic

In the aftermath of Syria's acquisition of independence, the country lacked a powerful sense of unity and the National Bloc leaders were divided into two different parties with different interests: the National Party supported by Damascus and the People's party reflecting Aleppo's and North Syria's interests. The military coups and counter-coups of 1949 arose from the army's dissatisfaction with the first established Syrian regime following its defeat in the first Arab-Israeli war of 1948. The third coup was led by Colonel Adib al-Shishakli on 19th of December 1949. Al-Shishakli's rule lasted for a period of four years and brought significant changes to the Syrian political life including social and constitutional reforms. In the reported period, the Syrian army also emerged as a strong political player and started to openly intervene in Syria's political affairs.³⁸

In February 1954, Shishakli resigned under pressure from both the army and the Syrian society which allowed a civilian rule of some sort throughout the period of 1954-1958. Subsequently, the elections of February 1954 were considered as the first free elections to be held in Syria; it brought to the fore different political parties in

³⁷ Ibid, p.191-192.

³⁸ Seale, Patrick. *Asad: The Struggle for the Middle East*. London: I.B. Tauris & CO. Ltd, 1988: p.46-47.

addition to the already existing ones.³⁹ Most importantly, it allowed the rise of Baath Party. The latter was founded in 1940 as a Pan-Arab student movement by a Greek Orthodox Christian, Michel Aflaq and a Sunni Muslim, Salah al-Din Bitar. Both founders were from Damascus where they used to work as secondary school teachers.⁴⁰ The party then emerged as a strong political power in the Middle East region with the ideology of achieving Arab Unity by eliminating both internal and external obstacles, feudalism and imperialism.

The ideology of Arab Unity started to observe light in 1958 negotiations between Syria and Egypt towards unity of both countries as one single nation. This unity was indeed achieved in 1958 with the proclamation of the United Arab Republic (UAR) and was followed by the dismantlement of Syrian parliament and political parties including the Baath Party which, despite its apparent dissolution, maintained an implicit political power. UAR was clearly established according to the terms of the Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser who fully ruled and dominated both lands disregarding and neglecting what Syria had aimed out of this newly established republic. Consequently, and since this second republic was not in conformity with the constitutional and institutional principles on which Syria had been based since its independence, the unity did not last long. Through the military coup of 1961, the unity of UAR came to an end and a civilian government was restored in Damascus.⁴¹

Meanwhile and in early 1960s, a Military Committee was secretly established by Hafez al-Asad and four other Baathists military officers including Major Salah Jadid. The committee was established for the purpose of eliminating the old order in Syria and restore the Baath Party following its dissolution during the UAR period. This organization led the coup of March, 8 1963, the first one after dissolution.⁴² This date marked the establishment of the so called Revolutionary Republic with a shared government constituted of members from Baath Party leaders, officers from the

³⁹ Leiden, Carl. "Political Instability in Syria". *The Southwestern Social Science Quarterly*, Vol. 45.4 (1965): pp. 353-360.

⁴⁰ Dam, Nikolaos van. *The Struggle for Power in Syria: Politics and Society under Asad and the ba'th Party*. London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2011: p. 15-16.

⁴¹ Ziadeh, Radwan. *Power and Policy in Syria: Intelligence Services, Foreign Relations and Democracy in the Modern Middle East*. New York: I.B. Tauris & CO. Ltd, 2013: p.3-5.

⁴² Seale, *ibid*, p.61.

Military Committee and other army groups. Yet, following its rise to power, the Baath Party witnessed internal frictions and conflict of interests. The first to mention is the shift in policy and prioritization of socialism over Arab unity. This new ideology emerged from the realization, by the party's younger generation, that the aim of Arab Unity and elimination of imperialism is no way to be reached as long as the country's economy is controlled by private industrialists and merchant/ landowners.⁴³ Therefore, the focus shifted from the whole Arab nations to the region of Syria which created a gap in ideologies between the traditional elites of the party and its younger generation and ended up with the bloody coup of 1966 that gave the upper hand to the party's new generation calling themselves the regionalists and allowed them to consolidate their power in Syria.

Furthermore, a second conflict of interest took part between the Party's two prominent political figures, Hafez al-Asad and Salah Jadid. This conflict had existed since the 1966 coup but took a sharp edge following the defeat of 1967 Arab-Israeli war. While Asad's camp favored an armed struggle against Israel aligned with possible cooperation with other Arab states, Jadid's side was against such cooperation and preferred focusing on the development and social transformation of the country with no objection to dependence on countries of the Eastern bloc and Soviet Union.⁴⁴ This conflict reached its peak in 1970 when both sides adopted different responsive measures to Palestinian leader's push out of Jordan. This led to another bloody coup on 13th of November 1970 and ended up with Asad's seize of presidency.⁴⁵

As presented in this chapter, Syria and Lebanon were not defined by their contemporary borders, they were both part of "Greater Syria". After the countries' division and border determination under French mandate, Syria had some strategic interests in Lebanon, yet, those interests were parked aside due to the domestic instability Syria was witnessing at the time. Under Hafez al-Asad's presidency, the country reached a level of internal political stability which allowed it to pursue an

⁴³ John. "Syria and the Baath Party". *MERIP Reports* No. 25 (1974): pp. 3-16.

⁴⁴ Dam, *ibid*, p. 63.

⁴⁵ Galvani, *ibid*.

active foreign policy and focus on its claims over Lebanese territories in the years to come.



CHAPTER II

TURNING POINTS CAUSING RADICAL TRANSFORMATION IN THE LEBANESE-SYRIAN RELATIONS (1975-2006)

2.1. The Lebanese Civil War

The Lebanese civil war is a long bloody conflict that hit the country over a period of 15 years during which 150,000 persons were killed. It was described as a proxy war that ended-up by Taif agreement of 1989. The reasons behind the war can be divided in three main categories; the socio-economic factor illustrated by poverty and lack of development in provinces mainly populated by Muslims, political factor and particularly political sectarianism that did not allow equal distribution of positions in the parliament between different sects and finally the external factor embodied in the Palestinian resistance.

Before elaborating more on the factors, it is essential to mention the prominent parties and armed forces who were fighting within religious and political circles. These parties were represented by the Maronite Christians, Shiites, Sunnis, Druzes, and the Palestine Liberation Organization. At first there were three main fronts; the Lebanese Front (LF) led by Kamil Sham'un, a faction that was dominated by Maronite Christians. They soon received support from Syria and later from Israel. The most significant militia of the Front was known as the Palanges Party Forces led by Bashir Jumayyel and played a key role in the war. On the other hand, the second front represents the Lebanese National Movement (LNM) groups led by Kamal Jumblat, a prominent Druze politician. As to the third, it constitutes the Palestine Liberation Organization with all its forces and specters, which allied with the Lebanese national movement.⁴⁶ The LNM movement was heterogeneous by nature as it was a joint coalition of Druzes, Sunnis and Palestinians. The fighting was initially between the status-quo camp represented by the Lebanese front and the revisionist camp

⁴⁶ Marefa.org. "Al Harb al Ahliya al Loubnaniya" 23.08.2005. 23.12.2018. <https://marefa.org/>. Path: Search; Al Harb al Ahliya al Loubnaniya.

represented by the Lebanese National Movement alliance with the Palestine Liberation Organization.

2.1.1. Main reasons that led to the breakdown of the civil war

Coming to the main reasons believed to have caused the outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War, an important and major one is the Palestinian question and particularly the PLO's Fedayeen who used the Lebanese territories in their struggle against Israel. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to explain how this organization emerged in Lebanon and the circumstances that led to the authorization of their operations on Lebanese soil.

In the course of the first Arab-Israeli war in 1948, different Palestinian camps were established in Lebanon. In the 1960s, those camps fell under the control of the Army Secret Services (created at the time by the president Fuad Abdullah Shihab) who imposed many restrictions on camp residents such as freedom of movement restrictions and many others. These restrictions were an attempt to suppress the supporters of the Palestinian Fedayeen not allowing them to take part in the armed struggle.⁴⁷

Following the devastating defeat in the Israel-Arab war of 1967, the Palestinian Fedayeen came to the fore as a resistance movement that settled in Jordan but executed operations from Lebanese territories. These operations caused repercussions on Lebanon's security as Israel was responding by attacking targets inside the country.

In the fall of 1969, the army general Emil Bostani arranged a meeting with Yaser Arafat to reach an agreement for the purpose of decreasing the tension between the Lebanese army and the Palestinian resistance; the terms of the agreement were however rejected by the Lebanese president Charles Helou, who won the presidency after Kamil Sham'un, and by the prime minister as well who was Rashid Karami at the time. Since nothing could be settled between both parties, the conflict aggravated

⁴⁷ Aljazeera.net. "Al-Harb al-Ahliya.. Alsharkh Bayn Loubnan Wa Felestinih". 23.09.2016. 15.12.2018. <https://www.aljazeera.net/programs/palestineunderthemicroscope/>. Path: Search; Al-Harb al-Ahliya al-Loubnaniya.

and started in Nahr al-Bared Palestinian camp situated in the north of the country then spread to al-Bekaa and south Lebanon.⁴⁸

After the aggravation of violence and in October, 25 1969, the Lebanese side realized the importance of requesting President Nasser's mediation and support to end this armed conflict. Both sides met in Cairo, Egypt and agreed on terms organizing the nature of relationship between them. These terms constituted what is known as Cairo treaty.⁴⁹ As per the latter, Lebanon consented to the military presence of the Palestinian resistance in the country and gave them the right to execute operations from its territory in addition to the autonomy of its institutions. Moreover, the treaty allowed the Palestinian side to run the camps whose residents were now permitted to participate in the armed struggle. On the other hand, the Cairo treaty stressed on the importance of coordination with the Lebanese army and respect of the country's sovereignty.⁵⁰ It is argued however that neither side respected or complied with the terms agreed upon in the treaty and that it only managed to postpone the civil war several more years. The situation in the country deteriorated by time and the violence escalated.

The year 1970 marked an important development on the Palestinian side when the Jordanian King suppressed the Palestinian resistance or Fedayeen believing that they had grown out of control. This suppression led to the events known as black September and ended up by expelling the organization out of the country. This is when the Palestinian Liberation Organization or PLO transferred its base to Lebanon.

In the meantime, Suleiman Franjeh won the presidency in Lebanon with one vote difference between him and his competitor Elias Sarkis. The first major action taken by President Franjeh was the dissolution of the Lebanese Secret Services with exercising democracy as an argument since from his opinion, the secret services were deeply involved in government's affairs.⁵¹ This action had a huge impact on the secret

⁴⁸ Youtube. *Wathaeki al-Harb al-Ahliya al-Loubnaniya*. 18.04.2015. 15.12.2018. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gdANQNiF7zc>>.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Aljazeera.net. "Abdo: Itifaqiyat Alkahira Ajalat Al-Harb Al-Ahliya bi Loubnan 6 sanawat" 20.11.2016. 16.12.2018. <<https://www.aljazeera.net/programs/centurywitness/>>. Path: Search; al-Harb al-Ahliya al-Loubnaniya.

⁵¹ Youtube. *Wathaeki al-Harb al-Ahliya al-Loubnaniya*. 18.04.2015. 15.12.2018. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gdANQNiF7zc>>.

services role to keep the Palestinian camps under a certain level of control or containment.

The conflict between Palestinians and Israel was constantly on the rise and many attacks targeting leaders of PLO party were exercised inside Lebanese territories not to mention the first Israeli invasion to south Lebanon in 1972 causing massive destruction. These incidents worsened the relationship and increased the armed conflict inside Lebanon between the Palestinian resistance and the Lebanese army until efforts were made from the side of neighboring Arab countries who exercised a pressure on the President Franjeh to stop his attacks against the Palestinian resistance. Faced with huge pressure, Franjeh decided to stop the army's operations against the resistance and held the latter responsible for its own protection inside Lebanese territories as the authorities are incapable of providing it.⁵² This decision definitely caused disturbances on the Lebanese side as it was conceived a huge threat to the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

As to the Lebanese internal situation, it was no less than turbulent, insecure, a war waiting for eruption. Other than the contradictory perspectives that different Lebanese political leaders adopted toward the Palestinian question with the left wing representing Druzes and allies as supporter and the right wing representing Christians as opponent, there was a significant devastation from poverty and social favoritism at the expense of Muslims in the country as well as dissatisfaction from sectarianism by the left wing. The latter led country-wide demonstrations with the involvement of student and labor movements requesting the elimination of political sectarianism and unequal division of seats in the parliament in addition to social reforms.⁵³ These demonstrations escalated the tension and helped spreading the struggle all over the country especially after some demonstrations were met by the use of arms and casualties were reported.⁵⁴

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Salibi, Salibi. *Cross Roads to Civil War: Lebanon 1958-1976*. New York: Caravan Books, 1976: p.92.

⁵⁴ Ibid, p.93.

2.1.2. Civil War years 1975-1989

The Lebanese Civil War broke out in April, 13, 1975 after the famous incident of Ain Elremmaneh. When Pierre Jumayyel, the leader of Phalanges party, was attending the consecration ceremony of a new Maronite church in the area, armed men attacked the entrance of the church and two of Jumayyel's bodyguards were killed. The incident created emotions of rage against Palestinians who weren't necessarily behind the shooting. Phalanges party reacted by attacking a bus carrying Palestinians back to Tal al-Za'atar camp from an event commemorating a successful commando operations executed against Israel. As a result, 26 Palestinians were killed and demands of Phalanges party's dissolution in addition to expulsion of its ministers from the parliament were raised by the National Movement. Ministers from both sides resigned from the parliament, two governments were created one after another and efforts were being exercised for peace and cease of fire. Yet, the Black Saturday constituted a turning point in the civil war.⁵⁵

On Saturday, December 6, later referred to as the Black Saturday, four bodies of Phalanges members were found in East Beirut following which the party deployed its troops in Beirut and killed no less than 200 Muslim civilians of both Palestinian and Lebanese nationality. The killing was based on identity cards which reflected the religion at the time. Following this massacre, Beirut was divided into two zones of control; the East zone mostly populated by Christians under the control of Phalanges forces and the West, inhabited by a mixed population, with a Muslim majority controlled by the National Block (Mixed forces including LNM, Palestinians and Lebanese Muslims). This also marked the beginning of what was known as the Hotels' Battles.⁵⁶

The year 1976 witnessed different massacres exercised by both sides and the armed conflict, which came to a head, caused huge displacement and immigration movements among Muslims and Christians. Additionally and in June of the same year, the Lebanese President Franjieh sought Syria's intervention and support to end the

⁵⁵ Ibid, p.98.

⁵⁶ Youtube. *Wathaeki al-Harb al-Ahliya al-Loubnaniya*. 18.04.2015. 15.12.2018. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gdANQNiF7zc/>>.

conflict and protect the Christians.⁵⁷ At the time, Syria's support and fighting alongside the Muslims was well known and was based on its pan-Arabism ideology, however, while it seemed like Muslims including Palestinians were becoming the winning side in the Lebanese Civil War, and in order to prevent the formation of a radical government in the neighboring country, Syria felt the obligation to intervene on the side of Christians.⁵⁸ For instance, if the Muslims supporting the PLO's Fedayeen had gained the upper hand and formed the government, Israel would have militarily intervened to prevent such an event which would have eventually threatened the security of the neighboring country, Syria. Consequently, Syrian troops entered the country and strengthened the Christian forces' power to invade Tal al-Za'atar Palestinian camp. During the invasion, huge number of Palestinians were killed and feelings of anger and denunciation arose from Arab countries against Syria. In return and as per the Syrian wishes, Franjieh called for early elections in virtue of which Elias Sarkis, a candidate chosen by Syria, was elected president in May 1976.⁵⁹

Meanwhile and after an attack against Israel near Tal-Aviv causing the death of 37 Israelis, the latter retaliated with a full-scale invasion of Southern Lebanon in March 1978 with the intention of eliminating the military bases of PLO and establishing a Buffer Zone within a width of 10 kilometers inside the Lebanese territories. As a response, the UNSC convened on March 17 and adopted the 425 resolution whereby the Lebanese political independence and sovereignty were restated and the immediate withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanese territories was requested or stressed-out. Additionally, the resolution settled the establishment of a UN interim Force for Southern Lebanon called UNIFIL with three main purposes including securing the Israel withdrawal from the country, restoring international peace and imposing a level of security not to mention supporting the government in regaining authority over the area. It was first decided by Security Council to limit the number of UNIFIL troops to four thousand then the number added up to six- thousand in the following weeks. The

⁵⁷ Weinberger, Naomi Joy. *Syrian Intervention in Lebanon: The 1975-76 Civil War*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986: p.195.

⁵⁸ Harris, William. "Syria in Lebanon." *MERIP Reports* No.143, Asad's Syria (July-August 1985): pp.9-14.

⁵⁹ Weinberger, p.195.

UNIFIL's mission was initially deployed over a period of six months.⁶⁰ Under a huge pressure from the US, Israel withdrew its troops from Lebanon in June 1978.

In November 1978 and as a response to Syria's military intervention in Lebanon, the Arab League established the Arab Deterrent Forces (ADF) with a number of 30,000 men whose mission was to impose security and support the government in restoring order and authority over its territories. Rather than securing the way for Syrian military withdrawal, the ADF instead fortified the presence of Syrian military and allowed it to become a dominant component.⁶¹ The reason is directly linked to keeping the decision on the troops' nationality in the hands of the Lebanese President Sarkis who was a Syrian choice in the first place, in virtue of which 25,000 men were to be deployed from Syria.⁶²

An important turnover of events is the friction that hit the Christian side after experiencing inter-killing incidents between Marada Brigade under the leadership of Franjeh clan and Phalanges forces. This led to the separation of Marada Brigade from the Lebanese Front and left East Beirut under full control of Bashir Jumayyel. The latter then had to defy the Syrian forces and a famous sub-conflict named the Hundred Days' war broke out leading Jumayyel to seek Israel's support in sending its fighter aircrafts. This was not the only instance when Jumayyel cooperated with Israel since again in January 1982, he negotiated the terms of Israel invasion to West Beirut with the aim of eliminating the PLO with the support of Phalanges armed forces. Israel used the argument of the assassination attempt executed against its ambassador in London and invaded Lebanon. This resulted in heavy clashes between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Forces and by June 15, Israeli forces succeeded in reaching Beirut. Later in August, Bashir Jumayyel was nominated by the parliament as the Lebanese president under Israel occupation; he gave promises to establish diplomatic relations with Israel. Few days before claiming the presidency, Bashir Jumayyel was assassinated on the 24th of September 1982 and as a response to his death, the Phalanges armed forces

⁶⁰ Makdisi, *ibid.*

⁶¹ Makdisi, Karim. "Reconsidering the Struggle over UNIFIL in Southern Lebanon." *Journal of Palestine Studies* Vol. 43.2 (2014): pp. 24-41.

⁶² Thompson, Eric V. "Will Syria Have to Withdraw from Lebanon" *Middle East Journal* Vol.56. No.1 (2002): pp. 72-93.

reacted by attacking two Palestinian camps, Sabra and Shatila, and exercised massacres against an estimated number of 3,500 Palestinians with the help of Israeli army.⁶³ With the request of the Lebanese government, the US Reagan administration formed a Multi-National Peacekeeping Force (MNF) in August under its leadership with the mission of overseeing the withdrawal of PLO armed forces and helping the Lebanese government in restoring its control over Beirut. Those forces were reinforced after the mentioned massacres of Sabra and Shatila took place.⁶⁴

As a successor to Bashir Jumayyel, his brother Amin was elected for presidency. Following the path of his brother, Amin Jumayyel signed an agreement with Israel on May 17, 1983 announcing the withdrawal of its forces from Lebanon on the condition of the subsequent withdrawal of Syrian army. This agreement, however, was conceived by other Lebanese factions as a shameful one and could not be put into effect since it was met with armed and civilian revolts. In August same year, the Israeli army withdrew from al-Shuf mountain and bloody wars erupted between Christians and Druzes ended-up with the pull-out of Christian fighters till the East of Beirut. Moreover, MNF facilities were targeted in a number of terrorist bombings during the years of 1983-1984 leading to their withdrawal from the country by early 1984.⁶⁵ Following their withdrawal, the Shiite movement Amal emerged as a significant player in the war and exercised control over West Beirut; then with the support of Syria and together with the Progressive Social Party led by Jumblat, they attacked the Sunni coalition (Al-Murabitoun) which was cooperating with the Palestinians. At this stage, Jumblat's party witnessed a shift in policy by turning against the PLO. In May 1985, Amal forces stroke the Palestinians in three different camps marking the start of what was called Camps' War that lasted until 1986.⁶⁶

With the end of Amin Jumayyel's presidency term in September 1988, the parliament had failed to reach a consensus and elect a successor. This disagreement led to a deep division between the political parties and a fragmentation of the executive

⁶³ Aljazeera.net. "Al-Harb al-Ahliya al-Loubnaniya". 14.04.2017. 19.04.2018. <<http://aljazeera.net/>>. Path: Search; Al-Harb al-Ahliya al-Loubnaniya.

⁶⁴ Makdisi, *ibid*.

⁶⁵ Thompson, *ibid*.

⁶⁶ Stork, Joe. "The War of the Camps, the War of the Hostages." *MERIP Reports* No.133 (June 1985): pp. 3-7+22.

authority into two different governments: one under the prime minister's leadership Salim al-Hoss and the other under the Army Commander's leadership, Michel Aoun.⁶⁷ The insurgent situation in the country called for an extraordinary conference of the Arab League. The conference was held in Casablanca, Morocco in May 23, 1989 where a triplet Committee was established with Saudi Arabia, Morocco and Algeria as members. This committee was given the mandate to negotiate an end to the violence and to set the terms of the Lebanese National Accord. The committee therefore requested a conference to be held in Al Taif, Saudi Arabia.

2.1.3. Taif agreement

Following its success in convincing conflicting parties to cease fire, the committee assembled 62 Lebanese deputies, many of them were in exile while others were in their safe houses inside Lebanon. The objective was to vote on political reforms and to ensure the election of a president accepted upon by majority of the votes. The negotiations lasted for a period of 23 days, from September 30 until October 22.⁶⁸ Other than political reforms, matters of high significance were also discussed such as the relations with Syria, the Israeli occupation of Southern Lebanon and the restoration of Lebanese sovereignty over its territories.

In his opening speech, Prince Saud al-Faisal, the Saudi foreign minister mentioned that "Failure was forbidden" with an attempt to imply that an agreement must and will be reached.⁶⁹

The consensus of Taif agreement was mostly based on the confessional formula of the Lebanese National Pact with some modifications pertaining to the demographic changes that hit the country during the civil war. While the political sectarianism was no way to be touched, reforms mostly effected the executive and legislative powers as well as public charges with efforts to reach a successful model for a second Lebanese republic. For instance, one of the major changes was transferring the executive power from the president to the council of ministers satisfying by that the Muslim population

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Maila, Joseph. "Le Liban en Phase Terminale" *Esprit*, No. 158 (1) (January 1990): pp. 28-32.

⁶⁹ Rogan, Eugene. *The Arabs a history*. London: Penguin Books, 2011: p.577.

who used to criticize the fact that a Maronite Christian holds in hand all decisions preventing therefore a full representation of the different sects in the country.⁷⁰ Hence, the prime minister was given the executive authority, his responsibilities included chairing the cabinet meeting and implementing policies. It was further agreed that the president would name the prime minister but only the parliament has the power to dismissal. As to the speaker of the parliament post, it was still guarded to the Shiites and given the role to advise the president on possible candidates for the position of prime minister.⁷¹

Another major change effected the ratio of representation in the parliament. While the ratio was previously set out as 6 to 5 in favor of Christians, Taif agreement brought equal representation of Christians and Muslims in the parliament. Furthermore, it increased the number of parliament seats from 99 to 128 so that Muslims are given equal representation without the necessity to decrease the already existing Christian seats.⁷²

With respect to Syrian occupation and since al-Asad was unwilling to compromise on his country's position in Lebanon, this issue was left to be settled by both countries through bilateral treaties in order to formalize the relationship.⁷³ However, the greetings that Syria received from the committee pertaining to the important role it played during the civil war gave its presence in Lebanon a certain level of legitimacy.

As to the issue of weaponry, the militias were ordered to disarm and were given a deadline to comply with this obligation with the exception of Hezbollah who was allowed to stay as the only militia fighting inside Lebanon against the Israeli occupation of the south.⁷⁴

All deputies agreed on the settlement of Taif and returned to the country in order to ratify it and proceed in forming the new government. Yet, the Army Commander

⁷⁰ Maila, Joseph, *ibid.*.

⁷¹ Rogan, Eugene, *ibid.* p.578.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Maila, *ibid.*

⁷⁴ Rogan Eugene, *ibid.*, p. 582.

Michel Aoun was against the Accord and exercised efforts to prevent its implementation with no success. Following the formal approval of Taif Accord, Rene Moawad was elected as president. Yet, few days later, Moawad was assassinated and Syria, Iraq, Israel in addition to Michel Aoun were all accused of his murder. However, no one was held responsible. After his death, the Lebanese Parliamentarians rushed to suggest a replacement for Moawad before hindering the whole reconciliation process but the Syrian government took the lead and announced Elias Hrawi as a president through Radio Damascus.⁷⁵ This proved that even during Taif era, Syria still held the upper hand and ultimate authority over the country. As the conflict escalated due to the so-called Liberation War initiated by Aoun's supporters against the Syrian military presence in the country, Hrawi requested the official military intervention of Syria in settling out this battle. Syrian army intervened and within few hours, The Liberation War ended with the Syrian occupation of the Presidential Palace in Baabda and the failure of Aoun who sought refuge in the French embassy then went to his exile in France.⁷⁶

After this last battle was settled, the Civil War came to an official end and the Lebanese people were able to take a deep breath and concentrate their efforts in allowing the success of the new government. In December 1990, all militia groups were withdrawn from the capital Beirut and the line dividing the city in two zones was also eliminated. For the first time since 1984, Beirut reunited again as one single city. In the Christmas Eve of 1990, the government of national unity was officially announced by Omar Karami, the brother of Rashid Karami⁷⁷, with 30 ministers in total including all leaders of militias involved in the civil war.⁷⁸

2.1.4. Syrian occupation of Lebanon

With respect to the Syrian occupation of Lebanon, it is important to underline the steps of its military intervention throughout the Civil War and the shift in alliances.

⁷⁵ Mauriac, Claude. "Journal De Beyrouth 1989". *Revue des Deux Mondes* (Septembre 1990): pp.167-186.

⁷⁶ Rogan, Eugene, *ibid.* p.579-580

⁷⁷ ** Rashid Karami is a Lebanese pro-Syrian politician who served as Prime Minister for 8 different terms. He was killed in a bomb explosion in June 1987.

⁷⁸ Rogan, Eugene, *ibid.* p.581.

Prior to the military intervention in 1976, Syria was supporting the PLO's Fedayeen in their struggle against Israel and against the Lebanese army. Yet, in 1976 and after receiving a request from the Lebanese president, this alliance shifted to the favor of Christians, the LF on the expense of the LNF including the PLO.

Moreover, when the ADF mandate came to an end in 1986 and no extension request was made from the Lebanese side, Syria still kept its forces in the country despite the Lebanese wishes of an overall withdrawal from the country. The Syrian argument was that its presence in Lebanon serves the purpose of keeping peace and support the country in fulfilling its role in the Arab-Israeli conflict; subsequently, it was argued that no Syrian withdrawal shall be put on the agenda before the Israeli's full withdrawal from the country.⁷⁹

More to that, Joseph Maila states in his article "*Le Liban sous Influence*" that no opposition stood a chance of success in confronting the Syrian will. In illustrating this point, he mentions the example of the army officers who fought on the side of Aoun in the Liberation War in 1990 and were imprisoned by the Syrian government inside Syrian territories rather than being sanctioned inside their country and by their own government. Those officers were not released before they had resigned from the army.⁸⁰

Touching upon the legitimacy of the Syrian military presence in the country, al-Asad finally succeeded in attaining his goal by signing the treaty of Brotherhood, Cooperation and Coordination with the Lebanese government. This treaty was signed in May 22, 1991 and determined the nature of Syria's presence in the country for the following 14 years. In virtue of this treaty, Syria and Lebanon became interlinked in the fields of foreign affairs, defense and economic security. In terms of international affairs, Lebanon was to consult Syria and actually adopt the Syrian views; additionally, both countries were to provide mutual support in matters related to security and national interests.⁸¹ The treaty goes further to include setting-up intergovernmental

⁷⁹ Laurent, Annie. "Syrie-Liban: Les Faux Frères Jumeaux" *Politique étrangère* Vol. 48.3 (Fall 1983): pp. 591-600.

⁸⁰ Maila, Joseph. "Le Liban sous Influence" *Esprit* No. 173 (7/8) (July-August 1991): pp. 142-144.

⁸¹ Ibid.

organs such as the supreme council composed of presidents from both countries, their prime ministers and vice-prime ministers as well as presidents of two chambers of deputies. Not to mention the various established committees in different fields of expertise including economy, defense and many more.⁸²

On the other hand, al-Asad couldn't be able to secure his forces' presence in Lebanon and his hegemony over the country without the blessing or the indirect contribution of the US at the end of the Cold War. Consequently, at the end of the war, the balance in power witnessed a severe shift with the dissolution of USSR. As the Soviets were supporting Middle Eastern countries against the US, those countries found themselves in a difficult position. Therefore, Syria needed an alternative alliance to save its economic hardship caused in the first place by its isolation on both international and regional level after supporting Iran during the 1980s Iran-Iraq war.⁸³ The alternative for Syria was to approach the US. Similarly, the latter was interested in maintaining a stability in the region which added Syria and Lebanon to its agenda.⁸⁴ The significance of these two countries comes from the fact that Lebanon's strategic geography facilitates the spread of any conflicting situation to the neighboring countries. As to Syria, its important role in the peace negotiations during the Israeli-Arab war gave it importance in the eyes of the US.⁸⁵ Consequently, the latter allowed al-Asad to maintain his interests in Lebanon.

In this context, it can be argued that Syrian president Hafez al-Asad had strategic interests in Lebanon and had always exercised efforts to legitimize and secure the presence of his military forces in the country until he succeeded in 1991. It is rather argued that al-Asad considers Lebanon a part of the Syrian territories and was never convinced with its independence within its current borders. This was actually implied in many official occasions both by Syrian politicians and the President Hafez al-Asad

⁸² United Nations. Peacemaker.un.org Site. 1992. 15 December 2018.

<https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/LB-SY_910522_TreatyBrotherhoodCooperationCoordination.pdf>

⁸³ Ziadeh, Radwan. *Power and Policy in Syria: Intelligence Services, Foreign Relations and Democracy in the Modern Middle East*. New York: I.B. Tauris & CO. Ltd, 2013: p.103

⁸⁴ Harris, William. "Syria in Lebanon." *MERIP Reports* No.143, Asad's Syria (July-August 1985): pp.9-14.

⁸⁵ Ziadeh, *ibid*.

himself.⁸⁶ In fact, while al-Asad undertook his first visit to Lebanon and more specifically to Chtaura in al-Bekaa in 1993, he made the declaration that when leaving Damascus to Chtaura, he felt he was moving from a city to another inside the same country and that he was leaving half of his own nation to meet with the other half. These sentiments, he continued, arise from a shared and unique history. He further stressed on the point that Lebanese and Syrian nations are actually the children of one single nation and represent one people. It was after the full Israeli withdrawal from Southern Lebanon in 2000 that the Lebanese society started questioning and criticizing the Syrian military presence in the country.

Speaking of the economic interests of Syria in Lebanon, it can be stated that the profits and revenues coming from different sources constituted a breathing window for Syria's economy. For instance, the example of Syrian labor in Lebanon; in addition to the hundreds of thousands of Syrians from workers and wealthy businessmen who transferred their investments from Syria to Lebanon and sought job opportunities in the latter throughout the 1950s and 1960s, this number had increased in the post-Taif period according to a research conducted by ORSAM.⁸⁷ The number of Syrian workers in Lebanon was estimated between 600,000 to 1.5 million in 2000-2001. As to the revenues from Syrian employment in Lebanon, it was approximated to a range between 2 to 4 billion dollars on annual basis.⁸⁸ In addition to the profits of employment, Syria was also benefitting from other sources such as the commissions Syrian officers and politicians used to obtain owing to the treaties of mutual interests signed between Syria and Lebanon in the post-Taif period as well as profits from the drugs trade and smuggling. All these profits constituted a total percentage of 47% of Syria's gross domestic product, according to an estimate by Gebran Tueni⁸⁹ made in 2005.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Laurent, *ibid.*

⁸⁷ Orsam. "Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: Economic, Political and Sectarian Challenges in the Absence of a Governmental Strategy. No.62, May 2017. 23.02.2019. <http://www.orsam.org.tr> Path: Search; Syrian Refugees in Lebanon.

⁸⁸ Dersan, Duygu. Responses to International Changes: a Neoclassical Realist Analysis of Syrian Foreign Policy (1990-2005). PHD Thesis submitted to Middle East Technical University. Spetember 2012.

⁸⁹ ** Lebanese politician and editor of beirut's daily newspaper, An-Nahar.

⁹⁰ Dersan, *ibid.*

2.1.5. Hezbollah, its formation, role in domestic politics and policy towards Syria

Hezbollah or the Islamic Resistance in Lebanon is a military political party whose members are totally from the Shiite community. It has been on Lebanon's political and military arena for more than 25 years and enjoys a prominent presence in the Lebanese parliament and cabinet.

The name of Hezbollah was associated with the Islamic Revolution in Iran carried out by "Ruhollah Moussawi Khomeini" in 1979.⁹¹ Its main goal was to establish an Islamic environment in the Republic of Lebanon as part of the "great" Islamic Republic that followed the revolution of Islamic Iran governed by "Guardian Jurist".⁹² Hezbollah began to emerge in the early 1980s, with financial support from Iran, as a clandestine military organization to counter the Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon, which reached the heart of Beirut in 1982. At first, the party's activity was part of the so-called Lebanese Resistance Front, which almost disappeared after the Israeli army withdrew from Beirut in 1986.

In 1985, Hezbollah party announced officially in a statement on February 16 that "the party is committed to the commands of a wise and fair leadership embodied in the Guardianship Jurist (Vilayetul faqih) and in Ruhollah Ayatollah Mousavi Khomeini, the leader of the Muslim's revolution and the promoter of their glorious renaissance."⁹³ From this point, it can be understood that the relationship between Hezbollah and Iran is intertwined with political and religious dimensions. Some of the Shiite Lebanese who represent Hezbollah cadres have deep spiritual ties with Iran's religious authorities, and Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei⁹⁴ who is considered by them as the highest religious authority.

⁹¹ Aljazeera.net. *Hezbollah*. 2004. 20.12.2018.

<<https://www.aljazeera.net/specialcoverage/coverage2004/2004/10/3/%D8%AD%D8%B2%D8%A8-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%84%D9%87/>>

⁹² Saouli, Adham, "Lebanon's Hizbullah: The Quest for Survival". *World Affarirs*, Vol. 166.2 (Fall 2003): pp. 71-80.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ ** Sayyid Ali Hosseini Khamenei is the second and current Supreme Leader of Iran, in office since 1989. He served as President of Iran from 1981 to 1989.

There are no independent sources that mention in detail about the way the party was run before 1989, but the current information indicates that the leadership was collective until the election of the first Secretary General of Hezbollah, Sheikh Subhi al-Tufayli (from 1989 to 1991). Then the post was taken by Sheikh Abbas al-Moussawi who did not remain in office for more than nine months. One of Moussawi's most important works was to give priority to the resistance of the Israeli occupation. He was assassinated by Israel in 1992 and succeeded by Hassan Nasrallah who has been serving as the party's secretary general since then.⁹⁵

Hezbollah gained popularity and respect from both Lebanese and Arab communities, since it was formed in circumstances that are predominantly "military resistance" to the Israeli occupation that invaded Lebanon in 1982. Therefore, the party built its political ideology on the basis of resisting the occupation. The first operation of the party, which won early "fame" in the Arab world, was the bombing of US and French troops in October 1983, killing 300 US and French soldiers.⁹⁶ Its "popularity" further spread especially after the withdrawal of the last Israeli troops from southern Lebanon in 2000, which was attributed to the success of the "Islamic Resistance" operations. Accordingly, this resistance party developed its military operations against the Israeli presence along with political efforts, which forced Israeli army to withdraw from southern Lebanon in May 2000.

Hezbollah has been present in Lebanese political life since the signing of the Taif Accord in 1990, which supported it with reservations to some of its clauses. In fact, the party accepted to cooperate with the secular Lebanese politics and put aside its claims for an Islamic rule in Lebanon in return for its recognition as a national resistance against Israel.⁹⁷ Hezbollah stands in the opposition, winning the first

⁹⁵ Marefa.org. Hezbollah. 21.12.2006. 16.12.2018.

https://www.marefa.org/%D8%AD%D8%B2%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%84%D9%87#cite_note-.D8.A3-2/

⁹⁶ Aljazeera.net. Hezbollah.. Alnashaa wal Tatawor. 3.10.2004. 16.08.2018.

<https://www.aljazeera.net/specialfiles/pages/25305d60-53cc-4cc4-aae0-64eb71384ae3/>.

⁹⁷ Zisser, Eyal. Commanding Syria: Bashar al-Asad and the First Years in Power. New York: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2007: p.182.

parliamentary elections in 1992 with 12 seats, the largest number of seats won by a single party bloc.⁹⁸

After Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon, it was expected that the party's fighters would join the Lebanese army and that it would focus on its political and social goals. However, Hezbollah's military wing continued its armed activities and military operations, and still refuses to disarm, despite the UNSC resolution 1559⁹⁹ adopted in 2004 calling for the withdrawal of foreign forces from Lebanon and hence not responding to the internal and external calls to renounce violence and become a political party.¹⁰⁰

When it comes to its relationship with Syria, it had been characterized as a significant unique relation, through which Hezbollah has gained political and moral support in an unprecedented dialectical relationship in the Arab world.¹⁰¹ Hezbollah never denied such a relation; on the contrary, it gave Syria a great credit for the party's victories. Actually, both Iran and Syria share the credit in supplying Hezbollah militarily and financially with Iran holding the lead. Supporting the party gave Syria the power to lead the peace negotiations with Israel as per its own terms which included the withdrawal from Golan Heights. Additionally, it showed Syria as the sole powerful player who is able to control Hezbollah and force it to disarm. Last but not least, supporting Hezbollah allowed Syria to maintain good terms and strong alliance with Iran.

Adding to its history of resistance against Israel, Hezbollah captured two Israeli soldiers through a special operation during clashes on the Lebanese-Israeli border in

⁹⁸ Norton, Augustus Richard. *Hezbollah: A Short History*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014: p.101-102.

⁹⁹ ** This resolution was adopted in September 2, 2004 through which the Security Council announced its support for free and fair presidential elections in the country and requested the withdrawal of remaining foreign forces from Lebanon.

¹⁰⁰ Bbcarabic.com. Hezbollah: Tarikh wa Taarif. 12.07.2006. 19.12.2018.
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/arabic/middle_east_news/newsid_5173000/5173158.stm/>

¹⁰¹ Aljazeera.net. Hezbollah. 2004. 20.12.2018.
<<https://www.aljazeera.net/specialcoverage/coverage2004/2004/10/3/%D8%AD%D8%B2%D8%A8-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%84%D9%87/>>

July 2006, which led the party to confront Israel in a war that ended with an Israel's serious failures and existential threat to it as a state.¹⁰² As a result of all these so called “achievements”, the party’s reputation grew up both locally and regionally for it gained appreciation and respect of not only Lebanese Shiites community but also a wide range of Lebanese and regional Islamic and non-Islamic anti-Israel communities. Hezbollah continued to benefit from its political gains, retaining its fighters, who he describes as a resistance movement not only for Lebanon but for the entire region.

2.2. Political Assassinations and Withdrawal of Syrian Troops (2006)

2.2.1. Al-Hariri’s assassination

Lebanon witnessed a long history of political assassinations that affected in different levels the stability and the domestic affairs of the country. The history of assassinations goes back to the 1950s up until 2009. In the post-civil war period though, the one significant assassination that had a profound effect on both the domestic politics and the Syrian presence in the country is the one that targeted the Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri.

In the post-war period, the reconstruction of the country constituted a huge challenge that became a major and initial aspect of Rafiq al-Hariri’s government. Al-Hariri, was a wealthy businessman who worked as a contractor in Saudi Arabia before taking the decision of returning to his home country, Lebanon following the end of the civil war. He is known for his significant contribution to the reconstruction scheme of Beirut. Al-Hariri was named a Prime Minister in 1992 and served in the government for an approximate period of 10 years: from 1992 to 1998 and again from 2000 until his resignation on 20 October 2004. He was able to strengthen the government through his economic policies but failed to make any reforms to the state. The post-war period witnessed as well an intensification of Syrian interference in the country’s domestic affairs and political structure which was an essential reason behind al-Hariri’s resignation.

¹⁰² Norton, Augustus Richard. *Hezbollah: A Short History*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014: p.139-140.

The year 2000 witnessed three major events; the first was the “success” of Hezbollah in forcing full Israeli withdrawal from Southern Lebanon, the second was the death of Hafez al-Asad and his succession by his son Bashar al-Asad. Whereas the third is the parliamentary elections of 2000.

With regards to the first mentioned event, Rabil argues that after long years of peace negotiations between Israel and Syria, Israel eventually withdrew from the country without concluding agreements of any kind avoiding by that any land compromises for the benefit of Syria, mainly Golan Heights, and preventing the latter from escaping repercussions of using Hezbollah’s military power against Israel.¹⁰³ As to the second event of Bashar’s rise to power, it was conceived as a start for a new and less problematic chapter of relations between Syria and Lebanon.¹⁰⁴

In his interview with *Esprit Magazine*, the Lebanese political scientist, scholar and researcher Joseph Bahout mentioned that the 2000 elections allowed a shift in power in the parliament as it brought to power the triple alliance of major actors from different sects in Lebanese politics: al-Hariri (Sunni), Walid Joumblat (Druze) and the group around Patriarch Sfeir called the assembly of Qornet Chehwane¹⁰⁵ (Maronite). These three major allies represented for a long time a “Dominant Opposition” that succeeded to put the Syrian regime and their ally, the Lebanese President Lahoud, in a position of minority.¹⁰⁶ Emile Lahoud was Lebanon's former Army Commander-in-Chief. He was elected as president in 1998 and was known for his affiliation with Syria. In fact, he used to be described as a Syrian tool to strengthen the latter’s control in the country.

Al-Hariri’s second term in office (2000-2004) marked a period of perpetual conflict between him and the president Lahoud paralyzing the government from formulating successful economic and social policies and preventing necessary reforms

¹⁰³ Rabil, Robert G. Syria, the United States, and the War on Terror in the Middle East. London: Praeger Security International, 2006: p.120.

¹⁰⁴ Zisser, p.130.

¹⁰⁵ ** This assembly basically gathered the forces of Aoun and Geagea left with no political leaders, with Aoun in exile and Geagea sentenced for life in prison.

¹⁰⁶ Bahout, Joseph, Anne-Lorraine Bujon and Olivier Mongin. “Le réveil de Beyrouth”. *Esprit* 314.5 (Mai 2005): pp. 119-128.

to take place. Whenever disagreements took place between the two men, Syria used to intervene to solve the problem explicitly while in fact encouraging their allies to undermine and weaken al-Hariri. Hariri, on the other hand, was guarded as pro-Western for he enjoyed a huge support from Saudi Arabia and France in addition to the US and therefore constituted a threat to Syria's hegemony in the country.¹⁰⁷ The turning point was the struggle of 2004 envisaged in the parliament's decision to extend the president's term for an additional period of three years beyond his constitutional entitlement. Despite the fact that Lahoud's extension of presidential term required constitutional amendments, Syria still managed to force the amendment through the Lebanese parliament by using its allies and security agents planted in the country. This amendment was met with huge criticism both at the national and regional levels.¹⁰⁸

As a regional response, the UNSC adopted the resolution 1559 on September 2, 2004, with an American and French backing, in virtue of which all remaining forces in Lebanon were requested to withdraw from the country. Additionally, through this resolution, the Security Council announced its support of a fair presidential election free of foreign influence. The resolution further included the disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militia and the restoration of Lebanon's full sovereignty.¹⁰⁹ On the national level, there was a clear division between supporters and opponents to the implementation of the UNSC 1559 resolution; those who opposed it based their opinion on the argument that it facilitates Western intervention in Lebanon's internal affairs especially when it comes to the presidential election.

Following the amendment for Lahoud's term, al-Hariri reacted by resigning from his position in October 2004. Although he had opposed Syria's intervention in Lebanon, he still stressed on the importance of staying on good terms mentioning the mutual respect and strategic interests both countries share, however, Syria kept pressuring al-Hariri to include its suggested candidates in his electoral list for 2005

¹⁰⁷ Nizameddin, Talal. "The Political Economy of Lebanon under Rafiq Hariri: An Interpretation." *Middle East Journal* 60.1 (winter, 2006): pp. 95-114.

¹⁰⁸ Geukjian, Ohannes. "Political Instability and Conflict after the Syrian Withdrawal from Lebanon". *Middle East Journal* 68.4 (autumn 2014): pp. 521-545.

¹⁰⁹ United Nations. *Resolution 1559 (2004)*. 02.09.2004. 20.12.2018.
<<https://www.un.org/press/en/2004/sc8181.doc.htm>>

elections.¹¹⁰ This is when Hariri made up his opinion not to comply with Syrians requests and hence received threats from the Syrian President Bashar al-Asad who mentioned that the elimination of Lahoud meant the elimination of the Syrian president himself and that there will be serious consequences for such a behavior.¹¹¹ Soon after and more precisely on February 14, 2005, Rafiq al-Hariri was assassinated in a car explosion in the heart of Beirut alongside with 21 others including his bodyguards and security apparatus.

2.2.2 Cedar revolution and Syrian withdrawal

Hariri's assassination triggered mass demonstrations and rallies in the country, some accusing Syria of the assassination and requesting its full withdrawal from Lebanon and others supporting Syria's position and acknowledging the important role it played to defend the territorial integrity of the country. Those demonstrations caused polarization on the political scene as the majority of Lebanese political parties or movements became one of two main rival alliances, the March 8 and March 14.

The term March 8 comes from the half-million rally that Hezbollah and other pro-government parties organized in 2005 to officially thank Syria for its important role in supporting the Lebanese resistance in defending the territorial integrity of the country. This movement formed a coalition of Hezbollah (Shiite), Amal Movement (Shiite), FPM (Christian), MM (mainly Maronite Christian), SSNP (Secular), Majd Movement (Sunni Movement) and LDP (Druzes) in addition to many others.

On the other hand, the term March 14 reflects the huge protest organized by the anti-Syrian opposition on March 14, 2005. That protest gathered a million supporter requesting the full Syrian withdrawal from the country as Syria was accused by this coalition to be behind the assassination. This coalition further requested an international and impartial investigation to look into the assassination and find justice. The March 14 movement brought together the FM (Sunni), LF (Christians), Kataeb (mainly Maronite Christian), and PSP (mainly Druzes) in addition to many others. In fact, following the Hariri's assassination, mass anti-Syrian protests and rallies broke

¹¹⁰ Geukjian, *ibid.*

¹¹¹ Rogan, Eugene. *The Arabs a history*. London: Penguin Books, 2011: p.2.

out in the country requesting the Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon. Those protests were referred to as the “Cedar Revolution”. Those anti-Syrian movements combined with international and regional pressure successfully managed to force the Syrian troops out of the country in April 2005 after 29 years of occupation.

Here, it is of utmost importance to explain the role of the US in shaping the Syrian policy towards Lebanon. Just as the US facilitated the Syrian military occupation during the Lebanese Civil War, it is the US again who exercised an efficient pressure pushing Syria out of Lebanon. This point is actually supported by Rabil who divided the US role into three different stages: prior to the first Syrian military intervention alongside the Christians, during the Gulf War and following the September 11 events and the US intentions to invade Iraq.¹¹²

Prior to the military intervention alongside the Christians, promoting peace in the Middle East seemed as serving the interests of the US in the region which made ending the conflict in Lebanon a crucial matter. The US, therefore, played an important role in convincing Israel to allow such an intervention from the Syrians’ side. Subsequently, Syria was able to send troops to Lebanon under the umbrella of a joint US-Israeli silence.

The second stage refers to the disturbances in relationship between the US and Syria when the latter shifted sides again following the Christians’ alliance with Israel. This relationship witnessed various challenges as well for reasons related to Syria’s support to organizations considered as terrorists like PLO and Hezbollah. However, Syria managed to overcome the turbulent relationship by supporting the US-led coalition against Iraq during the Gulf War.¹¹³ In return, Syria’s hegemony and important role in implementing Taif accord in Lebanon, were acknowledged by the US.

When the global “war on terrorism” and countries that support terrorists was announced by the US president George W. Bush in the aftermath of September 11

¹¹² Rabil, Robert G. Syria, the United States, and the War on Terror in the Middle East. London: Praeger Security International, 2006.

¹¹³ Rabil, p.71.

terrorist attack, the US-Syrian relationship reached a confrontation level since Syria stood against the US in its campaign on Iraq.¹¹⁴ Due to the Syrian behavior embodied in opposing the American invasion of Iraq and supporting Hezbollah by considering it a resistance movement rather than a terrorist group as regarded by the US, The latter in addition to France overcame their different perceptions with regards to Iraq occupation and agreed on sponsoring the UN resolution 1559 stating the necessity for Syria to withdraw from Lebanon as well as the disarmament of Hezbollah.¹¹⁵

It can be stated that one of the main reasons that accelerated the withdrawal process was the American occupation of Iraq and the rising frustration from Syria's decline in implementing the 1559 resolution. Syria feared a huge blow to its security from the US and therefore ensured the full withdrawal of its troops from Lebanon avoiding any further provocation.

Following the withdrawal, the 14 March coalition predominated the parliamentary elections of 2005 and Fouad al-Sanioura¹¹⁶ from Saad al-Hariri¹¹⁷'s bloc was appointed as prime minister of a government in which all current political parties and movements were represented including members from Hezbollah for the first time, except for the FPM (Michel Aoun's party).¹¹⁸ Here, it is noteworthy that the 14 March coalition accused Hezbollah of implementing Iran's and Syria's policies in the country while in return, Hassan Nasrallah accused them of undertaking efforts in collaboration with the US and Israel to weaken the party through disarmament for the purpose of reigning the Lebanese society.

Despite the full Syrian military withdrawal from the country, a range of political assassinations targeting eight members and important political figures from the March 14 movement stroke the country over a two year period, four of them were members of the Lebanese parliament. Those murders revealed nothing but the fragility of the

¹¹⁴ Zisser, p.134.

¹¹⁵ Rabil, p.122.

¹¹⁶ ** Fouad al-Sanioura is a Lebanese politician and a former Prime Minister of Lebanon (2005-2008). He is the leader of the Future Movement's parliamentary group.

¹¹⁷ ** Saad al-Hariri is the son of former Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri and the current leader of Future Movement political party.

¹¹⁸ Geukjian, Ohannes. "Political Instability and Conflict after the Syrian Withdrawal from Lebanon". *Middle East Journal* 68.4 (autumn 2014): pp. 521-545.

Lebanese system and suspicions arose as to whether Lebanon would be able to succeed in protecting itself in the absence of the power-sharing governments.

Since the direct accusations against Syria for its alleged role in the assassination of Hariri, international pressures exercised by the U.S and France increased on Syria to reconsider the nature of its relationship with Lebanon by upholding different measures such as the delineation of borders between both countries, recognition of Lebanese sovereignty and establishment of diplomatic ties including exchange of ambassadors.¹¹⁹ The last step of exchanging ambassadors was finally established in 2008 marking the official Syrian recognition of the Lebanese sovereignty. In light of this, “Ali Abdul Karim Ali” was appointed as Syrian ambassador for Lebanon while “Michel Khoury” was appointed as the first Lebanese ambassador in Syria¹²⁰.

Additionally, it is worth mentioning that the UNSC adopted the resolution 1595¹²¹ looking into an international investigation in Hariri’s murder. This resolution allowed the set-up of an International Independent Investigation Commission (UNIIC) to begin investigating the assassination. Furthermore, an International tribunal was established (STL) in conjunction with the Lebanese government, the first time that a political assassination in the country actually led to an international judicial intervention.¹²²

We can conclude from the facts presented in this chapter that the Lebanese people experienced a very long and bloody civil war, a war that transformed the country into many disparate districts ruled by armed militias. Those militias ran their areas of control according to their own political and sectarian rules. This war on the other hand, marked the first radical interference of Syria in Lebanon’s domestic affairs.

¹¹⁹ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-lebanon-syria-ambassador/syria-appoints-first-ambassador-to-lebanon-idUSTRE52N31720090324>

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ ** This resolution was adopted by the Security Council in April 7, 2005. It condemned the terrorist attack that caused the death of former Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri and subsequent attacks. Additionally, it stressed on the necessity to decide the future of Lebanon by peaceful means. Most importantly, it decided on the establishment of an international independent investigation Commission to support the Lebanese government in investigating the terrorist attack.

¹²² Abboud, Samer N. and Benjamin J. Muller. “Geopolitics, Insecurity and Neocolonial Exceptionalism: A Critical Appraisal of the UN Special Tribunal for Lebanon”. *Security Dialogue* 44.5-6 (2013): p.468-484.

This interference started with military support for different fighting groups depending on the Syrian shifts in policies and ended up with a hegemony over the political affairs in the country in addition to a military presence that lasted for an overall period of 29 years. The withdrawal of the Syrian troops however can be described as physical, since, the Syrian involvement in the Lebanese affairs continued and many insurgencies that took place after the withdrawal proved to be holding Syria's fingerprints.



CHAPTER III

THE REFLECTIONS OF ARAB SPRING ON LEBANON'S DOMESTIC POLICY (2011-2018)

3.1. The Arab Spring

In late 2010, early 2011, a wave of protests stroke the Middle East countries announcing rages against the corrupted governments and existing political systems. The spark that opened the door wide was caught in Tunisia, on the day that salesman Mohammad Bouazizi burned himself in public in protest against the deteriorating economic conditions and the corruption widespread in the state. This revolution evidently overthrew president Zaid El Abidine Ben Ali following which the protests reached many other countries in the region. In some countries, the protestors succeeded in forcing the fall of existing regimes such as the case of Egypt whereby in others, as in Yemen, Libya and Syria, the use of arms against the protestors twinned with external interventions diverted the situation to obscured passages of continuous armed conflicts. On the other hand, some countries like Morocco, and Jordan undertook administrative reforms in successful attempts to calm the crowds at early stages.

3.1.1. The case of Syria

The uprising in Syria broke out in provinces and started with peaceful demonstrations organized by social networking youths, at the end of January 2011, who actually failed to attract the Syrian society's attention.¹²³ Later in February, schoolchildren aged 15 and younger were arrested by the Syrian regime, imprisoned and tortured in different means for writing slogans on the wall against the president Bashar al-Asad. After failed attempts of negotiating their release, the families of detained children reverted to the streets of Daraa where many were shot and killed by security forces. The next day, a huge number of twenty thousand protestors joined the funeral and chanted slogans against the government whose buildings were as well attacked by the demonstrators.¹²⁴ Subsequently, a group gathering an approximate

¹²³ Gelvin, James L. *The Arab Uprisings: What Everyone Needs to Know*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015: p.126.

¹²⁴ Sterling, Joe. CNN. <<https://edition.cnn.com/2012/03/01/world/meast/syria-crisis-beginnings/index.html>>. 01 March 2012. 18 January 2019.

number of 300 protestors demonstrated on March 15 in Damascus requesting mainly the end of the state of emergency and the release of political prisoners. This group was called “the Syrian Revolution 2011 against Bashar al-Asad” and was dismantled by security forces which marked the spasm of what was to come.¹²⁵

The Syrian regime’s first reaction to these protests was promises of some institutional and constitutional reforms in addition to ending the state of emergency that had existed over a period of 48 years.¹²⁶ Those promises, however, were meaningless with the brutal repression adopted by the security forces toward the protestors. In fact, this policy contributed in increasing the circles of objections and spreading feelings of rage to many different provinces including Aleppo. By the end of 2011, a full-scale civil war was looming over Syria.

At first, the government manipulated the uprising by giving it a sectarian nature through its security forces and *shabiha* (informal security groups). The Islamists were blamed for the insurgencies and incidents of massacres were provoked against both Sunnis and Alewis to serve the government’s claims of a sectarian conflict. Since security forces and the informal security groups including pro-regime vigilantes failed in containing the protests and putting an end to the uprising, the regime decided early 2012 to change its policy and to restore peace by bringing in the heavy artillery.¹²⁷ In fact, the regime utilized extreme cruelty against its own citizens. It adopted the tactic of using chemical weapons, tanks and mortars as well as barrel bombs dropped down from helicopters on civilians without differentiation between those presumably hostile to the government and others who are not.

As a response to the escalation of violence in virtue of regime’s use of heavy weaponry, the opposition groups started also reshaping. At the very beginning, The Free Syrian Army, compiled of defected Syrian military officers, were protecting the peaceful demonstrators against the snipers planted by the Syrian regime. Then, more fighting groups started evolving by time including mainly the Islamic State of Iraq and

¹²⁵ Gelvin J., p.127.

¹²⁶ Andrews, John. *The World in Conflict: Understanding the World's Troublespots*. London: Profile Books Ltd, 2015: pp.76-77.

¹²⁷ Gelvin, James L. *The Arab Uprisings: What Everyone Needs to Know*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015: pp.130-131.

Syria (ISIS), Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) and the Islamic Front including Jabhat al-Nusra (JN). The Islamic Front comprises of a coalition of fighting groups significantly heterogeneous as they present different priorities and moderates. Additionally, other than fighting the regime, these groups were in rivalry with each other.¹²⁸ While the opposition groups are supported to different extents and different intervals of time by the members of European Union, the US, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and numerous non-Syrian militant groups, the Syrian regime on the other hand is strongly backed by Iran, Russia and the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah.¹²⁹

In August 2012, Syria was given the first warning of a US military intervention by the US president Obama if chemical weapons were confirmed to have been used by the regime in the armed conflict. Despite that the use of those weapons was indeed confirmed by the UN weapons inspectors, US president decided to endorse the Russian proposal rather than intervening in the war. That proposal consisted of a verified elimination of chemical weapons stockpiles by Syria and the signature of the chemical weapons convention.¹³⁰ Worth mentioning as well the fact that the United Nations failed to find a political solution in efforts to end the Syrian conflict through the Geneva talks with the opposition represented by the Syrian National Coalition recognized at the time by the majority of International community as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people.

Up until 2014, the Syrian conflict could be described as a civil war, it then gained a proxy war definition with the severe turnover of events marking the announcement of the Islamic State with the self-appointed caliphate Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and the emergence of ISIS as a strong extremist militia. At this point, the international focus shifted from the elimination of al-Asad and his regime to the destruction of ISIS. By August 2014, and following the brutal beheading of British and American hostages, the US-led coalition airstrikes began targeting ISIS in Iraq and the following month in Syria. Many countries participated in this coalition including Turkey, UAE, Saudi

¹²⁸ Andrews, John. *The World in Conflict: Understanding the World's Troublespots*. London: Profile Books Ltd, 2015: pp.78-80.

¹²⁹ Uludag, Mekki. "Syrian Civil War: Important Players and Key Implications – A Factsheet." *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 7.7 (August 2015): pp.4-10.

¹³⁰ Andrews, John. *The World in Conflict: Understanding the World's Troublespots*. London: Profile Books Ltd, 2015: pp.78-79.

Arabia, Jordan, Qatar and Bahrain followed by Morocco.¹³¹ The Turkish role was the most prominent on the eastern border, where they were able to re-organize the opposition's lineups forming a strong military front (FSA), which till this day is performing distinctively amongst the other opposition factions that began to slowly fade away. Additionally, there seems to be a role for the US in organizing the ranks of the Kurdish opposition, which has been waging a gangs' war with the Turkish state for some time.

The biggest mystery remains ISIS, which appears to be an organization established in the eyes of the regime to liquidate the opposition. The role played by this organization has always served the regime, and all its wars have been in this direction.¹³² What the regime and Hezbollah have failed to achieve, especially with regard to the liquidation of opposition symbols, is guaranteed by the organization of the state ISIS. It seems that ISIS was not only a necessity for the regime, but for America and its international alliance as well. The emergence of ISIS was a direct reason for the American intervention in Syria under the pretext of combating terrorism¹³³, and tried to play the role of double containment of both the Kurdish and national opposition, despite the strong differences that were between the Kurds and the Free Syrian Army. It seems that this role was important to the US for pressuring Turkey, but the presence of the Russian element was a strong deterrent to the US role in the beginning, especially that Syria was the only maritime port of Russia to warm water.

After 7 years of a bloody armed conflict, the international policy towards the crisis is shifting to keeping al-Asad in power under certain terms and conditions avoiding by that the alternative of having Islamists run the country. Hence, the powers involved are to a great extent diverting the fate of Syrians to what in the end serves their interests in the region.

¹³¹ Ibid, p.80.

¹³² Becker, Michael. "When Terrorists and Target Governments Cooperate the Case of Syria". *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (February 2015), pp. 95-103.

¹³³ Ryan, Curtis. "Regional Responses to the Rise of ISIS." *Middle East Report*, No. 276, ISIS (Fall 2015), pp. 18-23.

3.2. Official Positions of Lebanese Political Entities toward the Syrian War

The division of the major political parties in Lebanon between allies and opponents to Bashar al-Asad not to mention the fragile political structure and the sectarian volcano ready for eruption have undoubtedly made Lebanon the most effected country by the Syrian civil war. While the government represented by the Prime Minister Najib Mikati adopted the policy of “Self-Distancing or Dissociation”¹³⁴ towards the Syrian War as an attempt to avoid complications on the Lebanese scene, the major actors followed their own agendas and did not compile but rather used every available platform to express their affiliations.

3.2.1. Hezbollah and the Syrian civil war

In late 2011, Hezbollah began fighting alongside the Syrian regime, yet in an undeclared manner. Al-Qusayr region near the Lebanese border was the scene of direct interventions to defend the capital of Syria from falling in the hands of the opposition. Within the beginning of 2013, Hezbollah’s fighting with the Syrian regime has been confirmed following opposition operations targeting Hezbollah’s military convoys and the deaths of many of them.¹³⁵ The Lebanese voices opposed to Hezbollah’s intervention in Syria had started to rise, from Shiite voices such as Mr. Sobhi Al-Tufayli, the former secretary-general of Hezbollah, who is opposed to the party’s orientations with Iran and the Syrian regime, and March 14 leaders who were looking forward to the day the Syrian regime falls, whom they accuse of assassinating Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri.

However, all these claims did not have an effect on Hezbollah’s intervention in Syria. On the contrary, the party took an advanced step by announcing on April 4, 2013 launching a military attack along with the Syrian army to regain control over al-Qusayr region.¹³⁶ This attack was interpreted as an official announcement of direct intervention in the Syrian war. It is believed by some Western diplomats that the active involvement of Hezbollah, whose fighting skills exceed the Syrian army’s skills,

¹³⁴ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-22630005>

¹³⁵ Levitt, Matthew. “Hezbollah's Syrian Quagmire”. *PRISM* 5.1 (2014): pp. 100-115.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

allowed the regime to score important achievements and progress on the ground.¹³⁷ As a matter of fact, in an interview with Hassan Nasrallah on al-Manar TV on May 25, 2013, he stated the following:

“We will continue along the road, bear the responsibilities and the sacrifices. This battle is ours, and I promise you victory.”¹³⁸

As previously mentioned, there were also interventions from other parties alongside the opposition, such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey, which sought to organize the opposition and provide them with weapons and money. It was later revealed that the Shiite intervention in Syria through Hezbollah was only a projection of the Iranian-Saudi conflict.¹³⁹ Hezbollah was in fact fighting under the orders of Iran, where the commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) was directly supervising the fights. Shiite volunteers were in fact recruited from many countries including Lebanon, Pakistan, Iraq and others for the battle in Syria. As a consequence, the role of Hezbollah’s military expanded from Al-Qassir to Qalamoun in the countryside of Damascus and up to Aleppo, even in the Golan Heights, which enabled the regime to survive until today.

Security wise, Hezbollah’s military intervention in Syria has undoubtedly propagated the conflict into Lebanon. This can be explained by the many insurgencies reported in different provinces all over the country. For instance, the opponent militant groups rival to Hezbollah and particularly Jabhat al-Nusra are responding by attacking the party and its supporters within the Lebanese borders.¹⁴⁰ Furthermore, many incidents took place as a result of the increasing tension in the country, one of which occurred in the north and more specifically in Tripoli where armed conflict broke out between Alewites, previously armed by the Syrian regime prior to its military

¹³⁷ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-22630005>

¹³⁸ Hassan Nasrallah, “Words on Eid al-Muqawama and the Liberation.” Al-Manar TV. 25 May 2013.

¹³⁹ Carnegie Middle East Center Site. Salem, Paul. *Can Lebanon Survive the Syrian Crisis?*. 11.12.2012. 19.04.2018.

<<https://carnegie-mec.org/2012/12/11/can-lebanon-survive-syrian-crisis-pub-50298/>>

¹⁴⁰ Knudsen, Are John. “Syria’s Refugees in Lebanon: Brothers, Burden, and Bone of Contention”. in Rosita Di Peri and Daniel Mier (Ed.). *Lebanon Facing the Arab Uprisings: Constraints and Adaptation*. n.p. 2017: p.149.

withdrawal, and Sunni armed community. This armed conflict erupted several times and in different time frames not to mention the incidents of kidnapping that occurred against Shiites citizens and Hezbollah members as well as Lebanese soldiers both inside Syria and Lebanon.¹⁴¹

Nonetheless, an undeniable fact is, that the lack of a clearly defined border, the 375 km geographical boundary between both countries and the government's inefficient policies in place or even ignorance to control the border, have turned the latter into a sanctuary for regime and anti-regime activism, weapons transfer and travel of rebels.

3.2.2. Position of other Lebanese political minorities/majorities

As for Lebanon, the intervention of Hezbollah in the war was highly contested, especially by the March 14 Forces, who launched a spark to oust the Syrian regime from Lebanon and who sympathized with the Syrian opposition in its revolution.¹⁴² This sympathy was seen on the media outlets controlled by the March 14 group, especially Future TV, which expresses the policy of Prime Minister Saad Hariri who does not conceal his opposition to the Syrian regime that carries his father's blood.

Amongst the political parties opposed to the Syrian regime was the Lebanese Forces party headed by Dr. Samir Geagea, who was also opposed to the military role of Hezbollah in Syria. Worth mentioning as well is, Druze leader Walid Jumblat, the son of leader Kamal Jumblat, who was allegedly assassinated by the Syrian regime on March 16, 1977. He was also against Hezbollah's interference in Syria and the Syrian regime.

Together, they formed an internal front in Lebanon that met on these two issues; the opposition to the Syrian regime and the opposition to Hezbollah's intervention in Syria, accusing it of dragging Lebanon into conflicts it could not afford.

¹⁴¹ Maurice, Antoine. "Les Printemps Arabes Vus Du Liban". *Esprit* 401.1 (Janvier 2014): pp. 125-128.

¹⁴² Assi, Abbas and James Worrall "Stable Instability: the Syrian Conflict and the Postponement of the 2013 Lebanese Parliamentary Elections". *Third World Quarterly* 36.10 (2015): pp. 1944–1967.

3.3. Implications of the Syrian Conflict on the Policies of Lebanon

This reality has directly affected the internal policy in Lebanon where a political conflict has emerged over power and authority. Although the Lebanese have agreed to end the civil war in 1989 through the Taif agreement, it has been found that the two strong political parties that emerged thereafter as strong Syrian allies, Hezbollah and the Free Patriotic Movement (President Aoun's movement), seek to modify the Taif, and if possible change it entirely. Till this day these two parties are still competing over the control of the Lebanese government, at the expense of the relatively weak majority, The Sunnis.

3.3.1. The two-year presidential gap

The presidential gap in Lebanon is the period that followed the end of President Michel Suleiman's term until the election of President Michel Aoun. Before going in depth to clarify this gap, it is important to explain how former President Suleiman won presidency. The election of Michel Suleiman, who was the commander of the Lebanese army, on May 15, 2008 occurred in the wake of the Nahr al-Bared camp war against terrorism coming from the Syrian regime under the title of "Fateh al Islam"¹⁴³ in May 2007, thus obtaining the satisfaction of all parties both regional and local, following another presidential gap the parliament went through at the end of Lahoud's term in November 2007. After the end of president Lahoud's second term, with no possibility of extension of the third because the constitution of the country forbids it, the post of the president to the republic was vacant. The conflict between the two camps intensified, victory was in the hands of the March 8 group due to their upper hand in weaponry and the assassinations they carried out which overthrew important figures from the March 14 group. Then came the Beirut armed transgressions that were carried out by Hezbollah fighters on May 7, 2008.¹⁴⁴ This event, along with the previous war in the camp of al-Bared, was a strong reason for the March 8 group to

¹⁴³ Khalidi, Muhammad Ali and Diane Riskedahl. "The Road to Nahr al Barid: Lebanese Political Discourse and Palestinian Civil Rights". *Middle East Research and Information Project, Inc. (MERIP)* 244 (Fall, 2007): pp. 26-33.

¹⁴⁴ Levitt, Matthew. "Hezbollah's Syrian Quagmire". *PRISM* 5.1 (2014): pp. 100-115.

accept the commander of the army as president of the Lebanese Republic. He was then elected on 25 May 2008.

Although his candidacy was made possible by the March 8 Forces, the amount of criticism expressed by some politicians in the election session was quite clear, it seemed, however, that a certain agreement was sorted out to make him reach presidency. He won the election of the parliamentary majority where he received 118 votes of 128 against one vote for former MP Jean Obeid, another for the head of the Democratic Renewal Movement Nassib Lahoub, and there were six blank ballots found with one ballot bearing the words "Rafic Hariri and the martyrs' deputies." MPs Boutros Harb, Hussein al-Husseini, Nayla Muawad and George Adwan expressed their reservations during the election of Michel Suleiman on the constitutional mechanism of his election as president.¹⁴⁵ All of them represent opposing movements of the March 8 coalition. Therefore it seems that some sort of a settlement was achieved. This settlement was in fact made possible through the Doha agreement that gathered different Lebanese factions (March 14 and 8) on Wednesday May 21, 2008 in Doha, Qatar. The invasion of Beirut by Hezbollah on 7 May was a major pressure on it. This agreement was achieved through the collective efforts of former Emir of Qatar Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa the second, the Arab Ministerial Committee and the secretary-general of the League of Arab States Amr Moussa; it also presented an end to 6 months of political crisis in Lebanon, some of which have been marked by bloody events.

The most prominent clauses of this agreement included first, the election of a new president: the army Chief Michel Suleiman. The second important one expressed the adoption of the electoral law: it was agreed to hold elections according to provinces and the division of Beirut into three districts. As to the third, it concluded the formation of a new government of national unity composed of 30 ministers in total; 16 ministers for the majority, 11 ministers for the opposition, and 3 ministers for the president of the republic. The reason that led the party of March 14 to accept the agreement is that it negotiated the issue of weapons outside the military establishment; the prohibition

¹⁴⁵ Aljazeera.com. "Sleiman Becomes Lebanon President: Former Army Chief Elected Head of State after Qatar-brokered Deal between Political Factions." 25 May 2008. 18 Jan 2019.

of the use of weapons or violence in the purpose of solving internal disputes and restricting the security and military authority to the state was agreed upon.¹⁴⁶

All regional and international parties without exception welcomed the agreement. And because this settlement created some balance within the Lebanese society, President Michel Suleiman was keen to maintain this balance, so he sponsored a table for national dialogue in the presidential palace on November 6, 2012 resulting in a series of agreements known as the "Baabda Declaration".¹⁴⁷ The main points of the declaration emphasize the authority of the state and its institutions, the need to rely internally on the language of dialogue and not to resort to the language of arms, in addition to the commitment to the implementation of international resolutions relating to Lebanon, in particular, resolution 1701¹⁴⁸ on the weapon of Hezbollah.

Therefore, when it was found that the tripartite equation (the army – resistance – the people), which was always backed up by the parties loyal to the Syrian regime and the Iranian was named as the “wooden formula” by President Suleiman who always avoided talking about Hezbollah’s weapon, made the latter to turn on him.¹⁴⁹ When his term ended on May 14, 2014, Hezbollah stipulated that he accepts the tripartite, and apologize in return for the extension of his presidency. Former President Suleiman refused, and left the palace.

The second presidential gap, which resulted from the battle for the election of a new president, began with Hezbollah and its allies naming General Michel Aoun. The March 14 Forces gave the name of Samir Geagea and held a two-year shuttle election that reached 45 sessions, none of which were successful in electing a candidate, until a compromise was achieved under the pretext of national interest.

¹⁴⁶ UN Peacemaker Site. *Doha Agreement 'On the Results of the Lebanese National Dialogue Conference'*. 21.05.2008. 20.12.2018.

<https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/Lebanon_DohaAgreement2008_Engl.pdf/>.

¹⁴⁷ Salloukh, Bassel F. “The Syrian War: Spillover Effects on Lebanon.” *Middle East Policy* XXIV.1 (Spring 2017): pp. 62-78.

¹⁴⁸ ** The UNSC resolution 1701 was adopted in 2006 to mainly end the hostilities between Hezbollah and Israel and negotiate a cease-fire. Among other important points of discussion, the resolution stressed on the importance of Hezbollah’s disarmament and the necessity for Lebanon to exercise its power over its territory.

¹⁴⁹ Salloukh, *ibid*.

The first compromise made by Prime Minister Saad al-Hariri in 2015 was illustrated by withdrawing his support of Samir Geagea in favor of the pro-Hezbollah and pro-Syrian candidate Suleiman Franjeh – the grandson of former President Suleiman Franjeh (1970). Since this decision led to no positive outcome, al-Hariri again decided to shift his support to the second pro-Hezbollah and pro-Syrian candidate, Michel Aoun.¹⁵⁰ In virtue of Hariri's and Geagea's compromise, Michel Aoun was finally elected on October 31, 2016 at the 46th session, which was divided into two sessions, the first being in the morning and the second in the afternoon due to the fact that General Aoun failed to meet at least two-thirds of the votes in the morning round. After the re-votes during the second round, Aoun gained 83 votes of 127 who attended the session which goes to show the size of the opposition that was facing him, and if not for the alliances with Samir Geagea and Prime Minister Saad Hariri, he could not have passed the elections.¹⁵¹ At the end, as Rami Ruhayem stated, "Presidents are never made in Lebanon". In fact, the parliament members decide to meet and elect a president only after a deal had been made with external actors.¹⁵²

Thus, Lebanon passed through the danger of this presidential gap, but since then has moved to another gap: the gap in the formation of the government, which is still continuously stalled until this day.

3.3.2. Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon and its implications

It is difficult to say that Lebanon is immune to any negative impact from the Syrian crisis, as it is impossible due to several factors regarding geography and demographic factors; the lands are overlapped and the families are intertwined. One of the reasons holding up the neutrality of Lebanon is the fact that it has become a backyard for Syrian refugees whilst their country re-establishes itself. There is no doubt that humanity urges the Lebanese people to empathize with the oppressed and

¹⁵⁰ Wilsoncenter.org. "Lebanon's Presidential Election: The Elusive Search for Outside Influence and an End to Deadlock". 03.11.2016. 23.02.2019. <http://wilsoncenter.org/> Path: Search; Lebanon's Presidential Election.

¹⁵¹ Aljazeera.net. "Intikhab Michel Aoun Raisan Liloubnan". 31.10.2016. 20.12.2018. <<https://www.aljazeera.net/news/arabic/>>. Path: Search; Intikhab Michel Aoun Raisan Liloubnan.

¹⁵² Wilsoncenter.org, ibid.

provide shelter for those in refuge. Their country, however, is too small to bear the bulk of refugees, which now accounts for quarter its population¹⁵³.

As previously mentioned, there exists no border demolition between both countries which has certainly facilitated the influx of refugees. The latter were provided equal access to education, health sector in addition to social development centers. However, the increased pressure on these services and the already fragile infrastructure of Lebanon struggling to cope with the massive increase in solid waste, electricity and water consumption, have certainly created a huge burden both on the local community and the state that has to deal with it and find solutions to overcome its effects.¹⁵⁴

Other than the burden on infrastructure and social services, the Lebanese community finds itself on a crossroads of perception. From one hand, it is an obligation towards their Syrian neighbors, who previously supported them in similar circumstances, to welcome them in the country until a certain level of security is reached allowing them to return to their homes without facing threats to life. On the other hand, the Syrian refugees are originated from a country that exercised military occupation and hegemony over them.¹⁵⁵ Lebanese still recall a long history of occupation, killings and mistreatment exercised by the Syrian military forces; additionally, they still hold Syria responsible for many of the assassinations of political figures and insurgencies that had long dominated the internal Lebanese scene.

Furthermore, an economic factor can be added to the other mentioned factors causing strained relationships between the Lebanese community and the Syrian refugees. For instance, the Syrians who accept low-wages are competing with the

¹⁵³ Orsam. "Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: Economic, Political and Sectarian Challenges in the Absence of a Governmental Strategy. No.62, May 2017. 23.02.2019. <http://www.orsam.org.tr> Path: Search; Syrian Refugees in Lebanon.

¹⁵⁴ Trombetta, Lorenzo. "'Willy-Nilly We have to Live Side by Side' Relationships Between Locals and Newcomers at the Syria-Lebanon Border". in Rosita Di Peri and Daniel Mier (Ed.). Lebanon Facing the Arab Uprisings: Constraints and Adaptation. n.p. 2017: p.16.

¹⁵⁵ Meier, Daniel. "The Refugee Issue and the Threat of a Sectarian Confrontation". *Oriente Moderno*, Nuova Serie 94.2 (2014): pp. 382-401.

locals over job opportunities dragging the employers in favoring their recruitment.¹⁵⁶ Moreover, despite the fact that Syrians live in very difficult conditions and are in dire of humanitarian assistance with many of them having no legal presence in the country, the Lebanese community who already suffers from high level of poverty complains from the enormous funds and services being spent on refugees allowing them to perceive that the refugee community is actually receiving huge assistances while they are also in need.¹⁵⁷

Another worth-mentioning fact, the increase in number of refugees has resulted in many fears, especially for the Christians who are fighting as to not naturalize Palestinian refugees as an attempt to avoid affecting the demographic structure of Lebanon, which is based initially on equality in governance in population ratios. Those ratios, however, have reached 60% of Muslims and %35 of Christians as of May 2017.¹⁵⁸ If we add to this situation the presence of Syrians of Sunni majority, with the migration of Christians, Lebanon one day could become of one color threatening the sectarian equilibrium which is what the Christians in Lebanon are trying to prevent from happening. In line with the presented fact, the former President Suleiman and the current President Aoun shared the same view in describing the presence of Syrians in Lebanon as an “existential crisis” for the country with the current President stressing on the importance of the Syrians’ return to their home country and the necessity of creating safe zones inside Syria.¹⁵⁹

All these elements twinned with the absence of a consensus from the side of the government in handling the refugee crisis have resulted in an increased tension in the streets, which reflected protests and movements demanding the exit of Syrians from Lebanon and their return to Syria or their relocation elsewhere.

¹⁵⁶ Young, William, David Stebbins, Bryan A. Frederick and Omar Al-Shahery. *Spillover from the Conflict in Syria: An Assessment of the Factors that Aid and Impede the Spread of Violence*. RAND Corporation, 2014: p.28.

¹⁵⁷ Meier, Daniel. “The Refugee Issue and the Threat of a Sectarian Confrontation”. *Oriente Moderno*, Nuova Serie 94.2 (2014): pp. 382-401.

¹⁵⁸ ORSAM, *ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

To conclude, several problems have risen: the Syrian war, which has not yet ended, the regional struggle over the distribution of the spoils, the Syrian refugees crisis and the desire to replace the Taif agreement. All these issues have gathered to explode in Lebanon leading to a clear political paralysis. The first conflict over control has paralyzed the presidential elections for two years. Today, several months have passed and the government's situation is still exactly, where it was, but every time one issue is solved, another is created, and it is clear that this is all in one way or another related to the conflict on Syrian soil not to mention the fact that Hezbollah remains one of the major factors intercepting the efforts in isolating Lebanon from the conflict serving the interests of the axis of resistance “Iran-Syria-Hezbollah”.



CONCLUSION

This thesis aimed at analyzing the interests of Syria in Lebanon and secured through its hegemony and military intervention by examining the dynamics of relationship since the countries' independence and studying the volume of impact the turbulent situation in Syria has had on Lebanon's internal stability.

When the allied power divided Greater Syria into today's territories, Syria was discontent as it regarded Lebanon a projection of its own lands. However, since Syria's internal situation was witnessing ups and downs, insurgencies including coups and counter-coups until the arrival of Hafez al-Asad as a president to the third republic, it could not pursue an efficient foreign policy and had to focus on its own internal stability. When a certain level of stability was relatively reached under Hafez al-Asad, those claims started to rise and to be reflected in Syria's reaction and intervention in the Lebanese domestic affairs.

This study demonstrated that Syria pursued a policy of occupation and hegemony over Lebanon. Through the 29 years of military occupation and by supporting the Shiites party Hezbollah in its resistance against Israel, it could exercise its dominance over political affairs securing by that its strategic and economic interests serving the bigger aim of becoming a strong regional power.

The military intervention in Lebanon was made possible through Lebanese Christian calls for support against their rivals within the course of the Lebanese Civil War. Yet, Syria shifted sides during the war depending on its interests and as an attempt to ensure the remaining of its forces inside the country. In fact, efforts were continuously exercised by the Syrian regime to legitimize its presence which was only secured after Taif agreement. Following the consensus reached in Taif agreement, both countries signed the Brotherhood, Cooperation and Coordination treaty legitimizing Syrian military presence in the country and allowing Syria to strengthen its influence and power over different sectors including security, economy and politics which had definitely contributed in empowering the country regionally.

Politically, by exercising its control and ensuring the success of its allies to the Lebanese parliament, Syria had gained a strong and automatic supporter to its opinions and actions in the inter-Arab and international platforms such as the Arab league and UNSC. On the economic level, the most important factor that contributed in huge revenues to Syria and in creating a breath window to its economy is the huge number of Syrian workers working in Lebanon mostly in construction fields. Those workers used to accept low wages compared to what a Lebanese citizen would receive, yet this amount was still much higher than what they would have gained in their own country. Additionally, it was established in this study that Syria also benefitted from profits coming from different sources including smuggling activities as well we drugs trade.

Since Syria was using the argument of strengthening Lebanese ability to resist Israeli occupation through its military presence in the country, people started debating the real reasons behind this presence following Israel's full withdrawal in 2000. Those debates became stronger and turned into a large scale of protests requesting full Syrian withdrawal from the country following the assassination of P.M. Rafiq al-Hariri as Syria was perceived responsible for the operation. These protests along with international and regional pressure, succeeded in pushing for the military withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon which further turned out to be only physical since following the pull-out of forces, different insurgencies including assassinations and murder attempts occurred in the country with fingers of accusation pointed towards Syria. This was a clear demonstration of how much the Syrian regime had power inside Lebanon. Additionally, it also proved that this power was not only exercised through the military or security forces present in the country but also through the allies Syria was able to gain during the years of its occupation mainly Hezbollah.

Describing the relationship between Syria and Lebanon, it can be stated that first, it was dominated by a pure military and security nature, a nature that prevented the formation of a balanced relationship between two countries based on mutual interests. This unbalanced relationship was actually viewed by the Lebanese as an occupation. The idea of a Syrian occupation grew up further and gained a strong basis for appeal after the political influence that was exercised by Syria on the parliamentary structure of the country by forcing the election of its allied candidates not to mention its control

over the governmental decisions particularly on regional and international levels controlling by that Lebanon's relationship with different countries.

Furthermore, the study showed that Syrian intervention wouldn't had been made possible if it hadn't served the interests of the great power, the US. Asserting this conclusion, Seale argues that al-Asad sought, most of all, recognition from the United States as an important and influential regional player with the ability of imposing a relative stability and peace in the Levant region by extending the circle of his influence over Lebanon, Jordan and the Palestinians.¹⁶⁰

Other than its allies in the country, another important factor allowed intervention in Lebanese affairs and facilitated the process for Syria. This factor is embodied in sectarianism which has always dominated the Lebanese platform and decomposed the political scene. The absence of a strong national identity opened the floor for fractions within the community and encouraged different parties to seek power through alliances with external actors. The confessional democracy introduced in the national pact which is still being adopted till the day, has brought peace to the country but also conflict at the same time. The different parties are always in rivalry and competition over power which made the political system fragile and vulnerable to international interventions facilitating therefore a Syrian dominance.

Despite the fact that today's Syria struggles in a battle of its own, its unstable situation has caused tremendous repercussions on Lebanon, socio-economically, politically and even on security levels. Although the Syrian regime is busy concluding its armed conflict, the coalition of Hezbollah and FPM is ensuring the continuation of its influence on Lebanon's internal affairs.

One would question the reasons behind this strong support Hezbollah is providing to the Syrian regime to ensure the latter's survival. This support may be linked to religious reasons as Alewite comes from Shiism or it could be that Hezbollah finds it an obligation to return the Syrian favor of supporting its party during the long years of resistance against Israel. Additionally, Hezbollah may be trying to secure and

¹⁶⁰ Seale, Patrick. *Asad: The Struggle for the Middle East*. London: I.B. Tauris & CO. Ltd, 1988: p.293.

exercise control over certain territorial pathways through its support to the Syrian regime to guarantee the receipt of weapons transferred from Iran as it was the case before the eruption of the Syrian Civil War. However, an undeniable fact is that this support is mostly linked to the Iranian interests in the region as Lebanon constitutes the last bargaining chip to secure its interests while Hezbollah is the playing card.

In a speech describing Hezbollah's relationship with Syria broadcasted on al-Manar TV on May 25, 2013, Nasrallah stated the following: "I frankly say that Syria is the backbone of the resistance, and the support of the resistance. The resistance cannot sit with hands crossed while its backbone is held vulnerable and its support is being broken or else we will be stupid."¹⁶¹

Coming to the destabilizing effects the Syrian Civil war has had on Lebanon, the latter has shown a remarkable capacity for continuous adaptation and absorption of effects. Additionally, although all factors joined together would have caused the collapse of the country, the different political parties including Hezbollah not to mention the community itself are exercising efforts to avoid dragging the country into social conflicts. The attitudes adopted inside Lebanon can be described as accommodative, avoiding by that sectarian confrontations despite the increasing Sunni-Shiite tension. The Lebanese community, obviously, have learned lessons the hard way from the long civil war that stroke the country. As to Hezbollah, it can be said that it is trying to profit in controlling the Lebanese political orientation by holding on to internal stability.

The Lebanese-Syrian relationship has always been problematic and of an asymmetric nature. It has become, however, more turbulent lately and particularly following Hezbollah's intervention in the Syrian civil war and owing to the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon. These two countries, as presented in this study, have long been interlinked to a greater extent on account of a variety of factors divided into four different categories: ideological, historical, political as well as socio-economic. This

¹⁶¹ Hassan Nasrallah, "Words on Eid al-Muqawama and the Liberation." Al-Manar TV. 25 May 2013.

linkage makes it impossible for any radical change in one of them not to have profound effects on the other.

The Syrian civil war is still on-going while the international policy is diverting to keeping al-Asad in power. While it is undeniable that future settlements in Syria will definitely have an impact on Lebanon who is already in a political limbo, a question of how profound will this effect be and what policies Asad would pursue towards Lebanon, if managed to stay in power, is yet to be answered. At the end, Lebanon is a volatile country and threats of a renewed conflict are always on the table.



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Annex 1. PROMINENT LEBANESE POLITICAL PARTIES

Free Patriotic Movement (FPM): Founded by President Michel Aoun and currently led by his son-in-law Gebran Bassil. The party joined the March 8 coalition in 2006 and is pro-Hezbollah, pro-Syrian.

Future Movement (FM): This political party is led by MP and Prime Minister Saad al-Hariri, the younger son of the assassinated former Prime Minister of Lebanon, Rafiq al-Hariri. The movement is the largest member of the March 14 Alliance, which won a majority of the seats in the 2009 parliamentary elections.

Hezbollah: Hezbollah is a Shiite Islamist political party and militant group based in Lebanon. Its paramilitary wing is the Jihad Council, and its political wing is loyalty to the Resistance Bloc party in the Lebanese parliament. The party was founded by Imad Mughniyah, Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah, Ali Akbar Mohtashamipur and currently led by Hassan Nasrallah (Secretary-General).

Amal Movement: The Amal Movement is a Lebanese political party associated with Lebanon's Shia community. It was co-founded by Musa al-Sadr and Hussein el Husseini as the "Movement of the Dispossessed" in 1974. The current leader of the party is the Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, Nabih Berri. This party joined the March 8 alliance.

Marada Movement (MM): This political party was a former militia active during the Lebanese civil war named after the legendary Marada warriors of the early Middle Ages that fought on the external edge of the Byzantine Empire. It was founded by the former President Suleiman Franjeh and currently led by his grandson Suleiman Franjeh jr. Its part of the March 8 alliance.

Lebanese Forces (LF): The Lebanese Forces is a Lebanese Christian based political party and former militia during the Lebanese Civil War. It was founded by Bashir Jumayyel and currently led by Samir Geagea. The LF is part of the 14 March alliance.

Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP): It is a nationalist political party operating in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Iraq and Palestine. It was founded by Antoun Saadeh and under the current leadership of Ali Qanso and Ali Haidar. This party is an ally to the 8 March coalition.

Phalange or Kataeb Party: It is a Christian Democratic political party. Despite being officially secular, it is supported mainly by Maronite Catholics. It played a major role in the Lebanese Civil War. The party was founded by Pierre Jumayyel, Charles Helou, Alfred Naqqache, Chafic Nassif and Emile Yared. Its under the current leadership as Samy Jumayyel, son of Amine Jumayyel. It joined the March 14 alliance.

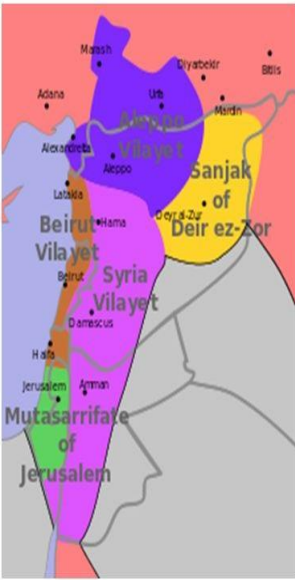
Majd or Glory Movement: Mainly Sunni Muslim movement. This political party was founded in 2004 and Najib Mikati has been its leader even since. Mikati was a former Prime Minister in 2005 and his party joined the March 8 alliance.

Progressive Socialist Party (PSP): This political party was founded by Kamal Jumblatt and played an important role in Lebanon after independence. It is currently led by Walid Jumblatt; it is ideologically secular and officially non-sectarian, however, support for the party mainly comes from Lebanon's Druze community. This party joined the 14 March alliance at first then split in 2011.

Lebanese Democratic Party (LDP): The Lebanese Democratic Party is a political party in Lebanon established by Prince Talal Arslan in 2001. Prince Talal is the son of Lebanese Druze leader Emir Magid Arslan and has presided the party ever since its establishment. This party joined the side of March 8 alliance.



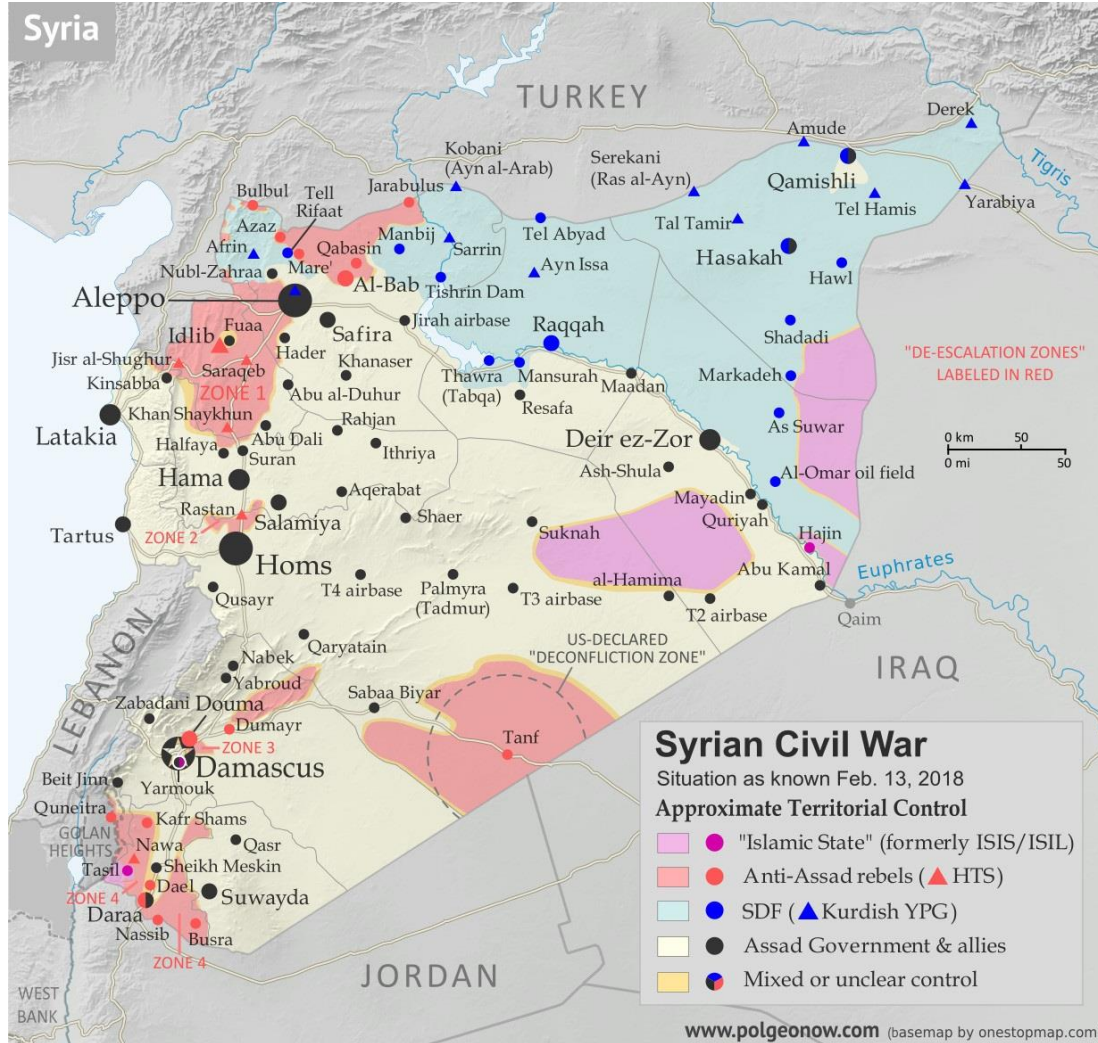
Annex 2. GREATER SYRIA MAP



Annex 3. MAP OF TODAY'S LEBANON



Annex 4. SYRIAN CIVIL WAR MAP AS OF FEB 2018



CURRICULUM VITAE

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Education:

Degree	Field	University	Year
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Work Place	Position	Year
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UNHCR	Protection Expert	2015 - Current

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Date: 02/01/2019

Baraa Darwich

ORIJINALLIK RAPORU

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ÖĞRENCİ ÖDEVLERİ

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