CONFLICT ON MOUNT LEBANON:
COLLECTIVE MEMORY AND THE WAR OF THE MOUNTAIN

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ABSTRACT

The Druze and Maronites, the founding communities of modern Lebanon, have clashed on more than one occasion over the past two centuries earning them the reputation of being primordial enemies. This study is an attempt to gauge the impact that collective memory had on determining the course and the nature of the conflict between these communities in Mount Lebanon in what came to be called the War of the Mountain in 1982. This dissertation will attempt to reconstruct, perhaps for the first time, the events of the 1982 war through the framework of collective remembrance. In doing so, the thesis hopes to achieve better understanding of the conflict as well as the consequences it had on the two communities and beyond, most importantly the post-war reconciliation process; which maybe applicable to other communal conflicts in the region.

This dissertation extensively utilizes oral history, in some of its parts, to explore how collective memory has shaped the conflict between the two communities, by interviewing a number of informants from both (inside and outside) the Druze and Maronite communities who have been involved or were witnesses to the conflict. These informants clearly reveal how their respective communities recall previous encounters; hence part of the study will deal with the question of oral history usages in historical research and the challenges and advantages that this tool will bring to Lebanese history and beyond. I will look into the history of both communities; how they have evolved and interacted with each other in Mount Lebanon as early as the 18th century onwards with a view to discover a recurrent pattern in their history. A good understanding of each community’s perception of themselves and each other would shed more light on the background of the conflict in 1982. Therefore it would also be relevant to explore earlier conflicts between these communities primarily the 1840-45, 1860 and the 1958 conflicts which still echo very clearly in their collective memories, rhetoric and literary productions.

The writing of a narrative of the War of the Mountain and the events which lead up to them has never been attempted thus far at least within the scholarly circles. Telling the story, or perhaps stories, of the many men and women who partook in these events or simply suffered as a consequence is a valuable contribution to the field of Lebanese historical scholarship; especially when this can help expose the intrinsic motives which lead to this conflict, as well as assist in preventing similar future conflicts from arising.
To the Memory of my Mou`allam
Kamal Salibi (1929-2011)
and to
Abdul Rahim Abu Husayn
For Arabic-language transcription, I have relied on the style guide of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (IJMES). The names of places and people will therefore lack diacritical marks except hamza and ‘ayn. For citation purposes, I have followed the *Chicago Manual of Style 16th edition*.

In many cases, I have deliberately deviated from the IJMES transliteration system and followed the names as used by their owners, such as Joumblatt instead of Junblatt, while I have utilized the common usage assigned by the Lebanese government to place names (town, cities and villages).
Acknowledgments

Journeys, at least the ones worthwhile, are seldom ones which are taken alone. My quest at Georgetown in this respect is no different, as many have shared the long, arduous and hopefully rewarding path with me.

First and foremost, my late Mou’allam Kamal Salibi who we lost in September of 2011 was with me every step of the way, even after he departed. Each time I sat down to write or edit, his voice would accompany me criticizing, suggesting or praising me, as he has done so while I sat on his dining room table writing my Master’s thesis. Kamal Salibi, for me as he was for many, was not merely a teacher but also an inspiration as well as a model of how one should always question many of the essential truth we take for granted. The many hours I have spent in his home and on his balcony, I hope, have made me a better person as well as put me on the path towards more intellectual discovery.

Throughout my brief career I have attained a number of titles as well as degrees but perhaps the one I cherish most is the one given to me by Salibi, as he used to refer to me as his grand students, having studied under his star pupil my mentor and friend, Abdul Rahim Abu-Husayn. From the first day I met Prof. Abu Husayn at the door of College Hall, he has granted me all the privileges of a son. His many fatherly reprimands throughout the years were a constant reminder to never allow my activist lifestyle to interfere in my academic progress. Perhaps and more importantly, Prof Abu Husayn, as the primary authority on Ottoman Lebanon has provided the field with many of the building blocks which shape my current study as well as helped develop the revisionist school of Lebanese history, which I am proud to belong to.

My gratitude also goes out to my thesis adviser and Georgetown mentor Prof Osama Abi Mershid, who helped and nurtured me throughout my years on the hilltop. Since my first visit to his office in the first week of school, Prof. Abi Mershid’s door has always been open to me despite his busy schedule and his many responsibilities. His course suggestions and recommendations outside my field of study has enriched my knowledge and opened up many comparative fields which I would not have ventured into on my own.

Special thanks to Prof. Yvonne Haddad who so kindly accepted to serve on my thesis committee and whose comments and feedback have significantly enriched my study.

Eleven years ago, I was offered to work as a research assistant for an American professor from Boston writing a book about the history of AUB, little did I know that my encounter with Betty Anderson would lead to years of friendship. By accepting to be one of my readers, Prof Anderson gave me spot-on comments and edits as well as pointed out the flaws and the strength of my thesis as well as suggested possible ways to develop and improve my work. To this I will always be grateful.

I would also like to thank HE PM Saad al-Hariri, a fellow Hoya, who upon the good offices of a dear friend Ms. Elena Anouti offered me a full scholarship from the Hariri Foundation-USA which made it possible for pursue my PhD. I would also like to thank Mr. Rafic Bizri, the director
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My utmost gratitude goes to the people which so kindly accepted to be interviewed for this study. The countless hours I have spent, interviewing them went beyond merely sharing copious amount of beverages and food, to listening to their most intimate tales. Stories of death, murder, pride, and remorse; stories of a lost youth and childhood. By allowing me into their memories these brave individuals in more than one way shaped my understanding and analysis of the conflict from both sides involved. While I do acknowledge, all of the interviewees’ contributions, I would like to specifically thank Ghanem Tarabay, a brave soul whose dedication to his cause and his people never seized to amaze me.

I would also like to thank MP Walid Joumblatt, President of the Progressive Socialist Party-Lebanon, who gave me unrestricted access to the PSP Oral History Project which proved extremely valuable for my work. I would also like to thank the Director of Dar al-Takadoumi Mr. Mahmoud Safi as well as his staff for facilitating my research as well as supplying me with all items relevant for this study.

I cannot amply thank my parents, Ghassan and Nabila and brother Rami for the never-ending care and support they have lent me throughout the many challenges I have encountered. My father, retired Judge and Law Professor Ghassan Rabah, a man of principal and Justice, has always stood as my pillar and a constant reminder that ethics and values do still exist in a world which is governed by might rather than right.

To my mother Nabila whose large heart and worrisome nature is the paradigm of motherly love. To my brother Rami who still hopes one day to sell off my books to make more room in our shared bedroom. Hopefully when this thesis becomes a book you will have to read it.

Many of those of know me are aware of my hard nature, the stress and pressure of life and all that comes with it were made easier by the love and care of my partner, Rasha. Her love and eyes have always kept watch over me at the hardest of times. For this I pledge my love and life.

As time goes by I have become more appreciative of friends, especially those who proved that true friendship is indeed a rare commodity.

Thanks is due to, Sami Saab, Omar Slim, Zeina Ghosn, Siso, Wassim Jaber, Nadine and Bassam Abu Shakra, Teymour and Diana Joumblatt, Tony Haikal, Tarek Hassan, Enass Khansa, Eli Khoury, Elie Khayat, and many more whose names I failed to list here.

To my comrade in arms, Husam Raja Harb, a brother and a friend who has always had my back and my never dying love, trust and my unwavering friendship.

While I do admit the collective credit and recognition to all people listed above, all the shortcomings and mishaps of this study is my sole responsibility.
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Introduction

This study is an attempt to gauge the impact that collective memory had on determining the course and the nature of the conflict between the Druze and the Maronite communities in Mount Lebanon in what came to be called the War of the Mountain in 1982. This stretch of land running parallel to the Mediterranean Sea to the West and adjacent to the anti-Lebanon mountain range to the East, is home to the Druze and Maronites, the founding communities of modern Lebanon, which clashed on more than one occasion over the past two centuries earning them the reputation of being primordial enemies. This dissertation will attempt to reconstruct, perhaps for the first time, the events of the 1982 war through the framework of collective remembrance. In doing so, the thesis hopes to achieve better understanding of the conflict as well as the consequences it had on the two communities and beyond, most importantly the post-war reconciliation process. This maybe applicable to other communal conflicts in the country as well as the region as a whole.

On the morning of April 13, 1975, unknown assailants opened fire at a Maronite Church in the Christian suburbs of Beirut, killing three people among them the bodyguard of Pierre Gemayel, the founder of the Lebanese Kataeb Party (Phalangist), Lebanon’s leading Maronite party. An outspoken opponent of the Palestinian Armed presence in Lebanon, Gemayel was attending the consecration of this church, which took this security incident to a new dimensions. In retaliation, members of the Kataeb Party ambushed a bus transporting people returning from a commemorative event in the Palestinian refugee camp of Tal Al-Za’atar.¹ This incident which took place on a spring Sunday morning, as Walid Khalidi would later call it, “the Sarajevo” which

¹Kamal Salibi, Cross Roads to Civil War: Lebanon, 1958-1976 (Delmar, N.Y.: Caravan Books, 1976), 98. Consequently, all the people on board, except the driver, were massacred. While the Kata’b claimed that the passengers (mostly Palestinians) were armed, this fact however has never been substantiated
ignited the war.\textsuperscript{2} Khalidi’s analogy to describe the direct cause for the outbreak of the war was not shared by the majority of scholars, who believed that the roots of this conflict anteceded 1975 and even the rise of the Lebanese state.

The Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) has been extensively studied by historians, anthropologists, political scientist, health scientists and, of course, extensively covered by journalist. These studies offered various interpretations in an attempt to explain and understand the underlying structural causes of this war that led to the destruction of a country which has been held as an economic and a political success-story. However, based on my extensive research thus far in this field, the War of the Mountain has never been addressed or analyzed on its own, but rather has been incorporated into the master narrative of the different schools of thought which govern Lebanese civil war studies. Such approach has obscured the distinctive nature of this chapter of the war which was not necessarily a mere continuation of earlier conflicts or a prelude to later confrontations in the course of this war. Much of the scholarly works on the civil war place great responsibility on the Palestinian factor and the presence of the military and political infrastructure of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which after 1969 moved its center of operations almost exclusively to Lebanon. This approach tends to either totally exclude or merely making only passing reference to local dimensions of the war which perhaps have had a greater or, in the least, an equal share of responsibility. An outstanding example of this trend is Farid Khazen’s The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon, 1967-1976 which takes this analysis a step further as it places the blame almost exclusively on the PLO and their Lebanese allies for

\textsuperscript{2} Walid Khalidi, Conflict and Violence in Lebanon: Confrontation in the Middle East (Cambridge, MA: Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, 1979), 47.
challenging and weakening the authority of the Lebanese state and thus paving the way to the war.³ A variation on this interpretation adopts the notion that Lebanon was an arena for regional and cold war conflicts and that the Lebanese had no real say in the subsequent events. Ghassan Tuwayni’s *Une Guerre Pour Les Autres* is one such eloquent example.⁴ A more structural analysis of the Lebanese system was undertaken by what may be referred to as the Marxist school in the interpretations offered of the conflict. Scholars such as Fawwaz Traboulsi *A History of Modern Lebanon* and Salim Nasr’s “Backdrop to Civil War: The Crisis of Lebanese Capitalism." argue that the Lebanese economy which promoted unmitigated capitalism paved the way for the migrant Lebanese working class to channel their syndical demands via the Palestinian revolution and other similar venues.⁵ This fact, according to the Marxists, and the failure of the traditional political class to reform and adjust to the ever-changing realities of Lebanon and the region was a main reason for the collapse of the state. The most common and widely circulated reading however, is that of the confessional and sectarian nature of the Lebanese political system which divided the country according to confessional lines. These divisions which did not recognize class or social mobility, coupled with the alliance of each sect to a foreign power to protect and support its share in the state and its economy. As a result Lebanon was exposed to recurrent rounds of violence as in 1958 events and in 1975-89. Kamal Salibi, writing at the end of the war, sums up what he saw as the main problems of the Lebanese political system and the essence of the conflict. In his *House of Many Mansions: A History of Lebanon Reconsidered*, Salibi stresses that most of the conflicts

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between these groups were waged over each group’s interpretation of Lebanese history which were at one stage or another each linked to a certain political project.\(^6\)

I argue that these interpretations’ have largely been skewed by their neglect of history and collective memory and have rather looked at the conflict through the lens of contemporary affairs such as the state structure or cold war politics and class struggle. Hence my proposed approach will bring in both new sources and new methodologies, especially oral history. This will make it possible for me to reconstruct the War of the Mountain as well as offer a better understanding of this affair, especially as it relates to two Lebanese founding communities. Hence our improved understanding will hopefully contribute to post war reconciliation which remains pending. The writing of a narrative of the War of the Mountain and the events which lead up to them has never been attempted thus far at least within the scholarly circles. Telling the story, or perhaps stories, of the many men and women who partook in these events or simply suffered as a consequence is valuable contribution to the field of Lebanese historical scholarship; especially when this can help expose the intrinsic motives which lead to this conflict.

This dissertation will extensively utilize oral history, in some of its parts, to explore how collective memory has shaped the conflict between the two communities. I will be interviewing a number of informants from both (inside and outside) the Druze (Progressive Socialist Party) and Maronite (Kataeb Party) communities who have been involved or were witnesses to the conflict. These informants and other informants would also be interviewed on how their respective communities recall previous encounters. Hence part of my thesis will deal with the question of oral history usages in historical research and the challenges and advantages that this tool will bring to Lebanese history and beyond.

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I will also be using primary documents (political party literature and propaganda), including oral history interviews, as well as the secondary literature at the Jafet Library at the American University of Beirut and the Saint Joseph University and the Lebanese National Archives, to try to reconstruct the events of the War of the Mountain and its ramifications. Furthermore, I will look into the history of both communities; how they have evolved and interacted with each other in Mount Lebanon as early as the 18th century onwards with a view to discover a recurrent pattern in their history. A good understanding of each community’s perception of themselves and each other would shed more light on the background of the conflict in 1982. Therefore it would also be relevant to explore earlier conflicts between these communities primarily the 1840-45, 1860 and the 1958 conflicts which both still echo very clearly in their collective memories, rhetoric and literary productions.

Subsequently, I will present how the centers of power within each of the two communities are actively working to maintain their communities somewhat unified collective memories and perceptions. While my focus appears to be on the ‘collective’, I in no way neglect or sideline individual agency or the relevance of individual memory. Therefore before delving into this aspect and to properly frame my work, I will present the different schools of thought which deal with memory studies starting with Maurice Halbwachs and his subsequent supporters and critics. This will be followed by presenting two examples of active agents used by centers of power to promote collectiveness as well as to recast, adjust, or modify the respective communities’ memories of themselves as well as ‘the other’. In the Maronite context, Al-Masiraa, the official publication of the Lebanese Forces (Maronite), published “the Story of a Hero called Charbel,” a weekly illustrated comic book using colloquial Lebanese dialect. In contrast, the Druze utilized the works of Taleh Hamdan, a prominent Druze strophic poet which are full of examples of the way the
Druze centers of power wanted their community to remember *Harb al-Jabal* as well as their supposed enemies, the Maronites.

The history of Mount Lebanon starting as early as the 17th century, the date of the migration of the Maronites from the Northern to the Southern district of Mount Lebanon, involves an elaborate tale which involves many chapters which are known or are still waiting to be told. While my work focuses on certain episodes of conflict between the Druze and the Maronites this does deny the fact that these two founding Lebanese communities have worked together and coexisted for a much longer periods of time. It is essentially this dynamics of conflict and accord which came to define the strenuous relationship of both these groups and consequently contributed in one way or another to the War of the Mountain in 1982 and its subsequent events.
Chapter One

Many attempts to document and explore the history of the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990) have thus far relied heavily, not to say exclusively, on written archival sources with few or no focus whatsoever on non-orthodox sources, primarily collective memory and oral history. These untapped sources go beyond the obvious utilitarian function of merely offering new facts pertaining to the overall Lebanese conflict, to serving a more important function especially within the context of the war of the mountain and the events that transpired between the Druze and the Maronites in the summer of 1982. Accordingly, the centrality of memory within the historical remembrance of both the Druze and the Maronites, as this study will argue, places oral history and collective memory at the crux of the motives which facilitated polarization and conflict and eventually led the way to war. Consequently, the framing of these motives and the interplay between collective memory and oral history entails a clear understanding of the theoretical concepts of collective memory as well as the advantages and limitations of oral history as utilized throughout this study.

The concept “collective memory” first appeared in 1902 in the writings of Hugo von Hofmannsthal. However, it was not until Maurice Halbwachs published his book The Social Frameworks of Memory in 1925, followed by his main work entitled On Collective Memory that this concept gained currency and became well-established in social sciences.

7 Lee Klein Kerwin, “On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse”, Representations, No. 69, Special Issue: Grounds for Remembering” (Winter, 2000): 127.
By shifting the unit of analysis from the individual to both the individual and his or her social group, Halbwachs challenged the Freudian model that ran supreme at the time.

According to the Halbwachsian model, memory is transmitted, by individuals as well as members of groups, and therefore “there are as many collective memories in a society as there were social groups.” Halbwachs furthermore places the individual within the different frameworks imposed on him by the group, which could be the society or the family or whatever exists between these two spectrums. This is clear for Halbwachs who emphatically asserts that:

It is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories…It is in this sense that there exists a collective memory and social frameworks for memory; it is to the degree that our individual thought places itself in these frameworks and participates in this memory that it is capable of the act of recollection.

It follows from this that the process of remembering and forgetting is regulated by the interests, goals, and practices of the group, and essentially what memories one retains of the past are filtered through the medium of the group. Therefore, the fluidity of memory makes the past exclusively dependent on the present contexts; and in effect renders the attempt to determine what really happened in the past futile.

Despite Halbwachs’ novel ideas, sociologists and researchers did not embrace his work until many years later. Yet, while some researchers adopted the Halbwachsian interpretation of collective memory, others found his analysis to be fraught with problems. One of the major criticisms leveled at Halbwachs is that his approach takes away individual agency from remembrance and makes the group an overpowering entity. Frederic Bartlett deemed the father of

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9 Halbwachs, 38
10Ibid. 12.
modern memory studies criticizes Halbwachs by claiming that groups do not have memories, but rather individuals in groups do. However, Bartlett agrees with Halbwachs on the importance of the group in harnessing individual memory, affirming that “social organizations give a persistent framework into which all detailed recall must fit, and it very powerfully influences both the manner and the matter of recall.” On the other hand, Barry Schwartz criticized Halbwachs for overstating change in the memory process, which ultimately makes the past somewhat vaguer than it really was. According to Schwartz, there is a dialectical relation between the past and the present, and memory can be understood through that lens of “continuities in our perception of the past across time and to the way that these perceptions are maintained in the face of social change.” It must be emphasized that such continuities in perception abound within the Druze and Maronite historical psyche as the subsequent chapters will attempt to hopefully illustrate.

History vs. Memory

The most significant criticism of memory studies came from within the field of historical studies. Starting in the 19th century, historiographical scholarship moved towards anchoring the study of history to a more scientific framework; this trend, commonly referred to as the German school, sought objectivity in historical writing and relied heavily on primary written documentation. Naturally, this excluded any role to memory in the newly founded historical profession. Historians frowned upon unwritten forms, especially memory, which is distorted by a number of factors; hence memory was labeled as ahistorical. However, the somewhat recent debate on memory vs.

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12Schwartz as quoted in Patrick Devine Wright, “A Theoretical Overview of Memory and Conflict”, in The Role of Memory in Ethnic Conflicts, ed. Cairns and Roe, 12.
history has taken a different turn. The prominent French historian Pierre Nora (1989) regards memory as the arch-enemy of history. According to Nora, “memory remains in a permanent evolution and is unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation”; history, on the other hand, “is an intellectual secular production, calls for analysis and criticism… history is suspicious of memory, and its true mission is to suppress and destroy it.”

Peter Novick, another critic of the Halbwachsian discourse, strips collective memory of its historical relevance arguing that:

To understand something historically is to be aware of its complexity, to have sufficient detachment to see it from multiple perspectives, to accept the ambiguities, including moral ambiguities, of protagonists’ motives and behavior. Collective memory simplifies; sees events from a single, committed perspective; is impatient with ambiguities of any kind; reduces events to mythic archetypes.

Novick, who coincidently dismisses the so-called “noble dream” of objectivity in historical research, stresses the following important dimension of collective memory as it relates to forging a common identity for the group. According to Novick, “Collective memory is understood to express some eternal or essential truth about the group, usually tragic. A memory, once established, comes to define that eternal truth, and, along with it, an eternal identity, for the members of the group.”

It is exactly these eternal/essential truths that make collective memory problematic in the context of the Druze-Maronite encounters, as “the memorializing of tragedies or perhaps victories committed won against ones’ group will most probably lead to engendering hostile

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15Nora as quoted in James V. Wertsch “Collective Memory”, in Memory in Mind and Culture, 125.
17Novick as quoted in James V. Wertsch, “Collective Memory” in Memory in Mind and Culture”, 126.
Moreover, as this study will demonstrate, when collective memory is left to develop in an exclusionist manner within a divided society such as that of Lebanon, it can prevent post-war reconciliation and perhaps reignite dormant hostilities; this was the case in 1860, 1958, and 1975–90. The War of the Mountain as will be demonstrated, is perhaps the best case in point.

While I do make use of the term collective memory throughout this study, rather than terms such as social memory or memory cultures, my approach to the realm of memory does not adopt the strict Halbwachsian model. I rather subscribe to the notion that although memory is framed by the group – in Lebanon’s case, the religious sect or the tribe – individuals are still the vessels in which the act of remembrance occurs, even if these are individuals who identify with a certain group. Amos Funkenstein squarely places the individual in the middle of this debate, affirming that:

Consciousness and memory can only be realized by an individual who acts, is aware, and remembers. Just as a nation cannot eat or dance, neither can it speak or remember. Remembering is a mental act, and therefore it is absolutely and completely personal.

While the individual, rather than groups, do indeed remember, the meanings of these memories are interpreted or recast by the group to serve a certain purpose. This is precisely the sense of the term collective memory that informs my analyasis. Another reason for my adoption of this term is that the concept of collective memory, or its Arabic translation *al-dhākirah al-jamāʻīyah*, resonates more with the subjects in my oral history interviews. The very term in Arabic assigns a major role in memory. Hence coining and using a different phrase would alienate or disenchant

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19Some authors such as Fentress and Wickham have opted to use the term social memory rather than collective memory, despite their acknowledgment that at times this usage might apply to Halbwachs’ collective memory as such. James Fentress, and Chris Wickham, *Social Memory* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1992).

my interviewees. While memory on its own presents its own challenges, using it in conjunction with oral interviews presents further challenges as well as complications to the writing of history while at the same time opens up new vistas of analysis or offers new insights.

Sources and Methodology of Oral History

In his memoirs, Bernard Lewis, the distinguished yet controversial historian sketches out the duties as well as the prerogatives of a historian. To Lewis, history is unequivocally “an approach that is free from both inherited attitudes and imposed constraints, where one follows evidence wherever it leads, where one start a piece of research without a prescribed or in any way predetermined result.”21 Almost all attempts of writing history have theoretically endorsed Lewis’s vision of “why study history”, but some have gone as far as to believe that a type of ultimate universal truth is attainable. This school of thought however did not come to dominate the profession at least at present. Historians became more and more aware that their craft as Marc Bloch stresses is in fact not a synthesis of the past but rather an observation as well as analyses of past events grounded in documentation and traces of evidence which are at times “forced to speak”.22 This spirit as embodied by Bloch has become the foundation of modern scholarship in the craft of history and elsewhere.

Lewis’ remarks however leaves one pondering a number of issues, primarily, if the evidence historians deal with is incomplete, is it permissible to look outside the traditional sources available to historians for supplementary evidence and documentation? Lewis a medievalist comes from a generation of scholars that equate evidence to textuality, which are to be found in primary sources and state archives and libraries kept under the lock and key of archivists and librarians.

The sources used in this project, range from the more traditional secondary sources to the more untapped sources, primarily but not exclusively oral history and Druze/Maronite party publications,

aspire to enhance this symbiosis between individuals and group memory and to reveal aspects of the story/stories that otherwise remain suppressed or simply untold. Alessandro Portelli, a pioneer in the field of oral history, elaborates the uniqueness of this approach:

The first thing that makes oral history different, therefore, is that it tells us less about events as such than about their meaning. This doesn’t imply that oral history has no factual interest; interviews often reveal unknown events or unknown aspects of known events, and always cast new light on unexplored sides of the daily life of the non-hegemonic classes.23

The use of oral history has been rare in most works dealing with the Lebanese civil war. Most of the recent works dealing with memory studies, such as those by Lucia Volk and Sune Haugbolle, do so from an anthropological approach that relies on ethnography, a cousin of oral history.24 Furthermore, all the existent works deal to some extent with post-war Lebanon and rarely explore the conflict and the role of memory in the actual conflict, focusing more on post-war implications rather than the events of the conflict itself.

The centrality of memory in the process of oral history adds to criticism launched against it as being unreliable and fault-ridden. Nevertheless, collective memory is always at play when interviewing informants; it is actually this encounter between group and individual memory which adds to our understanding of what really happened. But more importantly what it meant to people then and in hindsight. Furthermore, to use Portelli’s words “the credibility of oral sources is a different credibility” because within this exercise “what informants believe is indeed a historical fact just as much as what 'really happened'.25 So in reality instead of viewing collective memory

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as tainting the individual’s remembrance process, historians can use orality to study the encounters between the two.

The encounters brought forth through oral history are best understood however by keeping in sight the notion that most of what oral historian receive from their subjects is in narrative form. The narrative aspect of this process makes the quest for accuracy somewhat more elusive. In addition to what has been mentioned about the social frames and their effects on the individual’s memory oral historians do not merely ask their subjects to remember events and their implications. More accurately, oral history in a sense involves reconstruction of past experiences rather than just retrieving them from the so-called database commonly referred to as memory. With every question, the narrator responds to the questions based on what he/she remembers but more importantly by what his present predisposition dictates. Elizabeth Tonkin’s work *Narrating Our Pasts: The Social Construction of Oral History* underscore this point.26 Tonkin having conducted extensive research across Liberia dealing with oral tradition and oral history concludes that much of what we remember and relate to others is mediated through the dynamics that bond the teller and listener. Tonkin describes this process as follows:

The social contexts of oral histories include the additional condition that their tellers must intersect with a palpable audience at a particular moment in time and space. What they choose to say is affected by those conditions, which also mean that they get immediate feedback.27 She goes on to describe how these narrations are in a constant flux

The narrators and listeners connected by this contingency are thereby caught at a certain stage of their lives; they have also been formed inescapably by their own personal pasts to date. These factors influence the narration whether or not it is autobiographical; tellers are

27 Ibid, 38.
constructing retrospective accounts for audience with different time scales, and they may adjust their own narrations to the memories and understanding of their listeners.  

This is not to take away from the reliability of oral sources but Tonkin’s point warrants the claim that oral history accounts are far more important than just presenting us with factual or in some cases erroneous accounts. Consequently the use of oral history in the case of the Druze-Maronite can be a tool to investigate and reconstruct a certain historical event or occasion, however these oral accounts are much more indicative of changes as well as continuities across groups and boundaries, Paul Andary’s interview is a case in point, where the informant’s testimony is shaped by his own evolution as well as the person asking the questions; in this case me.

**Paul Andary Shot Twice**

When I interviewed Paul Andary, the Lebanese Forces (LF) second-in-command during the war of the mountain, I made a point of putting the question to him in direct and clear terms: how were the events of the 1860 civil war between the Druze and the Maronites instrumental in the shaping of his psyche and that of his comrades. Andary in turn was clear in dismissing any connection whatsoever between the 1860 and the 1982 events.  

While in fact, an examination of Andary’s memoirs *al-Jabal: Haqīqah lā Tarḥam* (The Mountain: A Ruthless Reality) published directly after the mountain war proves otherwise.

Andary, for example, describes his entry at the head of an LF contingent into the town of Deir al-Qamar with “its Saray [palace] which

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28 Ibid, 66  
29 Interview with Paul Andary, Adma, Lebanon, January 2010
has remained unchanged since the end of the 1860 massacre…. imprinted on its walls are the shadows of the [Druze] attackers, with their striped robes and black trousers.” By choosing to open his book with a tale of the massacres committed by the Druze in 1860 against the besieged inhabitants of Deir al-Qamar, Andary was fussing the two episodes, 1860 and 1983 as well as inserting himself and his Maronite cohorts in its midst, thus forming an uninterrupted link which transcends both space and time. Recently, however, Andary has released an English translation of his memoirs. An examination of the cover of both editions indicates how Andary speaking in 2010 and being an active member of the Lebanese Forces allied with the Druze PSP, would become more circumspect of any statement or act that would insult their present-day allies. Interestingly, Andary’s English book cover and title (War of the Mountain: Israelis, Christians and Druze in the 1983 Mount Lebanon Conflict Through the Eyes of a Lebanese Forces Fighter) does not resonate of the same tone that the Arabic version does, which previously reflected bitter animosity between the Maronites and the Druze. In his English translation, Andary rather wanted to portray that Lebanon’s problems can be externalized and virtually blamed on the Syrians and the Israelis. Andary’s somewhat mild answers perhaps might have been affected by the fact that he knew well that the person asking him these questions was a Druze and originally from the same area which saw much of the fighting.

This relates perfectly with the observations of Paul Thompson, a pioneer in the field of oral history:

… neither contemporary nor historical evidence is a direct reflection of physical facts or behavior. Facts and events are reported in a way which gives them social meaning. The information provided by interview evidence of relatively recent events, or current situations, can be assumed to lie somewhere between the actual social behavior and the social expectations or norms of the time. With interviews which go back further, there is the added possibility of distortions influenced by subsequent changes in values and norms.

31 The original Arabic title of the book was al-Jabal Haqiqa la Tarham (the Mountain: A Merciless Reality), Paul Andary and Rani Geha, War of the Mountain: Israelis, Christians and Druze in the 1983 Mount Lebanon Conflict Through the Eyes of a Lebanese Forces Fighter (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform: 2012)
which may perhaps quite unconsciously alter perceptions. With time we would expect this danger to grow.  

Andary, therefore, was not being deceitful in his answers but rather his answers should be viewed as part of the evolution that he himself and perhaps his community have undergone. Furthermore, had I limited myself to Andary’s book I would have missed the opportunity to explore this aspect which sheds light on the collective memory formation and how it is constantly rehearsed to conform to current requirements which might be personal or communal in nature.

However, Tonkin’s remarks as well as the Andary example cited above should not lead one to believe that the narrative nature of oral history renders it unreliable and incapable of accurately reconstructing the past like some textual archives do. The work of Alice & Howard Hoffman, illustrates how, despite the narrative aspect as well as the interplay between personal and social memory, oral history can still produce accurate accounts especially when cross referenced with written records. Hoffman, who fought in WWII was interviewed by his wife Alice on numerous occasions over a period of ten years. The result of this experiment revealed that the transcripts of all these interviews were to a large extent identical to, and did not differ from the events, which were recorded by the US army. More importantly, the Hoffmans main conclusion is that “it is possible for memory to achieve an archival quality if it is sufficiently rehearsed unconsciously or consciously shortly after the experience it documents.”

There is also the eternal claim that man is by nature forgetful and that events experienced could not be accurately recalled especially if these encounters are distant or if they involved a

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32 Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 129  
traumatic experience. The sheer nature of the topic examined, warfare, is highly charged with traumatic experience, as almost all the people I have interviewed, in the course of my research, have either lost loved ones, themselves been wounded or seriously injured or killed another human being in the course of the war. This however, does not necessarily mean that we need to discard the information obtained from the informants, but instead we should critically evaluate this source, just like scholars would any other document, so as not to misinterpret the information or more drastically add to the traumatic experience.

While poor memory may well affect oral history, historians have a wide array of options to jog or to unearth these memories. This is exactly why historians who use oral sources allow their informants to speak about themselves at length to grease the machine of memory. Coincidently, many of my interviews start with a small chat about the informant’s personal life and family and then move towards asking them questions directly related to their role in the war or the events surrounding it. However, despite the many strides achieved in the field of memory studies both empirical and theoretical, human memory continues to baffle and amaze.

The Curious Case of Ghanam Tarabay

One of my primary informants, Ghanem Tarabay, a commander in the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) militia who had lost his father and a few of his cousins during one of the first battles in the summer of 1982 between the LF and the PSP (the battle of Qoubbei), took me on a tour of the actual battleground and narrated the events of that battle that lasted for seven full days. He vividly described the events of the week-long battle and how his dad mocked him when he ordered his men to stay in their positions, just seconds before a bullet ended his father’s life. However, almost a year following my first interview with him, Tarabay told me how his maternal uncle reminded him of an episode of that battle which he personally had no recollection of whatsoever. Tarabay’s
uncle narrated to him how after his father’s death, they both took his corpse and had to take a long drive back to their village to avoid enemy roadblocks. Furthermore, he added how the Syrian Army checkpoint, upon knowing that Ghanem was actually transporting the corpse of his deceased father in the back, performed the official military honors which are reserved to martyred Syrian soldiers. Ghanem insists that until today he does not remember any of the details that his uncle told him, and moreover he doesn’t even remember that it was he who buried his father. This perplexing episode underscores both the volatility of oral accounts and the availability of corrective measures within the same. It also brings forth untold stories. If I had not interviewed Ghanem back in 2010, he would not have gone to his uncle later and discussed the topic and thus retrieve the story related above which would have remained buried next to Ghanem’s late father.

Much of what Ghanem underwent with loss or repression of memory is an extremely common occurrence in daily human interaction but with varying degrees of intensity. The seven sins of memory as Harvard Psychologist Daniel Schacter calls them, explains the elusive nature of memory as well as how its loss or involuntary remembrance can have an effect on peoples’ life. According to Schacter, these sins are the main reasons for the malfunction of memory and “just like the ancient deadly sins, the memory sins occur frequently in every daily life and can have serious consequences for all of us.” Schacter, divides these seven sins into two main groups; sins of omission and sins of commission. These sins of omission (transience, absent-mindedness, blocking) and commission (misattribution, suggestibility, bias, persistence), while the former accounts for forgetfulness, the latter is mainly responsible for wrong or unwanted memory(s). However, these seven deadly sins as put forth by Schacter do not adequately explain the repression

36 Ibid, 4.
of memory that Ghanem underwent (but this repression may be a psychological response by Ghanem). The sins of omission are instances where one might forget a number or a name but certainly not the death of a loved one. Furthermore, while the sins of commission, particularly, the sin of persistence which involves recalling traumatic and disturbing memories can lead to psychological problems especially with individuals involved in combat; however Ghanem did not suffer from persistent memories but rather the total lack of it. As early as WW1, these mental disorders, chiefly Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or what previously was referred to as shell shock, have been the focus of both mental health experts and social scientists.\(^{37}\) However an examination of the existing literature on memory loss or amnesia as it is commonly referred too makes it somewhat difficult to place Ghanem’s case within the existing groupings of amnesia.\(^{38}\) In most cases of combat-related memory loss, these memories lay dormant within the person and leads to dissociative amnesia which impedes one’s ability to remember either for a few hours to more extended periods of time.

Yet again this does not apply to the case under investigation for a number of reasons. Ghanem has never suffered from memory loss, other than the incident reported, and my hours of interviews and sporadic conversations over an extended period of time, as well as to the consistency and vividness of the majority of information he provided attests to this fact. More importantly, Ghanem remembers the actual traumatic experience, the battle and the death of his father and cousins down to the smallest detail, but he lacks any recollections of the funeral proceedings that ensued. Ghanem’s case remains one of many that continue to baffle scholars in


their quest to gain a better understanding of memory and its mechanism, as well as one of many occasions I had to personally reexamine many of my conclusions while conducting my research.

A further challenge I personally encountered when doing oral history is the generational gap which at times makes my ability to understand my interlocutors somewhat difficult idiomatic language. Ghanem for example narrated to me how his school principal used to tell him about the decline of the Druze which went along this line: “the Druze became weak the day they stopped sealing their windows with rocks during the wintertime.”39 This quote did not resonate with me at first, because, obviously, it was a generational reference completely alien to me, but, apparently, not to Ghanem and his cohorts. The solution to this obstacle however is somewhat easy to overcome. Just like I did on that occasion, researchers should ask their informants to elaborate on issues that are exclusively generational or sometimes too local, so as to be able to follow along with the narrator. When asked about the meaning of this expression, Ghanem explained that the dwellings of the Druze in past times did not have panes for their window and thus they had to use makeshift wood or rocks to close them during the winter season to protect them from the cold and wild beasts. Therefore, “the real degeneration of Druze power started when they abandoned their old ways and decided to embrace the modern way of life.”40 Among other old ways abandoned is the celebrated and much cited Druze cohesion and solidarity. Of course, the point of the anecdote here is not only architectural but basically underlines consciously or unintentionally, the Khaldunian concept of ‘asabiyah or group feeling which withers away when the people or the tribe abandons their old ways. This concept is perhaps essential in understanding the Druze’s self-perception as a proud warrior clan as the following chapter will elaborate. Much of the Druze

39 Interview with Ghanem Tarabay
40 Ibid.
rhetoric and literature produced before and during the conflict reiterate Ibn Khaldun’s ‘asabiyyah to serve a long term strategic goal as well as more immediate tactical one such as military mobilization.

**The Trope of Oral History**

Many critics also claim that oral history is essentially unverifiable because it is grounded in personal stories as opposed to textual evidence which can be usually cross-checked. Although oral historians rely heavily on oral sources, they nevertheless like all scholars utilize textual sources ranging from archives, newspapers, songs, movies, etc. For without these sources oral historians cannot prepare for the interview nor can they critically evaluate what is being told to them by their informants. Therefore, to declare that oral accounts are unverifiable would be inaccurate to say the least. While it is true that at times some incidents cannot be traced back to textual evidence this doesn’t mean the actual event did not occur.

Oral historians by forming this bond of trust with their informants usually end up finding personal archives, which until then the informant was reluctant to share with anyone. This was what exactly happened during my research when I asked the former minister of Public Works Ghazi al-Aridi about the archive of the Voice of the Mountain, the PSP wartime radio station. Generally believed to have been destroyed after the end of the war, Aridi, the former director of the station, was extremely willing to share the content of this archive which he keeps locked up. So instead of oral historians being perceived as bypassing textual evidence, the fact is that their activities only enhance the scope and the diversity of their sources. Consequently, previously unheard voices and experiences become central and thus help historians in redrafting or perhaps discovering new aspects of many issues that we previously took for granted, my work on the War
of the Mountain being a case in point. Portelli so forcefully sums up this shift which oral history was able to accomplish as follows:

The task and theme of oral history- an art dealing with the individual in social and historical context- is to explore this distance and this bond, to search out the memories in the private, enclosed spaces of houses and kitchens ------- to connect them to history and in turn force history to listen to them.41

Realistically however, oral history is still struggling to attain the same recognition that written archives, incomplete and full of gaps as they are, have achieved. At best the world of academia has acknowledged that oral sources are essentially supplementary in nature and they are to be coupled with written sources to add breadth and more insight to a historian’s work.42 It is therefore natural for historians to prefer to go with the textual explanation of an event if it is contradicted by an oral testimony. This however can prove to be a slippery slope.

**The Shah of Baabda Meets Salazar**

Historians, more often than not, practice great caution when analyzing written evidence which might range from speeches, newspaper article, and minutes of meetings or radio broadcasts. However based on some of the oral history work I have conducted thus far, these written documents or broadcasts despite being properly documented and verified are to say the least unreliable, and at times, quite misleading.

When working on the archive of the Voice of the Mountain radio station (VOM) 1984-1990, the Progressive Socialist Party (Druze) Radio, a researcher would come across a constant reference to the then President of the Republic Amin Gemayel as the Shah of Ba’abda or the Salazar of Ba’abda. Ba’abda being a reference to the site of the Lebanese Presidential Palace while

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41 Portelli, *The Battle of Valle Giulia*, p viii
the other references were a derogatory set of terms to indicate the despotic nature of the PSP’s political Maronite opponent, the first being the Iranian Shah that who deposed in 1979 by the Islamic Revolution, while the latter is Antonio Salazar the autocratic Portuguese Prime Minister that held office for 36 years. The Salazar incident, as I will call it, indicates how archives are constantly manipulated and should not be necessarily given primacy over oral sources.

During one of the daily broadcasts of the radio station, the newscaster interrupted the usual programs to read out a letter the station had received from the family of the deceased Portuguese dictator Antonio Salazar. In this letter, the Salazar family demanded that the radio station immediately cease using the name of their family as well as their father to refer to Gemayel who the letter said could not be compared to a great man such as Salazar. A historian who comes across this segment during his/her research would go forth and track down the actual letter which is present in the archive of the station. Upon investigation, they would realize that this letter was properly mailed to the station and had all the necessary credentials of being a real document. However, utilizing oral history methods to verify or to explain this specific event leads us to a different conclusion.

Upon interviewing, Ghazi al-Aridi, the former head of the VOM, the Salazar incident revealed a different story. Aridi recounted how they were aware how much Gemayel felt offended by these remarks which the station constantly used throughout their news segments as well as in their commentaries. Therefore, he and a few of his colleagues decided to play an on-the-air practical joke. After drafting the content of the letter mentioned above, Aridi instructed one of his staff to mail this letter to the radio station. A few days later, Aridi’s secretary brought him this letter which
he responded to with seriousness, requesting that it be aired immediately verbatim. While this incident might be regarded by Aridi as a practical joke, a historian with access to merely textual or the audio evidence years down the road might perceive this incident differently, which might lead to unforeseeable consequences. The example provided above is an indication how oral history should not be viewed as a second fiddle which merely complements the already existing textual evidence, but rather an autonomous tool which can be utilized to study and document past events in our attempts to reach a kind of truth or in the case of the Lebanese civil war, truths.

The study of civil wars, more often than not, has been a challenging as well as elusive task for scholars. In the case of Lebanon for example, historians have approached the civil war as being primarily fueled by economic, regional or sectarian impulses. Even Marxist accounts which used class as a unit of analysis did not venture beyond the group and did not look at individuals beyond their class affiliation. However, beyond the different theoretical approaches, these scholars have relied on almost the same sources, never venturing outside the realm of the written primary sources. These primary sources however are problematic because of two main issues. The first issue, proper state archives or other similar entities are almost non-existent and the collections which the state claims to have is housed in an abandoned warehouse un-catalogued, with the constant claim that they will be digitized and made available to the public. Moreover, most of what remains of this archive has miraculously survived 15 years of bombings and lootings leaving us with a fragmented, if not an unusable archive. Most of the political parties’ archives have faced similar fates and what we have left is basically what universities and research center or in some cases private collectors have amassed over the years.

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43 Interview with Ghazi al-Aridi.
The most accessible archives however are the newspapers and other periodicals published by the Lebanese and non-Lebanese (Palestinian, Syrian) factions which fought during the war. *Al-Anbaa* (PSP), *al-Masiraa* (LF), Al-`Amal (Phalangist) are some of the periodicals I have used in my work on the Druze and Maronites. However, these periodicals, like most primary sources dealing with the Lebanese civil war, are problematic because they are partisan in nature and address local and sometime internal matters which are usually difficult to infer from the text. An example of this would be *al-`Amal* and *al-Masiraa*: both are publications of the Maronite factions during the war. The former was the official mouthpiece of the Phalangist Party while the latter was the mouthpiece for the armed militia, the Lebanese Forces.\(^4^4\) However, these two factions were bitter rivals, especially after the death of Bashir Gemayel in 1982, and the majority of the contents published in the above-mentioned publications catered to this feud. However, this fact could not have been deduced through a traditional examination of both publications but rather through my oral history informants, as many of them have pointed out or elaborated on the background or the motive of a certain document or article I have encountered in the archives. Many of the articles published in both publications did not carry an author’s name and when it did, it was usually a penname. In general, it is also difficult to locate these publications because most of them stopped publishing after the end of the war. As for books, pamphlets, pictorials, many of which were published by these parties or by individuals espousing a certain political ideology and were never part of an official publishing house, and thus obtaining them at times can prove to be a difficult task. This was the case with Andary’s book which only became readily available after the withdrawal of the Syrian army from Lebanon in 2005.

\(^{4^4}\) I interviewed both editors-in-chief of these publications, Joseph Abu Khalil (*al-`Amal*) and Elie Khayat (*al-Masiraa*)
Throughout the research and writing of this study, I have personally interviewed many people either briefly or for extended periods of time. Each of them shared with me, to varying degrees, their personal experience and their involvement in the events in question. However, some of the oral history sources I use are not my own but are the products of various projects over many years. Some of these projects were partisan in nature and have toed the line with a certain collective memory effort by either the Lebanese Forces (Maronites) or by the Progressive Socialist Party.

**Bashir Gemayel: The Series**

Shortly after the assassination of Bashir Gemayel in 1982, his wife Solange and a few of his close associates founded the Bashir Gemayel Foundation-BGF with the aim of preserving his heritage as well as documenting his short but meteor-like career. The BGF would produce a series of publications as well as organize different activities mainly around the annual commemoration of Bashir’s assassination.

In 2012, the BGF collaborated with Mercury Media, a Lebanese online media platform, to produce a five part series about the life and political career of Bashir Gemayel. In addition to the conventional sources the filmmakers consulted, such as books, newspaper articles, and Bashir’s speeches, the production team interviewed and filmed 39 individuals who had intimate knowledge of Bashir as a man and as a militant politician. The scope of these interviews included his immediate family members, such as his brother and sisters, his personal assistant, his party comrades as well as members of his militia that worked closely with him up until his assassination.

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45 Bashir: The Series was released on 4 September 2016, the date of Bashir’s assassination.
46 Eli Khoury, CEO of the Quantum Group the owner of Mercury Media, gave me unrestricted access to this collection.
Given that this film series was commissioned by the BGF, these interviews were edited and inserted throughout the cinematic series to sanctify Bashir and his actions.

These interviews, in their entirety however, go beyond the series’ aim to reveal more about the period in question and shed light on the events that led up to the War of the Mountain as well as the period that followed. The majority of these interviews were conducted with Bashir’s inner circle who worked closely with him since 1980 in his bid to be elected president. This circle met almost daily and their discussions were transcribed by the secretary of the group, Antoun Najem whom I also interviewed. My interviews also included other members of this group which are not included in the Bashir documentary. While these interviews were conducted almost 29 years after the fact, the interviewees provide a fairly good and lucid narrative which corresponds with much of the textual sources I have used throughout my research. However, this does not take away from the limitations of these interviews nor the fact that they were conducted with an obvious aim in mind. A cross examination of the full transcripts as well as the segments which the producers used for the final released series clearly reveals how the BGF wanted to stick to the Maronite collective identity which Bashir Gemayel had molded and upheld throughout his rhetoric and actions. This notwithstanding, these interviews, as will be demonstrated, still retain their historical relevance and are extremely useful especially when juxtaposed to similar literature from the Druze side.

47 This group will be discussed in detail in the subsequent chapters
48 These minutes still survive with some of the members of this group and I had the chance to view some of its content.
The PSP Oral History Project

One of the other main sources I deploy throughout this study is the Progressive Socialist Party’s oral history project, a collection of interviews conducted by the PSP with its senior leadership, military commanders, soldiers, Druze clerics, allies from other parties, civil society activists, families of fallen martyrs and the public at large. The collection includes hundreds of hours of audio interviews conducted throughout the period 1983-1984 and were later transcribed between 2000 and 2005. The collection as a whole is meticulously transcribed and properly indexed, as the header of each page has the interview number as well as the tape it was taken from and the date of the transcription. Each interview, usually, opens with a small introduction by the interviewers in which they brief the subject about the purpose of this project and request that the interviewee talk about their upbringing, education, siblings, spouse as well as their career. The subject is then asked to talk about their political or military involvement in the recent events as well about their personal encounters with the enemy, in this case the Israelis and the Lebanese Forces. It is noticeable that with high-ranking or senior individuals, the interviewer does not feature prominently as the former is left to direct the interview as they wish, a luxury not afforded to the junior or less educated interviewees. Overall, these interviews provide an overall picture of the Druze psyche, or at least that of the Joumblatti faction, vis-à-vis the War of the Mountain. But like all oral history interviews they are not without their limitations and challenges.

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49 This collection is closed to the public and is housed in Dar al-Takadoumi, the PSP’s official publishing house/archive, in Moukhtara the Joumblatt’s ancestral village.

50 These interviews are available in audio format on cassette tapes and have been fully transcribed by hand by the staff of Dar al-Takadoumi as indicated in the index sheet of the collection. There remains almost 14 audio cassettes that have not been transcribed mostly of fighters from the Maten region (South of Mount Lebanon). These interviews were made available to me after I requested permission to use them from Walid Joumblatt.
One of these restrictions is somewhat technical in nature. Given, that these interviews were transcribed 16 years after they were conducted, left them vulnerable to some of the glitches that come with the transcription process. The people doing the transcription were not aware of some of the information they were listening to and thus could not add comments in the margins about the events being discussed or in some cases simply misunderstood references to names and places. Hence, someone reading these interviews requires extensive knowledge of the events discussed in order to understand some of the references made by these informants, such as geographical locations and casual or careless references to localized events.

This project, commissioned by Walid Joumblatt directly after the War of the Mountain in 1984, seemingly sought to document the period before the Israeli invasion in 1982 and the subsequent events that followed, culminating in the bloody clashes between the Druze and the Maronites. The reasons for undertaking this documentation are several and vary according to many of the people I interviewed. The popular explanation for this project stressed the military nature of these interviews which could possibly serve to teach the PSP militia the errors they committed and thus avoid any future debacle, especially that despite the Druze recent victory in military encounters, the war was still far from over. This claim might be substantiated by the fact that many of these interviews provide a detailed description of the many battles and fracases as well as the preparations for the ultimate showdown with the Maronite militia. Additionally, the breadth of these interviews extend to include all rank and file of the Druze militia, ranging from top military commanders to the less senior members, down to the platoon and squadron leaders. Seemingly,

51 The staff at Dar al-Takadoumi confirmed this claim to me, as all their staff who transcribed these interviews were too young to remember or participate in the war of the mountains. Furthermore, these transcribers were given strict instructions to write down these interviews verbatim without any comments or additions.
52 Platoons usually constitute of two squads, while a squad is usual composed of 8 to 12 soldiers.
the real reason for this oral history project goes beyond this somewhat simple utilitarian military aim, and features as part of a bigger project Walid Joumblatt seemed to have envisioned at that stage in his political career.

These interviews in fact, are part of a more comprehensive project that Joumblatt hoped to achieve, to rewrite or to purify the history of Lebanon from the fallacies that the Maronite political establishment and their historians have propagated throughout the years, virtually writing out the Druze’s role in the establishment of modern Lebanon. Coincidentally, these interviews are extremely charged with Druze historicity, and their own understanding of their regions’ history going back to the 11th century and even further back in time. The depth or sophistication of these historical claims and analogies usually depended on the informants: their age, educational background and proximity to decision-making process within the Druze community. But overall, nearly all the interviews adhere to a strict interpretation of the Druze past as well as perhaps their future. Ultimately therefore, these interviews were intended to act as a depository for future Druze and non-Druze scholars to consult when documenting the War of the Mountain and other events, to rewrite a ‘genuine’ history of Lebanon, which should naturally be harmonious or better compatible with Joumblatt’s own view of Lebanese history.

The Council for Druze Studies and Development-CDSD

The fact that Joumblatt, almost concurrently with this project, revived an already existing think-tank, and established another entity to pursue this project adds to the aforementioned claim. The Council for Druze Studies and Development-CDSD established in 1977, brought together a number of scholars, predominantly Druze, the likes of Sami Makarem, Abbas Abu Salah, Abbas al-Halabi whose writings would provide a counter narrative to Maronite accounts of the history of
Lebanon. Many of their projects and publications, before and after the War of the Mountain, centered on promoting Druze history and heritage while serving a larger Druze project.

At a congress held in 1980 in Beirut for representatives of the Druze diaspora, Sami Makarem, professor of Arabic Literature, Islamic Thought and Sufism at AUB, in his capacity as chairperson set out the main aims of the CDSD:

- Collect, publish and translate Druze works.
- Produce films and documentaries about the Druze that particularly target the Druze diaspora.
- Establishment of a Druze university which would prepare professionals capable of teaching the Druze about their faith and history.
- Founding a permanent exhibit for Druze arts and crafts
- Creating a Druze library that would hold all works published about the Druze
- Setting up youth clubs in the diaspora for young people to meet and prohibiting marriage outside the sect.

In due course, most of the aforementioned aims of the CDSD were addressed but with varying degrees of success, as the council was able to produce a series of studies and publications whose aim was to reexamine the history of Lebanon as written by the Maronites, which willfully wrote out the role played by the Druze and portrayed the Lebanese past as an exclusively Maronite affair.

One such publication was the joint work of AUB professors Abbas Abu Salah and Sami Makarem entitled, *Tārīkh al-muwahḥidīn al-Durūz al-siyāsī fī al-Mashriq al-‘Arabī* (Political History of the Unitarian Druze in the Arab East). The book cover that depicts a Druze warrior on horseback waving a sword surrounded by the five colors of the Druze, according to its publisher (CDSD), intends to cover “the political history of the Druze in a scientific manner using primary sources, more specifically Druze manuscripts, which historians has yet to make use of.”

55 Ibid.
introduction goes further to elaborate the purpose of this work and its ultimate aim which is to “remind the Druze of their true heritage, which has been distorted by some historians, either out of malice or simple negligence, so the Druze can be aware of their national duty and to renounce any side loyalties which could harm the state’s national structure.”

The Permanent Bureau for Druze Associations- PBDA

The second entity which was established to support Joumblatt’s vision was the Permanent Bureau for Druze Associations- PBDA. Established at the end of 1982, the PBDA was a parallel organization that served a more immediate goal than the CDSD. The PBDA had no far-reaching aims nor did it hope to rewrite the history of the Druze. Its newsletter which appeared almost daily between January 1983 and December 1986, reveals that its main aim was to counter the propaganda generated by the rightwing Maronite media. The PSP never acknowledged the PBDA as an entity organically linked to it nor to Joumblatt, but rather an independent initiative by a number of leading Druze public figures and non-governmental organizations. Al-Anbaa, the PSP official mouthpiece went as far as to reaffirm the PBDA’s autonomy by running an article praising what it called “the Phenomena of the PBDA” claiming that it is a populist movement that counters the Maronite false claims in the ongoing war in the mountains.

While the PBDA unequivocally restricted its membership to non-party affiliates, all participants in this entity adhered in one way or another, to the PSP/Joumblatti view of the ongoing conflict. Rajeh Naim, the editor of the PBDA newsletter, was never a card-carrying member of the

56 Ibid, 10.
57 There is no official date for the launch of this bureau however, its newsletter appeared in January 1983, which implies that it had to be created at the end of the previous year.
58 Al-Anbaa, January 31 1983.
59 Halim Takidinne, (senior Druze religious judge), Nadia Noueihad (writer), Sami Abdul Baki (Professor of Engineering at AUB), Afif Khodar (contractor), Abbas al-Halabi (Banker), Issam Naiman (Journalist), Siham Saab Khodar, Shawki Ghraizi (physician), Marwan Hamadeh (Journalist). Rajeh Naim (Journalist).
PSP, however he had previously served as head of the media office for the Lebanese National Movements-LNM, which, after the assassination of Kamal Joumblatt, elected his son Walid as its chairman.\textsuperscript{60} The publication which Naim issued however was clearly skewed towards the PSP and the Joumblatt clan, as it explicitly criticized and discredited any faction or personality that tried to defend the Maronite/LF point of view. Raja Naim recalls the establishment of the PBDA as being a spontaneous response to the imminent danger the Druze faced after the Israeli invasion and the entry of the Lebanese forces into southern Mount Lebanon. He also stresses that “much of the actions of the PBDA was of a defensive rather than offensive nature and an attempt to correct the deliberate misinformation of the Christian media outlets against the Druze.”\textsuperscript{61}

While this publication did not produce much original content, except for an occasional column by its editor. Most of its content took the form of press clippings from local, regional and international publications; the selection of these clippings was a statement in itself. They can be broadly placed in four main categories. The first category are articles which condemned the Lebanese Forces and the Maronites, usually by quoting from articles in their publications supportive of their project, intended to spread fear within the Druze. The second category, are articles which highlighted the activities of Druze notables unfavorable to the mainstream Druze consensus which the PSP and its subsidiaries represented. This second type of articles was cleverly laid out adjacent to the first category to suggest to the reader that these two groups were secretly conspiring and thus discredit them in front of the Druze public. The third category of articles mainly focused on defending the Druze acts of violence which were explained as a legitimate use

\textsuperscript{60} Reich, Bernard, Political \textit{Leaders of the Contemporary Middle East and North Africa: A Biographical Dictionary}. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), 291.
\textsuperscript{61} Interview with Rajeh Naim
of force solely triggered by the aggression of the invading LF militias of their lands.\textsuperscript{62} The fourth category, are articles and communiques which reported on the activists of the PBDA, ranging from visits to the President of the Republic or his prime minister and to other branches of government or the occasional press conference, all geared towards mustering public opinion for the Druze cause. The newsletter had “a daily 250 subscribers as well as a wide circulation which targeted the Druze diaspora reaching as far as Africa, Europe, Brazil and the United States to such entities as the American Druze Society as well as others.”\textsuperscript{63}

I will refrain from elaborating further in this section on these various publications and oral history projects discussed thus far and the role they played throughout the conflict, as these will receive extensive treatment in the following chapter when dealing with the Druze and Maronite collective perception of themselves and of each other.

Despite all the complications which come with institutionally commissioned projects, such as Bashir: The Series, PSP’s oral history, the CDSD and the PBDA, which might render its objectivity null, it is exactly this fact which makes it useful, at least for the purposes of this study. For example, the framework for remembrance that Walid Joumblatt wished to create for the Druze can be reconstructed by using these interviews and publications and further elaborating on the collective memory formation of this group and potentially their Maronite opponents.

Many attempts of writing the history of the civil war and its post-war implications has also fallen victim to this obsession with the historical truth as propagated by the warring factions. It is exactly for this reason that oral history can salvage as well as revive the scholarship on the civil war which faded away as early as the second half of the 1990’s. Oral history in this respect can

\textsuperscript{62} PBDF Newsletter, January 31 1983.
\textsuperscript{63} Interview with Rajeh Naim
serve two purposes. First to shed light on earlier episodes analyzed through the traditional textual sources, but second and most importantly, oral history can be used as a healing tool.

It is within these perimeters that oral history projects pertaining to the Lebanese civil war and particularly my own project about the War of the Mountain can bring forth these memories of past conflict not with the intention of proving who was on the right side of history but rather to foster an atmosphere of dialogue which the informants within these projects can publicly endorse by breaking the silence which has dominated post war Lebanon. The various stories and publications of the warring factions have often been framed to explain and justify their positions or to merely validate some of their actions; therefore a writing of a new narrative grounded on oral sources can perhaps a corrective process. By trying to write the narrative of the War of the Mountain maybe then, to use Salibi words, the Lebanese attics may one day be properly swept, paving the way for a country that embraces its past as well as its present, something which the subsequent chapter will.\textsuperscript{64}

\textsuperscript{64} Salibi, \textit{A House of Many Mansions}, 234.
Chapter Two

To be able to properly relate to much of the Druze and Maronite collective identity it is pertinent to properly understand the rich and controversial past which both these communities draw on to reconstruct a historical narrative which consequently frames their own understanding of themselves and the other. The following chapter will trace the historical evolution of both the Druze and Maronite while paying particular focus on the events which directly contributed to forming a sense of collectiveness both across time and space. The Druze-Maronite enmity was not an abrupt development and may not be explained away as simply sectarian in origin. Nor could it be attributed to the advent of imperialism or the failure of the Tanzimat to modernize the Ottoman Sultanate and enable it to resist the meddling of the great European powers in its affairs.65 While the preceding had certainly played some role in the eruption of violence and hostility, the enmity is a far more complex and much older than the 19th century dating back at least to the (early, mid or late) 17th century. Prior to the establishment of Greater Lebanon in 1920, the Druze and the Maronites made up the majority of the inhabitants of Mount Lebanon. According to Kamal Salibi, the history of Lebanon until then “essentially involves a Maronite-Druze story in which other Lebanese communities played only marginal roles, if any.”66 The fact that the Druze and the Maronites both perceived themselves to be the or the fathers/proprietors of Lebanon made them enter into a historic feud, with each side trying to prove that Lebanon is exclusively their own creation, thus subordinating the other side. This conflict, therefore, is perhaps better understood, as Salibi


frames it, as being “a conflict between two tribes flying distinct historical flags with no common vision of their past.”

These two distinct historical banners can be briefly summarized in two broad perceptions. The Druze perceived themselves as the descendants of a proud warrior clan brought to this land from Arabia to fend off the attacks of the Byzantines and their associates, known as the Mardaites or the Jarajimah, and later the Crusaders. While the Maronites believe that they are native to this land, tracing their ancestry back to early the Semitic peoples, more often than not they underscore this fact to merely distinguish themselves from the Muslim Arabs which invaded Syria in the 7th century AD. The Maronites, as a matter of fact, make irreconcilable claims as to their descent and the nature of their nation. Thus they claim to be a melting pot of different ancient civilizations (Arameans, Akkadians, and Canaanites) that inhabited the Lebanese coast and mountain and transformed it into a refuge from the oppressive Muslim invaders. But they also make the claim that the Maronites were none other than the Jarajimah who protected this refuge and valiantly defended Christianity against the invading Muslim hordes. But after they were defeated in the 7th century, the Maronites had, out of necessity forged an alliance with the Druze, who in turn wanted to maintain a certain autonomy from the Sunni Caliphate.

The Druze: Frontier Warriors and Feudal Lords

The Druze- or as they prefer to call themselves Ahl al-Tawhīd (People of Unitarianism) or al-Muwahhidūn (Unitarians)- are a heterodox offshoot of Ismaili Islam, who trace their faith to the cult of the Fatimid Caliph al-Hākim (996–1021) and his minister Ḥamza Ibn ʿAli. The Druze trace their descent to the confederation of Islamic-Arab tribes (Taym, Lakhim, Tay, Tamim,

67 Ibid, 18.
Jandal, Taglib) which were brought to Bilād al-Shām (Syrian coast) by the Abbasid Caliph Abu Ja`afar al-Mansur from different part of the Arabian peninsula to fend off the attacks of the Byzantines and their associates known and the Mardaites and/ or the Jarajimah. With the onset of the Crusades in the 11th century, these tribes gained prominence as they became the first line of defense against these later invaders.69 The Druze born Shakib Arslan, a man with a well-founded claim to scholarship and a highly regarded figure by both the Druze and Sunnis, claims direct descent from these early frontier warriors hailing from the Lakhmid tribes of southern Iraq. According to him 1500 Lakhmid cavalrymen had joined the armies of Khaled Ibn al-Walid in the 7th century to conquer Syria under the banner of Islam.70 During the reign of al-Mansur in the 8th century, the threat posed by the Byzantines and their agents the Mardaites who had fortified themselves in the mountainous regions and disrupted the spread of Islam needed to be addressed.71 Accordingly, al-Mansur devised a strategy to populate the already vacant area adjacent to the Mardaites to contain and defeat their forces. For this purpose the caliph summoned two of the Lakhmid Emirs (princes) Mounzer and Arslan “who exhibited fervor towards this plan, and thus the caliph commanded them to settle in the depopulated mountain of Beirut and he bestowed upon them land and the required documents and urged them to depart.”72 While parts of this narrative are corroborated by a number of other sources, the areas which the ancestors of the Druze settled were not entirely vacant, as the Umayyad caliphate had dispatched tribes from the Syrian hinterland to the coast.73 The first wave of Lakhmids were later joined by other waves of tribes

70 Abu Saleh, 27.
71 Ibid.
72 Tannus al-Shidyaq. Akhbar al-a`yan fi Jabal Lubnan. 1859. Part 2, 278.
from different regions of the Islamic empire possibly to join in the defense of the frontier against the continuous Byzantine attacks on the Syrian coastal lands.⁷⁴

Kamal Joublatt, the Druze chieftain and the founder of the Progressive Socialist Party, makes this abundantly clear in many of his writings. In a book published posthumously, Joublatt boasts of the Druze claim that they regard themselves as the rightful lords and true defenders of Lebanon. He writes:

> The German [Karl] Baedeker claims that our house [in Moukhtara] was built on the site of an old Crusader castle. The Joublatt family once possessed all the lands of Aley up to the Shuf. The great Druze families owned all the big estates from the Kisrwan frontier [in the north] to the Jezzine [in the south] and beyond, from the sea to the Syrian frontier and, at one time, even to the outskirts of Damascus.⁷⁵

The peripheral location and military nature of their charge, gave these tribes a quasi-autonomous status which depended on the success of the task assigned to them and their relationship with the central authority. It is perhaps this fact as well as the decline of the Abbasid state following the death of al-Mutawakkil, the tenth Abbasid Caliph, which helped in the induction of some of these tribes into some of the heterodox Islamic movements (Ismaili, Qarmatians, Alawite, Hashashin) prevalent at the time. By the 9th century, Shi’ism—in its different variants- came to dominate most parts of Syria including the areas which the Druze ancestors had now proclaimed home.⁷⁶ Among these religious currents were the Qaramita, an offshoot of the Ismaili doctrine which according to Kamal Salibi were “possibly an unsophisticated rural offshoot of the movement [Ismaili] with a largely Bedouin and `ashâ`air (tribal) following.”⁷⁷ As a movement, the Qaramita started in al-

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⁷⁴ Abbas Abu Saleh believes that the influx of these tribes (Abdul Malak, Bani Fawaris, Abdallah and Hilal) went beyond the mere military explanation and hints to the possibility that these groups might have migrated due to political factors. P 29. Also see Kamal Salibi, “The Buhturids of the Garb. Mediaeval Lords of Beirut and of Southern Lebanon”, Arabica 8(1961)


⁷⁷ Ibid,45.
Kufa (Iraq) and later spread to different parts of the region reaching greater Syria. The Qaramita essentially adopted a brand of revolutionary socialism which refused to acknowledge the imamate of the Fatimid caliphs and challenged their authority throughout the Muslim realm. In 971 AD, following a series of defeats, the Fatimid army commanded by the famous general Jawhar al-Siqilli faced off against the Qaramati forces in Ramla leading to the defeat of the latter.\(^78\) This led to the eventual retreat of the Qarmatians and their eclipse on the Syrian political scene. As a result, these tribes that remained who had embraced the Qarmatian heterodoxy were soon incorporated into a similar radical movement which started within the Fatimid religious establishment.

After defeating the Ikhshidids (969 AD) the Fatimid caliphate, originally founded in North Africa, moved its seat of power to Egypt.\(^79\) The Fatimids who subscribed to the Ismaili faith, like other similar heterodox Muslim Imamate groups considered the caliph or the Imam to be an infallible being guided by the will of God. However, it was during the reign of the sixth Fatimid caliph al-Ḥākim bi-Amr-Allāh that the status of the Imam was further elevated to an unprecedented level.\(^80\) It was around the figure of the eccentric and vacillating al-Hakim, that a movement of Persian and Turcoman immigrants declared his divinity. Hamza bin Ali, a central figure in this new cult, declared al-Hakim to be “no mere imam like his predecessors, but the living manifestation of the unity of the Godhead, ultimate and transcendental.”\(^81\) The cult of al-Hakim both as a religious and a political movement did not strike root in Egypt and soon petered out with the disappearance and possible murder of al-Hakim. However, it was within the Qaramati tribes

\(^78\) Abu Saleh, 42. Salibi, *Syria under Islam*, 82.
in Syria that were already receptive to similar preaching, that this cult was to gain new followers. By embracing the teachings of Hamza and his missionaries the Druze as a religious community were born and ever since, and as they themselves believe, have remained unchanged. This static nature of the sect was further augmented by the fact that in 1043 AD the Druze (Tawhid) da`wa (calling) was finally sealed off to outsiders and from that point on the Druze became “a self-contained society: no missionary activity, no proselytism, no open public performance of rituals, no places for open collective worship, no marriage outside the community.”

These neophyte Druze tribes got their first real challenge with the arrival of the first Crusades in 1098 AD. Under the leadership of the Buhturid clan, these tribes who were settled in the Gharb region overlooking the coast, resisted in one way or another the marching Crusader armies. Initially these tribes refrained from confronting the superior Frankish forces and instead let them pass unscathed in their drive to capture Jerusalem. The fall of Beirut in 1110 AD, led to the defeat of the Buhturids who had to fully retreat to the Gharb region adjacent to the coast. However this retreat did not spare them the wrath of the Crusaders who invaded the Druze areas in an attempt to root out any future threat to the coast which they now controlled. However the Druze at least in the modern era, deliberately elected not to acknowledge some episodes of this Crusader affair. During the Crusader control of the coast their relationship with their enemies involved resistance as well as collaboration. While the Druze, at least in recent times, boast of their resistance to these foreign invaders and the valiant role they played throughout that period, they utterly deny that they had cordial relations with the Franks and possibly collaborated with them.

An examination of one of the few surviving works of Druze history at the time, Şāliḥ ibn Yaḥyá,

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83 Abu Saleh, 98
Tārīkh Bayrūt clearly implicates the Buhturids as being Crusader collaborators. Ṣāliḥ ibn Yahyá himself a prominent 15th century Buhturid emir writes about the role his family throughout that period and alludes to the role they played in appeasing as well as confronting the Crusaders who were occupying the Lebanese coast. It is perhaps interesting that this Buhturid emir saw no shame in this act as he mentions these episodes without providing any comment or justification. Kamal Salibi, one of the editors of Tārīkh Bayrūt remarks that:

The lords of Beirut and Sidon were always willing to pay well for Buhturid good will, and the Buhturids often found it necessary as well as profitable to come to terms with them, although their raison d'etre was to fight the Franks and to block their advance in the region. At the same time, the Buhturids were anxious to show their masters in Damascus that they were performing their duties with pious zeal, lest subsidy and support be withdrawn and punishment follow.

These maneuvers, however, as Salibi calls them never reached the point where the Druze could be officially regarded as being in Crusaders’ service. This on-the-fence tactic was also adopted by the Buhturids under the Mamluks and have since then become a hallmark of Druze political behavior. When it became obvious to the Buhturid emirs that the Mongols and the Mamluks faceoff was imminent, in what was later the battle of `Ayn Jalut, and in a remarkable feat of realpolitik the family decided to divide its ranks. Ṣāliḥ ibn Yahyá, a crack-archer, who fought with the Mamluk army of Sultan Qutuz unashamedly reports about the decision of his family who:

Held counsel together and agreed that [the latter] would leave and join the Egyptian army while [the former] would stay with the Mongols in Damascus ... and the man on the side of the victors would intercede for his comrade and for the country. [a third prince who stayed with the Franks]

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86 Ibid, 65
This Buhturid gamble paid off after the Mamluk victory, the family continued to enjoy the sultans’ favors despite some periods of disgrace. During the later Mamluk era, the Buhturids were officially inducted into the Mamluks army as officers within the Halqa corps (Cavalry). One of them even attained the prestigious rank of Emir of Forty, by which he had to maintain forty horseman and could have a military band to go along with it.\textsuperscript{87} Part of their duty was to serve with the darak (guard) force assigned to protect Beirut and the coast from the Crusader raids and to maintain security and order.\textsuperscript{88} While this new arrangement greatly reduced their administrative power and Iqta (tax farming) their access to Beirut and its flourishing port and its spice trade made some of their emirs exorbitantly rich.\textsuperscript{89}

By 1517, the Buhturid luck would run out. The Ottoman conquest of Syria (1516 AD) and the defeat of the Mamluks which the Buhturids chose to support left them defeated with no chance of making a transition into the Ottoman structure of power. The eclipse of the Buhturids gave rise to another Druze family which would rule Mount Lebanon under the Ottomans for the next two centuries. The Ma`ans who were related to the Buhturids, rose up during the early Ottoman years to assume leadership of the local government. While some historians, both Druze and Maronite, maintain that the Ma`anids were the natural heirs to their Buhturid cousins and it was in fact a reward for the Ma`ans support of the Ottoman conquest of Syria; this claim however, when properly examined does not hold any water. Kamal Salibi maintains that this Buhtur-Ma`an alleged succession is a latter-day invention of the Shihabi emirs (related to the Ma`ans through marriage) and their circle which wanted to “provide the Shihab regime in Lebanon as the successor

\textsuperscript{88} Ibid, 162.
\textsuperscript{89} Salibi, \textit{House of Many Mansions}, 122.
of the Ma’anid regime, with an Ottoman legitimacy dating back to the time of the conquest. In fact a proper examination of these allegations leads to the conclusion that the Druze transition from Mamluk to Ottoman rule were certainly not as smooth affair as previously assumed.

In his various works on the Druze and Ottoman Lebanon, Abdul Rahim Abu-Husayn using the Ottoman archives as well as regional primary sources paints a fairly different historical picture of the Druze-Ottoman encounter. While the Druze like to maintain their image as a warrior society loyal to the Muslim Ottoman authority, the reality was somewhat different. In 1518, shortly after the Ottomans took over Syria, a number of Druze chiefs joined the rebellion of Nasir al-Din ibn al-Hanash which amounted to a last desperate attempt at a Mamluk counter revolution. However, this Druze mutiny as well as the others that followed went beyond the typical struggle within the Muslim factions vying for power. The Druze chiefs seemingly did not want to lose out on the profits of the lucrative trading via the Beirut port with the Italian merchant republics, Venice and later Tuscany. For the next few decades, the Druze, using weapons smuggled to them from the Venetian base in Cyprus challenged the Ottoman authorities and seized every opportunity to rise in mutiny. It is no coincidence, as Salibi points out, that the name of the musket in Arabic (bunduqiyya) corresponds exactly to the Arabic naming of the city of Venice. By getting their hands on an abundant supply of weapons, that were superior to those used by the Ottomans, the Druze proved to be a handful.

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90 Ibid, 124.
91 Abdul Rahim Abu-Husayn. "Rebellion, Myth making and Nation Building: Lebanon from an Ottoman Mountain Iltizam to a Nation State", in Studia Culturae Islamica, 97, ILCAA, (Tokyo University of foreign Studies), 8.
93 Ibid, 19.
94 Salibi, House of Many Mansions, 125.
95 Abu-Husayn, "Rebellion, Myth making and Nation Building", 15.
The Ottomans did not back away from this challenge and dispatched numerous punitive campaigns against the Druze. This period of “long rebellion” as Abu-Husayn brands it led to the destruction of many Druze villages and the death of many of their men. Over time, this would have dire consequences on the community as it greatly reduced its numbers and its ability to maintain a viable peacetime economy. At the time, contemporary chroniclers such as Ibn Tulun spoke of loads of Druze heads brought to Damascus and paraded to the public to underscore the Druze defeat and the extent the Ottomans were willing to go to suppress any mutiny.  

Furthermore, the Ottomans used the Druze scriptures (which the Druze hold secretive) captured during their campaigns to underscore the heresy of this sect in order to justify their excessive use of force and naturally set an example to other aspiring rebels. Despite this last tactic, the Ottoman punitive actions, at least in the case of the Druze were never religiously motivated, something which the Druze refuse to acknowledge. The Druze prefer to maintain that the calamities that befell them throughout the ages (some claim that the Druze were butchered seven times) have all been because of their faith rather than a consequence of their earthly or political choices. Furthermore, the many different tales and Lebanese school textbooks relegate this period of rebellion and the violent and unprovoked manner the Ottomans acted as being the outcome of mere false claims and allegations hurled by the Ma’anid opponents. The claim that the attack of Ibrahim Pasha in 1585 against the Druze as being a response to the false accusation of the theft of a tax convoy by a Ma’anid emir, has been simply proven false. Abu-Husayn maintains that this tax convoy was

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97 Interview with Raja Naim. Naim was one of the many people who used this line when asked about the Druze and their history.
98 Abu Saleh, 133. Abu Saleh like many others considers that the Ottoman campaign was an unjust act prompted by the instigation of the enemies of the Druze.
never robbed, but in fact according to the Ottoman records it reached its intended destination in
Istanbul and was deposited in the state treasury. More importantly, this expedition like many
others before was dispatched to merely punish the Druze for their continued insubordination and
not a response to a single infraction; the many Ottoman reports on the matter underscore this point.
In an order to the beylerbeyi (governor) of Damascus as well as other related letters no mention is
made to the tax convoy theft instead it blatantly stresses the rebellious nature of the Druze activity
against the Ottomans and issues instructions to neutralize them:

The person known as Korkmaz ibn Ma’in [Ma’n], of the Druze community (taife), is
a rebellious chieftain (mukaddem-i asi). He has gathered [around him] miscreants from
the Druze community and done harm and mischief (mefsedet) in the sancak of Safad
in my divinely guarded territory (memaliki mahruse). The people of the area have
requested that you march against the aforesaid community where it is gathered. I have
commanded, upon the arrival [of this order], that you march against the aforesaid
community with extreme circumspection.

Starting in the 16th century the rise of the Safavids brought with it the hope to resurrect the great
glories of the Persian Empire. The adoption of Twelver Shi’ite Islam by the Safavid Empire
gave it a religious identity which pitted it against its Sunni Ottoman rival. However it would be
wrong to assume that this contention was sectarian in nature but was rather a tool both sides used
in a political rivalry which persist to this day. In 1590 the height of the Safavid-Ottoman feud,
Fakhr al-Din Ma’an, Korkmaz’s son was appointed as an administrator of the Sanjak of Sidon-
Beirut. This young emir’s return to power was sanctioned by the Ottomans with the intention of
ending the Safavid (Persian) penetration of that region. Fakhr al-Din, using both brains and brawns
would do exactly that by destroying the Harfush (Shi’ite) emirs of the Bek’a region in eastern

100 MD 53, No. 724, 11 Safar 993/12 February 1585. Order to the beylerbeyi of Damascus. Ottoman
chancellery document as translated in, Abu-Husayn. The View from Istanbul. 17.
101 Ibid, 34.
Lebanon. Traditionally in Ottoman service, the Harfush had switched sides and were trying to link up their area with the predominately Shi’ite Jabal ‘Amil region to the south.\textsuperscript{103} The success of Fakhr Din in responding to the Safavid threat brought back the Druze, although momentarily, to their original status as warriors in the service of Islam.

**Unity amongst Disparity**

Much of the Druze rhetoric and self-perception underscores the unity of the community to an extent that pluralism within the unit is more often than not suppressed and transformed into one dimension. However an examination of the Druze as a political community reveals a complex and diverse reality very different from what the Druze like to maintain. The Druze throughout their history have been led by a number of prominent families whose leadership status fluctuated depending on their relationship to the central Islamic authority as well as to each other.\textsuperscript{104} These families since settling in the area in the 8\textsuperscript{th} century have divided themselves according to the Qaysi-Yemeni dichotomy which governed the tribal political structure at the time. This feud which started in the early years of Islam divided the Arab tribes into a northern Qaysi faction and a southern Yemeni faction and would evolve with time to include other non-Muslim Arab tribes.\textsuperscript{105} This feud survived much into the 19\textsuperscript{th} century in different parts of the Levant especially in Syria. According to Jane Hathaway, *A Tale of Two Factions*, “under the Ottomans Lebanon above all was riven by Qaysi-Yemeni rivalry” which lead to serious tensions between the antagonists.\textsuperscript{106} Naturally the Druze at least up until the 17\textsuperscript{th} century were the main driving force of this feud. This

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\textsuperscript{103} Salibi, *House of Many Mansions*, 126.
\textsuperscript{104} These families included, the Arslans, Joumblatts, Abu Nakad, Imad, Talhuqs, Abd al-Maliks, Abu Harmouch, el-Eid, Abi-Lama.
\textsuperscript{105} Jane Hathaway, *A Tale of Two Factions: Myth, Memory, and Identity in Ottoman Egypt and Yemen* (Albany: State University of New York, 2003), 32.
\textsuperscript{106} Ibid, 33.
dichotomy, however, ran across the traditional sectarian lines and included both Druze and Christians alike. Ultimately these tensions erupted into a mini civil war in the famous battle of Ain Dara in 1711, which ended with the defeat and final eclipse of the Yemeni faction headed by the Alam al-Dins who regarded themselves as the rightful successors to Ahmad Ma’an, the last Ma’anid Emir.107

While the Qaysi-Yemeni party structure was indeed crucial in the events of Mount Lebanon; another dichotomy of more or equal importance came to define the political history of the Druze. The Junblatti-Yazbaki feud was a predominately Druze affair which pitted two factions one led by Sheikh Junblatt against a Yazbaki faction led by Sheikh Yzbak Ibn Abd al-Salam, the father-in-law of Fakhr al-Din Ma’an.108 Many scholars view this feud as a post 1711 development which essentially replaced the Qaysi-Yemeni division and was rooted and utilized in the Shihabi succession which ensued.109 However, important as this feud was within the Shihabi context, it certainly was an earlier phenomena which was fully developed during the reign of Fakhr al-Din almost a century earlier. Abu Husayn affirms that a careful examination of the contemporaneous chroniclers of Faker al-Din vividly reveal, that “the division among the Druzes between Junblati and Yazbaki factions was already a fact of Druze political life in the Shuf during the times of Fakhr al-Din Ma’an long before the time of the Shihabs, in the mid-eighteenth century, when it is commonly believed to have developed.”110 Regardless of why or when this feud originated, what

107 Ibid, 34.
is certain is that the political history of the Druze community since then has been regulated by
these two factions who were in a state of constant rivalry with both groups uniting to defend the
so-called existence of the community when needed. This unison which momentarily suspended
the Junblati-Yazbaki factionalism, was usually a response to any form of external threat against
the Druze, the 1860 and the 1982-83 war with the Maronites, as well be demonstrated, are cases
in point.

A Recipe for Disaster
The valiant warrior image that the Druze perpetuated for themselves however was not sufficient
in itself to beget conflict and civil strife with other local communities. Only a challenge that
constitutes an anti-thesis to the Druze self-perception and poses an existential threat to them or is
perceived as such could do so. This threat, at least in Druze perception, materialized with the
Maronites, who by the 18th century through a series of events and factors became the real masters
of what was formerly Druze country par excellence.

The Druze image of their neighbors in Mount Lebanon, the Maronites, which is imprinted
into their collective memory, is that of lowly peasants brought in to carry out chores unbefitting of
warriors. According to the Druze, the Maronite migration to the southern part of Mount Lebanon
began in the 17th century under the encouragement and protection of the ‘Great Prince Fakhr al-
Din Ma’an’ to meet certain economic demands, as the Druze, “warrior-aristocratic rulers, relied
heavily on the Maronites who turned out to be diligent farmers and obedient subjects.”¹¹¹ While
the Christians immigration into Mount Lebanon was indeed sanctioned and encouraged by Faker
al-Din however, this was never exclusively a largesse on his part but rather a response to an

¹¹¹ The Mountain: in Defense of our Existence and Dignity, 21.
economic and political need. The successive Ottoman punitive campaigns against the rebellious Druze had affected the latter’s demographic presence in the southern part of Mount Lebanon to an extent that the Druze did not have enough people to farm the land and to carry out other economic activities. The earliest clashes between the Druze and the Ottoman forces of the governor of Damascus Khurram Pasha in 1523 led to the death of hundreds of Druze and “the burning of 43 Druze villages including the village of Baruk”, the seat of the Ma`ans at the time.\textsuperscript{112} The waves of Ottoman military campaigns that followed and the extended duration and magnitude of these clashes as well as the forces dispatched to punish the Druze affirms that the losses incurred by the Druze were heavy and unrecoverable. Consequently, and primarily out of pure necessity Fakhr al-Din encouraged the Christians of the northern parts to settle in his areas to mainly provide the labor to farm the lands of the Druze. The tolerance exhibited by Fakhr al-Din at later stages towards these new arrivals was two folded. It was only natural for the Druze to allow these outsiders to feel at home and thus allow them to build churches, especially if they expected them to be productive in their tasks. Furthermore, the Druze were confident that the Christians had no real prospect of converting any of the Druze to Christianity mainly because the former had a strong tribal structure which prevented this from happening. Moreover their being Christians precluded the possibility that they would ever pose a threat to their Druze masters, as the later stood little chance of gaining the approval of the Ottoman authorities who always preferred to appoint a Muslim ruler to administer the land.

At a later time, Fakhr al-Din’s growing relationship with the Italian merchant republics (Venice & Tuscany) and his contacts with the Papacy made this policy of tolerance somewhat

expedient for him and perhaps a condition of his Christian allies. These aforementioned details are not high on the Druze’s modern historical psyche as they insist on stressing the agrarian nature of the Christian immigration. Many of the people I interviewed from the Druze side made this abundantly clear and at times went as far as to use the image of the Christian peasant in slanderous terms. The Druze insist on branding these Maronite migrants as Sanay‘ayha (people who work with their hands especially lowly professions) a belittling term at best especially when used as such. One female informant, a graduate of the American University of Beirut and a native of the city of Aley, insisted that the Christians were always peasants and that the Druze were the princes and warriors of Mount Lebanon. When I pointed out to the fact that the Druze community were also agrarian in nature and that life in the past centuries required that all people farm their lands, she violently refused to acknowledge this and responded mockingly “shut up, shut up, and go read your history.” The clearly condescending undertone shared by a fairly educated Druze towards her Maronite counterparts would come to brand the relationship between the two sides, with the former side feelings somewhat betrayed

With the passage of time, these Christian subjects through the Maronite Church developed relations with the different foreign missionaries operating in Ottoman Empire. Subsequently, these missionaries encouraged the Maronites to rebel against their Druze overlords and to curtail and abolish Druze feudalism. According to the Druze collective psyche, the Maronite Church supported Bashir Shihabi II (known as the Red Prince by the Druze) who turned against his former ally Sheikh Bashir Joumlatt. The Shihabs who were outsiders to Mount Lebanon inhabiting the Wadi al-Tayim region were related to the Ma’ans through the female linage. After the death of

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113 Interview with AA, October 14, 2014.  
the last Ma’anid Emir in 1697, the Shihabs were chosen by the Druze notables to manage their cousins’ estates. This tale of Shihabi succession has been incorporated by most Lebanese scholars and the public at large, both Maronite and Druze, into the master narrative of their country’s past, as it entails an empowering feature for both factions. The Druze can claim that they were the political faction capable of appointing a new multazim (tax farmer) while the Maronites can also boost that their rule was fully legitimate and was achieved through some sorts of a democratic vote. This peculiar transition of property, however, from a Druze feudal lord to a Sunni one almost alien to the region was a halfway arrangement by the Druze chieftains who were divided amongst themselves over the succession. According to Abdul Rahim Abu Husayn, none of the local Druze tribal chiefs wished to concede even nominal precedence to any of the other Druze tribal chiefs as this would upset the delicate balance of power and a tax concession of this magnitude would certainly do so, as it would bestow on its recipient some superior moral standing and possibly considerable wealth. So instead of keeping the position as an exclusively Druze preserve, these Druze notables preferred to give it to the Shihabs who had no local constituency and thus had no chance of effecting the power balance, or so they thought.

Emir Bashir vs. Sheikh Bashir

Originally Sunni, the Shihabs started to convert to Christianity in the second half of the 18th century. It wasn’t long before the different factions of the Shihabs started to compete for power, as they allied themselves with either the Joumblatti or Yazbaki faction to overshadow both...
Maronite and Druze contenders. In 1788, with the help of the Joumblatti party led by the powerful Sheikh Bashir Joumblatt, Bashir II (Shihab) was appointed to head the Lebanese Emirate replacing his uncle Emir Youssef Shihab. Following a short period of instability, Bashir was able to assert himself as a powerful ruler capable of meddling in the internal affairs of the different communities including the Druze. By the 19th century, the Druze had been furthered weakened by a number of factors, primarily the infighting between the Yazbaki and the Joumblatti. Bashir Joumblatt, by allying himself with Emir Bashir, was able to weaken and crush his Druze opponents; something which will prove to be detrimental on the long run to the Druze and perhaps to the Maronites as well.

The rise of the Ottoman Ruler of Egypt, Mohammad Ali Pasha, and his growing intervention in the affairs of the Levant in 1831 would have dire consequences on Mount Lebanon. Mohammad Ali’s political and financial backing of Emir Bashir enabled him to assert himself as the paramount ruler of Jabal Lubnan.\textsuperscript{117} Bashir proceeded to put more financial burdens on the feudal lords as well as treat them with utter condescension, chiefly among them his former ally, Bashir Joumblatt. The popular myth goes that the Emir was receiving a number of Druze notables among them Sheikh Bashir in his newly exorbitant constructed mansion in Beiteddine, when he declared that “Sheikh Bashir, the mountain is not big enough to accommodate two Bashirs” to which Sheikh Bashir arrogantly replied “that might be true, however whoever feels uncomfortable can leave.”\textsuperscript{118} This most probably imagined encounter is certainly an indication of how the Druze perceived this confrontation, as being guided by mere jealously rather than a calculated lust for

\textsuperscript{117} Caesar Farah. \textit{The Politics of Interventionism in Ottoman Lebanon, 1830-1861}. (Oxford: Centre for Lebanese Studies, 2000), 740.
\textsuperscript{118} \textit{ʻIzzat Ṣafi. Ṭarīq al-mukhtārah zaman Kamāl Junblāṭ} (Beirut: Dar Nahar, 2007), 22
power and dominance by both parties involved. In response to the Emir’s challenge, Bashir Joumblatt appealed to the Yazbaki factions whose numbers and support were insufficient by that time to defeat the powerful Bashir II. The final military confrontation in 1825 between the two Bashirs ended with the defeat of Joumblatt and his Yazbaki allies who were arrested by the governor of Damascus and handed over to the governor of Acre. Upon the insistence of Emir Bashir both Sheikh Bashir and the head of the Yazbaki faction Sheikh Amin al-Imad were later executed.

Common as this episode might seem at the time, given that most political feuds ended with some sort of violent encounter, the killing of Sheikh Bashir was a totally different matter. Bashir Joumblatt was revered by the Druze as one of their important political leaders. *Amud al-Sama* (pillar of heaven) as he was called by his supporters, Joumblatt was known to maintain a pious lifestyle as well as abide by the dress code of the Druze clerics. Tannus al-Shidyaq, in his significant work on the families of Mount Lebanon, *Kitab Akhbar al-A’yan fi Jabal Lubnan* underscores the exalted stature of Sheikh Bashir. Shidyaq, a Maronite who worked for the Shihab family describes Bashir as:

- medium height, soft bodied, handsome with a dark complexion, dignified, wise, balanced, chivalrous, brave, gallant, generous, forgiving, just, forthcoming, protective, extremely wealthy with money as well as followers, defender of the land, known as the pillar of heaven. He had distributed in one year 650 thousand piaster to all the poor in the land. He erected bridges and repaired roads and during his times temples [churches] became plentiful and peace and stability prevailed, earning him a reputation throughout the lands.\(^{119}\)

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Sheikh Bashir’s personal attributes as well as his symbolic stature transformed his death into a watershed moment in the history of Druze-Maronite relations. Kamal Salibi calls this act by the Emir Bashir perhaps a:

Last blow to Druze political dominance in the country; the Druze never forgave him for it. Weakened and leaderless, they henceforth ceased to cooperate wholeheartedly in the affairs of the Emirate and awaited the opportunity for revenge. The Christian Shihab, it is true, had crushed the Druze Janblat not because he was Druze, but because he was a powerful political rival. The Druze, however, were to remember the incident differently; and Bashir’s subsequent policy was to make them look upon him more and more as a Christian enemy to their community.\(^{120}\)

The events which followed the execution of Bashir Joumblatt only reinforced to the Druze the notion that Bashir II was truly out to get them. The Egyptian conquest of Syria by Ibrahim Pasha, son of Mohammad Ali and the war with the Ottomans that followed further estranged the Druze who preferred to side against the Egyptians because of their supports of Bashir II. In fall of 1837, the Druze of Hawran rebelled against the Egyptian decision to conscript more Druze into the Egyptian army and to disarm them. The Druze of Hawran were soon joined by their coreligionist from the Shuf and Wadi al-Tayim. Initially successful in their rebellion, the Druze were defeated by 20 thousand troops personally commanded by Ibrahim Pasha. Amongst these were 4000 Christian troops commanded by Emir Bashir’s son Khalil.\(^{121}\) The fact that Bashir II was born a Maronite, after his father had converted from Sunni Islam to Christianity, also complicated things even more as his drive to power was perceived by the Druze as having a sectarian motive.\(^{122}\) The alliance that Bashir established with the Maronite Church was

\(^{120}\) Kamal Salibi. *The Modern History of Lebanon*. 27.
\(^{121}\) Ibid, 34-38.
additionally sufficient to reinforce the sectarian fears of the Druze and further drive them into rebellion.

The Druze never forgave the Maronites’ betrayal and collaboration with the Egyptians, and they perceived these acts as a threat not only to their feudal status but also to their existence as a community. Consequently, the defeat of the Egyptians by the Anglo-Turkish forces in 1841 led to the overthrow and exile of Bashir. For the next two decades, Mount Lebanon was a scene of bitter feuds and skirmishes between the Druze and the Maronites which finally erupted in 1860 in a full-scale civil war. During this power feud, Sa‘īd - son of the slain Bashir Joumblatt - had emerged as the leader of his community, and was ready to avenge his father. In the following lines, Leila Fawaz gives a vivid description of the setting on the eve of the war:

The continued absence of a strong government, coupled with Druze Maronite frustrated ambitions, was a recipe for disaster. Any social unrest could trigger warfare within communities and between them, and opportunities for generating unrest were clearly not lacking. On the other hand, the Ottomans’ desire to discipline the Maronites for their treacherous collaboration with the Egyptians allowed the well-organized Druze forces to destroy the major Christian villages and towns. Consequently, and under the united leadership of the Joumblatti and Yazbaki factions, the Druze massacred the inhabitants of three of the biggest Christian towns: Deir al-Qamar, Zahle and Hasbayah. A contemporary Druze chronicler admits that his coreligionists did not spare the life of any adult male even if he pleaded for mercy. The Druze raiding parties would enter villages, kill their male inhabitants and then proceed to systemically loot homes and shops and set them ablaze. The civil strife ended with the arrival of the French navy in Beirut,

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which imposed a ceasefire and stationed garrisons across the country. Although the Druze were military victorious, they were not successful in capitalizing on their win. The French intervened on behalf of the Maronites and demanded that the Ottoman authorities arrest the perpetrators of the heinous crimes. Consequently, Saʻīd Joumblatt and other leading Druze notables were imprisoned and later exiled. Furthermore, Joumblatt’s death while in incarceration augmented the hatred that the Druze harbored towards the Maronites. According to the Druze narrative, the Maronites forced the six major powers at the time (France, Britain, Russia, Austria, Prussia and the Ottoman Empire) to abolish the old feudal system and instate an administrative council (Mutasarrifîyya) in its place.\textsuperscript{125} The council gave the Maronites ultimate control over Mount Lebanon, deprived the Druze of their feudal status and transformed this communal space into an exclusive Maronite homeland.\textsuperscript{126} The new setup gave the governorship to a non-Muslim Ottoman administrator, 4 of the 12 seats on the council were allotted to the Maronites, Druze (3) seats, Greek Orthodox (2), Catholic (1), Sunni (1) and Shiite (1). Furthermore, the first Ottoman mutasarrıf (governor) favored the Maronites by creating the post of deputy mutasarrîf and granting it to them, consequently further disfranchising the Druze \textsuperscript{127}

**The Maronites: Lebanon a Refuge**

While the Druze perceived themselves as gallant warriors in the service of Islam, the Maronites saw their country and their existence from a wholly different perspective. The Maronites believed that they were native to this land, tracing their ancestry back to early Semitic peoples. The Maronites claim that their nation was primordial even predating Christianity as these civilizations


\textsuperscript{126} *The Mountain: in Defense of our Existence and Dignity*, 23-24

\textsuperscript{127} Akarli, *The Long Peace*, 83.
were “forged on the lands of Lebanon into one people, which were called the Phoenicians, and these Phoenicians in turn adopted Christianity and became the Maronites.” The underscoring of this Phoenician tradition basically aims to show the following assumed facts. Firstly, the Maronites have always existed in Lebanon, even predating Christianity, and secondly that the Lebanese, like their seafaring ancestors the Phoenicians, were civilized entrepreneurs with no connection to the nomadic tribal traditions of Arabia. Moreover, this Lebanese nation was always protected by its brave and organized armies known as the Mardaites and the Jarajimah. The Jarajimah, according to Maronite tradition, defended the nation from the invasions of the Muslims, starting with the Islamic conquest in the 7th century AD. These “Lebanese Mardaites”, as Daw calls them, made possible the establishment of a refuge for people persecuted by the Muslims and the new colonized Arab tribes, the precursors of the Druze. After the Druze settled in Lebanon, rather than engage in open warfare with them, the Maronite opted for a peaceful alliance. According to Walid Phares, an advisor to US President Donald Trump during his candidacy, this historical settlement was mutually beneficial. On one hand, the Druze needed the labor provided by the Maronites to maintain their agrarian economy; on the other hand, the Maronites endured until the time was right to reclaim their rights. To achieve their goal, the Maronites employed certain tactics. They continued to support the Lebanese entity against outside forces (mainly Islam) and supported the Druze sect within this entity, while at the same time trying to convert the Druze Emir to Christianity. Consequently, when all these elements were aligned during the reign of the Shihabs, the Maronites reclaimed what was rightfully theirs. However, in a last desperate attempt to maintain their feudal status, the Druze committed the massacres of 1860.

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The Maronites insistence on tracing their ancestors to this warrior community is perhaps better understood when juxtaposed against the Druze view of them. While the Druze look down at the Christians as meager peasants, the Maronites deny this heritage and instead assert that it was the other Christian communities and not them who are the peasantry. Furthermore their link to these Maradites, who are originally from Anatolia, deny any claim that the Maronites have and link to the Arabs in any form or way. The Mardaite lineage was propagated by two prominent Maronites historians, Jibrāʾil Ibn al-Qilai, Maronite Bishop of Cyprus (15th century) and Maronite Patriarch Istfan al- Duwayhi (17th century). Ibn al-Qilai was the first to establish that the Maronite or Shaʿb Marun (the people of Saint Marun) that date back to the 6th century were descendants of “kings and heroes among them who defended the mountains and the coastlands. From the heights of the mountains, their valiant chiefs would descend together with their men as a torrential fall of rain to rout Muslim invaders whenever they attacked.”

Building on this Duwayhi, writing in the 17th century, went further by asserting that Youhana Marun, the first patriarch of the Maronite church was of “Mardaite princely descent and his mother a Frankish princess of the Carolingian line.” The Byzantine persecution and the fleeing of the Maronites to their mountain refuge in Lebanon was possible through a certain Ibrahim, the nephew of the Patriarch who was “a valiant Mardaite warrior that secured the withdrawal of his uncle and his faithful followers to the safety of Mount Lebanon.” Within this framework, the main image, which the Maronites want to preserve for themselves according to Salibi is possessing

Warlike instincts and skills which preserved them in Mount Lebanon as a free and defiant Christian people in their Islamic surroundings. Was it not the same valour inherited from

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130 Salibi, *House of Many Mansions*, 78.
131 Ibid, 83.
132 Ibid, 84.
their Mardaite forebears that made them also rise in the defence of the True Apostolic Faith of Rome against the wicked schisms and heresies of the East, to deserve in the end the supreme compliment paid to them by no less a person than the pope himself: that they were, truly, a rose among the thorns?¹³³

Spotless as these facts may seem, especially coming from a prominent Maronite cleric such as Duwayhi, the authenticity of such claims are easily challenged.

The Maronite doctrines of the ‘Mountain Refuge’ (Asile du Liban) and ‘the Resurrection of the Phoenician Nation’ as well as their Mardaite connection are lucid examples of how collective memory is fabricated and molded over time to serve a present political project. The roots of the first two doctrines (Asile du Liban and Phoenicia) are to be found not in the prehistoric records and archeological sites but rather in the modern scholarship of the Jesuit priest Henri Lammens. Lammens formulated the idea that Lebanon stood apart from the rest of the Syrian land, because of its terrain as well as its distinct past. This rugged terrain provided shelter to all the dissidents and the oppressed who sought to escape the wrath of the central authority, while Lebanon’s pre-historic past explained the country’s uniqueness.¹³⁴ In addition, the Maronite political establishment, represented by the notable Maronite families and rising bourgeoisie, adopted this Asile du Liban doctrine, transforming it into their flagship. This ‘consortium’ of powerful Christian businessmen wanted to reinstate the image of Lebanon as a continuation of the Phoenician merchant republic.¹³⁵ The consortium assumed that a Phoenician legacy would certainly distinguish them from the Arab/Muslim countries surrounding them. However, this Phoenician sanctuary had a number of flaws, which left it open to criticism. According to Salibi

¹³³ Ibid, 85.
¹³⁴ Salibi, 131.
the refuge theory, as reproduced by the Maronites in the 20th century, did not take into account several points.\textsuperscript{136}

First, the Maronites fled the Syrian hinterland to Lebanon because of Byzantine persecution rather than the tyranny of the Muslim rule. Second, it is assumed that the Islamic state never established its control over the areas of Mount Lebanon, a fact falsified when subjected to proper historical examination. The Muslim Empire, as early as the time of the Caliph Mu’awiyah (d.680), established in nearly all parts of Mount Lebanon, and the periods which followed were not so different. Most importantly, Salibi stressed the fact that the majority of the tribes which existed in this so-called sanctuary were Arab, including the Maronites, dating back as early as the third century AD. Furthermore, these tribes’ adoption of the Islamic faith went through a peaceful process of conversion to heterodox Islam, mainly the Druze and the Shi’ites, and was not a direct result of the Islamic conquest. Therefore, the ancestors of the Lebanese, contrary to Maronite saga, did not flee any persecution, and their existence in present-day Lebanon was contemporary to the Islamic conquest.\textsuperscript{137}

The Phoenician legacy of the Maronites, according to Salibi, is somewhat easy to debunk. While the Maronites’ primary reason for the resurrection of Phoenicia is to stand apart from the Arabs, in reality, the Phoenicians are originally from Arabia. The origin of the word Phoenicia can be traced to the Greek word Phoenix which literally means date palm.\textsuperscript{138} The Greeks named these seafaring people “date-eaters” because they used to consume dates during their long voyages. Naturally, date palms are more abundant in the Arabian Peninsula and not commonly grown across

\textsuperscript{136} Salibi, 136.
\textsuperscript{137} Ibid, 148.
\textsuperscript{138} Phoenix dactylifera
the Syrian coast. In addition, Salibi states that the Maronites consciously dismissed Herodotus, the Father of History who traced the Phoenicians’ Arabian origins, and they preferred to go with their own interpretation. Consequently, the Maronite myth served a far greater goal. By claiming that the Lebanese were in fact the inventors of the modern alphabets, which the Greeks later adopted, in reality, “the whole human culture owed the Lebanese a great debt.” However, Salibi concluded that any similarities between the Phoenicians and the Lebanese might be justified by the sheer fact that they both shared the same geographic location rather than the same historic legacy.

The Mardaite-Maronite link, however, appears to be even easier to disclaim. Being merely a gesture to distinguish themselves genealogically from the Arabs, the Maronite past seem to indicate otherwise. According to Salibi, Duwayhi himself provides evidence that negate the non-Arab roots of the Maronite. In his book on the origins of the Maronites, *Tarikh al-Ta'ifa al-Maruniyya*, Duwayhi mentions that the Maronites of Aqura in the North of Lebanon were “divided into Qaysi (north Arab) and Yemenite (south Arab) factions, much as other tribal Arabs in Syria were.” Furthermore, the Khazens the Maronite lords of the Kisrwan region and the allies of Fakhr al-Din were members of the Qaysi party. It is highly unlikely that the Qaysi-Yemeni faction would entertain allowing any person or family to join its ranks if their Arab lineage is questionable.

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The Maronites Go West

The Maronite attempt to draw connections to a non-Arab or a western entity however was achieved through a different track all together, a track which was neither imagined nor prehistoric and can be traced to the First Crusade. The Crusader- Maronite encounter in the spring of 1099, would be a watershed moment for the Maronites not only politically but religiously as well. Kamal Salibi goes as far as to consider this juncture as a transomrational event as “were it not for the Crusades the Maronites might very well have remained the fossil peasant community which the Franks found in Mount Lebanon in the last year of the eleventh century.”\(^{141}\) As the Crusaders first arrived to the Lebanese coast, the Maronites were amongst the first communities to welcome them with jubilation and offer their services as guides.\(^{142}\) William of Tyre, the Crusader chronicler and the archbishop of Tyre documents this early contact:

> High up on the lofty range of Lebanon, whose towering summits rise far above those cities on the east which I have just mentioned, lived certain Syrian Christians. These people had come down to offer their congratulations to the pilgrims and to pay them their tribute of brotherly affection. Since they were well-acquainted with the country all about, the leaders called these people and consulted with them, as experienced men, about the safest and easiest way to Jerusalem. In all good faith the Syrians care- fully considered the advantages and all the lengths of the various routes leading thither and finally \(^{143}\) recommended the shore road as the most direct.\(^{144}\)

Naturally, the Maronite association with the Crusaders persisted for the next two centuries up until the Mamluks were finally able to evict the Crusaders from the Lebanese coast. With this removal also came the Mamluk reprisal for the Maronite collaboration with the Crusaders, consequently, the Maronite status as a community greatly regressed. The Maronite persecution hit

\(^{141}\) Kamal Salibi. "The Maronites of Lebanon under Frankish and Mamluk Rule (1099-1516)", Arabica; IV (1957), 288.
\(^{143}\) The Crusader county of Tripoli fell in 1289
\(^{144}\) William of Tyre as Quoted in Kamal Salibi "The Maronites of Lebanon under Frankish and Mamluk Rule (1099-1516)", 290-291.
its peak in 1367 with the execution of their patriarch Jibrā’il of Hjula who the Mamluks burnt at the stake. The Crusades, however, put the Maronites on a course that no military defeat could have diverted, the Maronite church and its union with Rome. The Maronite-Crusader connection and the special privileges the Maronites enjoyed during the Frankish rule encouraged the former to shed its Monothelitism and to embrace Roman orthodoxy. Prior to their western leap towards Catholicism, the Maronite church, was part of the Eastern doctrine of Monophysitism which was branded by Rome as heretical. This doctrine basically professed that Jesus Christ had two natures but one will while the Monophysitism adopted by the Roman Church maintained that Christ had two wills (one human and one divine). The Maronites, especially the clergy who later received their religious training in Rome, try to maintain that they were never part of this heresy but rather they have always been believers in Roman orthodoxy.\textsuperscript{145} In a book published by the Maronite League \textit{al-Mawarina}, the author Antoine Khoury Harb affirms that “the Maronites were the only eastern Christians that remained loyal to the Holy See, which explains why they were joyful and welcoming of the Crusades.”\textsuperscript{146} However, this claim is challenged by many Maronite works that indicate that the Maronites had adopted the Monothelitism before and during the early encounter with the Franks.\textsuperscript{147}

However, while the Maronite church in 1180 willfully entered in union with Rome, this was not the case with some Maronites who refused this unison by all means possible. These anti-union elements went as far as “attacking the Uniate churches and monasteries, beating, mutilating, and

\textsuperscript{145} Matti Moosa, \textit{The Maronites in History} (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1986), 289. I am using the Arabic translation of this work.


\textsuperscript{147} Kamāl Ṣallibī, \textit{Maronite Historians of Medieval Lebanon. With a Pref. by Bernard Lewis}. 1959. 44-45. Salibī talks about Tuma the Archbishop of Aleppo whose book clearly adopts
sometimes killing Uniate priests, monks, bishops and abbots.”¹⁴⁸ These challenges increased with the entry of other Monophysite (Jesus possessed one divine nature) Christian factions into Mount Lebanon primarily the Jacobites, whose preaching was effective and greatly embarrased the Uniate Maronites.¹⁴⁹ Through the next few centuries the Maronite-Rome relations was in flux as the so-called orthodoxy of the Maronites was in doubt and deemed unworthy of the patronage of the Papacy. During the 15ᵗʰ century, the Catholic missionaries, specifically the Franciscan order helped the Maronites to finally seal the debate over the orthodoxy of their community.¹⁵⁰ This order provided religious guidance and training to the Maronite clerics and at the same time lobbied for them with Rome. The Papacy, finally convinced of the worthiness of investing time and effort in the Maronites, established the Maronite college in 1584 an institution which has remained operational until this day. The college, supervised by the Jesuits, welcomed “students soon arrived from the Orient to be immersed in Latin theology and liturgy as well as devotion to the Church of Rome.”¹⁵¹ This college graduated a number of leading Maronite clerics that later assumed different positions within the church, ranging from the office of the Patriarch to lesser posts. Some graduates of this college included Patriarch Istfan al-Duwayhi and Jibrā’il Ibn al-Qilai, who in addition to their ecclesiastic duties were the authors of important works on the history of their community.¹⁵² The final cementation of the Union with Rome in the 16ᵗʰ century not only provided the Maronites with an institutional religious backbone but also gave them political western

¹⁵⁰ Kamal Salibi. "The Maronite Church in the Middle Ages and Its Union with Rome." 99-100
patronage and protection, something which would prove vital for the Maronites in the centuries to come. The Franco-Ottoman rapprochement, starting in the 16 century, allowed France to proclaim itself as the protector of the Catholics in the Levant. By virtue of being Catholic, this protection was naturally extended to the Maronites, who in turn enthusiastically embraced it with open arms. Patriarch Jacob IV Awad, affirmed in 1715 that the Maronites have “no refugee, no salvation, outside the throne of France and its representative in the Levant.”

As important to this political patronage, perhaps, was the chance given to the Maronites to benefit from the religious and secular education made possible by the missionaries which were dispatched to the Levant, the Jesuits being one example of such missions. This educational element gave the Maronites an advantage over the Druze who did not really have an entity of their own to educate their elite or their commoners on languages and new innovations. In the 16th century, despite their dwindling numbers, the Druze who were still politically dominant became reliant on the Christians to act as intermediaries with the west especially with affairs pertaining to commerce. This naturally empowered the Christians who soon became important brokers for the leading commodity at the time, silk. According to Salibi, the Christians held a sort of quasi monopoly of the different stages of the silk production process, from “the peasants, to the money lenders, to the intermediaries, brokers to the local markets and the merchants that exported to Europe.” It is this feeling of being outmatched by what they considered to be their clients, which made the estranged Druze even more resentful towards the Maronites

156 Salibi. House of Many Mansions. 105.
The Maronites and the Eastern Question

The successive Ottoman-Russian wars and the many setback suffered by the Ottomans enabled the major European powers at the time to take a more active role in the affairs of the Ottoman Empire. This Western intervention reflected itself in what became known as the Eastern Question, primarily how to divide up the Ottoman territories after its demise and the fate of the Christians residing in these territories. Consequently the Maronites, who by the 17th century had assumed the reins of power under the Shihabi succession, were beneficiaries of this forceful Western intervention in the region as it gave them the international support needed to maintain a Christian dominated Mount Lebanon. The Maronite Church, having secured its liturgical and doctrinal connection with Rome, started to assume a more active role in the governance of Mount Lebanon. During the reign of Emir Bashir, the support of the church proved decisive in the confrontation against the Sheikh Bashir and the Druze. This was partly why the Druze progressively started to demonize the church and its different clerics as being the main instigators of hatred against the Druze. Further buttressing this notion for the Druze at least, was the role the Church played later in the peasant revolts against the authority of the feudal lords, both Maronite and Druze. The peasant revolt which started in Kisrawan, the predominantly Maronite Northern part of Mount Lebanon in 1859, was a response to the highhanded policies of the feudal sheikhs. Consequently, groups of Christian peasants congregated and organized themselves as a protest movement pledging to defend each other from the yoke and likely retaliation of these Sheikhs. This dissident movement gradually gained momentum and spilled over to different parts of the mountain including the Southern Druze-Maronite part. Under the two Qaimaqamiiyya system set

157 France, Britain, Prussia, Austria, Russia.
158 Engin Akarli, The Long Peace, 86
in 1845, the southern sector was administrated by a Druze governor while the northern was left to the jurisdiction of a Maronite local notable. The spread of the revolt therefore into the Druze part was received by the Druze as a sectarian ploy to further weaken and ultimately dominate the Druze. The fact that the Church had implicitly empowered these commoners to rise against the feudal sheikhs exasperated the situation further. Yehoshua Porath, in his study of the “The Peasant Revolt of 1858-1861 in Kisrwan,” affirms the principal role of the Maronite church in:

Sharpening communal conflict in 1841 gave the Church its first great opportunity to exert its influence on the Christian peasants. The Maronite Patriarch called for unity under the leadership of the people’s representatives, in contrast with the long tradition according to which the shaykhs and amirs were the sole leaders. From then on the Church did not cease to interfere in political issues.\(^\text{160}\)

The head of the church at the time, Patriarch Bulus Mas’ad, as well as a number of leading clerics all hailed from modest backgrounds and thus were naturally predisposed to support the commoners rather than the Sheikhs. Regardless of the reasons of this grassroots revolt, or the motives of the Church at that stage, they indeed played a major role in exasperating an already tense relationship between the Druze and the Maronites which spilled over in 1860 into a full scale civil war.

The fighting between the Druze and Maronites started in the early summer of 1860 and momentarily spread to Damascus, the latter being driven by other factors primarily economic. The Ottoman authorities did not immediately intervene to stop the atrocities but rather remained neutral and at times were accused by the Christians of facilitating and supporting the Druze in committing their massacres. Leila Fawwaz, *an Occasion for War*, details the different reasons behind the local Ottoman authorities’ incompetence or perhaps complicity in the events of 1860, but she also affirms that “some of them [the Ottomans] believed that at least in the early phases massacres attributed to them [Druze] were really victories over an aggressor who had been equally armed

\(^{160}\) Ibid, 134-5.
and equally bellicose.”¹⁶¹ This sentiment was not shared by the Maronites nor their French patrons who wanted to restore the imbalance caused by the debacle and also exercise their duties as protectors of the Maronites. Consequently, after a series of diplomatic acts which included the European powers and the Ottomans, the French Emperor Napoleon III dispatched a European expeditionary force, half of which was French. These troops were commanded by the seasoned General Charles de Beaufort d'Hautpoul, who previously served as chief of staff for Ibrahim Pasha of Egypt during the Syrian campaign, and thus was familiar with complexities of the region.¹⁶² Beaufort who landed after the events had lapsed had a set of directives, primarily to restore law and order, and to return the displaced Christians to their towns and villages. More importantly, Emperor Napoleon’s orders to his general were “catch, judge and punish the guilty, return to the Christians their confiscated goods, disarm the Druzes, and force on them reparations as indemnity to the victims of the insurrection.”¹⁶³ These objectives however were never announced but instead the French took the moral high ground declared that their mission was to bring justice and provide humanitarian aid to the victims of Mount Lebanon. Napoleon personally addressed his troops before their departure to the Levant:

Soldiers, you are departing for Syria, and France happily salutes an expedition which has one purpose only, that of making the rights of justice and humanity triumph. For you are not going in order to wage war against any nation but to help the Sultan bring back to obedience subjects blinded by a fanaticism from another century. You will do your duty in this far away land rich in memories, and you will show yourself the dignified children of these heroes who gloriously brought the banner of Christ to that land.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ Fawaz. An Occasion for War. 207.
¹⁶³ Fawaz. An Occasion for War. 114.
¹⁶⁴ As quoted in Fawaz. An Occasion for War. 115.
The French were largely successful in carrying out their agenda by punishing the Druze and making them pay for the damages. Many of the leading Druze feudal Sheikhs lost land, money, their freedom and even their lives. The French drive for total vengeance however was curbed by the British which had assumed a guardian role of the Druze very similar to the French-Maronite arrangement. The British played an instrumental role in protecting the Druze especially against some of the haphazardly verdicts of the extraordinary tribunals set up at Beirut and Moukhtara to judge the accused Druze. One such act was the request of some Christian moneylenders to immediately collect on the debts of the deceased Sa‘īd Joumblatt, Bashir’s son, who had borrowed money to pay for the Druze war efforts. These lenders with the help of the Church requested from the French to confiscate and auction off the Joumblatt estate including their family palace in Moukhtara. This however was averted by the British who rented out the palace of Moukhtara to the British Syrian School part of “the Lebanon Schools” administered by the Lebanese Protestants. This maneuver saved the palace, which was the symbol of Druze political power and the legacy of the once powerful clan, from the greed of the lenders until the Joumblatts were strong enough to reacquire and administer their estates. Certainly such a move on the part of the Maronites would be perceived by the Druze as ample proof of the formers exclusionary policy.

After the success of punitive expedition and the evacuation of its troops, the French tried to reinforce the Maronites by attempting to reinstate a Shihabi Christian governor of Mount Lebanon. This proposal was unequivocally rejected by both the British and the Ottomans who

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165 Rodogno. *Against Massacre Humanitarian Interventions in the Ottoman Empire, 1815-1914*, 112.
166 For a full history of these schools see Abdul Rahim Abu-Husayn. "The 'Lebanon Schools' (1853–1873): A Local Venture in Rural Education." In Thomas Philipp and Birgit Schaebler, eds., *The Syrian Land: Processes of Integration and Fragmentation: Bilād Al-Shām from the 18th to the 20th Century* (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1998).
after a process of arduous negotiations with the rest of the European powers hammered out a new governance structure for Mount Lebanon. On 9 June 1861, the ambassadors of the five great powers to the Porte and the Ottoman Empire signed the *Règlement et protocole, relatifs à la réorganisation du Mont Liban* which gave the mountain an autonomous governance status with an elected administrative council supervised by an Ottoman Christian (non-muslim) governor. The *Mutasarrifiya*, as it became known was divided into six districts, each district with a fairly homogenous sectarian makeup. Each of these districts had an elaborate electoral hierarchy which ultimately delegate one or more representatives to the administrative council. In addition to putting together the nucleus of a relatively modern state, the *Mutasarrifiya* instituted two main practices which became pillars of Lebanese politics: sectarianism and foreign intervention.

First, while the Ottomans retained official power over Mount Lebanon, after 1860 the great Europeans powers were given a quasi-role in the affairs of this newly born entity. John Spagnolo, however sees these claims as being an “over-simplification” of a more intricate process where the Ottomans certainly held the upper hand while the great powers prerogatives were restricted to merely “influencing the appointment of the governor and then only if they acted together.”

Spangologo remarks might be conceptually true, especially that the Ottoman government exercised full sovereignty through the governor as well as the other sections of the administration, however, in the psyche of the Lebanese- Christians and Druze- the *Mutasarrifiya* was unequivocally willed by the great powers. This would lead these two sects, as well as to the others which joined Lebanon after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, to further develop their

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169 Ibid. 46-47.
relationships with these foreign powers, an act that would prove to be both a source of stability and volatility.

The second practice, which existed but now became codified was the sectarian division of the country, as the six district drawn out reflected a sectarian reality caused by the changing demographics. Thus it was possible at that time to elect people to office based on their sectarian rather than their tribal or political affiliation. However to imply that sectarianism was a foreign introduction, and the culture of sectarianism was caused by the Ottoman experiment with modernity forced upon them by pressure from the west is inaccurate to say the least. The politics of Mount Lebanon as this chapter has thus far demonstrated went through different stages, starting with the Qaysi-Yemeni split to the Joumblatti-Yazbaki rivalry. The outwardly sectarian Druze-Maronite clashes that followed are better understood through the lens of politics rather than religious animosity brought about by a number of factors, western intervention merely being one of them.

The creation of *al-Mutasarrifiya* was perceived by the Druze at least, as a Maronite triumph as they were able by the intervention of France to achieve what they had failed to gain on the battlefield. However, this view greatly contradicted reality, as the Maronites themselves perceived this arrangement as a political setback rather than a victory to their political project. The Maronite church according to Carol Hakim, was extremely disgruntled by the new regime which installed a non-Maronite governor to rule over a predominately Maronite mountain. The Maronite patriarch Bulus Mas‘ad, believed to be the main instigator of the anti-feudal peasant revolt a few years earlier, voiced his rejection of this new governance structure which placed the Maronites, who

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outnumbered the other communities combined, on par and prevented them from ruling themselves (see table below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Population (in thousands)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maronites</td>
<td>242.3 (58.4 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Druze</td>
<td>47.3 (11.4 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek Orthodox</td>
<td>52.3 (12.6 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek Catholic</td>
<td>31.9 (7.7 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shiite</td>
<td>23.4 (5.7 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunni</td>
<td>14.5 (3.5 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>2.9 (0.7 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>414.8 (100 %)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 2** Ottoman population of Mount Lebanon 1830-1914.\(^{171}\)

Mas‘ad called on the French to “restore to us [the Maronites] our ancient rights” by sanctioning the appointment of a native Maronite mutasarrif (governor), someone with the profile of Yusuf Beik Karam, the strong Northern notable and a hero of the 1860 war with the Druze.\(^{172}\) According to Mas‘ad only by correcting this injustice and allowing for majority rule “which, at present, is the fundamental principle of the civil Constitutions of all the civilized countries” could a practical rule be achieved.\(^{173}\) Despite this disenchantment, the Maronites cooperated with the Ottoman authorities throughout the existence of al-Mutasarrifiya. The only somewhat serious challenge to the Ottomans over al-Mutasarrifiya came in 1866 with the rebellion of Yusuf Karam, who had been exiled two years earlier. Karam had hoped that by opposing Daud Pasha the Ottoman governor he would prove that this non-native bureaucrat was incapable of carrying out his duties and thus possibly replace him instead. Yusuf Karam’s false sense of entitlement and his overreliance on France in addition to other local factors led to his defeat and his eventual final


\(^{172}\) Hakim, 108.

\(^{173}\) Ibid, 105.
exile to France. Bulus Mas’ad, who was also defeated by extension, also realized that the great powers, France in particular would not intervene to aid the Maronites and that it was both prudent and wise to accept the reality of Daud Pasha’s governorship. Despite, this Maronite failure at restoring a Shihabi-like rule, they nevertheless were able to plant the seeds of a Maronite homeland which with time would acquire an ideological structure which would help the Maronites reclaim what they considered to be rightfully theirs.

**Birth of the Lebanese Nation**

In the winding days of Ottoman rule, a group of secularly educated young men all graduates of the Jesuit University in Beirut-USJ provided the ideological framework for a Maronite homeland. These students studied under leading scholars of the School of Oriental Studies at USJ. The school housed a number of renowned scholars of Religion, Semitic languages, Near Eastern History, Archeology and Geography, such as Henri Lammens, Louis Jalabert, Sebastian and Louis Ronzavelle and Louis Cheiko. Although these scholars were of equal academic importance, perhaps Henri Lammens had the most impact on the course of Lebanese nationalist project. While writing his book on the history of Syria (*Le Syrie: précis historique*), Lammens concluded that Lebanon was a Mountain Refuge (*Asile du Liban*) detached from the Syrian coast by virtue of its geography. Coincidently, Lammens’s work came to light in 1921, one year after the declaration of *Grand Liban*.

Lammens students mostly were scions of the leading Christians families renowned for their involvement in mercantile activities; as the names of families such as Chiha,

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174 Ibid, 117-118.
176 Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions*.
177 Lammens works have been discussed in the previous chapter see page
Pharaoun, Corm, Fattal and Tayan amongst others, became synonymous with Western trade as well as the Lebanese nationalist discourses.

Charles Corm is one such student of Lammens who became a poster-child to these mercantile families as well as a founding pillar of the Lebanese nationalist thought. After graduating from the Jesuit University in 1911, Corm became the kingpin of the automotive distribution industry as the exclusive representative of Ford Motor Company in Syria and Lebanon. He was often referred to by the Lebanese as “Mr. Ford”, something which Corm detested to say the least. Corm, who coincidently only wrote in French, established around him a network of intellectuals/businessmen who produced a wide array of literature exclusively promoting Lebanon’s Phoenician legacy. Along with other prominent individuals such as Yusuf al-Sawda and Albert Naccache, Corm established the Society of Young Phoenicians, which acted as a think-tank for the Lebanese nationalists. Across the pages of La Revue Phénicienne, the official publication of the group, Corm focused on the notion that the Lebanese are members of a distinct race which has survived uninterrupted over the course of the centuries. This, however, had great implications due to the fact that membership to the Lebanese nation entailed relinquishing any recognition of the partial Muslim legacy of the country. Therefore, the adoption of the race as a pillar in Corm’s national dogma excluded the non-Christian population, practically more than half of the Lebanese. The only official Lebanese census was conducted in 1932 during the French Mandate recognized the Christians as a majority of the population, which was an deliberate mistake. To this day, this remains a source of contention because this inaccurate census gave the

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Maronites more power within the confessional system codified in the constitution. However, Corm apparently was not interested in offering his Muslim ‘compatriots’ an inclusionist vision of the nation. In his famed work of poetry, *La Montagne Inspirée* (the Inspired Mountain) Corm explicitly pursues the racial and the religious elements of his brand of nationalism when addressing the Muslims:

> My Muslim brother, understand my frankness: I am the real Lebanon, sincere and churchgoing; All the more Lebanese that my faith symbolizes the heart of a pelican. If my fervor is attached to the dogmas of the Church, It is because in my eyes it is the universality; because I cannot believe in a god that divides the immense humanity.

All throughout this work, Corm religiously reiterates the notion that the Phoenician race and its civilization is survived by the Lebanese Christians, the rightful inheritors of this land. Furthermore, he stresses the importance of the Phoenician language:

> It is that, we were only at the gable of history, before becoming Muslims or Christians, we were only a people united in the same glory, and, in evolving, we should at least, by the fact of one faith all the more praiseworthy, love ourselves like in the Era when we were pagans!...[...] language of my country, tell us our history, tell our children that in all that seems to humble, that they can be proud to have been in glory, In glories by the thousands! Language of my country, give us confidence, make us still believe in ourselves and in our ancestors, protect for us our place, and protect our audience at the table of the gods!

Corm overly anti-Arab sentiments even led him to seriously contemplate an alliance which the Zionists in Palestine, something which would certainly enrage the Lebanese Muslims. Corm believed that both the Jews and the Maronites were suffering from the same plight due to the Muslim tyranny over the centuries and therefore it was natural for these two minorities to strike a strategic alliance. Consequently, Corm drew his inspiration from the biblical alliance between

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181 Ibid.
King Hiram I (980 – 947 BC) - the alleged father of the Lebanese- and King Solomon of Israel to form:

A common front against their principal enemy and that is the Muslim Arab proclaiming pan-Arabism. [The Muslim danger forced] Christian Lebanon to find “partners in fate” and among them is the Jewish community in Palestine and Zionism in general… the Jews and the Lebanese must find a way to mutual understanding and regular relations and we are ready for this.\(^{182}\)

Despite some of the Maronite community’s fervor for Corm’s line, the Maronite political leadership did not want to alienate itself from its Arab surroundings, especially during a time when the Jewish project was still hazy and its success still uncertain. During the 1975 civil war, however, many of the ideologues that promoted Maronite-Israeli rapprochement looked towards Corm’s works for inspiration.

One of Corm’s fellow-travelers, who was perhaps equally influenced by Lammens was Bulus Nujaym. Nujaym whose seminal work La Question du Liban; appeared in 1908 under the penname, M. Jouplain, was written during his stint in Paris while finishing his doctorate in Law and Political Science.\(^{183}\) It appears that Nujaym perhaps harbored some political aspirations so he did not wish to hurt his career by putting his name on a publication which might be construed by the Ottomans as a call for cessation and thus land him in trouble. It is no coincidence that this book, with its Lebanese nationalist tone, was written almost concurrently with revolution of the Young Turks which demanded constitutional reform and introduced its brand of Turkish nationalism.\(^{184}\) Nujaym’s work marks a change of mood towards al-Mutasarrifiya, which for the author, was “a stepping-stone towards real independence, which would someday, be achieved with

\(^{182}\) Corm as quoted in Laura Zittrain Eisenberg, Lebanon in the Early Zionist Imagination 1900-1948, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994) 64.


\(^{184}\) For more details on the Young Turks and the Arabs see Hasan Kayali. Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire 1908-1918 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).
the help of Europe.”\textsuperscript{185} This indispensable stepping stone had in fact prepared Lebanon for its eventual sovereignty. Additionally, Nujaym’s work resides in its presentation of a vivid Lebanese past as well as future which starts with the Muslim conquest and traces the events of Mount Lebanon till the present (1908). Despite its Christian tilt, this historical account still entertains no-Christian elements which are encouraged to join the Maronite homeland if they choose to by sharing in the “national and patriotic sentiment, transcending former religious divisions and solely preoccupied with future development and prosperity.”\textsuperscript{186}

Najem’s education and work in local government made it clear to him that Mount Lebanon was not viable under its current borders due to objective economic realities such as lack of access to sea ports as well as the scarcity of arable land. This according to Nujaym would lead to the destruction of the Mountain unless it is given “new land by expanding its territory.”\textsuperscript{187} For Nujaym, the expansion of the current \textit{Mutasarrifiya} would merely be a return to the Lebanon of Fakhr al-Din rather than a new construction. This proposal was in fact an inclusionary proposal which would introduce new groups alien to the sectarian fabric of Mount Lebanon. By asking for the annexation of the coastal cities (Beirut, Saida and Tripoli) and the Bekaa valley, the Muslim population of these lands would join the Maronite and their Druze in their mountain refuge. This request for expansion despite being driven by necessity rather than pure altruism, exhibited a good understanding of the reality of the country as well as the region around it. Including Muslims into the new expanded entity will help protect Lebanon from the hostile Muslim environment around it, especially if these Lebanese Muslim truly become part of this Maronite homeland. The terrible

\textsuperscript{186} Hakim, 190.
\textsuperscript{187} Ibid, 192.
humanitarian conditions and the famine which ensued in WWI throughout Mount Lebanon, reaffirmed the need to expand its territories especially if a future repeat was to be averted.¹⁸⁸

The end of WWI and the ultimate collapse of the Ottoman Empire shifted the idea of a Maronite homeland from the realm of theory into that of reality. The Lebanese delegations that went to the Versailles conference in 1919, all advocated in one way or another a Maronite homeland with extended borders very much similar to those specified by Lammens and Nujaym. The two delegations headed by Daoud 'Ammun, member of al-Mutasarrifiya’s Administrative Council and Maronite Patriarch Elias Hoayek respectively met with many stakeholders to convey the wishes of the Lebanese to have a separate Christian entity apart from the Arab world around it.¹⁸⁹ Most of the individuals involved in the lobbying efforts with the French and other participants at Versailles were ideologically committed to varying extents to the notion of Greater Lebanon with its Phoenician heritage. The memorandum Hoayek submitted on behalf of the Lebanese to the peace conference on October 23, clearly underscore the Maronite zeitgeist:

Lebanon’s independence, as it was declared and as it was conceived by the near majority of the Lebanese, is not only an independence stemming from the collapse of Ottoman authority! It is, above all, a complete independence vis-à-vis any Arab state that might come into being in Syria. . . . Some have, through an abusive manipulation of language, sought to confound Lebanon with Syria. This is a grave error. Without even having to summon their Phoenician ancestors, it is quite evident that the Lebanese have always constituted a distinct national entity, separate from the groupings surrounding it, whether in terms of language, moral principles, affinities, or Western culture.¹⁹⁰

Eleven months later on 1 September 1920, the representatives of the different Lebanese communities’ listened to the French High Commissioner General Henri Gouraud as he brought

¹⁸⁹ A third delegation was dispatched in February 1920 by Patriarch Hoyek headed by Abdallah Khuri
the Maronites dream of a Greater Lebanon into reality. Gouraud, as if reading out an article from *La Revue Phénicienne*, proclaimed the establishment of an entity which conforms to the aspirations and demands of the Maronite elite, including the Church. France, who under the provisions of the Sykes-Picot agreement in 1916 was granted Syria and Lebanon, found it convenient and practical to award the Maronite, their own homeland. Gouraud affirmed that this entity was indeed:

> A single nation, rooted in its past,” a range of “majestic mountains, [. . .] impregnable stronghold of [Lebanon’s] faith and freedom,” and a “mythical sea, which has been witness to the triremes of Phoenicia [and which] transported through the world [Lebanon’s] subtle, skillful, and eloquent [Phoenician] forefathers.\(^{191}\)

The creation of Greater Lebanon was truly a feat of great importance to the Maronites and an equally resounding defeat for the Druze as they lost their status as the second largest community in Mount Lebanon. The Druze who had gradually lost the reins of power after the demise of the Ma`ans suddenly found themselves alienated by a system which does not celebrate their historical legacy and merely gave them a proportional share which corresponds to their meager demographic reality. Meir Zamir affirms that the Druze all of a sudden found themselves replaced by the Sunnis, who after 1943 agreed to partition Lebanon amongst themselves according to the National Pact, leaving the Druze totally alienated.\(^{192}\) Walid Joumblatt, decades after Lebanon had gained its independence from the French Mandate, still harbored this sentiment of Maronite betrayal of the Druze, which he would sustain way into his conflict with the Maronites in 1982.\(^{193}\)

In 1980, upon the good offices of the Director of Army Intelligence Colonel Johnny Abdu, Joseph Abu Khalil, Editor-in-Chief of al-‘Amal newspaper and a close associate of Bashir

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\(^{191}\) Gouroud as quoted and translated in Franck Salameh, *Language, Memory, and Identity in the Middle East*, 93.


Gemayel met Walid Joumblatt over dinner for the first time. Abu Khalil, a Maronite from Beiteddine in the Shuf Mountain was on a mission to convince the young Druze leader of the validity of Bashir’s plan for Lebanon and to possibly reconcile the two kingpins. Abu Khalil addressed Joumblatt stressing “the unity of Mount Lebanon and the importance of a Christian-Druze alliance under the patronage of the state which would pave the way for the rise of a strong central state capable of gradually reclaiming its sovereignty” but was surprised by the aloof response he received. Joumblatt’s telling response to this utopic alliance was “why didn’t you [the Maronites] do so in 1943, when you ignored the political reality of the mountain and you went through with a settlement that contradicts this reality or at best is unharmonious with it.” This same sentiment was shared by other Druze as well, Saleh Zahreddine professor of History at the Lebanese University being a case in point. Zahreddine, interviewed in 1984 viewed “the national pact as a sectarian compromise whose disastrous implications are still felt to this day.”

This sentiment however was not shared by the majority of the Druze community as the Yazbaki faction under Emir Majid Arslan continued to support the traditional Maronite elite up until 1983 when the clashes finally erupted between the two communities. But it is equally important to bear in mind that the Maronite-Druze relationship within Greater Lebanon and even beyond 1943 was not always of a contentious nature but rather went through phases of appeasement where both parties were working in synergy. However, the fact that the Maronites starting in 1920 onwards were strategically placed throughout the state apparatus including the bureaucracy and the armed forces placed them at the helm, while all other sects including the

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194 Ibid.
197 For a detailed account of the Druze relationship with the Lebanese state see Yusri Hazran, *The Druze Community and the Lebanese State: Between Confrontation and Reconciliation* (London [u.a.]: Routledge, 2014).
Druze had to take a backseat. This Maronite political establishment referred to as al-Maruniyah al-Siyasiyah that dominated Lebanon incorporated Muslim and Druze elements, however these individuals were bound together by common economic interests rather by a common political vision. Fawwaz Traboulsi writing on the economic and political elite following independence remarks that from these 30 leading families of the oligarchs “24 Christian families (nine Maronites, seven Greek Catholic, one Latin, one Protestant, four Greek Orthodox and one Armenian), to six Muslim (four Sunni, one Shiite and one Druze)” which clearly indicates the Christians hegemony on all matters of state.198

These two contradictory myths, which the Maronites and the Druze formulated over time as this section demonstrates, had extremely negative ramifications, mainly because each community identified itself in opposition to the other, with no chance of both political projects being able to coexist or reconcile beyond some short spells. These charter myths that validate certain powers structures, as Bronislaw Malinowski argued, “cannot be sober dispassionate history, since it is always made ad hoc to fulfil a certain sociological function, to glorify a certain group, or to justify an anomalous status.”199 Therefore, when the Druze and the Maronite myths collided, the consequences were dire, as for one myth to exist the other one must be destroyed, as neither community left any room in their constructed identity to entertain the other.

Chapter Three

In his famous lecture “What is a Nation” (1882), Ernest Renan laid out what he believed were the main pillars of a nation. Renan systematically dissected the existing misperceptions vis-à-vis nationalism by clearly affirming that “Man is a slave neither of his race nor his language, nor of his religion, nor of the course of rivers nor of the direction taken by mountain chains. A large aggregate of men, healthy in mind and warm of heart, creates the kind of moral conscience which we call a nation.” ²⁰⁰ According to Renan, the main and perhaps the only prerequisite for a nation, is the collective will of the people, while all other claims are nothing but mere myth. Renan stresses that “a nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things which, properly speaking, are really one and the same constitute this soul, this spiritual principle. One is the past, the other is the present.” ²⁰¹ Much of the modern experiments at nation building hoped to accommodate or create a common heritage for people that occupy the same terrain in hopes that this constructed model can the building block of the nation. More often than not, this process is carried out by the state or by its auxiliary agencies, who produce a wide range of cultural products (history books, anthems, anniversaries and statues) to act as a binding agent for the citizens of the same state. These groups, at least theoretically, were expected with the advent of time to shed their communal identities or simply incorporate them into the metanarrative crafted by the authoritative centers of power, mainly the state. In the case of the Druze and the Maronite these communal identities were preserved through a number of organic institutions which either created, propagated or remolded the past to serve the groups immediate or strategic goals.

²⁰¹ Ibid.
In the fall of 1860, Renan arrived to the shores of Lebanon as a member of a scientific mission attached to the French forces dispatched by Emperor Napoleon III to end to the civil war that was raging between the Druze and the Maronites. During his stay, Renan conducted a number of archeological excavations that unearthed Phoenician and other Semitic inscriptions and artifacts. After his return to France, Renan published the finding of his stay in the Levant in a book which he interestingly entitled *Mission de Phénicie*. Renan’s work, tremendously helped popularize the Phoenician past of Lebanon both in the West and beyond, especially as these claims were packaged in a scientific demeanor and by a scholar of acclaimed fame. However, it is perhaps paradoxical that Renan, who emphasizes collective will for the rise of any nation, to lend his support to one Lebanese faction against the other, thus making the process of an all-encompassing Lebanese Nationalist project even more elusive. Be it as it may, Renan’s remarks about statehood and the soul of a nation (past & present) begs the question, how could the Maronites and Druze each with their own distinct soul to exist in the same body. More importantly how could these two souls resist the many attempts to domesticate them and forge them into the nation? The following chapter will explore how both the Druze and the Maronites were able to keep their respective collective identities fairly intact and what centers of interest were responsible for the preservation of these conflicting identities over an extended period of time.

The Maronite fighters of 1975 and the years that followed according to Michael Johnson “might have thought they remembered appalling events of 1860; however, there is no indication that there was an unbroken line of communal fear and hatred from 1860 to 1975.” However, in the light of this study’s findings, it seems that each of the Druze and the Maronites community

203 Johnson, *All Honourable Men*, 16.
maintain a sort of unbroken or perhaps fabricated bond with an imagined or real past which each community uses to serve its political project. Each community’s collective memory is transmitted to the group through two mediums: either socially by intra-group interaction, or instrumentally through active agents. In this case, these active agents comprise the Maronite church and its subsidiary institutions and the Druze religious and political leadership which utilizes cultural tools to mold and distribute these memories.\textsuperscript{204} Such cultural tools range from storytelling and ritual performances to paintings, architecture, monuments, language, music, photos, and film; with time, these would help create sites of memory (especially monuments, archives, cemeteries, museums, beside others). These sites represent arenas where a group can “recollect knowledge(s) of the past and convey and sustain it by a circulation of signs that calls attention to its own logic of inclusion, exclusion, and selective in completeness.”\textsuperscript{205}

**The Custodians of Identity**

The Maronite Church is a paradigm of an active agent which mediates memories to its community, using most of the tools discussed earlier. As early as the 17\textsuperscript{th} century, the Maronite church embodied the Maronite political project which anchored Lebanon as a homeland for the Christians of the East. The Church’s Union with Rome in the 12\textsuperscript{th} century greatly empowered its clergy and augmented the resources at their disposal, by offering them a religious as well as political backbone. However, within the Church institution is another extremely important and influential groups: the Monastic Orders (Lebanese Maronite Order, Carmelite Order, and Antonine Maronite Order) which exert considerable influence on all stratus of society. While all the aforementioned

\textsuperscript{204} James V. Wertsch “Collective Memory” in *Memory in Mind and Culture*, 119
orders have equally contributed to the Maronite community, perhaps it is the Lebanese Maronite Order which leads the pack both in a religious as well as a socio-economic capacity.\textsuperscript{206}

This institution, as its history indicates was not created by the initiative of the Church but was rather established and developed against its will. In 1695, three young Maronite monks, Jibrā’il Hawwa, Abdallah Qaraali and Joseph (Yusuf) al-Bite, scions of leading Aleppian merchant families moved to Mount Lebanon and commenced to explore the monasteries in the region and prepare to found a new monastic order. The founders of this new order wanted to establish clear-cut rules and regulations for monastic life which until that time tended to follow earlier monastic traditions and practices with no real structure or institution to guide or supervise their activities. Following an arduous process, which involved a tug-of-war with the church authority, the order finally received the seal of approval from the Patriarch Istfan Duwayhi. At a later stage in 1770, this order was divided into an Aleppine and a Lebanese branch. The Lebanese branch or the \textit{baladiyah} meaning homegrown or local order slowly established themselves as a socioeconomic powerhouse as it gradually started to replace the Maronite nobility, in many aspects of the local economy. These powerful local families of tax-farmers, appointed by the local government or by the Ottoman authorities, saw their economic resources dwindling especially during the reign of Emir Bashir II and thus were forced to turn over some of the monasteries they subsidized to the orders. Richard van Leeuwen, \textit{Notables and Clergy in Mount Lebanon}, traces the financial and political rise of these monastic orders which through a series of agreements with local feudal families such as the Khazins, as well as their adoption of efficient administration succeeded in significantly expanding their real-estate portfolio.\textsuperscript{207} Having been born out of the


\textsuperscript{207} Ibid. 175-6.
intention to see change within the Maronite Church, the monastic order was naturally inclined to support any movement that promoted reform. The order’s chance to further advance its reform goals came in 1736 with what was referred to as the Lebanese Council (*al-Majma’ al-Lubnani*). The Lebanese Council was one in a series of measures taken by the Vatican to further strengthen the orthodoxy of the Maronite Church. On top of its agenda, this synod, an assembly of ecclesiastics, sought the introduction of a number of structural changes to the church hierarchy, especially at the senior level, as well as to adoption of regulations that would delimit the influence of lay notables in the internal workings of the church.\(^{208}\) The Lebanese Order was fully supportive of the Council decisions which gave more weight to the commoners and clerics that hail from humble backgrounds allowing them to participate in the affairs formerly restricted to a privileged few. In his book, *a Concise History of the Lebanese Maronite Order*, Father Youssef Mahfouz, a member of the Lebanese Order retrospectively depicts the tension between the monks and the traditional Maronite clergy at the eve of 1736. Despite writing in 1969, Mahfouz lashes out at the traditional Maronite clerics who:

> Received their education in the college in Rome and where lost and sometimes pompous, because of the fact they have acquired from the West a mentality which clearly clashes with the mentality of their countrymen, and they [clerics] were unable to reconcile these two mentalities. The Maronite people live in utter minimalism while only few of them are governed by pretentiousness and the tyranny of their leaders.

Mahfouz however distinguishes the Monastic orders from the traditional Church structure affirming that:

> It [the Lebanese Order] was the only organization which could have been entrusted with carrying out a set of reforms throughout the Maronite community, mainly because all its members were unified and enlisted in serving a common good no matter what difficulties they would confront or regardless of the price they had to pay.\(^{209}\)


The Lebanese Order’s zeal to see this council succeed went as far as contributing six thousand piasters, a small fortune by the standards of that time, to the expenses of the synod. Quite interestingly, the other anti-council faction supported by the notables went out of their way to derail the task of the Papal emissary so as to keep matters as they were. The gradual adoption of the decisions of the synod was a victory for the monks over the traditional clergy as well as the beginning of a democratization process inside the church. This process was felt throughout the next century and finally allowed a cleric of lower social rank such as Bulus Mas’ad to be elected to the head of the church.

Perhaps an equally major accomplishment of the 1736 synod was the adoption of obligatory education for all Maronites, male or female, a measure which with the advent of time gave them a palpable advantage over the Druze. The synod dictated clearly to:

“teachers… to abide by the public order rules, to teach the youngsters in schools the principles of reading and writing in Syriac and in Arabic, then to teach them the psalms, then the mass service book and the daily prayers, then the New Testament. In case the students prove to have exceptional capacities for learning, teachers have to inculcate to them Syriac and Arabic grammars then the melody science, calculation, and later on to promote them to higher studies. Higher studies encompass rhetoric, poetry writing, philosophy, topography, arithmetic, cosmology and other mathematical sciences. It gathers law principles, Gospel explanations, conceptual and literary theology, and any important and relevant matters they find necessary for them to accept the sacraments, and to hold rituals and celebrations.”

To accomplish these goals the synod ordered each parish to set up a school to carry out this educational mission as:

“leaders of dioceses, towns and villages, farms and convents, individually and collectively, to cooperate and work hand in hand to promote this important and useful

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211 Lebanese Synod, Chapter six, No. 3 paragraph 3. Translation from “The Maronite Church and Education: Academic and Technical” in The Maronite Church in Today’s World, File III, Text 16.
work. It invited bishops and priests, heads of monasteries and convents, to work on putting a teacher where needed, to write down the names of the youngsters at the age of learning, and to force their parents to take them to schools whether they liked it or not. In case the family was poor and needy, it asked the monasteries or the local church to provide for them either through their own wealth or through collecting alms on Sundays. As for the teacher fees, a part was to be paid by the church or the monastery (provided the teacher is not one of the fathers or monks) and the remaining was to be paid by the parents.  

The Lebanese Order would pursue these directives with remarkable vigor and dedication, setting up an impressive network of school all across Lebanon, even reaching Cyprus, Akka and Latakia. These schools offered the “Maronite people” an education which ranged from literacy and simple arithmetic courses to the more advanced degrees. By 1950 following the founding of Holy Spirit University in Kaslik, the order had at its disposal a fully functioning educational system and curriculum from kindergarten to a number of terminal university degrees. Many of these monastic institutions also included printing presses which were used to produce and disseminate publication of both religious and secular nature, which allowed the monks to further extend their reach. This educational drive led by the order greatly empowered the Maronite community which by the mid-17th century became the main interlocutors with the West on all matters pertaining to commerce, primarily the silk trade.  

**The Warrior Monks**

The role of these monastic orders however went beyond merely educating the youth, as they were also crucial in forging a collective identity within the community, acting as custodians of Maronite identity also played a crucial role in militarizing the Maronite youth especially in the years leading up to the civil war in 1975. Tanyous Nujaym, affirms that the Lebanese Monastic Order helped in

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212 Lebanese synod/council, chapter six, No. 1.
moral

213 Rizk, “Milestones in the History of the Lebanese Maronite Order.”

214 See previous chapter p 67
molding the Maronite identity on a number of levels. First, through “its elaborate organizational structure and its vast and rich property and its pioneering role, second as an entity that preserves authenticity and the legacy of the community… Third by ensuring the full commitment [of the Maronites] to Catholicism while still preserving their own [Lebanese] identity. Finally, and most importantly, a model for preserving the Maronite existence the special Lebanese status and propagating the uniqueness of Lebanon.” In brief, these monks through their unmediated daily interaction with their congregation, used different mediums to disseminate their creed which was completely aligned with the Maronite political project. Many of the combatants of the Christian militia during the civil war (1975-1990), especially the younger crowd, looked at the traditional church authority with apathy and saw them to be distant and far removed from their hopes and aspirations. Patriarch Anthony Khoraish (1975-86), with “his namby-pamby pro-Palestinian” attitude was overshadowed by the heads of the monastic order. Charbel Kassis (1974-80) and Bulus Na’amān (1980-86), Superiors of the Order, with their gloves-off approach were far more popular and influential than the Patriarch as their rhetoric and actions were more in sync with the mood of the Maronite commoners. These monks, were inversely detested by their Muslim and Leftist opponents who regarded them as the main instigators of hatred against them as well as the bankrollers of the many weapons purchased for the Christian militia. This last accusation was never denied by Na’amān as he related to me a verbal altercation he had with Yasser Arafat (PLO Chairman) and Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyad), a senior PLO official.

216 Randal, Going all the Way, 113.
Khalaf who had joined Yasser Arafat in one of the many meetings they had, jokingly asked Na’aman to donate the 4.5 million LBP he had collected from his last fundraising trip abroad (to be used for weapons purchase) to the PLO, which Arafat added are to be used to purchase land in Palestine. Na’aman coolly responded, to Khalaf and Arafat challenge “so you know, the Lebanese Resistance has collected 15 not only 4 million LBP, and we have enough money to buy both land and weapons, and let me remind you it was you not us who sold their land [to the Jews].”

Kassis was equally confrontational in his public statements as he affirmed that “Monks are existentially and organically linked to the people…..and in order to defend himself, every Christian has the right to be trained to handle weapons.” Therefore, the Order saw it prudent to encourage its monks to partake in combat and to allow the Christine militias to use its property and monasteries for logistics and weapon storage. This last action was later used by the Druze during and after the battles in 1983 to vindicate their looting and demolition of many of the churches and monasteries. The monk’s warrior-like stance as well as their die-hard commitment to their cause, made Kamal Joumblatt remark in his usual smart-aleck fashion that “the tonsured heads of Lebanese monks give off a golden halo.” The hatred or blame to these clerics was equally shared by common Druze folk, my maternal grandmother is a case in point. Years after the end of the war, she cautioned me as a teenager never to donate money to any church because “this money would be used to buy weapons to kill us [Druze].”

Despite being “relatively unsophisticated students of simpler stock than the middle-class boys and girls who attended USJ or AUB” as Johnathan Randal describes them, these students...

217 Interview with Bulus Na’aman. Kaslik, July 2011.
219 Ibid, 357.
220 Kamal Joumblatt as quoted in Randall, 113
who graduated from these Monastic institutions shared a palpable fervor for the Maronite myth explained previously. Jocelyn Khoueiry, the commander of the Nizamiyat (the female fighting division of the Lebanese Forces), was a student of theology at the Kaslik University, and soon became a poster-child and a promoter of her community’s ideology. Khoueiry, a member of the Kataeb, had gained fame after a picture of her shooting her AK47 while wearing a tank top appeared in the local and international press. Speaking to a group of women in Souk al-Gharb (a village in the region of Aley) in 1983, Khoueiry clearly broadcasts the Maronite collective identity:

What we are experiencing today goes back well before the eight years of war, but it is rather a piece of a larger chain of events which go back 1400 years, ever since the Islamic conquest, specifically after the Battle of al-Yarmouk in 636. Some of the Christians fearing persecution went to the mountain and have survived there ever since. The people of this mountain have resisted for the last 1400 years, because they have chosen the hard course. They refused to leave and to live the life of a Dhimmi, so they stood their grounds and fought”… In 1860, the Druze through trickery infiltrated Deir al-Qamar. We will not butcher them as they did because Jesus taught us to sacrifice and to endure but to also defend our church when it is in danger. We should understand that from today, we should always be vigilant so as to avoid the trickery and deception of the Druze who have been conspiring since 1860.

Notably, in most of her interviews and political activities, Khoueiry wore a visible crucifix, and her rhetoric and manners greatly resembled those of the clergy. Monk Butrus Daw claims that women such as Khoueiry can be traced back to the Phoenician goddess Astarte, whose female offspring - amongst whom was Jocelyn- were defending the Maronite nation by fighting in the civil war.

The Monks also lent their unwavering support to Bashir Gemayel, who by 1980 became the uncontested leader of his community. Within the Lebanese Front, a hodgepodge of Christian, intellectuals, political parties, and militia groups, the Order of Monks, represented by the father

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221 Ibid
222 Al-Masiraa, 30 April 1983.
superior, lobbied for Bashir’s vision which more often than not clashed with that of other members of the front. The monks did not hold back their fascination with Bashir who stood apart from the rest of the Christin political elite, being just like the monks closer to the people and able to speak their language. Bulus Na’aman, branded by many as Bashir’s ideological godfather, explained in 2012 this wholehearted political support of Bashir.

We were convinced that Bashir was the man of the hour, because he was able to fully impose his personality and leadership talent and patriotism. We never had a doubt that we will not be able to build a country on the bases of democracy, humanism and freedom unless if it is done by someone as brave as Bashir. We all supported him because we knew that he will rid the country of all its problems [PLO and Syrian forces].

This sober political statement however does not vividly reflect the emotional attachment the Monks had formed with Bashir especially at the apex of his power. Na’aman explaining to Syrian President Hafez al- Assad what Bashir meant to him went as far as to see the young leader as “not Pierre Gemayel’s son, but the son of all the injustice that the Christians of the Middle East had suffered over the centuries.”

The Kaslik Research Committee

Bashir for his part reciprocated to the monks’ admiration, as he further entrusted them with a number of missions that included mediation with other Maronite factions as well as with the PLO and their Lebanese Muslim allies. The relationship between the Order and the maverick leader was institutionalized through the activities of the Kaslik Research Committee- KRC, an assembly of prominent Christian intellectuals who endorsed the ‘Lebanese Idea’ as propagated by Charles

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224 During the period in question two individuals occupied the post of father superior of the order, Charbel Kassis (1974-80) and Bulus Na’am (1980-86).
226 As quoted in Randall, 141.
Corm and his associates. This think-tank housed an imposing line-up of over a 100 individuals who sat on a number of educational and political institutions. Bashir was first introduced to this group in 1977, where according to Na’aman there was an immediate intellectual chemistry between Bashir, which the members of the KRC saw as “an honest Lebanese willing to fully defend his country.” The KRC had initially started as a subsidiary for the Lebanese Front, a coalition of Christian parties formed at the start of the civil war, but the rapid rise of Bashir, brought the KRC closer to his ideological sphere with some of its members becoming close confidants and members of his inner circle. The KRC published numerous books and booklets, organized conferences and roundtables all with the declared intention of endorsing Lebanon as a refugee for the minorities in the Middle East against the yoke of Islam, and to lend support to the Lebanese Resistance as embodied by Bashir Gemayel.

These KRC mobilizing and propaganda activities were much expected by any faction under threat of war as certainly was the case with the Maronites, however the real contribution of the KRC went beyond merely providing ideological support or justification for Bashir’s action. The KRC, gave the young warlord the much needed ideological depth and strategic planning which he had lacked earlier in his career. Bashir, the younger son of the founder of the Kataeb party, had gained a reputation of being a person willing to engage in bareknuckle confrontations when needed; something which branded him as politically-restricted compared to his older brother

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227 See page 74
229 Interview with Bulus Na’aman, 2012. BGOH.
Amin, who by Lebanese standards was a typical white-collar politician. For Bashir to make a transition from a warrior to a more statesmen role, he certainly needed the endorsement of the members of the KRC, whose reputation and experience was expedient. In addition to empowering Bashir, the KRC, as Theodore Hanf put it “was coming up with radical solutions to fundamental questions on the future of the Christian communities in Lebanon”, which were becoming more pressing as the civil war was progressed, especially after 1976 with the entry of the Syria army into Lebanon and the different events that ensued.  

Perhaps one of these pressing questions was how could the Christians survive in a predominately Muslim environment with a demographic reality clearly tilting to the Muslim side. This demographic reality was also exasperated by a more dangerous call for reform and secularization championed by the Muslims and Leftists parties supporting the PLO. The Lebanese National Movement (LNM), headed by Kamal Joumblatt demanded an abolition of the sectarian system which gave the Maronites privileges and unmediated access to the resources of the Lebanese State. One of the radical responses offered by the KRC to counter the LNM demands, was the adoption of new system of governance that entertains a wide spectrum of options ranging from decentralization to full scale federalism and partition of Lebanon into self-governing districts. While many Christian intellectuals had previously implicitly endorsed federalism as a viable solution for Lebanon, none of them discussed it publicly beyond the occasional academic and scholarly publications. Diplomat and juror Antoine Fatal, and lawyer Musa Prince and member of Chamoun’s National Liberal Party, each brought forth a detailed program which proposed a mixture of confederalism and federalism all with the intention of preserving the unity and diversity.

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of Lebanon. However, the Lebanese Front’s position on this matter, at least in the beginning of the conflict, was always murky and never fully asked for all out federalism. The Front which included old-school politicians, stressed the need for constitutional reform but also continuously made it a point to demand the unity of Lebanon under the provisions of the 1943 pact. The Maronite psyche or banner had always entertained a federalist option or a return to pre-1920 Petit Liban, which will give the Christians a clear demographic superiority and the ability to resist any attempts to absorb them into their Muslim surroundings.

In January of 1977, in one of the famous conferences held at al-Bir monastery, Camille Chamoun, the former president of the Lebanese republic made his position on federalism extremely clear. Chamoun, in his robust manner declared to a room full of Christian leaders and intellectuals:

The Christian, who for the last 1400 years, considers Lebanon his home is terrified for his future and for Lebanon as a national entity. This is the first premise, and the last premise, to remove from the Muslim mind the idea that they might possibly control the fate of Lebanon now and in the future. Removing the fear the Christians and the greed that the Muslims have is the beginning to reach a solution. Any return to the 1943 formula, coupled with any minor altercation would lead to more fighting, where we [Christians] will have to stoop to their level and implement our point of view by force, and to pay taxes on their [Muslims] behalf and to pay for public works and projects conducted in their areas, without them even showing gratitude. We have to all agree to cooperate and to live together in amity and this can be achieved by adopting a new political of governance. In my opinion, I suggest confederalism, because we just cannot live with them and to grant them their demands which will persevere until they

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are rid of us. I am willing to endorse any plan that takes such a [confederate] direction.\textsuperscript{234}

Chamoun’s blunt and clearly condescending manner towards the Muslims reflects his own frustration with the Lebanese political system and his realization that the privileged status of the Maronites, was perhaps a thing of the past. This projection of inferiority by the Maronites, led to the spread of the phobia of transforming into \textit{dhimmi} subjects with no legal or social right of any kind. This status is reminisce of the treatment given to the Jews and the Christians who were conquered by the early Muslim armies, through which people who are classified in the Quran as “People of the Book” are given protection in exchange for a \textit{Jizyah} (head tax). In return, these \textit{dhimmis} were expected to abide by a set of rules and abstain from wearing certain colors in public and even give right of way on the street to Muslims when ordered.\textsuperscript{235} The Maronites however were never subjected to such mental or physical abuse because technically they never lived under direct Muslim rule and their status under the Druze emirate, according to their own admission, was that of a privileged community. Nevertheless, the Maronite establishment’s rhetoric during that time underscored the \textit{dhimmi} fate that awaits the Christians in case the Palestinians or their allies are triumphant. Many of the rumors circulating at the start of the conflicts between the Christians militias and the PLO and their allies included talk of deporting the entire Maronite population to North America onboard ships as part of a bigger conspiracy engineered by Henry Kissinger the US Secretary of State to install the Palestinians in their stead.\textsuperscript{236} While there was no serious evidence of this conspiracy, the undertone of many of the Maronite politicians and intellectuals

\textsuperscript{234} Chamoun as Quoted in Bulus Na’aman. \textit{Al-Waṭan, al-Hurriyyah}, 153. My translation.
\textsuperscript{235} Ye’or Bat, \textit{The decline of Eastern Christianity under Islam: from Jihad to Dhimmitude: seventh-twentieth century} (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1996).
\textsuperscript{236} Michael Butterand and Maurus Reinkowski, \textit{Conspiracy Theories in the United States and the Middle East: A Comparative Approach} (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 87
speeches and publications reminded its constituency of what was at stake if the Maronite lose the war. Bashir Gemayel declared forcefully the real fight of the Lebanese Christians was to have a “country where we can live without bowing our heads to the ground, a place where nobody can come and tell us: ‘Wear a turban or die’ as they did during the rule by the Turks.”²³⁷ Bulus Na’aman went even further by branding Islam as a religion essentially incapable of tolerating anything different from it, saying:

> Islam is a system with totalitarian demands on all aspects of society…if there is any provision for people of a different faith, then it is only in a subordinate position. Islam is not backward compared to Christianity, as many believe. It is simply different, its character prevent it changing. An Islam that accepted a secular society will no longer be Islam.²³⁸

The publications of the KRC and its members also took a similar fold, writing under the penname Amin Naj, Antoine Najm’s *Lan Na’īsha Dhimmiyyīn* (we will not live as dhimmis) details why it is not possible for the Lebanese to continue under the 1943 pact. Doing so, according to Najm, would only led to the inevitable, Muslim persecuting and ultimately dominating Christians.²³⁹ Najm unequivocally declares that as Christians we "do not agree to be dhimmis, or second class citizens, where they enjoyed perhaps the best conditions in their material life and in terms of reproduction, […] but [where] their effective rights are lower than those of their fellow Muslims."²⁴⁰ A schoolteacher by profession, Najm originally from Qartaba in the Byblos region of Mount Lebanon, had grown up in the predominately Muslim city of Tripoli where his father was employed. Najm a charming and candid person in his eighties, recalls how his father got into a fist fight with a Muslim at the marketplace because the latter had yelled at his father to use the

²³⁸ Hanf, 385.
gutter side of the road, because as a Muslim he had right of way.\textsuperscript{241} This naturally enraged Najm’s father who ended up assaulting the man who was disrespecting him for merely being a non-Muslim.\textsuperscript{242} In 1967, the Arab debacle in the war with Israel was also an eye-opener for Najm. At that time, Najm was teaching at a public school and as news broke out of the Arab shocking defeat, suddenly and without any provocation Najm’s Muslim colleagues stopped talking to him. Najm admits that episode troubled him greatly as he truly never considered himself to be anti-Arab but his Muslim coworkers assumed that he was so for the sheer fact of being a Maronite. These personal experiences in addition to other objective factors made Najm as certain as ever that a reconsideration of the ‘Lebanese Formula’ is the only salvation for the Christians. Consequently, Najm’s political career and nearly the entirety of his writings, especially after the outbreak of the civil war, were preoccupied with devising a federal solution for the Lebanese problem, earning him the title, the Philosopher of Lebanese Federalism. Paradoxically, Najm was a senior member of the Kataeb and the head of its “Creed Branch” responsible for instructing members in party doctrine and ideology.

\textbf{The Kataeb: In the Service of Lebanon}

Founded in 1936 by Pierre Gemayel, a pharmacist and an avid footballer, and fashioned after the European fascist movements at the time, the Kataeb was a social democratic party with essentially unpretentious goals. Frank Stoakes, writing about the party early on in the civil war, saw the Kataeb as a “builder, surrogate and defenders of the [Lebanese] State.”\textsuperscript{243} Stoakes fascination with the Kataeb was partly the result of his shadowing of some of its senior members and visits to

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{241} Interview with Antoine Najem
\item \textsuperscript{242} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{243} F. Stoakes, "The Supervigilantes: The Lebanese Kataeb Party as Builder, Surrogate, and Defender of the State," \textit{Middle Eastern Studies}, 11 (1975), 215-36.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
their para-military training camps. According to Stoakes, the Kataeb’s existential aim was “the preservation of the state and the advancement of society, and the second is subordinate to the first; without the state there can be no progress.” In 1943, the Kataeb, adopting “in the Service of Lebanon” as its main mantra, was one of the main factions which took to the streets, along with its Muslim equivalent al-Najada party in what is popularly referred to as the battle of Lebanese independence. Following this brief anti-French revolt, al-Kataeb unreservedly supported the 1943 national pact and the simple power-sharing arrangement which clearly privileges the Maronites over the rest of the Lebanese sects. This pro-Pact position became part and parcel of much of the party’s political positions and actions way into the civil war.

Despite being a founding member of the Lebanese Front in 1976, which at times radiated of anti-Pact statements, Pierre Gemayel and his party’s old guard always underscored the intransience of the National Pact. Joseph Abu Khalil, a close confidant of both Pierre and Bashir Gemayel affirms that Bashir at a certain stage stood in opposition to his father vis-à-vis the National Pact, which Pierre until “his last breath fully embraced” Therefore, despite what Andre Sleiman calls the “Grand Debate” over the abolition of the National Pact and the adoption of Federalism within the Kataeb, the party establishment which coincidently included Pierre’s older son Amine nipped federalism in the bud and prevented Bashir from incorporating it into the mainstream doctrine.

For this anti-pact or federalist tendency to develop beyond mere rhetoric, it needed an intellectual incubator which could help this movement grow, something which was not possible

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244 Ibid, 217.
245 Interview with Joseph Abu Khalil, Beirut Lebanon, 30 December 2015.
246 Sleiman, 143.
within the conservative setting of the Kataeb structure. The KRC was exactly the incubator the Maronites identity needed where it could air out some of the ideas which previously were considered an act of treason at least from the perceptive of the Lebanese Muslims which shunned the West and viewed it as an enemy of the Arabs and a friend of Israel. It is noteworthy that some of the studies promoting federalism written before or at the start of the civil war (1975) under an alias or anonymous, were republished after 1978 by the KRC but with the names of its author. One such publication was Fouad Ephrem al-Boustani, *Le Problème du Liban* which was republished by Holy Spirit University in 1978.\(^ {247}\) Furthermore, many leading Kataeb members, including Bashir Gemayel and Antoine Najm by working through the KRC were able to flaunt their federalist aspirations without contradicting the pro-Pact party they officially belonged to. Also more importantly, the Lebanese Order of Monks by offering a logistical and intellectual scaffold to this project, gave Bashir and his team the ability to disseminate these ideas beyond the Maronite intellectual elite. While the Maronite collective identity was also influenced by other entities and factors such as education and class structures, it’s these institutions highlighted thus far that placed them in sharp opposition to the other Lebanese communities. This recasting and perpetuating of collective perceptions, as will be demonstrated, also applied to the Druze community but through different vehicles and centers of power.

**The Druze Way**

As a faith, the Druze are an extremely introverted group, which does not allow proselytizing nor intermarriage. When the movement started under the Fatimid Caliph al-Hakim, it was essentially a missionary endeavor which dispatched hundreds of preachers to different regions of the Islamic

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empire, including present day Lebanon. Following the disappearance and possible murder of al-Hakim, the members of his movement went through a period of persecution or Mihna which lasted for seven years.\textsuperscript{248} In 1043, as the Druze themselves call it, the door of the da'wa (calling) was permanently sealed, and no new initiates were permitted to become part of this movement. This sense of exclusivity led the Druze to see themselves as a chosen folk that were blessed enough to belong to a family that embraced the call for Tawhid. In addition, the Druze are expected to practice endogamy which makes the social cohesion even stronger, therefore Druze who deviate from this norm are weakening this eternal bond and are thus shunned both religiously and socially. This expulsion can range from the more extreme form of completely rupturing contact with the violator, or even refusing to bury ones corpse in a Druze cemetery with the last rites usually administered by the Druze clerics. The Druze even go further by asserting that for someone to be a Druze, both parents have to be Druze. Being born from a non-Druze womb is sacrilegious and the person bred by “a non-Druze belly” would never attain the full rank of a Druze.\textsuperscript{249}

Politically, the Druze perceive that the strength of their community reside in their unwavering unity and cohesiveness, especially when faced with external challenges. The fact that the Druze were a heterodox minority which did not exceed 750,000 thousand worldwide made unity a central theme within the community.\textsuperscript{250} After the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the Druze who were spread out across the Levant played an important role in the formation of the new nation-states, at least in Syria, Lebanon and to a lesser extent Palestine-Israel. Despite the fact that the Druze worldwide share a common bond, their political decision-making process have always been

\textsuperscript{248} Anis Obeid, \textit{The Druze and Their Faith in Tawhid} (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2006), 93
\textsuperscript{249} The Druze use the term born from (Battein Sharia’a) to indicate that the mother is non-Druze
\textsuperscript{250} The number is a fairly moderate estimate based on the three main Druze communities in the Levant as well in the diaspora.
directed by the community’s temporal interests. In 1925, the Druze of Syria under the leadership of Sultan Pasha al-Atrash took up arms against the French mandate. The Great Syrian Revolt that ensued spread to other parts of Syria and lasted till 1927. Across the border however the majority of the Druze of Lebanon, contrary to custom did not come to the aid of their Syrian Druze brethren, but preferred to maintain their pro-French standing. In 1921, the decision to appease and collaborate with the French mandate cost Fouad Joumblatt (Kamal’s father) the administrator of the Shuf district, his life. Local Druze rivals known for their Arab nationalist fervor led by Shakib Wahab ambushed and fatally wounded him, in the `Ainbal Valley in the district of Shuf.  

While the Druze have always maintained unity in the face of danger, their political history bears witness to bitter rivalries between the different factions competing for wealth and power, a struggle which eventually weakened the Druze. The Druze are traditionally divided, at least starting in the 17th century, according to two main political factions: the Joumblatti and the Yazbaki, headed by the house of Joumblatt and Arslan respectively. Consequently, the majority of the Druze, “aligned themselves with either one side or the other, as dictated by their interests at any particular time.” The Druze as a society are a highly stratified group where class plays an important role in their daily life, as social mobility within the sect is not impossible but fairly difficult. Leading the Druze are local notables or Sheikhs who draw their authority from their families historic status but also from their ability to lead, protect and cater to the needs of the group. These needs more often than not are met partly with funds generated by the Sheikhs tax farming or from his own pocket if needed. In his book Being a Druze, Fouad Khuri remarks how the Druze unlike other Lebanese groups have stuck to their traditional leadership even when the

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251 Hazran, 27.
252 For more information about the evolution of this rivalry see chapter, page 49.
latter were unable to fully deliver on these clientelistic services. In return however Khuri also admirably confirms that these Sheikhs have exhibited “steadfastness and persistence, in the face of the socio-economic changes that swept, as they still do, throughout Druze society.”

These notables maintain a direct relationship with their constituency which also extend to none Druze members, who pledge allegiance to this household, something which is usually passed on through generations. Most of the Druze I have interviewed who claim allegiance to the Joumblatt house, made it clear that their family ties to Dar al-Moukhtara (Moukhtara Palace) goes back centuries, and that at least one or more of their ancestors have fought and spilled blood under the banner of the Joumblatts.

Lost Druze History

The Druze, as a community, do not rely on written sources to learn about their past or to propagate their group feeling but essentially employ communal structures as well as some socio-religious elements to facilitate their group’s memory formation process. Despite being in power for over four centuries, the Druze lack any substantial works of history that documents their political exploits. The only two works that survive written by the Druze themselves are those of Şâlih ibn Yahyâ, Târikh Bayrût and Ibn Sabât’s Şidq al-akhbâr who limit themselves to part of the Druze history. Most of the primary history of the Druze as demonstrated in earlier chapters was documented by the Maronites, however these works according to the Druze were skewed as it only served the Maronite political project and sidelined the Druze contributions in the founding of modern Lebanon.

254 Fuad Khūrī, Being a Druze (London: Druze Heritage Foundation, 2004), 144.
It is perplexing to say the least why the Druze with all their valor and military victories have fallen short of recording their history. Rajeh Naim claims that the Druze were preoccupied with their military conquests and operations to ever bother with what they considered a secondary task.\textsuperscript{256} It is highly unlikely however that such an explanation could suffice, as the different Druze leaders certainly had an elaborate administrative hierarchy and people capable of recording the events that occurred down to the minute detail. One might presume that the series of Ottoman punitive campaigns did not only destroy and kill a huge number of Druze but it was also able to destroy the records which the Druze kept along with their holy religious letters (\textit{Rasa'il al-Hikma}). Possibly, within the various religious scrolls that Ibn Tulun says were captured by the Ottomans were works of history similar to the two that survived.\textsuperscript{257}

The lack of written sources has forced the Druze to rely heavily on oral tradition to preserve the socio-political legacy of their ancestors. Much of the stories of Druze lineage, valor and supposed religious persecution are perpetuated through oral traditions which, at least for the Druze, carries equal or greater weight to written sources. This oral transmission naturally is regulated by a number of centers of power within the group to ensure that such traditions are always in line with the collective remembrance of the community.

Issam Aintrazi (Abu Said), the PSP military commander of Beirut, confirms that growing up within his extended Druze surroundings oral tradition was way more influential on his historical perception than the textbooks he used to read in school.\textsuperscript{258} Aintrazi who holds an MA in history from the State University of New York, stresses the symbiosis of the Druze familial sphere and

\textsuperscript{256} Interview with Rajeh Naim.
\textsuperscript{257} See page 49 the Long Rebellion and the Druze Ottoman confrontation as discussed by Abdul Rahim Abu-Husayn.
\textsuperscript{258} Interview with Issam Aintrazi (Abu Said), North Carolina, December 2013.
the formation of his own adolescent perception of the world. Born in 1953, Abu Said who grew up in Beirut found it difficult to adjust to the various schools he was forced to attend. This was partly because his classmates would at times bully him for merely being a Druze, until his mother finally decided to move him to a school in Choueifat owned by a Druze. Aintrazi, affirms that the feeling of persecution the Druze of Beirut experienced forced them to be more cohesive and to look to their sect for moral and physical protection. According to Aintrazi, “while in school we were taught that Emir Bashir al-Shihabi was a Lebanese hero, in our community he was a dog and a villain, they never taught us anything about Sheikh Bashir but as kids we would listen to the grownups talk amongst each other and thus learn the true history of the Druze, one generation to the another.”

This was equally true of the 1860 Druze-Maronite clashes as the history books Aintrazi read at school dealt with these events from a pro-Maronite vantage point, considering the Druze as aggressors and the Maronites as hapless victims; something which Druze oral tradition rebuffed. Abu Said admits that although he was too young to remember the events of 1958, he and his Druze friends used to listen to his brother-in-law who fought in the revolution talk about his exploits, prompting their generation to “wish we had gotten the chance to fight in defense of the Druze.”

**Druze: Blood Brothers across Generations**

Adding to these oral traditions is a set of socio-religious practices and beliefs which are the building blocks for creating a feeling of group solidarity or ‘asabiyyah. The social and political evolution of the group when viewed from an Ibn Khaldunian lens reveals how Druze solidarity or ‘asabiyyah did not wane despite the evolution of the community. On the contrary, the tribal

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259 Ibid.
260 Ibid.
structure remained virtually intact when the Druze were at the zenith during Faker Din or at their weakest under the reign of the Bashir II.\footnote{Salibi, \textit{House of Many Mansions}, 125.} According to Ibn Khaldun, the strongest form of `asabiyyah or group solidarity is that of kinship or blood ties. This strong fraternal bond between the Druze which at times transcends geography is achieved through the interaction of various elements chiefly among them their intrinsic belief in reincarnation. The belief in the perpetual nature of the soul and its constant movement from one vessel to another, occupies a central place in the Druze sect’s socio-religious creed. Contrary to the conventional interpretation of life after death in Islam, the Druze believe that after the perishing of the body, the soul simply emigrates towards another body.\footnote{In Islam, after death the soul is in a state of suspension awaiting final judgment} Death for the Druze is therefore simply a decaying of the present vessel or garment, which is simply exchanged for a newer one; the act of reincarnation therefore is referred to by the Druze as \textit{taqammus} from \textit{qammis} meaning shirt.\footnote{Anne Bennett, “Reincarnation, Sect Unity, and Identity among the Druze.” \textit{Ethnology}, Vol 45, No. 2, 2006, 88-9.}

Beyond its spiritual and religious implication, reincarnation plays an important role in creating one single bloodline which all Druze regardless of space and time share. The strong imagined pedigree is usually the act of intermarriages and birth which welcomes people into groups that call themselves, either clans, tribes or families. This blood bond which simply fizzles out either by natural death or by marriage outside the group, remains intact in the case of the Druze, because of their belief in reincarnation which ensures that this blood bond is never lost even posthumously. According to the Druze, reincarnation is a global phenomenon which occurs with all human beings, however not all religions are willing to entertain this elementary system. Fuad Khuri affirms that “I am yet to meet to a Druze, young or old, educated or uneducated, male or
female, rich or poor who publicly or privately cast on doubt on his or her belief in reincarnation.”

The Druze firmly believe that the soul of any Druze or Muwahid, regardless of their social status or level of piety, is exclusively reincarnated in the body of a new born Druze. In practical terms, a Druze born out of a Druze father and mother is part of a circle, which is “never altered by marriage, conversion and death.” Therefore according to this system all Druze are, brothers in a former, present or a future life because they basically can be “born into each other’s houses.” The perpetuation of this belief in reincarnation is disseminated throughout the community through different channels but perhaps the most salient vehicle is the phenomena known as nutuq. Nutuq, meaning to speak in Arabic, involves a child’s recalling his/her past life in details and with adult assertiveness. This usually involves specifics of their former life, family, career and even the way they died. This common yet baffling occurrence amongst the Druze, does not occur with all people but rather with individuals who have perished in a sudden and tragic manner. People who have died in combat, murdered, or simply from a work accident are the ones that are most likely to experience this ritual of recall, which is always oral and public. Some parents of children who experience nutuq encourage this process by actually tracking down the past-life families and establishing a familial relationship. A number of Druze I interviewed, would voluntary mention that they remember their past life. Imad al-Awr, who participated in the War of the Mountain in 1983, affirms that in his former life, which ended in 1958, he was shot in the chest in the village

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264 Khuri, Being a Druze, 104.
265 Ibid, 105.
266 Bennett, 89.
of Kfar Nabrakh. Imad vividly recalls, the weapon he was carrying, who from his family was with him and the feeling of the bullet that killed him as it entered his body.267

In his written testimony on the matter of reincarnation and Druze politics, Fawaz Dalal from the town of Rashaya, also narrates with utter lucidity and conviction the interplay between his two lives vis-à-vis the events of 1958 and 1982. Dalal, a high school teacher, holds a Doctorate in History and Political Science writes:

One of these days, I was one of the people who took part in the 1958 revolution, along the great leader Kamal Joumblatt. Our fight was against what we called the reactionary Lebanese current which was part of the Baghdad Pact… at that stage my intellectual capacity did not permit me to understand the implications of that era nor to join the struggle out of pure conviction, however I was one of the first to join the revolution because of my sectarian or tribal affiliation which manifested itself in the party [PSP], a journey which ended with my martyrdom. Coincidentally I was reborn in the village (Rachaya) of my former military commander but in a family which did not share my past-life political convictions.268

Dalal recalls how his many encounters with his former commander “would transport them both back to a different place, time and event” and how the former would validate many of the stories the young boy would share with him.269 As a young man, Dalal was able to convert his family into supporters of Kamal Joumblatt and the PSP, which he himself had officially joined. In 1982, Dalal fought with the National Resistance Movement against the invading Israeli army and their Lebanese allies. His mesmerizing account of the War of the Mountain is a standing example of how reincarnation allows the Druze to maintain an uninterrupted link across time and space:

In the painful events which occurred in Mount Lebanon, I found myself yet again going back in time 20 years as if I am a son of that land, this land is my land and its people are my people. During those events I still recall the cries of the fighters on the various fronts. “Here are the martyrs of 1958 fighting you but with new bodies and different names” and also another famous motto at the time “why would we care if

267 Interview with Imad al-Awar, Beirut May 2016.
269 Ibid.
Regardless of which approach one takes on the issue of reincarnation, be it scientific or spiritual, what is beyond doubt is that the Druze take the matter with deadly seriousness and place memory at the crux of their beliefs. According to a story told to me by one of my informants, a child in the Shuf Mountain revealed that in his past life he had been murdered by a certain individual which he also identified by name. His past-life family had always assumed that their son had died of an accident and thus did not suspect any foul play. After the father had verified from the child, who had been his son in a past life, about the slaying and its circumstances, he avenged his murdered son by killing the perpetrator. This perplexing moral and judicial aspect of this tale leaves one pondering, to what extent are the Druze willing to go to protect one another?

**O Brother, Where Art Thou?**

This fraternal relationship obliges all Druze to extend care and aid which one would extend to any Druze as if they were immediate family members. Consequently, being a Druze involves carrying this belief in reincarnation as well as other percepts of the faith into one's daily practices. While they do consider themselves to be a Muslim sect, the Druze do not fully practice the five pillars of Islam, at least daily prayer, zakat (alm giving), fasting and going on pilgrimage. Instead the Druze subscribe to a more elaborate seven pillar code which combines both tribal and religious elements:

- Truthfulness in intent and of the tongue (*Sidiq al-Lisan*).
- Safeguarding brothers and sisters (*Hifiz al-Ikhwan*).
- Renunciation of idolatry and paganism.
- Repudiation of the devil and all forces of evil.
- Belief in Tawhid of our Lord in every age and stage.
- Acceptance of God’s divine acts, whatever they may be.
- Submission to God's divine will in private and in public.\(^\text{270}\)

\(^{270}\) Obied, 171.
Unity and fraternity are thus clearly embedded within the seven pillars of the Druze faith, and to lie or to refuse to aid a fellow Druze is a cardinal sin which leads one to lose membership in this exclusive society. Therefore it is very common for a Druze from a different region or even a different country to rush to the aid of a Druze which he/she has never met before. *Ya Gheirt al-Din*, the customary call used to evoke camaraderie is enough to awaken the tribal feelings of the most secular and educated Druze. This eternal bond was certainly evoked by the Druze of Lebanon in 1983 in their conflict with the Maronites, as Druze from different classes, professions, regions and countries (Syria and Israel) rushed to the aid of their brethren defying the political realities at the time. This will be elaborated on in the ensuing chapter with particular focus on the role played by the Druze of Israel whose aid to the Lebanese Druze proved beyond instrumental.

**Wise vs. Ignorant**

Despite the profound tribo-religious effect of reincarnation on the collective identity of the Druze and the binding function it performs, an active agent is still needed to ensure the propagation of these different beliefs. This function is carried out by the Druze clerics known as the *Ajawīd* (the Druze religious clergy) whose role is that of guardians of customs and traditions and to regulate and mediate the exchange of memories. These *Ajawīd* propagated the theme that all Druze are brothers and therefore are bound by a sacred oath of allegiance to this real or imagined family. Unlike the Christian Church, the Druze ecclesiastical body is not divided in an institutional and clear cut manner. The Druze faith and religious scriptures are exclusively restricted to individuals who have been initiated into the faith commonly referred to as *Uqqal* (wise men), while the rest fall within a category known as *al-Juhhāl* (ignorant). Upon reaching adulthood, a Druze may ‘ask for his religion’ or to join this class of *Uqqal*, but to take such a step according to Anis Obeid, involves adhering to “strict rules of conduct in personal and private life and to remain under
continuous peer review and scrutiny.” Naturally, embracing such a life of piety includes practicing temperance and shunning almost all of the earthly pleasures such as smoking, consumption of alcohol and over indulgence in food. Druze religious learning however differs greatly from the Christian-Islamic tradition as the former process is far removed from any official religious schools with their somewhat rigid structures. The Druze do not retain any institutions similar to the Maronite college discussed earlier or al-Azhar in Cairo the bastion of Islamic learning. Instead, Druze religious learning involves a mentor-disciple dynamics where a learned Sheikh allows the novice to study under him either by way of tutorials or by joining the Sheikh’s circle of learning. The only form of religious schooling that exist is to be found in Khalwat al-Bayada, a religious retreat in Hasbaya, in south Lebanon. These Khalwat, which I have visited, do not go beyond acting as a hermitage where these initiate can be tutored by one or more of the learned clerics on its grounds.

The promotion within the ranks of the ‘Uqqal is not simply determined by the level of learning but also by the degree of piety and commitment to the values and essence of Tawhid, they exhibit throughout their daily interaction with other Druze. The most virtuous among these ‘Uqqal, who wear the rounded turban (mukalwas) are usually very few in number and at most have never, at one time, exceeded 10 throughout the Levant. Few as they may be, these clerics are the effective custodians of the sects’ spiritual affairs, and while they refrain from meddling in politics, at time of crisis they have the ultimate say in how the Druze will react. In 1983, Abu Hassan Aref Halawi (Lebanon) and Abu Youssef Amin Tarif (Palestine), both mukalwas clerics at the time, went beyond their customary spiritual position and assumed a blatantly political role; all for the sake of

272 Khuri, 124.
protecting their coreligionists. More often than not, these Sheikhs do not actually go on record and issue any public statement but instead, they let their wishes be known through the visitors that seek their advice.

The more hands-on involvement of the Druze clerics in the political affairs of the community is reserved to the Sheikh al-'Aql who gets to wear a spiritual as well as a political hat. Historically this institution was part and parcel of the Druze political factionalism (Yazbaki & Joumblatti) which picked their own Sheikh for a lifetime appointment. Sheikh al-'Aql was expected to conform to the parameters of the party that appointed him. Mashyakhat al-'Aql as an institution that can be traced to Sayid Abdallah al-Tanukhi al-Buhtari, a 15th century Druze religious reformer and member of the family that ruled over the Druze at that time. Extremely revered by the Druze, Sayid Abdallah established many of the religious legal structures and practices which survive to this day. The role of Sheikh al-'Aql as the paramount religious authority changed over time to assume a more supportive role to the political factions and the strong feudal lords that led them. Judith Harik in her study “Shaykh al-'Aql and the Druze of Mount Lebanon” observes that contrary to what many assume, Mashaykit al-'Aql contributed to the instability and the feuds between the different Druze which ultimately led to the overall weakening of the Druze political status. After 1943, the Lebanese state officially recognized the dual status of both Sheikhs which legally were salaried employees of the state attached to the office of the Prime Minister. In 1970, with the passing of Rashid Hamada, the Yazbaki Sheikh al-'Aql both factions agreed to unite the post under the incumbent Joumblatti sheikh, Muhammad Abu Shaqra. Abu Shaqra, assertive and confrontational nature proved to be a versatile asset to the Druze, especially after 1975 in the war that ensued.

274 Judith Harik. ““Shaykh al-'Aql and the Druze of Mount Lebanon: Conflict and Accommodation”, Middle Eastern Studies, 30/3 (1994), 463
The unification of the post of Sheikh al-’Aql allowed the Druze religious establishment to widen its influence as it was no longer restricted by the Joumblatti-Yazbaki divide. Practically, by that time Kamal Joumblatt due to many local and regional factors had overshadowed Majid Arslan, the head of the Yazbaki faction, which compared to Joumblatt’s trailblazing brand was somewhat of a classical politician, who had no formal education nor was interested in politics beyond the clientelistic system he operated. In 1971, with the support of Kamal Joumblatt, a number of Druze clerics launched a fundraising drive to establish an association which would provide educational and health services to the people of the Shuf. Consequently, al-Irfan Unitarian Foundation set up a network of schools and clinics that spread across all Druze areas, with an estimated student body of 6000 students. Al-Irfan’s curriculum, with its good academic track record, does not include any Druze religious instruction as none of these students have reached the age of adulthood, a prerequisite for religious initiation. Despite their layman status, Irfan students do receive religious training anchored in the Koran as well as the Abrahamic tradition but never in a manner which allows them to claim an initiate Druze status. Al-Tarbiya al-Tawhidiya, or ‘Unitarian Education’ is a course given to students, where they are told the stories of the different prophets from the old testaments and stories from the Quran as well as how to be a good Druze. What is certain is that much of the religious or secular knowledge these boys and girls receive, clearly resonates of Druze collectiveness. As a Druze foundation, al-Irfan naturally taught its students the history of Lebanon from the perceptive of the Druze which contributed in widening the gap between these upcoming youth and their Christian neighbors. Coincidentally, after 1984, the Civil Administration which was set up by the Progressive Socialist Party-PSP to replace the Lebanese State published its own history and civics textbooks. Effectively, all schools in the areas within the PSP control was bound

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275 Interview with Ali Zeindinne, PSP Oral History Project.
to use these books which placed the Druze at the center a process of rewriting a proper history of Lebanon very much similar to the one being conducted by the Council for Druze Studies and Development discussed earlier.\footnote{276}

The \textit{Sheikhs} involvement in the affairs of their community extends to all levels, as their commitment to the protection of their brethren has no limits and transcend the civilian sphere. During times of war, these men of religion actively participated in combat, providing the regular Druze fighters with motivation and vigor whenever needed as well as with much needed numbers on the battle field. During the War of the Mountain, these Druze clerics formed a military order known as \textit{Quwwāt Abou Ibrahim} “Forces of Abu Ibrahim” in reference to Ismail ibn Muhammad al-Tamimi, the brother-in-law of Hamza Ibn `Ali, one of the five key figures in the Druze tradition.\footnote{277} Beyond their psychological effect, this fighting outfit was decisive due to its ability to completely disregard some of the political restrictions which the Joumblatti faction was bound by, such as the relationship with the Syrian regime and their own outward hostility to the State of Israel.

**Progressive Socialism Meets the Druze**

In 1949, Kamal Joumblatt founded the Progressive Socialist Party- PSP, which - despite its secular inclusive doctrine- ended up being a shell for the Joumblatti faction and predominately fielded by Druze. At the apex of his career Joumblatt as a figure went beyond his sect and was embraced by many Lebanese and a wider Arab audience as a genuine committed reformer; however the party itself was never able to overcome its Druze base. Farid al-Khazen sees Joumblatt, despite his

\footnote{276}{See page 31.}
\footnote{277}{Druze belief Tamimi to be the embodiment the universal soul depicted in green in the Druze flag with its five pointed star. Obeid, 97}
impressive credential and grand scheme for reform, as a paradoxical character driven by a combination of opportunism, moralism, sectarianism and socialism.\textsuperscript{278}

Born in 1917, Kamal Joumblatt was brought up by his mother Nazira Joumblatt who had to assume leadership of the family after the murder of her husband Fouad. Educated in Aintoura Lazarist School and later the Sorbonne in France, Joumblatt returned to Lebanon in 1939 after the outbreak of WWII and studied towards a degree in Law. During his studies in France, Joumblatt fell under the spell of the ideas of progressive thinkers such as Rousseau, Saint Simon and Teilhard de Chardin, which he carried back home in hopes of modernizing the Lebanese political system.\textsuperscript{279}

Following a period of conventional political activity, which included a ministerial appointment and two terms in parliament, Joumblatt soon departed from the conventional cast he was born into. Over afternoon tea, a group of intellectuals, businessmen and middleclass professionals including Joumblatt met and founded the Progressive Socialist Party. The PSP, founded in 1949, sought to champion the interests of the workers in a non-Marxist approach while ultimately working towards their motto which declared a “Free Citizen and Happy People”.\textsuperscript{280} It is interesting to note that the PSP flag that Joumblatt designed himself depicts a blue globe with a pen and a pick in its middle against a red background, red being the official color of the Qaysi faction which dominated the politics of Mount Lebanon in the 17\textsuperscript{th} and 18\textsuperscript{th} century. Joumblatt and the other founding members believed that reform can be achieved gradually by collaborating with like-minded individuals within the Lebanese system and especially members of the Maronite elite which he grew up with in school and throughout his University education.

\textsuperscript{278} Farid al-Khazen "Kamal Jumblatt, the Uncrowned Druze Prince of the Left". \textit{Middle Eastern Studies.} 24, 1988, no. 2, 179.


\textsuperscript{280} Ḥizb al-Taqaddumī al-Išhtirākī (Lebanon) \textit{Rub’qarn min al-niḍāl} (Beirut: al-Ḥizb, 1975).
In 1952, the Popular Socialist Front, a coalition of reformist individuals from across the sectarian spectrum, led by Kamal Joumblatt defied the first post-independence President of the Republic Bishara al-Khuri, who had violated the constitution by extending his own mandate, one which was marred with corruption and cronyism. Following a period of peaceful protests, the Socialist Front was able to depose Khuri and replace him with a member of its own, Camille Chamoun. As it was publicized at the time, Chamoun had received the endorsement of Joumblatt, after he pledged that his term would be used to champion the reform platform set forth by the Front.

Joumblatt and Chamoun’s understanding soon fell apart and transformed into a bitter animosity, as the former started to challenge Joumblatt within the traditional Druze areas of the Shuf. This rivalry finally erupted after Chamoun rigged the 1957 parliamentary elections to oust all his main rivals, including Joumblatt. Chamoun was naturally successful in doing so because he controlled all key elements of the Lebanese state and furthermore he had styled himself as an ally of the West able to standing up to the impending threat of Gamal Abdul Nasser. By securing enough votes in Parliament, Chamoun could amend the constitution to renew his term, which was originally set at a six year non-renewable term. The Druze perceived this as yet another episode of unfaithfulness, as it brought forward memories of Bashir II’s betrayal of Bashir Joumblatt in the 19th century with what Camille Chamoun perpetrated a century later. Furthermore, the fact that Chamoun was from Deir al-Qamar, which the Druze destroyed in 1860, provided both sects with ample material to use in their collective remembrance.

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union between Egypt and Syria and the fall of the pro-Western Iraqi Monarchy distributed the regional political balances and finally led to the outbreak of violence in Lebanon. The landing of the US Marines shortly afterwards ended the small skirmishes between warring factions. However, the two main parties at the heart of the conflict, namely the Druze and the Maronites, only viewed these events as an additional chapter in their collective memory of conflicts as the subsequent chapters will demonstrate.

The events of 1958 marked a clear departure from Joumblatts earlier beliefs, as he shed any illusions that the Maronite political establishment would treat him as its equal. The PSP under the watchful eyes of Joumblatt, became a supporter of Pan-Arab and Third world liberation movements. The 1967 Arab debacle, and the rise of the Palestinian Revolution saw Joumblatt and his party become one of its main partners and allies within the Lebanese political system. Yusri Hazran affirms that “by 1969 (Cairo Agreement) Junblatt had become the Palestinian Resistance Organizations most faithful ally” taking practical steps in his new post as Interior Minister to mediate between the PLO and the Lebanese state. More importantly, the PSP became a venue where the Druze historical banner received positive reinforcement to serve both the party as well as the clan’s short and long terms goals. From a Druze perspective, the Arab nationalist, anti-western line which the PSP incorporated into its creed fits perfectly within the Druze collective self-perception of being protectors of this land from the West and its local Lebanese collaborators. The reform drive which Joumblatt steered also fell perfectly in line with the Druze longing to regain their original status within the Lebanese political system, a status which they lost after the

284 Hazran, 161 & 163. The Cairo Agreement between the Lebanese state and the PLO gave the latter the legal right to operate from the South of Lebanon and to wage war across the border into occupied Palestine.
annexation of the Sunni areas to Mount Lebanon in 1920. Joumblatt’s disenchantment was obvious in many of his statements and articles that expressed frustration from the confessional system.

In summer of 1975, the Lebanese State inaugurated a statue of Faker al-Din in his hometown of Baakline, Joumblatt who refrained from attending used this occasion to remind the establishment of the inequalities within the system:

> There is a significant difference between the Lebanon of today and the authentic historic Lebanon. The Lebanon today does not represent the historic heritage or national unity which Fakhr al-Din embodied and we, the authentic Lebanese feel foreign in a confessional system.285

It is no coincidence that in 1983 shortly after the end of the fighting with the Maronites, this same statue was destroyed with a charge of explosives. While no side has officially claimed responsibility for this act, Walid Joumblatt never shied away from expressing his discontent of how the Maronites have historically abducted Fakhr al-Din and incorporated him into their myth.286 Much of what both father and son shared about the hegemony of the Maronites was not restricted to the Druze but rather shared by the Muslims who despite their numerical majority were always forced to play second fiddle. Attacking a sectarian entity, such as the Maronite political establishment can indeed be passed on as a demand for reform as it ultimately aspires to establish a secular modern state, something which Joumblatt placed on the top of his socialist agenda at least after 1958. However what stands out as a purely Druze feature is the tone which Joumblatt and consequently PSP supporters used to describe the Maronites, which resonated of clear hatred and primordial condescension. Kamal Joumblatt made this attitude abundantly clear when he described the Maronites as:

285 Joumblatt as quoted in Hazran, 179.
Good scribes, authors, historians and poets as well as workers, traders and laborers, but they had never been more than that. The [French] Mandate handed them complete political power on a plate, a free gift that they did not deserve, as they themselves have demonstrated. Druses have a saying: Maronites make poor governors, for they lack both the feeling and the tradition of government.\(^{287}\)

The aggressive and escalating attitude which Joumblatt expressed was partly due to his frustration with the rigidity of his opponents, but it was also directly proportional to the rise of the Palestinian Revolution and its increasing popularity among the Muslims in Lebanon.

Following the events of Black September in 1970, which pitted the Jordanian army against the PLO and the expulsion of the latter from Jordan, Lebanon became the PLO’s last remaining base of operations. This reality led to an upsurge in PLO political and military presence in different regions of Lebanon especially the areas adjacent to the border with Palestine. Joumblatt, as leader of the Leftist Lebanese National Movement and Secretary General of the Arab Front for the Support of the Palestinian Revolution, was quite aware of the impact of the PLO presence on the Maronites and hence tried to use the PLO as a vehicle to advance some of his legitimate demands, by force if necessary. This maneuver on Joumblatt’s part backfired as the Maronites perceived his maneuvers as part of a wider plot to displace them from their land and naturalize the Palestinians in their place. Bulus Na’aman thirty years after the start of the war spoke of the fears and obsessions that his community experienced at that time:

The Palestinian project seemed to us at the time as swinging between two options, either to use Lebanon a permanent base for the liberation of Palestine or making Lebanon a surrogate country for the Palestinians. Furthermore, the plan of the [Lebanese] National Movement reeked of deep-seeded hatred and meant to settle old scores, some of which go back to before the foundation of Greater Lebanon in 1920 to the time of the feud between Emir Bashir II and Sheikh Bashir Joumblatt. This was clear to us as Kamal Joumblatt, president of the Progressive Socialist Party declared:

we will eradicate the plot of the great [Bashir II] Shihabi which during his reign, exiled Sheikh Bashir [Joumblatt] and advanced the Maronites on the expense of the Druze.\textsuperscript{288}

Be that as it may, what is certain is that the Druze as a community were highly influenced by the PSP both as a secular entity which empowered them as an avant-gardist group willing to embrace change as well as a proud warrior community indigenous to this land. The party by the sheer fact of its Joumblatti leadership, under Kamal and later Walid, drew the same perimeters that others power centers within the community used to define what it is to be a Druze. While other political parties such as the a Nazi-styled, Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party- SSNP and the Lebanese Communist Party were active within the Druze at large, none had the legitimacy nor the appeal as the PSP under the leadership of its charismatic Socialists lords.

**The “1958 Generation”**

One of the major outcomes of the 1958 conflict perhaps was the generation of young men and women who saw in the 1958 crisis sufficient proof that coexistence within the existing political system was no longer possible. The majority of the people who constituted the cadres of the different militias in 1975, and more so in 1982, were around the age of ten in 1958 and recall this event as an important juncture in the subsequent war. Subsequently, this “1958 generation” did not endorse *al-Mīthāq al-Wāṭanī* (the National Pact) that was forged among the founders of the 1943 republic.\textsuperscript{289} The Muslims (the Druze, Sunnis, and Shi’ites) found the pact inequitable because it gave the Maronite minority unrestricted control over the country. On the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Bulus Na’amān. *Al-Wāṭan, al-Hurriyah*, 69. My Translation
\item Under the provisions of this pact, the Maronites would not seek foreign intervention, but would accept Lebanon as an »Arab«-affiliated country, rather than a »Western« one, while the Muslims were to abandon their aspirations to unite with Syria. The President of the Republic was always to be Maronite, the Prime Minister always to be Sunni, the speaker always to be Shi’a, the deputy speaker of the Parliament always to be Greek Orthodox. All public offices were to be in a ratio of 6:5 in favor of Christians to Muslims. Leonard Binder, *Politics in Lebanon* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1966): 276.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
other hand, the Maronites saw that their Christian homeland was threatened by various factors and therefore no longer sustainable under the provisions of the Pact.

Bashir Gemayel and Walid Joumblatt, were born in 1947 and 1949 respectively and are both typical of this generation. The anti-National Pact sentiment was a central theme in Bashir Gemayel’s political rhetoric; he made it clear that “the 1943 formula has been buried and we have placed a tombstone on the grave, and we have stationed a guard [over this grave] so it will not be resurrected.” Many of Bashir’s opponents used his disdain for the pact to paint him as endorsing a racist vision which ultimately refuses to acknowledge the Lebanese Muslims as equals. Antoine Najm, however, affirms that not to be true, as despite the fact that Bashir was never fully exposed to the Muslims of the country he never saw Lebanon as a purely Maronite homeland, especially at the end of his career as he made his final thrust towards the presidency. In the preface of his book, *Dawlat Loubnan al-Ittihadiya* (the Federal State of Lebanon), Najm is vigilant to clarify his aforementioned claim as he opens his first sentence with “we are pro-Pact but not pro-Formula.” Najm affirms:

> We are with the [National] Pact because it endorses Christian-Muslim coexistence in the free state of Lebanon under its internationally recognized borders. This coexistence is steadfast, to us, it is ingrained in our Liberal nature and our belief in dialogue as we are committed towards fortifying, defending and removing any obstacle which stands in its way.

However according to Najm the problem lies in the formula which hinders the Pact’s implementation thus:

> We are against the “1943 formula” or the legal and constitutional implementation framework of this pact, which is the variant. Despite the Muslim refusal of this formula since independence, it has continued to serve the Pact, which made it a threat to the Pact itself. The Pact can only be served through a system which ensures the presence of both Christian and Muslim groups in a way that their freedom and

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291 Interview with Antoine Najm
293 Ibid. My translation.
development can be preserved, all in geographical, institutional security, cultural frames which allows them to have the final say in their fundamental affairs.  

Bashir’s contempt for the 1943 state and its formula and abolishing it, at least at the beginning of his career, was his main obsession. Most of his speeches during 1979-82 purposely debunked the so-called successful formula of co-existence and pluralism which the proponents of the 1943 formula try to pass off as a modern state. Bashir was clear in declaring that this formula was a thing of the past, warning that:

The new stage dictates that all Lebanese should come together but not under the desolate stale 1943 pact. We will not accept to go back to the tone of the Christian Priest kissing the Muslim Sheikh or the image of the Church and Mosque embracing…. Our cause is extremely sensitive. We should learn from the past or the current conditions will reflect badly on us and thus we will prove to the world that we are undeserving of life. We should always be ready to convince anyone who wants to get rid of us that his attempts would only fail. They tried to get rid of us on many occasion but failed and in 1958 they also tried but failed. We will prevent the state [1943 model] to stand on its feet, because it will only lead to our ruin. The root of all evil was this State, way before the problem was Muslim vs. Christian.  

Walid Joumblatt’s sentiments were not very different; he made it abundantly clear that Lebanon was molded to please the Maronites, and that not until true reform was achieved [de-Maronification] would the war in Lebanon truly come to an end. Joumblatt agreed with Bashir that the crux of the problem lies in the pact itself and what was needed to fathom through the current crisis was

A new nonsectarian pact which is different from the sectarian one concluded in 1943. Once we get to this new pact perhaps this war might stop. To achieve this goal we need to empower the current state institutions and to pass some constitutional amendments which place all people on equal par before the law.

294 Ibid. My translation.
296 Al-Anbaa, 18 April 1983.
All the interviewees I have met during the course of my research affirmed that the events of what was popularly called “the 1958 revolution” contributed in more than one way to the shaping of their own and their communities’ collective memories. In this respect, age is extremely important in the molding of collective memory. Social scientists have concluded that historical events that are either witnessed or related to the right cohort are usually well remembered. Studies conducted by Rubin, Wetzler, and Nebes, conclude that individuals between the ages of 13–25 are the group most likely to retain and pass on memory. 298 Hassan al-Beaini, a retired Lebanese army officer and a commander of the PSP Military Police, vividly recalls his father’s exploits during the 1958 Revolution. Beaini specifically remembers how his father had to “walk to the Lebanese-Syrian border to get weapons for the village and how, upon his father’s return, he brought him to the village square and made him fire a weapon in the air.” 299

The Slaying of Na‘im Moghabghab
Halim Bou Fakhraddine, a physician and the PSP representative to the Soviet Union during the civil war remembers in detail his father’s leading role in the 1958 events. Halim’s father was tasked by Kamal Joumblatt with acquiring and transporting weapons from the United Arab Republic in Syria and to smuggle them through an area known as Deir al-‘Ashir. In the days leading up to the confrontation between the ‘rebels’ and the pro-Chamoun elements, Bou Fakhraddine accompanied his father to the village of Sawfar where Kamal Joumblatt was meeting his ally, the Shi’ite strongman and former speaker of the house Sabri Hamada. On that day Halim, who was merely 11, was taken aback by the number of fighters who were trickling

298 These studies were conducted by D. C. Rubin, S. E. Wetzler, and R. D. Nebes” Autobiographical memory across the adult lifespan”, in Autobiographical Memory, ed. D. C. Rubin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 202-221.
299 Interview with retired General Hassan al-Beaini, Virginia, USA, February 2010.
in from different regions, armed with weapons which he never previously seen. These fighters “commenced to dance and recite the famous war cries known as Hawrabi as they shouted out pledges of allegiance to Kamal Joumblatt.” Halim admits that at that young age did he was oblivious to the ideological implications of the conflict, however he remembers quite well how the showdown was between Camille Chamoun who was adamant on crushing Kamal Joumblatt. But the real experience imprinted in Bou Fakhraddine’s psyche was a murder he witnessed, which was part of the ramifications of the 1958 clashes.

After his election as president, Fouad Shihab, as it was customary, decided to vacation in the summer presidential palace in Beiteddine, the mansion built by the famous Emir Bashir. To welcome him to the Shuf, Joumblatt led a huge delegation which soon turned into a virtual political rally, as PSP flags were hoisted and speeches were delivered. Halim was next to his father but soon decided like all children his age to wonder around and admire the cars around the venue. He soon heard a commotion and spotted a man being surrounded by a group of Druze who were trying to overpower him. As the muscular-built man drew his pistol to defend himself, he was swiftly struck on the back of the head by one of his attackers leading him to bleed heavily, after which nearly everyone surrounding him proceeded to severely beat him until he was swimming in a pool of his own blood.

The dead man was Na‘im Moghabghab, Shuf MP and member of Camille Chamoun’s National Liberal Party. In addition to being one of Chamoun’s closest aids, Moghabghab was famous for his heroic act during the 1943 struggle for independence, where he climbed the parliament building while being shot at and replaced the French banner with the newly created Lebanese flag. Moghabghab who was elected twice to parliament in 1952 and 1957, was

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300 Interview with Halim Bou Fakhraddine, Beirut, 21 January 2016.
extremely despised by the Joumblatti Druze for leading the pro-Chamoun police contingent which bullied and harassed their villages during the conflict a few months earlier.\textsuperscript{301} It seems that Moghabghab was curious to see what was happening in Beiteddine, so he took his Druze driver Naim al-Zour on a reconnaissance mission, but he was unfortunate as one of the bystanders from his own village recognized him.\textsuperscript{302} Interestingly, the life of the driver al-Zour was spared for merely being Druze as he was allowed to shamefully flee the scene. However, the story did not end here for Halim, as his father brought him closer to Moghabghab’s corpse and commanded him to pass over it twice and step in his blood. Halim who was wearing brand new white sandals which were ruined by the blood, remembers how months later his gloating father would order him to go fetch these blood-stained sandals to show them to his visitors. It was obvious to Halim that his father wanted to teach him that “this would be the fate of anyone who would dare hurt the Druze”, a lesson which has stayed with him till this day.\textsuperscript{303}

Also present at the same crime scene, was retired General Raja Harb. Harb, born in 1945, later assumed the command of the People’s Liberation Army, the PSP regular militia during the War of the Mountain, following in the footstep of his father who fought with the rebels in 1958 and his grandfather who was also involved in the 1860 clashes in Deir al-Qamar.\textsuperscript{304} Contrary to his father’s wishes, Raja followed him to the Beiteddine event and was witness to the brutal slaying of Naim Moghabghab. Such a traumatic experience at that age certainly scarred both Halim and Raja for life and also cemented in them their community’s collective perception of themselves and of their Maronite enemies.

\textsuperscript{301} Attié, \textit{Struggle in the Levant}, 145.
\textsuperscript{302} Interview with Halim Bou Fakhraddine, Beirut, 21 January 2016
\textsuperscript{303} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{304} Interview with Ret. General Raja Harb, Beirut, December 30 2016.
Such watershed experiences were not limited to Beaini or his community, but were also shared by the Maronites elsewhere. Elie Hobeika, the leader of the Lebanese Forces (LF) whose name was directly associated with the Sabra and Shatila massacre in 1982, shares a similar experience, which scarred him as an adolescent. Hobeika relates how in 1970 at the age of 14 he witnessed pro-Palestinian elements vandalizing his apartment building and assaulting a Lebanese police officer in his neighborhood in the heart of East Beirut. According to Hobeika, who hailed from a fairly modest family, this was a defining moment in his life and that of his classmates, who felt that they were in immediate danger; leading them to join the Phalangist party and other similar factions.\(^{305}\) One of Hobeika’s cohort, and later executive officer in the LF security and counter-intelligence branch was Ass‘ad al-Chaftari, who despite his middle class upbringing was equally affected by the same events as his commander. Chaftari who after the war became a champion for truth and reconciliation bravely admits in his memoirs the hatred that himself and perhaps others around him fostered to their Muslim compatriots.\(^{306}\) In 1967, following the Arab debacle, Gamal Abdul Nasser tendered his resignation on live TV, declaring that he is willing to bear the whole responsibility for the defeat. This provoked an outcry from across the Arab world including the Lebanese Muslims that regarded Nasser as their hero. To Ass‘ad, this Muslim reaction was un-Lebanese, choosing a foreigner as their hero went against his patriotic feelings.\(^{307}\) This further fortified the image he had of the Muslims as aspiring:

> to build a regional Islamic state, where as I wanted a free and sovereign Lebanon. They [Muslims] looked towards Arabia and longed to go back to wearing the traditional cloth and ride camels, where as I looked towards the west and root for modernity…. I could never get along with these bastards. After the events of 1842

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\(^{307}\)Ibid, 27.
and 1860 and the burning of Zahle three times and the bloody revolution in 1958, it became clear to me that the Christians have always suffered from the Muslims.\textsuperscript{308}

These memories, however, were not sufficient on their own to cause conflict; other elements, such as group interest, fuel and direct these memories so as to mobilize and in this case militarize the community. On the eve of the Lebanese civil war these men and women had been subjected to a wide range of indoctrinations by various institutions, ranging from their parties and schools to their families and most importantly their sect. It was against this background that the events of Harb al-Jabal transpired.

\textsuperscript{308} Ibid, 27.
Chapter Four

Despite their divergent collective identities, the Druze and Maronites were not necessarily destined to clash, however certain events and junctures led to the gradual escalations of tensions which spilled over into open warfare. The following chapter will highlight these events while showing how the constructed historical framework of both communities and their constant linkage of current events to an imagined past prevented them to resolve and transcend their disagreements and to find a common vision forward.


Prior to the Israeli invasion, the “Druze” southern parts of Mount Lebanon (Shuf and Aley) had largely remained outside the scope of the civil war. Most of the fighting during the opening two year war (1975-1977) was mainly restricted to the Northern part of Mount Lebanon, with sporadic incidents which affected the Maten region north of the Beirut-Damascus highway. This relative tranquility however was shattered on 16 March 1977, when the paramount Druze leader Kamal Joumblatt was assassinated by “unknown” assailants a few miles away from his ancestral home in the Moukhtara in the Shuf. All fingers pointed to the Syrian regime as the perpetrator of the crime mainly because of Joumblatt’s staunch resistance to the Syrian Army’s entry into Lebanon to rescue his Maronite enemies the Lebanese Front from an impending defeat at the hands of the Lebanese National Movements and their Palestinian allies. Joumblatt, never had any illusions regarding the nature of the Syrian regime, or its leader Hafez al-Assad, whom he considered to be merely a petty bourgeois military junta bent on dominating Lebanon.\footnote{Kamal Jumblatt, I Speak for Lebanon (London: Zed Press, 1982), 70-74.}

Around a year earlier, Joumblatt had visited Damascus, in what would be his last trip to Syria,
where he held a lengthy *tete-a-tete* meeting extending for several hours with Assad. This meeting however failed to bridge the gap between the two leaders but had the opposite effect of pitting them against each other in terms of their positions on raging Lebanese civil war and the way to put an end to it. According to Abbas Khalaf, the PSP VP for international affairs, who accompanied Joumblatt on this trip, the meeting did not go well. At the end of the meeting, Assad invited Joumblatt to stay the night in Damascus where they can continue their “conversation” the next morning. Joumblatt declined Assad’s invitation despite Khalaf’s advice to the contrary. According to Khalaf, Joumblatt looked him in the eye addressing him sternly, in English “I have to go back to Beirut, I have work to do.”

It was obvious at that point that both sides had crossed the point of no return in an already inimical and arduous relationship and that there was no love lost between the two men was an open secret. Therefore when the green Pontiac Firebird with Iraqi plates overtook and opened fire on Joumblatt’s car, on that warm March day, no one had any doubts that it was Hafez Assad’s orders that pulled the trigger and eliminated the head of the Joumblatti clan and the supreme Druze leader.

Raja Harb, who was scheduled to meet Walid Joumblatt for lunch on that day at Socrates restaurant on Bliss Street, a weekly ritual they maintained at that time, was an eye witness to the events which transpired that afternoon. Arriving at the restaurant on time, Harb was extremely alarmed by Joumblatt’s tardiness as he was known for strictly keeping appointments. Harb immediately called Joumblatt who informed him “it seems someone has shot at my dad, pass by me, we need to go up to the Shuf.” Harb proceeded to pick up Joumblatt and drove to the Shuf, when they reached the Ouzai area, the convoy of the Sheikh al-Aqil ominously passed them, flying on its hood the Druze flag. Joumblatt all of a sudden was assailed by a strange sensation

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310 Interview with Abbas Khalaf
311 Interview with Raja Harb
and morosely said to Harb “the Arabs will have to wait at least a hundred years or more, before another Abdul Nasser or a Kamal Joumblatt comes along, my father is dead.” 312 Upon reaching the Arab Deterrent Force Checkpoint at Damour, manned by the Syrian army, both were briefly detained and their personal arms confiscated. Harb tried to explain to the Syrian officer that he was a Lieutenant in the Lebanese Army and that was his service revolver but to no avail. Joumblatt reached the scene of the crime in the Christian village of Deir Duriet and saw the bodies of his father’s two escorts, Fawzi Shedid and Hafez Ghousuani laid by the roadside. Upon arriving at the Joumblatt’s ancestral palace in Moukhtara, Walid was informed that his father’s assassination had unleashed a series of Druze reprisals against innocent Christians across the Shuf and Aley region, some of whom, ironically, were card-carrying members of Joumblatt’s party.

The Druze who committed these atrocities were most probably driven by two considerations. Despite the apparent Syrian hand in Joumblatt’s murder, it was the Maronites or Christians who requested and “invited” Syrian military intervention in 1976; therefore, Maronites were regarded as guilty by association. Second, the several massacres that the Christians committed against the Palestinians in the refugee camps of Tel al-Za‘atar and Karantina, as well as the so called Black Saturday massacre in which Christian militias executed tens of civilians based on the religious affiliation on their ID cards were not yet forgotten.313 Joumblatt himself accompanied by the Sheikh al-Aqil Mohammad Abu-Shaqra went from one village to another to stop the bloodshed and save the Christian inhabitants from the retaliation of the Druze. The rescue party, however, was too late, as Joumblatt later admitted that “as soon as Kamal Joumblatt was killed, injustice and ignorance killed tens, no hundreds, of innocent

312 Ibid.
313 Interview with retired General Hassan al-Beaini, Virginia, USA, Feb 2010.
Christians in the Mountains who had no fault other than that they sought refuge with us.”

Walid Joumblatt calls to his clansmen, at the time, to “work together to assure security and stability for all inhabitants of this mountain" fell on deaf ears.

Harb explains the magnitude of this violent barbaric reaction by citing two main factors. First, while the Druze are indeed communally liable that day, local Druze agents of the Syrian regime had acted as agent provocateur manipulating the wrath of the masses and leading the Druze killing mobs.

Second, Kamal Joumblatt, at least for the Druze, was no ordinary man. In addition to his progressive international persona, “he was the grandson of Amud al-Sama (pillar of heaven) [Bashir Joumblatt]” and killing him was the ultimate sin. Standing above his father’s grave, Walid Joumblatt was adorned with the traditional mantle of leadership by Mohammad Abu-Shaqr, as he forcefully declared “Walid, a worthy successor to a great predecessor.”

This passing of the torch however had to come at the cost of the death of the innocent and despite the efforts of Walid Joumblatt and his party to reassure the Christians and provide them with whatever protection they could, the Druze vengeance prompted a Christian flight from Mount Lebanon (Shuf & Aley) to the purely Christian regions. A US diplomatic dispatch to the State department, estimates that 91 people were killed and 7000 people fled the Mountain escorted by the Lebanese Interior Security Forces.

Kamal Joumblatt’s assassination changed the whole of Mount Lebanon as the Druze-Christian dynamics of coexistence and the feature which has set the region apart since the days...

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315 Walid Joumblatt as quoted in US Cable Sat, 19 Mar 1977, Junblatt Assassination-Situation March 19. 01211 191106Z
316 Interview with retired General Raja Harb.
317 Ibid.
319 Sat, 19 Mar 1977, Junblatt Assassination-Situation March 19. 01211 191106Z
of Fakhr al-Din was no more. Joseph Abu-Khalil, the Editor-in-Chief of *al-ʿAmal* newspaper (the mouthpiece of the Kataeb party), echoed the frustration and the hatred of the displaced Christians towards the Joumblatti faction especially after 1977. Abu-Khalil, a native of Beit al-Din affirms the Shuf as a region was spared the turmoil that had engulfed the country starting 1975. As a Maronite and as a senior Kataeb member, he felt no physical threat to make the drive to his village at 1:00 am, usually the time the newspaper was sent to print, in the summer of 1976 where his family was vacationing. For Abu-Khalil, the essential historical truth remains, that Mount Lebanon enjoyed almost a century (1861-1958) of tranquility and coexistence between the Druze and the Maronites. His sentiments however soon changed after he was unable to access his hometown as Abu Khalil criticized the Joumblatti attempt to establish a Druze canton, which started with “Kamal Joumblatt’s 1958 coup and continues, till this date, with his son Walid”.

Uprooted and defeated, these Christians looked towards their traditional Christian leadership to return them to their villages and homes, however by that time these aging leaders had no practical plans to achieve this return. This reality would soon change with the rise of a young type of leader, one who could put actions to words, a leader in the words of Johnathan Randall would be willing to go all the way.

### The Rise of Bashir

The manner in which Bashir Gemayel rose to power and the path he charted for himself was very detrimental in the war of the mountain. Many of the aggressive actions this maverick militant-turned-politicians took made him in the eyes of his enemies and especially the Druze, the Joumblattis of them at least, as an existential threat. In 1975, Bashir was still struggling to

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320 *Al-ʿAmal*, 17 March 1983.
321 Randal, *Going all the Way*. 

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make a name for himself within the ranks of the Kataeb. However this proved to be somewhat difficult as his rebellious ideas clashed with that of his father and his older brother Amine who both belonged to a breed of politicians, Bashir used to call a brand of wheelers and dealers. Bashir’s insistence on the fact that “the old Lebanon …..is dead”\textsuperscript{322} and his image as a military man who preferred using violence as the first option put him at a disadvantage, with his own community and also with the Muslims who perceived his statements as calls for war.

In 1976, the Phalangist military high commander, the famed William Hawi was killed while touring the front in the siege of the Palestinian refugee camp of \textit{Tel al-Za’iar}. Consequently, Bashir, Hawi’s deputy was appointed in his stead. His first real test as chief of the Kataeb militia came in the summer of 1978 by confronting the Syrian Army in Ashrafiyah, East of Beirut. Bashir has mistakenly assumed that the West would rush to their aid if they were able to put a good fight. Bashir’s frustration, however, was obvious during his meeting with German ambassador Von Pachelbel, as he had hoped that the Israelis would have intervened in the fight, a miscalculation it seemed from his part.\textsuperscript{323} Over a period of 100 days, the Syrian Special Forces who were part of the ADF, relentlessly shelled the area and tried to storm it, but to no avail. Ultimately, the 100 day war cost the Christians a heavy death toll and the destruction nearly the entire quarter. Although Bashir was able to save face by withstanding the Syrian blitz, he later confessed to Abu Khalil who he lovingly called ‘amo (uncle) that he had miscalculated and “if I knew Israel would not intervene, I would not have done it [the 100 day war].”\textsuperscript{324} More importantly this episode of realpolitik proved to Bashir that his militant approach was

\textsuperscript{322} Bashir Gemayel as quoted in Rani Geha, \textit{Words from Bashir: Understanding the Mind of Lebanese Forces Founder Bashir Gemayel from His Speeches} (Lexington, KY: Create Space, 2010), 15.


\textsuperscript{324} Interview with Joseph Abu Khalil, 2012. Bashir Gemayel: The Series, Oral History Interviews- BGOH
insufficient, at least on its own to win the confrontation with his community as well as against his external enemies.

Almost immediately, Bashir consciously started moving away from the image he had previously drawn for himself as merely a field commander in the early stages of the war. In his public appearances and speeches his firebrand rhetoric remained unchanged, however privately, Bashir started to reach out to the international community, specifically the United States, France and most importantly Israel to convert them to his project. To achieve, Bashir started to seek out people who could act as his shadow cabinet and provide him with the intellectual and practical package needed to make him a politicians and potentially a statesman. These fifteen men Bashir assembled, each came from a different background and possessed a set of skills and talents which Bashir needed to seize power. The debate in their first meeting was how to seize power. Two channels were discussed, either to democratically elect Bashir as president or to appoint him through a military coup, the latter option was chosen.

Unity at Gunpoint

This blatant discussion of Bashir’s wish to become president was only possible after he was able to neutralize all the internal threat within the Christian community. One of the most important obstacles Bashir had to overcome was the disunity of the Christians whose diversity of political groups and militias was a hindering rather than an empowering factor. The liberated regions, as the Christians referred to the areas under their control, were in a state of disarray as each militia

325 Charles Malik (Former Lebanese FM and AUB philosophy Professor), Zahi al-Boustani (Senior Officer in the Security General), Salim al-Jahel (Judge and member of the Supreme Court), Antoine Najm (Kataeb Ideologue), Joseph Abu Khalil (Editor of Kataeb Newspaper al-‘Amal), Colonial Michael Aoun, George Freiha (AUB professor), Jean Nadir (Head of Kataeb Ashrafiyah Chapter), Fadi Frem (Deputy Chief of Staff LF), Fouad Abi Nadir (LF Commander of Operations), Elie Hobeika (LF Chief of Intelligence), Ass’ad Said and Elias al-Zayelik, Samir Geagea (LF commanders)
levied its own taxes and tried to enforce its own law. Despite having a unified military command, the members of the Lebanese Forces (LF) which was established in 1976, continued to operate as separate units, something which Bashir greatly opposed.326 The Kataeb, National Liberal Party, Tanzim, Guardian of the Cedars were the main fighting factions which sat on the LF’s Joint Command Council, presided over by Bashir al-Gemayel.

In its early years, the LF had struggled to become a true army as it lacked the funding and the proper equipment which it seldom had to buy from the black market. However, this was to change with the open alliance that the Maronites forged with Israel which started to progressively supply them with weapons and training.327 Among the main proponents of this open alliance with Israel were Bashir Gemayel and Dany Chamoun, the son of former President Camille Chamoun. Both these militia leaders had forged a working relationship with the Israeli security and military establishment and this translated into shipments of guns and military hardware which started to arrive to the port of Jounieh. The Kataeb by the sheer fact of its size was the recipient of the majority of these weapons, while the NLP Tigers were at second place. Despite its fairly small size, the Tigers militia were spread out across the ‘liberated areas’ and had access to weapons which outmatched their demand which made them engage in illicit trade and the drug business, at least that what their opponents claimed. What is certain however, is the NLP Tigers were less disciplined and gained a reputation for being hoodlums compared to the more organized Kataeb. Bashir also suspected that the Tigers with its various freelancing warlords have been acting as double agents for the Palestinians and the Syrians. According to Naji Butrus, the LF commander of the Ain El-Remmaneh district and longtime member of the

Kataeb party, the NLP had two types of fighting groups, “the Numur (Tigers) an elite disciplined fighting unit commanded by Dany Chamoun and al-Ahmar who were more of a gang rather than a militia.” The NLP and the Kataeb militia had faced off on many occasions, however in summer of 1980, these sporadic incidents became more recurrent and the channels which these two factions used to resolve their differences faltered.

Bulus Na’aman who was usually delegated by Bashir to liaison with the NLP, admitted that his efforts to reconcile Bashir and Dany were an abysmal failure. Na’aman over a period of two months met Rashid al-Khazen, a senior NLP official, to try to mend the fences. Some of these meetings were attended by Bashir as he was adamant to end this anomalous state of affairs which was making the Maronites look weak in the eyes of their Israeli allies. Bashir did not want to resort to violence as a first option mainly to avoid a repeat of the Ehden massacre, where Tony Frangieh, son of the former president and his family were gunned down. At Ehden, Bashir had instructed a Kataeb squad, commanded by Samir Geagea to storm Frangieh’s summer home and arrest a number of his supporters guilty of killing a high-ranking Kataeb member, Joud al-Bayeh. The assumption was that Frangieh would not be present allowing Samir Geagea and this crack squad would be able to subdue and apprehend the criminals without a real fight. However, the firefight that ensued, led to a bloodbath killing everyone in the villa including even the family dog.

Bashir had on many occasions requested the NLP militias fall inline within the LF jurisdiction and to refrain from running their own weapons supply line from the port of Tabarja north of Beirut and to keep their troops on a tight leash. In practical terms it wasn’t only about

328 Interview with Naji Butrus
329 Na’aman, 302.
330 Randall, 121.
331 Ibid, 124.
armament but about perception of the liberated regions as a model for the new Lebanon, Bashir propagated. Bashir was unusually patient on this matter until Na’aman informed him that Khazen had confessed to him that he had no real leverage over the militia after “that they had disrespected him and insulted him publically.”

Bashir answered Na’aman, “you tried your way now let me try mine.”

Before doing it his way, Bashir started to publically declare the need for a radical solution to the lawlessness engulfing the Christin areas. On July 27 1980, speaking to representatives of socio-economic group in the Kisrwan region, Bashir set out what were the steps needed to end this internal standoff:

We believe in political diversity, and we will never abandon this belief, however we also need to be faithful to the blood of our martyrs and to save the society in the liberated areas, and this can only be achieved if our forces are united. It is unacceptable that every neighborhood chief to have his own militia, and that every small shop [measly faction] to have a tank or a field gun. Practice politics as you please, but let us willingly unite the military, before a madman comes along and does so by force.

Eleven days later, this ‘madman’ Bashir gave the green light to his troops to neutralize all the NLP locations and to end the debate once and for all. Bashir’s men attacked the seaside resort of Safra Marina only after they made sure that Dany Chamoun had departed. However, Chamoun’s men and their families who were tanning or asleep were not as lucky, as an estimated 150 NLP members were gunned down. This military operation dubbed by Randall as the “Day of the Long Knives" sealed the fate of the NLP militia which were forced to dissolve within

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332 Na’aman, 302.
333 Interview with Bulus Na’aman, Kaslik 2011.
334 Bashir Gemayel speech at the Yacht Club- Kaslik as quoted in Antoine Najm’s lecture delivered at AUB , April 25 2016. My translation.
335 Randall, 136.
336 Adolf Hitler’s purge of his Nazi SA in 1934.
the LF military structure or as some of them did flee the liberated area into west Beirut. A crucial element which further legitimized Bashir’s forceful unification of the “Christian Gun” was the endorsement of former President Camille Chamoun who was convinced of the necessity of such a step even if it came at the expense of his own NLP. The fact that Bashir offered Chamoun a lucrative cut from the National Fund, rumored to amount to 1 million a month seemed to have appeased the ageing politician.

**Zahle: Victory in Defeat**

Bashir’s next challenge was to get his Israeli allies and the western countries by extension to support his bid, not by mere words but by concrete actions. To do so, Bashir needed to use his newly united Lebanese Forces in a combat situation and frame this act as of national security interest to his allies. This chance would come in the Battle of Zahle in the December of 1980, when clashes erupted between the LF and the Syrian army in and around the city. These clashes soon turned into a full scale war, escalating into a Syrian siege of Zahle, the capital of Catholicism in the Levant. To break this siege, Bashir dispatched his commando units to Zahle, led by Joe Eddé.

Eddé, the scion of a prominent political family from Byblos, was a non-partisan and like the group he belonged to was personal friends of Bashir either from school or university. In 1977, Eddé, was commissioned by Bashir to organize the LF commando units by solidifying it into an efficient and professional outfit, with no allegiances outside the group. Joining Eddé and his men in the defense of Zahle was Augustine “Tito” Tegho, who had been outside

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337 Ibid.
338 Ibid, 139.
339 Interview with Joe Eddé, Bashir Gemayel: The Series
Lebanon since 1977. Tegho who was a Lieutenant in the Lebanese army at the time had fled Lebanon earlier after his regiment had faced off against the Syrian army around the Lebanese Ministry of Defense at Fayadieh. Tegho’s regiment commanded by the legendary commando Capt. Samir Ashkar who single handedly took the decision to respond to the Syrian army provocation and effectively started the 100 day war. Tito, sentenced to death in absentia, for his role in the Fayadieh incident sneaked back into Lebanon onboard a commercial boat from Cyprus. Immediately after his arrival, Tito joined Eddé and his men who made the trip by foot from the ski resort in Faraya across the snowcapped mountain into Zahle. Tito, now a retired General who spends his time hopping on his motorbike or swimming, speaks forcefully about the battle of Zahle. For him and the 90 so men who joined the people of the city in the defense of Zahle, it was simply a matter of survival, “it was not a Christian one but rather a Lebanese Resistance, which fought the Palestinians in 1975 and the Syrians in 1981 in Zahle.”

Zahle which was technically under Syrian occupation since 1976, had no official LF barracks so Eddé had to enter the city with his troops using the rugged trail via Mount Sannine. The LF continued to make this long hike until the Syrian used attack helicopters and landed paratroopers to capture the hills overlooking the trail and the city and a strategic military outpost on the mountain peak known as “the French Chamber”. The forceful Syrian response to Bashir’s challenge was expected given the context and timing of the confrontation. For Syria, the notion of losing Zahle had major military and political implications. In practical military terms, controlling Zahle at the mouth of the Bekaa Valley enabled the Syrian army to resupply its troops in Lebanon as well as prevented the Israelis from outflanking them and attacking

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340 Interview with Augustine Tegho, Beirut August 10 2016
341 Ibid.
Damascus and bypassing the Golan Heights which acted as a natural barrier.\textsuperscript{342} More importantly, a few month earlier in October 1980, Syria signed a Friendship and Cooperation Treaty with the USSR, giving its army the moral and technical confidence to respond to any challenge.\textsuperscript{343}

After the Syrian initial success in Zahle, Bashir gave his men a clear option. Over an open channel which the Syrians heard, he informed Eddé that they had the option to retreat or risk being stuck in the city:

> without ammunition, without medicine, without bread, and maybe without water; your task will be to coordinate the internal resistance and defend the identity of the Lebanese Bekaa and the identity of Christian Lebanon, and by that you will give a meaning to our six year war. I hereby give you full authority to do whatever you see fit. I do not want to theorize. My place should be next to you in Zahle, I wish I could be next to you bearing my gun instead of being in Beirut waiting to be killed by a random [arterially] shell, as I prefer to die in battle. If you decide to stay, know one thing, heroes die and they never surrender.\textsuperscript{344}

Eddé and his men had no delusions about their predicament but retreating was never on their minds, responded to his commander with these simple words, “we will stay.”\textsuperscript{345} They knew quite well that their possible martyrdom would be an offering to the Christians both in Lebanon and the Levant. However, the fate of the LF contingents defending Zahle was not sealed as the Syrian usage of air force in the Bekaa had violated, the Syrian-Israeli implicit agreement, which barred the Syrians from flying over Lebanon or impede Israeli fighters from doing so. The \textit{Israeli-Syrian Deterrence Dialogue}, according to Yair Evron prevented the Syrians from using aircrafts or deploying surface-to-air missile (SAM).\textsuperscript{346} Consequently, the Israeli government,


\textsuperscript{344} Bashir as quoted in Clovis Choueifaty, \textit{The Battles of Syria in Lebanon Vol 2} (Self-published. 2010), 100.

\textsuperscript{345} Ibid.

under Menachem Begin acting against the recommendations of the director of the Mossad and AMAN (Directorate of Military Intelligence) and other members of his administration decided to punish this Syrian aerial transgression. Begin sanctioned an airstrike which destroyed two Syrian helicopters on their runway East of Zahle. Against this attack, Syria deployed a few SAM batteries to curb the Israeli enthusiasm for any future attacks. This was the start to what became known as the missile crisis which required US intervention and the dispatching of Philip Habib, a veteran career diplomat with Lebanese Maronite stock. As Regan’s Special Envoy to the Middle East, Habib met with all sides concerned and defused the standoff and lifted the siege of Zahle evacuating the non-natives LF fighters from the city escorted by the Lebanese Police. Waiting for his men at the LF War Council in Karantina, Bashir received the heroes of Zahle, the cream of the LF fighting corps, who despite evacuating Zahle had won for Bashir and their community an unprecedented victory. Joe Eddé, approached and presented the official military salute to his friend and commander Bashir and addressed him “mission accomplished”.

On that day by making a heroic stand the 90 Special Forces fighters who received the medal of Zahle for bravery and valor, gave the Lebanese Forces the chance to prove to the world, that the Maronite-Israeli alliance was strategic rather than merely logistical. Bashir’s words to his men was customary to any outfit celebrating a well-deserved victory as he stressed the sacrifices they took to protect Zahle from the invading hordes. However this speech was more of a political coming out party and an occasion for Bashir to address the Arab world as well as the international community, declaring that:

Oh you returning fighters, your triumphant return today indeed crowns your military strength and standing over the course of 6 months, and in the midst of a reinforced siege, for it has solidified the line of the Lebanese resistance, a line in accordance with the desire of all Lebanese, not in opposition to any Arab or international recommendations or resolution. And on this occasion, it's necessary to thank all Lebanese, Arab, and

347 Ibid, 94-5.
international authorities that undertook a sincere effort in order to end the tragedy of the
city of Zahle, and to dismantle its siege, and begin the implementation of security
measures as part of a comprehensive future plan. It was no mere coincidence that Bashir chose to deliver his speech in classical Arabic something
which he has done only three times within his fairly short political career. Selim Abou, the
former President of the Jesuit University, concludes that Bashir’s usage of classical Arabic,
customary to politicians and statesmen, was to break away from the military frame he was cast
in, and to declare himself as fit for the presidency as well as to make his words heard by the
Arabs at large.  

The 100-day war complex which had plagued Bashir since 1978 had been finally lifted, as Lt.
General Rafael (Raful) Eitan, Chief of Staff of the Israeli army, had honored his earlier promise
getting word to him during the battle of Zahle, “do not worry, we will not let you fall.” For
the Maronites and their young leader Zahle above all proved that their cause was worthy enough
to cause an international crisis and that their quest to rebuild a new Lebanon, free of the PLO
and Syria was within reach.

The Likud Party and Bashir

After winning the parliamentary elections in 1977, the Likud party, headed by the veteran
politicians and a hero of the Israeli war of independence Menachem Begin was tasked with
forming the next ministerial cabinet. Begin, who headed the infamous Irgun militia that fought
both the British mandatory forces as well as the Palestinians prior to 1948, had all the necessary
credential to lead the Israelis and to take bold risky initiatives. In 1979 the Camp David peace

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348 Bashir Gemayel speech "Return from Zahle", 30 June, 1981.
350 Ménargues, 107.
accord Begin signed with Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat solidified his position as a political heavyweight. The Begin government that gave more attention to Lebanon and the PLO threat to its Northern border, consequently enforced its relationship and cooperation with the Lebanese Forces. Starting 1978, the LF started to receive serious military hardware such as artillery and tanks as well as the customary small arms and their ammunition.\textsuperscript{351} In addition to the political motives, Begin saw in Bashir a younger version of himself, and the fight that the Maronites were waging to liberate their land from the Palestinians was no different from their own struggle in 1948. The few people who sat in on the meetings between Begin and Bashir confirm that “Begin considered Bashir like a son to him.”\textsuperscript{352} Naturally, this fatherly warm sentiment reflected on other branches of the Israeli government which previously detested the LF militia branding them as “Toy Soldiers”.\textsuperscript{353} Bashir and his men were also equally influenced by their Israeli allies as many of them between 1978 and 1982 had visited Israel to receive advanced training courses, some of which were reserved for the elite of the Israeli army.\textsuperscript{354} These courses included paratrooper training, security, intelligence and infantry. Elie Hobeika his men for example were schooled on the latest security and counterintelligence measures in the Midrasha the famous Mossad academy near Herzilya. Furthermore, Hobeika and nearly all the senior commanders around Bashir, including Fouad Abi Nadir, Fadi Frem, and Samir Geagea all attended the Staff and Command College in Israel; which according to one of the people I interviewed was “an intense, fully hands-on course which including top notch Israeli instructors.”\textsuperscript{355}

\textsuperscript{352} Interview with Antoine Najm.
\textsuperscript{354} Kirsten Schulze, \textit{Israel's Covert Diplomacy in Lebanon} (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 106.
\textsuperscript{355} Interviewee requested anonymity
Zionist movement and the various tales of the Israeli struggle for nationhood. When Johnathan Randall first walked into Bashir’s apartment, he directly noticed the memoirs of former Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban, which in itself is a clear political statement. Furthermore, the purge of the NLP militia which Bashir authorized in July of 1980, was dubbed by him as “Operation Altalena” after the Altalena Affair which involved the state of Israel and the renegade Irgun militia headed by none other than Menachem Begin himself. In 1948, the Irgun challenged the newly formed Israeli state by trying to land the Altalena ship which was packed with Irgun fighters and weaponry. Following a long standoff between the two sides, the Israeli government ordered the sinking of the ship, affirming just like Bashir did later, that there is only one legitimate Israeli state.  

The Likud’s parliamentary victory in 1981, saw Ariel Sharon, the hero of the 1973 war appointed Defense Minister. Sharon, known as somewhat of a maverick, soon found in Bashir a reliable ally who stood apart from the traditional ruling class his brother and father belonged to. In his autobiography, Sharon saw in Bashir unification’s of his community in 1980 a serious commitment towards “reconstituting the independent national government that had been buried by the PLO first and reinterred by the Syrians.”

The End of the Affair: The Killing of Kamal Joumblatt

The slaying of Kamal Joumblatt was a major blow to the Lebanese National Movement and to some extent the PLO whose alliance with Joumblatt gave it the much needed political cover to operate. The Druze however, certainly the Pro-Joumblatt among them, were affected beyond this

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356 James Barr, A Line in the Sand: Britain, France and the Struggle for the Mastery of the Middle East (London: Simon & Schuster, 2011), Check page in hardcopy

mere political reality, as they found themselves without a leader surrounded by Syria and the Lebanese Front, each with their own antagonizing plans and goals. By the sheer custom of hereditary succession, Walid Joumblatt replaced his father as head of the Joumblatt clan, the PSP and later the Lebanese National Movement. Kamal Joumblatt however had not groomed his only son to replace him, and his untimely death in 1977 brought this untested 28 year old man to the head of his community and in extremely perilous times. While his father was the product of the Jesuit educational system which made him embrace the ideas of the Maronite establishment at least in the beginning, Walid Joumblatt was a graduate of the American University of Beirut, known to be the hub of Arab Nationalism and anti-Lebanese establishment ideas. Furthermore, Walid stood in sharp contrast to his father’s stoic and philosophical character, as he floated within the circles of intellectual, western journalist and revolutionaries of Ras Beirut as opposed to his father which avoided social functions all together. A US embassy cable profiling Walid right after his father’s death described his character’s flaws as well as his merits:

Walid has an eye for pretty women and a sense of humor, according to friends. During college days, he affected "hippy-like" behavior, dressing in a disheveled manner and roaming Beirut on a motorcycle. Classmates in college and high school found him pleasant, somewhat timid, and of only average intelligence. According to the weekly al Jamhour, he abhors smoking, but likes reading, photography, and classical music.\(^{358}\)

However, the author of the same cable warns that Walid Joumblatt should not be dismissed as a lightweight because:

It is too early to judge Walid’s political abilities. Kamal, before he became head of the Yamani\(^{359}\), was supposedly shy, retiring, and unfit for political leadership. Similarly, it is premature to predict with any confidence the political positions which Walid will espouse.\(^{360}\)


\(^{359}\) The cable states falsely that the Joumblatts are the heads of the Yemeni factions while the Arslans are those of the Qaysi. However the opposite is true.

\(^{360}\) Ibid.
The first major feat of Walid Joumblatt’s political career was indeed unpredictable and shocking to many around him. Forty days after his father’s assassination, the period reserved for mourning, Joumblatt made the arduous trip to Damascus to meet the man who is believed to have killed his father. Sitting opposite to him, Walid listened to the Syrian president Hafez al-Assad as he welcomed him and informed him of the new perimeters of their future relationship. In a threatening manner, Assad looked at Joumblatt and addressed him “How you resemble your father!” in an obvious reminder of the fate that awaited him if he decided to walk in his father’s footstep and continue to oppose the Syrian regime. Joumblatt consciously made this trip because he was fully aware, that difficult as it might be, reconciliation with Syria was needed to protect the Druze and the PSP, and more importantly crucial for the development of his party’s military infrastructure.

**Preparing for War**

The PSP under Kamal Joumblatt had no standing militia but relied mostly on its Druze irregulars which would be mobilized upon need. The majority of the PSP members who fought in the two-year war (75-77) had received their military training by joining one of the many Palestinian factions who used to run basic training camps all across Lebanon. The armament which these fighters used, usually a bestowment from the PLO or a regional country, were somewhat basic and in short supply, as Joumblatt did not have the means nor the will to invest heavily in his militia. In November 1976, the PSP founded the People’s Liberation Force - “The Tanoukhi Brigade” a group of young men who were trained by a Druze medical doctor and a former officer in the Mexican Special Forces, Ghazi Karami. The choice of name clearly indicates Kamal Joumblatt’s wish to

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361 Walid Joumblatt as quoted in https://www.meforum.org/meib/articles/0105_ld1.htm
link his current political venture to that of the early Druze settlers tasked with defending the Lebanese coast against foreign invasions. In all cases, this Brigade was the nucleus to many of the fighting units which were formed in PSP areas, especially those who were engaged in combat at an early stage. According to Riyad Taqi al-Din, the former Chief of Staff of the Lebanese Army, involved in the military activity of the PSP in 1975, the Druze as a people, “were difficult to train and discipline, because they had an intrinsic belief that they were natural born fighters and thus training was unnecessary, a misconception which took a long time to alter.”

The decision to form an official fighting body required a long and arduous debate within the PSP. Kamal Joumblatt was not fully convinced of the utility of investing in a military body which entailed tremendous financial burdens as he exclaimed “where would I get the salaries to pay these men?” Nonetheless, some of the military setbacks incurred by the PSP militias especially in the Battle of Araya, a key town on the Beirut Damascus highway, promoted Joumblatt to sanction this fairly small militia which didn’t exceed 400 fighters. On July 3 1976, the Lebanese National Movement in an attempt to relieve their Palestinian allies during the siege of the camp of Tel al-Za’atar, attacked the Christian village of Araya, north of the Beirut-Damascus highway. The capture of this strategic juncture would possibly end the siege of the camp or perhaps prompt the Lebanese Forces to redeploy. The PSP were tasked with leading the attack on two main axis, while the other factions including the Palestinians were to lead secondary attacks on parallel axis. Contrary to the set plan, these auxiliary factions faltered leaving the PSP all alone to repeal the counteroffensive, which resulted in the death of 27 of their fighters. Raja Harb, who was a first lieutenant at the time, spearheaded the attack which ended tragically. To Harb and many of the field commanders, Araya

364 Interview with Raja Harb
365 Taqi al-Din, 197.
was their wake-up call that victory can only be achieved if the PSP attains military self-sufficiency. Nevertheless, it wasn’t until the death of al-Mouallam (Guru) as Joumblatt was referred to by his followers, that a process to build a real military structure was set in play in collaboration with the USSR. Kamal Joumblatt, a recipient of the prestigious International Lenin Peace Prize awarded to the friends of the Soviet Union, maintained a strong alliance with the USSR, which continued with his son Walid. Kamal Joumblatt, however, never transformed this amity with the soviets into actionable items especially when it came to training and armaments.

Halim Boufakhereddine, who was the chief liaison officer with the Soviets after 1978, affirms that the assumption of Walid Joumblatt to the PSP, saw a radical transformation in the modus operandi in their relationship with Moscow. The PSP, turned towards transforming their friendship with the USSR to a more institutionalized form, as large numbers of Druze and PSP members started to receive scholarships to study in some of the leading Soviet universities. More importantly, on the military level the Soviets took the PSP under its wing and gradually transformed its militia into an army with modern training and with an unrestricted access to weaponry when needed. Raja Harb who led the transformation of the PSP militia asserts that starting 1978 until its decommissioning in 1990, the PSP militia under his command had around 150 men yearly in the USSR at either of the two main training facilities at the Odessa and at Simferopol Military Academy in Crimea. In the winter of 1978, the first group of 52 cadets arrived in the USSR and started to get exposed to various military courses at the school of Infantry to the more advanced Command and Staff College. After their homecoming, these skilled fighters formed the cadres of the PSP training camps which transferred the skills they had acquired

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366 Interview with Halim Boufakhereddine
367 Interview with Raja Harb
368 Ibid.
to a huge numbers of future Druze combatants. Some of these camps featured a number of Syrian trainers dispatched by Hafez al-Assad to assist his new ally Walid Joumblatt. All these aforementioned developments allowed Walid Joumblatt to declare on June 1 1978, the founding of the People Liberation Army (Jayish al-Tahrir al- Sha’abi), which eventually grew to include over 10000 fulltime soldiers spread over infantry, mechanized and logistical brigades. The Druze, under the leadership of the young Joumblatt now had an army capable of confronting any serious challenge, especially the perceived threat that was looming with the rise of Bashir Gemayel and his newly unified Lebanese Forces.

The Missed Opportunity

Despite the widening gap between the Druze and the Maronites, especially after the assassination of Kamal Joumblatt, both sides were determined to find a way to reestablish a working relationship that might possibly pave the way to the Christian return to the Shuf. One of the earliest attempts was a meeting arranged by the Managing Editor of An-Nahar newspaper, Michael Abou Jawdi between Walid Joumblatt and Bulus Na’aman. This meeting took place in June 1977, and the main topic of discussion was the Druze Christian coexistence in the Shuf Mountains and the future challenges that face both communities. Na’aman admits that while his interlocutor was warm and candid, Joumblatt was not willing to oppose the Syrians nor publically establish channels with the Lebanese Front.

In July 1980, shortly after Bashir neutralized the NLP, Zahi al-Bustani was delegated to establish contact with Walid Joumblatt. Bustani who sat on Bashir’s ‘war cabinet’ was a native of the town of Deir al-Qamar and was aware of the intricacies and dynamics of the Shuf. The

369 Taqi al-Din, 220.  
371 Ménargues, 81-2.
lunch in Moukhtara, however, did not yield any serious outcome but yet it sent a clear message to Joumblatt that Bashir was open to suggestions that would secure Druze consent for his project. Another more serious attempt to bring the Lebanese Forces and Bashir to terms with Walid Joumblatt was taken by the President of the Republic Elias Sarkis. This initiative was delegated to Colonel Johnny Abdu, Lebanon military intelligence chief (Deuxième Bureau) who was on excellent terms with Bashir and his close circle.

The series of meetings that ensued took place at Abdu’s house, featured Joseph Abu Khalil and Antoine Najm from Bashir’s side and Samir Franjieh, representing Joumblatt. Shortly after the start, Bashir’s emissaries requested a Druze be added to the opposing side, after which Colonel. Riyadh Taki al-Din joined in the dialogue. According to Abu Khalil what facilitated this process was a parallel process which the Syrian regime had launched to parley with Bashir. This culminated in the midst of the battle of Zahle with a meeting between Major-General Muhammad al-Khawli, Chief of Air Force Intelligence, and Bashir in the presence of President Sarkis. Syria had always hoped to coax Bashir in abandoning his Israeli allies in hopes of neutralizing Bashir and joining their side. The meeting was extremely open as both sides expressed willingness to explore ways to reestablish a friendship which was shattered with the 100-days war. Khawli made it clear to Syria’s outspoken critic by declaring “I have assured President Assad that you’re an upstanding man, which we can work with, and I also told him that your relationship with Israel was out of pure necessity as you had your back against the wall.”

Samir Franjieh, the scion of a family traditionally on excellent terms with the Assad family and an active member of the Lebanese National Movement represented Joumblatt in these...
talks. His father Hamid was a leading figure in the independence era and a key ally to Kamal Joumblatt in the 1958 revolt. Franjieh a close friend to Joumblatt with Leftist inclinations, was educated at the Jesuit University where he and other leftists clashed both literally and intellectually with the right wing factions chiefly among them the Kataeb and Bashir Gemayel. According to Franjieh, the meetings with his ideological nemesis were surprisingly positive, despite the fact that they started off by throwing accusations at each other for previous events, both sides started to exchange fruitful discussions. It was extremely vivid to Franjieh that Bashir he knew at the Jesuit University in 1968 had matured politically as the ideas his delegates were proposing were a departure from his earlier rigid ideas. The objective of these series of meetings was to “agree on common grounds by reaching a written agreement which would pave the way for an eventual meeting between Bashir and Walid as well as other sides, for what is needed a common vision to build a formula for the new Lebanon”

Both of these young leaders have never met before and much of the information they knew about each other was based on personal impression of mutual friends or acquaintances. After his only meeting with Joumblatt, Joseph Abu Khalil reported back to Bashir his disappointment because contrary to what he thought:

The man I met today was unimpressive, he does not project self-confidence. He is reserved and paranoid. I thought him to be of a tougher metal. His logic is very different from ours, he and his allies believe that our aim is the Zionification of Lebanon. They think us to be more powerful than we are, therefore I think they fear us. Therefore I think we are well positioned to negotiate with him.

Walid Joumblatt on the other side was equally oblivious to Bashir’s persona, much of the questions he asked Franjieh about Bashir and the ongoing negotiations were of an inquisitive yet

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376 Interview with Samir Franjieh, Beirut 12 August 2016.
377 Ibid
378 Samir Franjieh as quoted in Abu Khalil, 149. My translation.
379 Abu Khalil as quoted in Ménargues, 84. My Translation.
aloof nature. Joumblatt’s ignorance of his foe and hesitancy to engage him was normal given that he felt disenfranchised within a Maronite dominated system. Talking to Alain Ménargues, Joumblatt expressed his barefaced frustration for “being a Druze and my children will be as well, we will never become presidents [of the republic], whereas any Maronite, even the stupidest amongst them, can become president just because they are Maronite.”

Despite the reservations from both sides, the talks yielded two documents outlining the demands, expectations and responsibilities of each side, in preparation for signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). These documents when placed within their proper context are a good indications of the mental political state of each faction as well as their immediate and long term goals. The document submitted from Bashir’s side was clearly part of his master plan to seize power by mustering enough political support to be elected President at the end of the Sarkis term which was in a year’s time. The points raised by the Bashir memorandum “liberating the nation from foreigners, reclaiming state sovereignty and changing the political mindset of the country” are a case in point. This somewhat overambitious goal was, nevertheless, coupled with practical measures involving the cooperation of Bashir and Walid, leading to the suspension of the constitution, dissolving of Parliament and the incorporation of the various militias into the Lebanese army. The most important element of the document however remains its alleviation of Joumblatt and the Druze from their minority status and placing them second to the Maronites, practically a return to the pre-1920 setup.

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380 Interview with Samir Franjieh
381 Ménargues, 83.
383 Ibid.
Joumblatt’s document, on the other hand, read more like a reform plan rather than a roadmap for political office. Many of its clauses were infused with socialist undertones as well as demands to abolish the sectarian Lebanese system which “creates in the Muslims a feeling of inequity and alienation.” Both documents however noticeably acknowledge the role each side was expected to play to warrant the cooperation of their regional and International allies; as none of the two leaders were under any illusion that without the cooperation of Israel, Syria and the PLO, their plans will remain at best a process of wishful thinking. It was the absence of this regional consensus which derailed the negotiation process which by the end of December 1980 stood the chance of becoming a reality. Walid Joumblatt early on in the negotiation process requested that these sessions be conducted in absolute secrecy for fear that his Syrian allies might construe this move as a challenge to them. Samir Franjieh maintains that at the final minute, “the Syrians did not allow Walid to proceed with the deal,” concurrently, the Syrian attempt to open up to Bashir had faltered and so with it the Bashir-Walid dialogue. According to Ménargues, Joumblatt was summoned by President Assad to Damascus where he was warned not to pursue talks with the Christians and the Lebanese Forces. The story which Ménargues cites includes a terrifying gesture which Assad made when addressing Joumblatt “it is striking how much you resemble your father, I could see him sitting on the same chair where you are right now, and this was four days before his death. Why didn’t he listen to my advice? It’s a shame what happened to him”. This same story has been circulated and in different contexts to highlight the highhanded approach the Syrians employed with their allies, however there are reasons to suspect this topos

**Notes**

385 Interview with Samir Franjieh.
386 Ménargues, 88.
387 Ibid.
like story at least within our current discussion. First, Kamal Joumblatt never met Assad four
days before his death but rather their last meeting took place in spring of 1976. Second this story
offers Joumblatt the chance to exonerate himself from any blame for abandoning the dialogue
with Bashir, and framing it as not the result of a personal disposition but rather an arm-twisting
Syrian tactic. Close to concluding the MOU with Bashir, Walid Joumblatt traveled abroad and
launched a verbal assault, like he has done on numerous prior occasions, against the Lebanese
Forces and the person of Bashir. It was no surprise that these talks collapsed almost in tandem
with the start of the Battle of Zahle, when a former leader of the purged NLP militia, Elias al-
Hannash believed to be a Trojan horse for the Syrian regime, provoked a firefight with the local
LF chapter after which the Syrian soon joined.

Crossing the Rubicon: Operation Snowball

The regional implications of the Battle of Zahle and the Syrian-Israeli standoff made it clear that
the forthcoming period might perhaps bring about tremendous change. On January 12, an Israeli
helicopter landed in Zouk north of Beirut, on board was Ariel Sharon accompanied by high
ranking military and intelligence officers. Sharon’s visit was that of the highest ranked Israeli
official to Lebanon since the founding of the state of Israel, however the news which was to be
delivered to Bashir and the LF was worthy of such a trip. After receiving “a royal welcome”
by Bashir, Sharon and his party were transported to the Mossad office a few miles away where
they met with Pierre Gemayel and Camille Chamoun. Over dinner, Sharon dropped a bomb by
informing his hosts that Israel will “rearrange its northern border by launching a major military
operation… we will not tolerate what is happening and we are adamant to take action.”

388 Abu Khalil, 157.
389 Ménargues, 196-7
390 Sharon as quoted in Ménargues, 197.
declaration however was not to only inform the LF but to seek their logistical and more importantly political endorsement to this invasion. The Israeli army would drive all the way to the outskirts of Beirut, where the LF was expected to get their hands dirty and take on and storm the Lebanese capital which by that time was virtually a PLO bastion. Sharon and the hawkish faction behind him was able after a long debate to convince PM Begin of the inevitability of military action to protect Northern Israel from the artillery and rockets of the PLO and their Lebanese allies. Consequently, Begin sanctioned Sharon to carry out one of the two plans for the invasion of Lebanon, which was a limited incursion of 40km into Lebanon much similar to the operation Israel undertook in 1978.

In 1978, a land invasion (operation Litani) by Israel pushed the PLO back to the north of the Litani River, 20 miles away from the Lebanese-Israeli border. This operation, however, proved to be unsuccessful as PLO activities persisted but with less frequency. After the signing of the Camp David peace accord by Israel and Egypt, as well as an undeclared cease-fire between the PLO and Israel, the rightwing Likud government felt confident enough to put an end to its Lebanon predicament. In effect, Menachem Begin wanted to end the Palestinian armed presence in Lebanon, and more importantly, he wanted to “facilitate the reconstruction of the Lebanese state and political system under the hegemony of Israel’s [Christian] allies”, and thus pave the way to the signing of a peace treaty between the two states.391 Begin had earlier reshuffled his cabinet and expelled elements that did not fully endorse his hawkish outlook. Consequently, Begin sacked his Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan and Defense Minister Ezer Weizmann and replaced them with Yitzhak Shamir and Ariel Sharon respectively, one of the most hawkish lineups to date. The Israelis, via Sharon, promised Alexander Haig- the US secretary of state at

the time- that their limited incursion into Lebanon will not venture beyond 25 km. According to Philip Habib, Haig, well known for his pro-Israeli leanings, gave Sharon a green light by telling him “we [USA] don’t think you should invade Lebanon, but it’s really up to you to decide that for yourself.”

Sharon hoped to gain his government’s acceptance for a full scale invasion which would destroy the PLO’s military civilian infrastructure, however despite their implicit wish to get rid of the PLO, neither Begin nor the United States were willing to publicly endorse such a reckless move. Sharon never known to follow orders, ended up carrying his original plan and coincidentally that of Bashir, the liberation of Lebanon from the PLO.

On June 6 1982, and in retaliation for the assassination attempt against its ambassador to the United Kingdom Shlomo Argov, Israel launched Peace for Galilee a full-scale invasion of Lebanon that included three months of rigorous fighting and a vicious siege of the capital Beirut, which is 118 km beyond Sharon’s initial pledge. This ended in the evacuation of the PLO and the forcible election of Bashir Gemayel as president of the republic. Against all these developments, the stage was set for the events of that would unfold between the Maronites and the Druze and the long and turbulent past they had shared over the years.

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392 Boykin, 56.
Chapter Five

The rapid and forceful rise of Bashir Gemayel to power brought apprehension to his Muslim enemies but more so to his Druze Joumblatti opponents, who saw in him a threat to their existence. This perhaps exaggerated fear was enhanced by the collective perception of the majority of the Druze who saw in the overly ambitious Bashir Gemayel a re-embodiment of Bashir II who had ended the Druze dominance over the politics of Mount Lebanon, destroyed the Druze muqatajiya families (tax-farmers) in the 19th century and more importantly killed their leader Bashir Joumblatt.\(^{394}\) Equally Bashir Gemayel’s alliance with Israel, and the military invasion underway also equated to Bashir II’s collaboration with the invading Egyptian forces of Mohammad Ali Pasha (1831) which the former used to crush both his Christian and Druze opponents. Consequently, the common Druze in 1982, felt overwhelmed by the Israeli invasion as well as the possibility of the Lebanese Forces entering their towns and villages to exert revenge.\(^{395}\) While these fears might have been somewhat unfounded at first, however the sequences of events as well as the confrontation between the Druze and the Maronites that followed only cemented and reinforced each communities perception of the other.

Reclaiming our Rightful Place

On 18 June, twelve days after the start of the Israeli invasion, a LF convoy made its way to the Shuf Mountains, effectively starting the chain reaction that was to become \textit{Harb al-Jabal}. Before dispatching his soldiers to the mountain, Bashir al-Gemayel stood on the hood of a jeep at the Kasarjein Barracks in Ain el-Remmaneh and gave his men instructions for the mission ahead. To many of the Christians of the Shuf, the Israeli invasion brought them one step closer to

\(^{394}\) Traboulsi, 230.
\(^{395}\) Interview with Sheikh Sharif Abou Hamdan. PSP Oral History Project.
returning to their villages and homes, which they had left five years earlier when Kamal Joumblatt’s assassination forced them into exile. George Radi, an LF soldier and a native of Dar al-Haref in the Maten region, was present that day and listened carefully to the words of the al-Qā‘id (Leader). Gemayel, addressing a select group of LF troops, reminded his men the following.

May God forgive them [his opponents] for what they did; nevertheless we will turn over a new page. We are confident that Lebanon’s 6000 years of history will never disappear and that we will rebuild a stronger and a more beautiful Lebanon. Today, a new Lebanon is born and it will not resemble in any way the old Lebanon of 1943, which was based on indifference and dubiousness… we need to forget the old institutions, as we will not allow for a weak judiciary or a parliament full of brokers and wheelers and dealers… Tomorrow you will return to your villages to find statues commemorating the martyrs of the Communist Party and the Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party [your opponents]. You will also find your houses burnt and demolished. I tell you from now on, your duty is to protect our foes regardless of what they have done to us in the past… There are some people we fought for the past eight years all across Lebanon, these people have blown up our houses and desecrated the tombs of our ancestors. But today we have to respect their dead; they might have bombed our houses but we will protect theirs. They have insulted our rituals but we will respect theirs, they have expelled us from our homes but we will keep them in theirs. Now is the time to take back the initiative and to reclaim our rightful place in the Mashriq (Levant)...  

Also present on that day was ES, a high-ranking LF intelligence officer. Reflecting on Bashir’s speech that day, ES believed that what was being asked of the Shabab (troops) was virtually impossible to carry out. Despite Gemayel’s conviction that his strong, 25,000-troop militia was a professional and disciplined army, the reality was somewhat different. The LF contingent dispatched to the Mountain was composed of two kinds of men. The first group of fighters comprised soldiers native to Mount Lebanon who had been displaced from their homes and villages after 1977 and who had grown up with the collective memory of their ancestors being massacred by the Druze, both in 1860 and in 1977 after the slaying of Kamal Joumblatt. The

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second breed of fighters was totally alien to the mountain, but they had lost loved ones and comrades and merely wanted revenge. Surprisingly, it was the latter group who aggravated the situation, mainly because they had no understanding or respect to the particularities of the region and thus committed unspeakable acts against the Druze, such as humiliating them at roadblock, abduction and even murder. According to ES, Bashir’s speech on that day did not have “double meanings, Bashir literally meant what he said, however, the people listening to him had double feelings.”

Not only the populace but also the higher echelons of both the Druze and the Maronite communities were driven by these mixed feelings.

The LF force dispatched to the Shuf were under the command of the Naji Butrus, the veteran commander of the Ain el-Remmaneh district and one of the participants in the famous “Bus incident” in April 1975 that started the civil war. Despite hailing from the Southern coastal Maten region, Butrus was also very familiar with the Shuf and the customs of its people; as he would spend his summer holiday at his maternal grandparents in Deir al-Qamar. Upon receiving his orders, Butrus led a mechanized convoy of 900 fighters (some of whom were support troops) from their barracks in Ain el-Remmaneh to the intersection of al-Damour at the entrance of Shuf. Waiting for them there, was an Israeli General called Beja who escorted the LF party to their new base at an abandoned Lebanese army barracks in Beit al-Din.

Bashir seemingly had no intention at clashing with the Druze, for this display of power was sure to provoke a reaction, but a number of factors prevented such a scenario from happening. First, according to Butrus his advancing troops were mistaken by the Druze to be Israeli, as their uniforms, armaments and vehicles were identical to those of the Israeli Defense Force-IDF. Second the fact that a high ranking Israeli general was providing escort was proof enough that

397 Interview with ES. He said this verbatim. Beirut, Lebanon, January 2010. This person requested anonymity
398 Interview with Naji Butrus, June 22 2016, Makleis, Lebanon.
the Israeli would not take lightly to any violent actions against this deployment. The choice of the Lebanese army barracks was not coincidental but rather a conscious decision by Bashir to avoid provoking the Druze. This decision was partly upon the advice of Antoine Najem who warned Bashir of the following:

> If you must send your men to the Mountain, make sure to avoid two things. Do not establish your own LF barracks but rather use the ones the Lebanese Army uses, second do not disarm the Druze. If you try to disarm the Druze, they will feel under threat and thus rise in revolt, just like they did in the 1840s when Ibrahim Pasha did so.  

Since the start of the invasion, the Druze, refrained from any open military confrontation with the Israeli army. Despite their frustration and shock over the ease and effectiveness of the Israeli advancement, no single bullet was fired at the IDF. Within two days of the start of the invasion, the IDF blitzed through the south of Lebanon with one clear objective, reaching and securing the Beirut-Damascus highway. By securing this, objective the IDF was able to encircle the capital Beirut and sever the supply line between the PLO and its forces in the Bekaa valley. The PLO forces, dispersed from the southern border all the way to Beirut, crumbled when faced with a better trained, equipped and organized military force. Yezid Sayigh in his assessment of “Palestinian Military Performance in the 1982 War”, underscores many of the obstacles and shortcomings of the PLO, stressing that what gave the IDF a fairly easy military victory was the PLO failure to evolve “fully from guerrilla units into regular forces using classical modes of

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399 Interview with Antoine Najem.
operation.” Regardless of the factors which led to the Palestinian debacle what is certain is that all the Lebanese, especially the Pro-Palestinian among them, were shocked by the rapidity and ease of the IDF advancement. Sheikh Sharif Abu Hamdan, admits that the sight of the Israeli army blocking the access to his village in the Shuf had “a tremendous impact on the morale of everyone around him.” Abu Hamdan, a Druze religious judge and an adviser to the Sheikh al-‘Aql Mohammad Abu Shaqra, refused to accept the defeat and the occupation which came with it:

Although people at the early stage of the invasion were afraid of the Israeli army and their future plans, we, like a good Druze should always do, refused to appear as vanquished. Upon the instructions of his eminence [Sheikh Mohammad Abu Shaqra] and Walid Joumblatt, we requested that the people refrain from hoisting any white flags because they were unnecessary to begin, and to simply act like civilians under occupation and to refrain from talking to the IDF troops or sell them any food and goods they needed.

Walid Joumblatt was very vigilant that the Druze refrain from dealing with the Israelis so as to avoid any clashes or more importantly to prevent them from becoming willing collaborators with what he perceived as an all-out occupation. The Druze reality was somewhat different, for as a community the Druze did not view the IDF as an existential threat nor a permanent foe. As long as the Druze were allowed to keep their arms there was no need for them to fight the IDF, the Israelis were there simply to expel the PLO and not to hurt the Druze. The arms of the Druze therefore is a natural extension of their existence. As a minority the Druze believe that their arms are their only means to protect themselves and their land from a historically aggressive surroundings. This attachment to weapons is clearly echoed in Druze popular culture, for when a Babyboy is born they refer to him as a rifle, as he will be expected once he reaches adulthood to defend the Druze like his

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401 Interview with Sheikh Sharif Abu Hamdan, PSP Oral History Project.
ancestors did before him. I vividly remember my late grandfather who used to recite to me an exclusively Druze proverb, one which stress weapons as an extension rather than an accessory:

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\text{When a huge fortune comes their way} \\
\text{A Christian would build a huge Mansion} \\
\text{A Muslim would go to Mecca on pilgrimage} \\
\text{A Druze would simply buy more weapons}
\]

While the IDF seemed to be aware of these Druze fears, they still tried to test these limitations. On 10 June, an IDF patrol commanded by a captain pulled up to the Moukhtara Palace, the historical abode of the Joumblatt’s and requested to examine the premises in search for weapons and fighters.402 Joumblatt and his military command had anticipated such a scenario and thus had refrained from keeping any of the heavy weaponry on the grounds. This Israeli demand naturally caused a ruckus, as the people present including Walid Joumblatt confronted the Israeli troops at the entrance and refused to allow them to carry out their orders. According to Suleiman Rashid, the caretaker of the Palace, May Joumblatt the mother of Walid, was furious as she was provoked by this blatant invasion of her home.403 As it is customary with Arab hospitality, every guest visiting al-Moukhtara is served coffee. When the coffee boy tried to offer coffee to these soldiers May reprimanded him shouting “we don’t serve coffee to the lowlife dogs.”404 This standoff was defused as the Israel captain left the palace without finishing the task at hand, but kept a few personal carriers around the location. In response to this transgression, Joumblatt’s close circle sent out calls to neighboring villages to come to the aid of their besieged leader. In a fairly short amount of time, Druze clerics and laymen started to arrive at the gates of Moukhtara. This small unarmed crowd quickly turned into an angry mob which threatened to

402 Interview with Raja Harb.  
403 Interview with Suleiman Rashid, PSP Oral History Project.  
404 Ibid.
capture the Israeli vehicles, after which the Israelis fully evacuated the area. According to Raja Harb who was present that day, this was a sly attempt by the Israelis to send a message to Joumblatt and the PSP that they were under close scrutiny.\textsuperscript{405} Shortly after, an Israeli Colonel paid a visit to Joumblatt to assure him that what happened was not part of the IDF policy but merely a manifestation of the schism between the different Israeli factions fighting for power.\textsuperscript{406} Joumblatt’s position vis-à-vis the Israeli invasion was always that of hostility, even when he met any of their officers or representatives he made it clear that he was doing so out of duress rather than conviction. This was the same position Joumblatt expressed to Nachik Navot, the Mossad officer in charge of Lebanon, when the latter urged him to join a salvation committee President Sarkis had suggested.\textsuperscript{407} Interviewed by the Israeli TV, Joumblatt announced “as a political prisoner I refuse, out of principle, to join any committee while the Israeli tanks are surrounding the presidential palace.”\textsuperscript{408} According to Harb, the journalist that interviewed Joumblatt asked him if he was a Lebanese Army officer, to which Harb replied “I am a Druze and also an officer in the Lebanese army.”\textsuperscript{409} The manner in which Harb identified himself is peculiarly interesting as it reflects his own and his communities’ frame of mind when threatened as was the case at the time.

The culmination of these Israel attempts to reach out to Joumblatt came with the visit of Shimon Perez, the head of the Israeli Labor Party, to Moukhtara. Perez, whose party objected to the Israeli invasion as being a reckless and unnecessary, was dispatched by the president of the Socialist International- SI Willy Brandt to check on Joumblatt, one of the two SI Vice

\textsuperscript{405} Interview with Raja Harb.
\textsuperscript{406} Ménargues, 243. The rank of the officer is not confirmed due to two contradict sources but what is certain is the fact that he was a high-ranking field commander.
\textsuperscript{407} Ibid, 249.
\textsuperscript{408} As quoted by Ménargues, 250.
\textsuperscript{409} Interview with Raja Harb.
The Israeli cabinet had been under tremendous pressure internally as it faced a gale of criticism from the Left led by Peres who accused Sharon of “shrouding the whole invasion with a cloak of deceit, and now with the end of the fighting, the immediate aim of the Israeli democratic forces is to topple the government of Begin.” Peres wanted to take advantage of Joumblatt’s oppositions of the invasion to further discredit Begin, something which Joumblatt made sure to avoid. Joumblatt’s hesitant and aggressive stance with dealing with the Israelis was not totally based on ideology but rather on Realpolitik. For Joumblatt, the Israelis had certainly won the military confrontation, but the PLO where still barricaded in Beirut and the Syrian army was still stationed on the fringes of the Beirut-Damascus highway. On 17 June 1982, Joumblatt left Moukhtara to Beirut escorted by the American Counselor Ryan Crocker who maneuvered him through the many Israeli checkpoints besieging the capital, where he remained until the final evacuation of the PLO two month later.

**Bashir vs. Walid**

On 20 June, one day after the LF militia entered the Shuf Mountains, Gemayel and Joumblatt met at the presidential palace in Ba’abda. The President of the Republic at the time, Elias Sarkis, convened a “Salvation Committee”, which included representatives of the major sects, to discuss the question of the Israeli invasion and its repercussions. The committee was made up of Prime Minister Shafiq al-Wazzan, Foreign Minister Fouad Butrus, Bashir Gemayel, Walid Joumblatt, Nabih Berri (leader of the Shi’ite Amal Movement) and Nasri al-Ma’luf. Joumblatt who had previously refused to join this committee, finally acquiesced to Sarkis’s requests after securing the

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410 Ménargues, 250.
411 Peres as quoted in Ménargues, 250.
412 Interview with Suleiman Rashid, PSP Oral History Project.
413 See Al-Nahar, 20 June 1982.
approval of some of the Sunni political leaders, primarily Saeb Salem and Rashid Karami and the expansion of the committee to include more personalities. Prior to their meeting, the two young warlords Bashir and Walid had never met before but had been exchanging messages through a network of interlocutors, at least since 1980. Their latest attempt to reconcile in 1980-81 was supposedly thwarted by Hafez al-Assad who would not entertain such an idea. Before the committee convened, these two had a side meeting that lasted for nearly 45 minutes. According to the classified minutes of this meeting, Gemayel had asked Joumblatt for his support to be elected President. Joumblatt was also asked to help end the military invasion by convincing his allies, the Palestinians, to surrender. In return, Joumblatt was offered the chance to become the second man in the republic, answerable only to the President. According to George Freiha, Bashir’s Chief-of-Staff, Joumblatt’s cooperation was extremely important for the success of their project. Gemayel in fact wanted to reinstate the pre-1840 Maronites-Druze alliance, whereby the main power center would reside, respectively, within the hands of the Maronite and Druze. Down the centuries, the Maronites have always harbored some sort of delusion that the Druze shared their Lebanese national aspiration and therefore a return to the Lebanese Emirate was plausible.

The blunt manner in which Bashir addressed Joumblatt stems from the fact that, one month before the Israeli invasion, Joumblatt had relayed to Bashir’s emissary his willingness to avoid any confrontation in Mount Lebanon. However, the first meeting between the two ended with no tangible results. Joumblatt, perhaps, would have considered Gemayel’s proposal, which would have empowered the Druze politically and given them a bigger share of the Lebanese state.

414 See page 155.
415 Interview with an LF official who requested anonymity.
417 Salibi, 205.
However, given Joumblatt’s political rhetoric in that period, it is presumable that the memory of the 19th century did not fit well into his collective memory and that of the Druze. Any reference to this era evoked images of Maronite treachery and the persecution of Joumblatt’s grandfathers, and more specifically the Bashir Joumblatt incident mentioned earlier. On the other hand, the Maronites were well aware of this reality and made it abundantly clear that they would never trust the Druze. Interestingly, a common Lebanese proverb preaches this line, as it says “Dine at the Druze house and sleep at the Christian house”, stressing that the Druze are treacherous by nature and can kill you in your sleep. We can safely presume that this proverb was not created nor propagated by the Druze, but was rather the perception of their Maronite counterparts. An article that appeared in al-ʿAmal newspaper entitled “Walid Joumblatt and the Bashir Gemayel Complex” might serve to underscore this point. This one-page feature story speaks of how Walid Joumblatt, ever since his tribal appointment to the Joumblatti clan, had harbored resentments against the Maronites and particularly Bashir Gemayel. According to the article, this is a trait he inherited from his father. But the most important point that the author Walid, the penname of Nabil Khalef, makes is the following:

The name “Bashir” has always been problematic to the Joumblatt family because it reminds them of the end of their feudalism and Bashir II. Now the Maronites, under the leadership of Bashir Gemayel, have proved that they can transform into a fighting Spartan community and not only remain businessmen and men of letters.\footnote{Al-ʿAmal, 4 July 1982, “Walid Joumblatt and the Bashir Gemayel Complex: a reading into Joumblatt’s political stances based on a psycho-sociological historical interpretation.” The article also featured a relatively small picture of Walid Joumblatt with the subtitle “the remnant of old Lebanon’ while above it in the center lay a big picture of Bashir Gemayel with the subtitle “the new face of Lebanon.”}
Battle of Qoubeï-al-Krayeh: The First Spark

On 27 June, seven days after their meeting, Joumblatt replied to Bashir’s proposal. In addition to the LF forces dispatched to the Shuf, a smaller contingent was sent to the Aley-Maten region where it was stationed in the Mar Elias Monastery in the village of Kahlouniyeh; a few miles West of the Beirut-Damascus highway. These LF troops had taken advantage of the Israeli presence in the area and consequently started to patrol some of the surrounding villages, searching some of the houses looking for guns. With the start of the invasion, the PSP military command had issued instructions to all its units to refrain from openly carrying arms and to merely maintain vigilance, especially at night. The continuing LF transgressions, however, especially the search for weapons and questioning of people, was surely to provoke a violent Druze response. At dawn, the Druze who were keeping guard in the village of al-Krayeh noticed movements from the LF barracks as troops started to head in the direction of their village. Most of the people I interviewed who fought in the battle that day confirm that they were surprised by the Lebanese Forces or what they commonly refer to as Kataeb as they entered their villages. Simply, the main reason for this surprise is that they assumed these troops were Israeli because the LF uniforms and vehicles were identical to the IDF. The LF started to search the houses and round up some of the villagers in the town square, which was perceived by the Druze to be an ominous sign which would lead to their eventual massacre. The Druze were particularly weary of a repeat of the 1976 scenario in the village of Salima, where in retaliation for the death of some of their own Christian fighters, using the presence of the Syrian army at the time, raided the Druze and killed a number of them. Shortly after the IDF entered their region, Jihad Bou Fakerdine, a PSP military commander was delegated by the people of Maten to convey to the Israeli’s his people’s fears as well as their utter refusal of any LF presence within their areas:
We will not allow you to enter our villages if the Kataeb [LF] militants come in after you or use your forces as cover to gain entry to our areas. If you do so we will be forced to fight you. Or instead you make sure to prevent the Kataeb from setting checkpoints and posts. If you opt not to, you will only enter the Maten over our dead bodies. 419

One of the people detained in the village square was Kamel Daou, a 79 year old Druze cleric who was forced along with the rest of his village folks to stay seated on the ground for over 8 hours, after which they were forced to go home and remain under house arrest for 6 whole days, the duration of the battle that followed. Daou insulted and annoyed by his detention, addressed one of his captors, “we are not used to sitting like this for [eight] hours” to which the LF militiaman angrily replied “shut up, you [Druze] have made us sit on the ground for over eight years.” 420

The manner in which the soldier responded reflects how, despite Bashir’s clear instructions, many of them were guided by revenge rather than political ideology. Halim Bou Fakerdine, a native of Qoubbei’, recalls how a few days before the LF stormed his village, he got into an altercation with an LF fighter at the hospital in the city of Aley. Following a short firefight between the PSP and the LF one Druze fighter was transported to hospital with serious injuries, as Halim started to attend to his wounds a number of LF fighters stormed into the Emergency Room requesting to arrest the patient. As a physician, Halim stood up to these men and their leader, a young man with a very aggressive attitude sporting a beard and waving his handgun. Emmanuel Gemayel. Bashir’s nephew,

419 Interview with Jihad Bou Fakerdine, PSP Oral History Project.
420 Interview with Sheikh Kamel Daou, PSP Oral History Project.
addressed Halim threateningly “listen Dr. we are the [Lebanese] State here, our way of doing things will prevail, you need to get used to it.” Halim did not recognize this man at the time, but would see him again a week later when he was inspecting his corpse a few steps from his house.

**You’re Back?..... We Have to Fight**

The main response to the invasion of their village came from their relatives and neighbors in the adjacent village of Qoubbei which were equally surprised by the LF infiltration. Ghanem Tarabay, the senior commander in that battle confronted the advancing Christin fighters on the fringes of his village near the mosque, which caters to the Sunni summer inhabitants of the area.

When the Israeli invasion started on June 6, Ghanem was in Moscow receiving medical treatment but he soon jumped on the first plane to Damascus, then proceeded by foot from the Syrian border all the way to Qarnayal where he was met by one of his comrades. Ghanem then drove past the Israeli checkpoints on his way to Moukhtara to meet Walid Joumblatt. Once in Moukhtara, Ghanem had to jump over the fence to gain entry to the Palace where Joumblatt and his senior leadership were held up. As he made his way up the stairs to the main hall, Anwar al-Fatayri, the veteran PSP official rushed to inform Joumblatt of Ghanem’s arrival. Joumblatt rushed to meet Ghanem at the door addressing him “so you are back?” after which Ghanem enquired what is to be done, to which he received a clear answer “we need to fight.” Ghanem then turned around and went back to his home where he prepared his men for the battle to come.

Ghanem who underwent extensive training courses both in Lebanon and the Soviet Union had no delusions that the Druze were not so eager to fight because they were still shocked by the

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421 Interview with Halim Bou Fakerdine.
422 Interview with Ghanem Tarabay.
invasion. Some of them were equally convinced that the Lebanese Forces were better trained and equipped and impossible to beat by a weaker PSP militia. However this was completely unfounded, because by 1982 as Ghanem confirms the PSP had a fully trained militia capable of defending their areas if needed.

Ghanem’s decision to confront the LF early on was geared by two main considerations. The First was a tactical consideration, to prevent the LF from linking up with their forces in the southern parts of Mount Lebanon with their Christian hinterland in the North Maten region. For the Druze, the possibility of such a scenario occurring would have catastrophic military implication as the entire area would be totally severed from the PSP supply lines and thus be doomed. Second and more importantly this battle was simply a fight for our “existence and dignity” reminding his comrades before the battle “remember Salima.” For Ghanem who was 28-year-old at the time, it was clear that the duty at hand was his family’s legacy and that he was just doing what his ancestors did in 1860 and 1958:

My father, who had fought with the rebels in 1958, died next to me during the battle and so did a number of my cousins… We did not clear our decision to engage the Lebanese Forces with the Party (PSP), but we knew what should be done. I was defending my land and my dignity, just like my father did in 1958 and my great-grandfather before him in 1860.

The LF Chief of Staff, Fouad Abu Nadir, affirms that his men were acting upon their own initiative for they had no instructions of any sorts to search for weapons or even arrest people. Abu Nadir, who happens to be Manuel Gemayel’s cousin as well, declares that the whole battle of Qoubbe ʿ was “an accident” as the LF field commander, “in an act of utter stupidity, acted without any instructions which led to two of our men being killed, and as we attempted to rescue

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423 Interview with PSP Military Commander who requested anonymity. Beirut, Lebanon, December 2009.
424 Ibid.
425 Interview with Fouad Abi Nadir.
their bodies two more men died and thus the situation got completely out of hand.”

What is perplexing is that these troops dispatched to Maten were amongst the elite of the LF fighting corps as they belonged to the Beirut Defense Units- BDU, founded by Massoud "Poussy" Achkar. Despite turning the command of his unit over to Joseph al-Zayak, Achkar rushed up to Bhamdoun as soon as he got the news of the incident. Poussy assumed command of the battlefield and tried to reinforce and extract his men who had been engaged in an all-open firefight with the PSP militia. To his surprise, however, the IDF prevented them from sending supplies or to even set up their mortars to provide support. According to Achkar the situation got so volatile between his troops and the IDF to an extent where a firefight was almost imminent, requiring him to personally intervene to deescalate the situation.

At the LF HQ in Karantina, the Commando units were ordered to mobilize and prepare to make the trip to Qoubbei were the intensity of the battle was on a perpetual crescendo. Commanded by Bob Haddad, one of the heroes of the battle of Zahle, the LF commandos assaulted the PSP positions on the strategic hill top above Qoubbei ʿ, but failed to capture it. Nassif Nakhoul, one of Haddad’s three platoon commanders, described the task assigned to him and the other commandos as an “Impossible Mission” where many of his comrades including himself and his commander were seriously injured, requiring their immediate medical evacuation to Beirut. The PSP on the other hand had equally suffered lots of casualties, as the bulk of the fighting fell on a dozen or so local fighters with fairly limited resources. Slowly as word spread, these fighters were joined by their relatives and by fighters from neighboring villages. Leading a group of 10 fighters from the village of Bmariam was Fawzi Abi-Chahine

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426 Ibid. According to Druze sources, the LF local commander who consequently died during the battle was Ibrahim al-Tawil, but this fact has never been verified.

427 Interview with Massoud Achkar.

aka Abo Mot’aib (father of mischief). Abo Mot’aib regards the battle he fought in 1982 as identical to the one the Druze of Syria waged in the village of Korayh under the leadership of Sultan Pasha al-Atrash against the French occupation:

That day we were around 18 fighters onboard one vehicle trying to make our way to the battlefield. The Kataeb were using all sorts of weapons and artillery in preparation for storming Qoubbei and consequently the whole Maten. But as you are aware, the Shabab [fighters] and the people of the Mountain have more faith and are more resilient than people who come from Kisrwan or mercenaries from Egypt\textsuperscript{429}, who are here to rule over a people [Druze] who answer to no one, but God almighty. \textsuperscript{430}

The Lebanese Forces however, utterly dismissed that their enemy was made up of exclusively local fighters, but rather a façade for a bigger more notorious factions. On the second day of the battle, \textit{Al-ʿAmal} reported that the IDF in Qoubbei’ were engaged in an open firefight with “a 2000-strong group comprised of Iranian, Palestinians and Jordanian recruits who were acting upon Syrian instructions.”\textsuperscript{431} The report further goes to explain that the PSP and these ‘recruits’ have ignored the wishes of the local Druze clerics which requested that they evacuate their village and refrain from clashing with the Israelis. Strangely enough, the Kataeb mouthpiece never made any mention of that fact a large group of its men were the ones fighting nor that consequently the grandson of Pierre Gemayel was killed in combat. Responding to these allegations, Ghanem affirms that it is perhaps ironic how the Christians never recognize that it was the Druze who fought them, as they always look for an external side to blame. They always maintain that “In 1860 it was the Ottomans, in 1958 it was Abdul Nasser and in 1982 it was the Palestinians and the Syrians. They [Maronites] do not accept that a small group such as the Druze could defeat them”\textsuperscript{432} Be that as it may, the Maronites certainly perceived themselves as facing a much bigger plot, as Bashir’s rhetoric clearly reflected this, speaking in 1976:

\textsuperscript{429} This is reference to the Pierre Gemayel’s family who took refuge in Egypt for fear of Ottoman persecution.  
\textsuperscript{430} Interview with Fawzi Abi Chahine, PSP Oral History Project. My translation.  
\textsuperscript{431} \textit{Al-ʿAmal}, Monday 28 July 1982.  
\textsuperscript{432} Interview with Ghanem Tarabay.
It must be clear for the international public opinion that the war we are conducting now is absolutely not a war between the Christians and the Muslims. It is even not a war between the Palestinians and the Lebanese. Its mainly a war between the Lebanese system, the Lebanese personality, the Lebanese identify against the extreme left groups, against the anarchist groups, against those who do not believe in democracy, in freedom, in liberty - and those people are trying to take advantage of the Palestinian cause and the Palestinian presence in Lebanon, in order to sue them to do what they are doing against Lebanon.  

Therefore for Bashir or any members of the LF, to restrict their confrontation with the Druze to a sectarian and tribal framework would be a step down and an abandonment the struggle for a New Lebanon.

Faced with this quagmire, Bashir reached out to his allies within the Druze community, the Yazbaki faction led by Emir Majid Arslan. Arslan, a hero of Lebanese Independence, was 74 at the time and his deteriorating health prevented him from performing the normal duties of leadership. Consequently, the burden of command fell on Arslan’s eldest son Faisal who was on excellent terms with the Lebanese Forces and its leader Bashir Gemayel. On the second day of the battle, Bashir meet with a Druze delegation from Ras al-Maten one of the largest towns in the Maten region at the Kataeb chapter in Kahaleh south of Aley. The public statement issued following this meeting stressed Bashir’s “commitment to enhancing the cohesion between the Druze and the Maronites and other segments of Lebanese society”, he would go on to affirm to his Druze guests that “the Lebanese Forces wants to achieve freedom, security and equality to all the Lebanese, and that the LF merely wants to temporarily provide security and to prevent acts to vengeance until the Lebanese state can take over.” Beyond this customary political rhetoric, the main reason for this meeting was to reach a ceasefire which would allow the LF to evacuate Qoubbeï and to retrieve the corpse of Emanuel Gemayel. Bashir was very careful not

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434 Al-'Amal, Tuesday 29 July 1982.
to position himself as an enemy of the Druze for he was in need of every vote he could muster from the surviving 1972 parliament to be elected President. Any attempt to punish the Druze or harm their areas therefore would be politically counterproductive and thus would harm Bashir presidential aspirations. While some Druze factions appeased and cooperated with Bashir, Walid Joumblatt continued his all-out attack on Bashir and what he called the Kataeb-Israeli plot to subjugate the mountain and Beirut. On the same day that Emanuel’s remains were being returned, Joumblatt warned his enemies that “we [the Druze] will not permit the settling of the scores of 1860” and that the Druze will never accept to disarm under any circumstance.435

For Ghanem and his men the battle had been won despite the great casualties and harms that befall them, for they were able to show the skeptics amongst the Druze that the LF with their formidable training and equipment could be beaten. Beyond its local implications however, this confrontation exposed to both the Druze and the Maronite the rules of engagement vis-à-vis the IDF. Despite their strategic alliance with the LF, Israel was not willing to take sides nor to allow their Lebanese allies to use them to impose their will on the Druze. During the actual battle, Ghanem had requested from one of the Druze village elders, a Sheikh (Druze Cleric) who had participated in the 1958 events, to take his WWII rifle and to walk to the Israeli post in Bhamdoun. Once there, this Sheikh did nothing but sit with the Israeli officer who was following the events via his field binoculars. This symbolic gesture was an implicit message understood by both sides that “we mean you no harm” and that the Druze are only carrying arms out of pure self-defense.436

Ironically enough, the Syrian Army was also monitoring the development of the battle from their outpost in Sawfar, where according to the LF leadership were providing them

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435 Al-ʿAmal, 1 July 1982.
436 Interview with Ghanem Tarabay.
with men and ammunition and fire support.\(^{437}\) This last claim however remains unsubstantiated and highly unlikely, because any Syrian intervention on that occasion would have provoked a response by the IDF, something which never occurred at that stage in the invasion.

**The Assassination of Bashir**

Despite this military setback in Qoubbe‘, Bashir was undeterred. On 21 August 1982, as part of the settlement brokered by US special envoy to Lebanon Philip Habib, the PLO began its evacuation of the besieged capital. Two days later, the Lebanese Parliament convened under the protection of the Israeli army and elected Bashir the seventh President of the Lebanese Republic. Bashir’s election, at least to the Maronites, was not just a political conquest; it was rather a reclaiming of a strong Lebanon capable of protecting the Christians of the East.

More importantly, Bashir’s presidency was the culmination of the resistance that started in the 7th century with the Mardaites, thus fitting perfectly within the framework of the Maronites’ collective memory process. Bulus Na‘aman, saw in Gemayel’s election the realization of a long-awaited dream that spanned many generations.\(^{438}\) This was the case because to many Maronites, including Na’aman Bashir was not only a politician but rather a symbol of power for the Lebanese and the Christians of the Levant. This dream, however, was short-lived, as on September 14, the President-elect was assassinated and with him the dream of Lebanon. Bashir’s death took his community entirely by surprise, for the bomb planted by Habib Shartouni, the pro-Syrian member of the Syrian Socialist National Party-SSNP, did not only kill Bashir the man, but rather the idea of Bashir. His rise to power and his commitment to the ideas he preached gave people hope that a strong Lebanon might emerge from the rubbles of the old. Thomas Friedman,

\(^{437}\) *Interview with Massoud Achkar & Fouad Abi Nader*

the NYT correspondent to Lebanon at the time was witness to Bashir’s rapid ascent as well as his tragic demise. In his landmark narrative of that period, From Beirut to Jerusalem, Friedman places Bashir as well as other actors as part of a regional and international poker game. A game which defies any rules and is only guided by one consideration alone, to what extent is the player willing to utilize violence and on this level no one could beat Hafiz al-Assad’s poker hand. Assad who had destroyed the Syrian city of Hama to crush the mutiny of the Muslim Brotherhood, was certainly not going to spare, Bashir nor the Israelis:

All summer long Syria's President Hafez Assad had been losing his shirt in Lebanon. With Bashir's election, it looked as though Assad was going to have to resign himself permanently to an Israeli victory. But in Middle Eastern poker when the pot is at stake, the rules go out the window. The only rules become Hama Rules and Hama Rules are no rules at all. On the last hand of the summer, Assad topped the Israelis' four kings with an ace, which he pulled right off the bottom of the deck. The Israelis cried for the sheriff, and Assad just laughed. "Around these parts," he told them, "I am the sheriff."  

The martyrdom of Bashir was channeled by the Lebanese Forces towards molding a new chapter in the community’s memory, so that his death can be used as a launching pad rather than a grave to the Maronite political project. A number of coincidences helped to make this memory construction process less arduous. At the time of his assassination, Bashir was in his early thirties, the same age as Jesus Christ when he was crucified. On the day of his death, the same day that celebrates the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, Bashir visited the monastery of the Holy Cross where his sister Arzeh was a nun. Standing beneath a large cross, he delivered what was considered his last sermon, in which he stressed that Lebanon will never be subjugated, adding that what was happening at that time was the resurrection of Lebanon. These factors, in addition to Bashir’s image of being a pious and ardent warrior, canonized and deified him in the collective memory of

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his supporters. As Michael Johnson remarks, this “process transformed the Lebanese Forces to a monastic order comparable to the Knights Templar, the warrior monks of the Crusade.”

The LF’s self-perception of being an ideologically-driven military outfit is clearly exhibited by its members. For example, George Radi boasts that the Lebanese Forces had superior arms as well as the “most expensive military uniform in the world”. Interestingly, the Lebanese Forces received from the IDF arms and equipment which were indeed of good quality but not necessarily the most expensive, whereas the Druze arsenal heavily relied on Soviet or Eastern-made arms. In addition, the LF fighting doctrine did not restrict them to a certain geographical location within Lebanon; therefore, an LF soldier originally from the North could serve in the South of Lebanon and vice-versa. Furthermore, Radi’s collective perceptions greatly resembled those of crusader knights, who believed that their western armor and bravery surpassed that of their Muslim opponents. So in reality, the Maronites who were Western, non-Arab and Christian were far more superior to their Eastern, Arab and Muslim foes.

Despite the fact that Bashir’s assassin, Habib al-Shartouni, was a Maronite and a member of the Syrian Socialist National Party (SSNP), the Maronites decided to avenge their martyr in a different way. Two days after the assassination, and with facilitations made by the Israeli Army, Elie Hobeika, the LF’s Chief of Intelligence, ordered militiamen under his command to enter the Sabra and Shatila Palestinian refugee camps in West Beirut. As early as 1969, the Palestinians were demonized by the Lebanese Right that accused the PLO of trying to deport the Christians of

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Lebanon and establish a surrogate Palestinian home. For example, the Guardians of the Cedars, an ultra-nationalist militia who joined the ranks of the Lebanese Forces in 1980, promoted the slogan "the duty of every Lebanese to kill one Palestinian".\textsuperscript{442} Years of hatred topped with the frustration over the death of ‘al-Bashir (The Bashir)\textsuperscript{443} were channeled against the innocent civilians in the refugee camps. Consequently, after two days of carnage which went as far as killing infants and the mutilation of some refugees’ sexual organs, the killing party evacuated the camps leaving behind them more than 1,700 dead civilians. Although the Lebanese Forces completely denied any involvement in the massacre, this episode tarnished the image they tried to uphold of being pious Christian warriors. More importantly, this massacre aggravated the already turbulent relationship with the Druze who now felt that a similar fate awaited them.

The loss incurred by Israel was indeed grand as both Begin and Sharon had wagered on Bashir to lead his country into a post-PLO Lebanon which would sooner than later follow in Egypt’s footsteps and sign a peace treaty with Israel.\textsuperscript{444} With Bashir gone, both the Maronites and Israelis were as Bashir predicted doomed, for he had warned shortly after his election “if I die and 60 thousand Bashir don’t replace me, then damn you and the cause.” Bashir’s ominous warning would soon come true as the next stage brought the Druze and the Maronite even closer on a collision course.

\textsuperscript{443} Following the death of Gemayel, his name started to appear in the LF media outlets as well as in their rhetoric with a definite The Bashir, as a way to glorify his martyrdom
\textsuperscript{444} Ibid, 144.
Long Live the King

Almost a month after Bashir’s election, the parliament reconvened under similar circumstances, and elected Amin Gemayel the new President of Lebanon. Amin, the eldest son of Pierre Gemayel, the founder of the Phalangist party, differed greatly from his younger brother Bashir. Amin, a member of the Lebanese Parliament, which his brother Bashir described as an assembly of wheeler-dealers, fully espoused the 1943 formula. According to George Freiha, Bashir’s Chief-of-Staff, Israel had agreed to support Amin’s candidacy, provided that he honored Bashir’s commitments by signing a peace treaty between the two countries. However, Amin did not abide by this promise, and this had terrible repercussions on the Maronites, as will be demonstrated later. These factors placed him at odds with the so-called 1958 generation, which comprised the majority of his community, including the 25,000-strong LF.

Once Bashir was elected, the leadership of the Lebanese Forces passed to Fadi Frem, the former head of its military operations and the husband of Bashir’s niece. Frem’s mission was clear, to prepare the LF for its full incorporation into the Lebanese state, to act as the backbone to what Bashir always called for, a 100 thousand strong army capable of protecting the whole of the 10452km2, the area of Lebanon. However the demobilization of the Christian militias required the full cooperation of the Lebanese state, as these troops would form an elite unit that would answer to the President of the Republic, Bashir Gemayel. With Bashir dead, the LF had to adjust its plan and deal with his successor, his older brother Amin. It was no secret that the two brothers were mortal rivals, as Amin stood in utter contrast to his brother whose whole political career and rhetoric was the antithesis of the LF’s new vision for the republic. Amin had

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445 Ménargues, 394.
announced his intention to run for the presidency early on during his brother’s funeral. Tasked to deliver the family eulogy, Amin seized the chance to step up to the plate:

Comrades of Bashir Gemayel in the Kataeb or the Lebanese Forces, our oath to you is that Bashir Gemayel is still alive in his creed, he is still alive in his determination to bring back the spirit of Lebanon. Our oath to you oh great heroes, heroes of the Lebanese Forces, some of you died defending Lebanon, any conspiracy [to destroy Lebanon] will shatter, they were able to kill Bashir body but they will never be able to vanquish the spirit of Bashir nor his will to liberate and unify… the journey will persist until the goals which Bashir died for are achieved.446

Amin would repeat this pledge “to walk in his brother footsteps” on two other separate occasions. The first was to Fadi Frem and the LF central command (Elias al-Zayek, Elie Hobeika and Fouad Abi Nader) when he hosted them for dinner in his house in Bikfaya. For the LF officer around the dinner table their fears and hesitancy to support Amin was not totally unfounded. Amin, nicknamed al-ʻAnid “the stubborn one” had always resisted the incorporation of the Maten region into the Lebanese Forces, refusing to surrender his hold over the many businesses and racketeering he operated. Amin ran the area under his command as his own fiefdom, with a standing army answerable to him and even a think tank House of the Future and a newspaper, Le Reveil to promote his own line.447 Bashir’s war cabinet, who was now leaderless, met and deliberated about the upcoming presidential elections, primarily where they stood vis-à-vis Amin’s nomination. Following a stormy two-hour session, the group consented to Amin’s nomination after he vouched to implement Bashir’s governance and reform plan.448

Amin would reiterate this pledge on 20 September, three days before his elections, to an Israeli delegation which he hosted at the House of the Future in Antelias. Sitting opposite to Yitzhak Shamir, Israeli Foreign Minister, Ariel Sharon and David Kimchi, former deputy director of the

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446 Amin Gemayel’s Eulogy at Bashir’s funeral. Al-ʻAmal, Thursday 16 September 1982.
447 Randall, 133.
Mossad and director general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Amin affirmed that if elected he would honor Bashir’s earlier commitments. Menachem Begin and his hawks had to adjust to the reality of losing Bashir, however they still hoped that their original plan to evict the PLO and sign a peace treaty with Lebanon was still attainable. Amin did indeed establish contact with the Israeli state as early as his brother and Dani Chamoun but he always made it a point to suppress this fact and instead portray himself as a clean-cut politician detached from any militia activity.

Alain Ménargues, maintains that Amin was in fact more brutal than his brother Bashir, as he personally led the Kataeb forces on the battleground, however the main difference is that while Bashir publicized his involvement in such actions, his older brother did the exact opposite.

Despite his contact with Israel, their intelligence agencies always viewed Amin with suspicion mainly because of his good relations with the Assad regime and the PLO. Furthermore, Amin was one of the main advocate of the 1976 entry of the Syrian army to aid the forces of the failing Lebanese Front. In September on 1982 however the 40-year old Gemayel told his Israeli guests everything they wanted to hear:

You are most welcome, I am very delighted to receive you at the House of the Future… we cannot describe the amount of grief we as a family, party and a nation are undergoing for the loss of Bashir, above all he was my brother. Bashir has done tremendous work for the country and the Lebanese people, so we have to continue what he has left and try to persist in the same direction. I have read some of the minutes of your meetings with Bashir. Our relationship has been ongoing since 1958 and I believe it can be developed into a real peace treaty between the both of us.

Shamir was mesmerized by the tune he heard, the mere mention of peace promoted him to bestow the presidency on Amin addressing him with the symbolic “Mr. President, we are saddened for the loss of Bashir but we are yet glad that your movement and your people have

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449 Ibid.
450 Interview with Alain Ménargues.
found a leader to continue the road towards independence. We are confident that tomorrow you will be elected president.” At the conclusion of this fateful meeting, Sharon in his usual brutish blunt manner, grabbed Amin by the shoulders and declared “the king is dead, long live the king.” True to the Israeli promise, the members of the parliament, Amin was a member of, voted for him to become the 7th president of the Lebanese Republic. Shortly after, upon the initiative of US President Ronald Reagan, the multinational peacekeeping forces comprised of American, French and Italian divisions landed in Beirut with the declared mission of “prompting the withdrawal of Israeli, Syrian and Palestinian forces from Lebanon and to strengthen the ability of the government of Lebanon to defend its sovereign territory.”

The Druze recognized neither the legitimacy of the new president nor the fact that he did not necessarily share his brother’s political vision. The PSP media outlets launched an all-out attack against Amin and accused him of trying to establish a monarchy. Sawt al-Jabal (Voice of the Mountain), the PSP’s radio station, constantly referred to Amin as “the Shah of Ba’abda”, and to the Lebanese Army under his command as “the Army of the Ruling Family.” This perception of Amin Gemayel as a despot and an extension of his brother was integrated into the Druze collective psyche, consequently adding to their resentment of the Maronites and making it impossible for the Joumblatti Druze to reconcile with their Maronite foes. More importantly, an examination of the Druze rhetoric during that period (Fall 1982 to Fall 1983) lucidly exhibits their fear of annihilation at the hands of what they considered the neo-Crusaders. Walid Joumblatt’s interview with Newsweek Magazine summarizes this fear

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453 Interview with George Freiha.
454 National Security Decision Directive (NSDD) 64.
455 The Voice of the Mountain radio-station, one-year anniversary of Harb al-Jabal.
and, beyond that, so the extent to which the Druze were willing to go to avoid it becoming a reality:

We are now in a state of war with the Isolationists [Lebanese Forces] who are responsible for the massacres of Sabra and Shatila and Tel al-Za’tar, among others. They want to do the same thing to the Druze. However, I will not allow at any cost my people to be butchered at the hands of the Phalangist.\footnote{As quoted in \textit{al-Anbāa}, 6 June 1983. It is interesting that Joumblatt refers to the Druze as “my people” rather than “my sect”.}

The Sabra and Shatila massacre had grave repercussions on both the IDF and their Lebanese allies, especially within the context of the Druze-Maronite conflict. First it internationally discredited the current Israeli leadership, especially, Begin, Shamir and Sharon for not honoring their promise to the United States not to enter Beirut. Second it placed the direct responsibility for the carnage on the Lebanese Forces as perpetrating an act of blind vengeance. These were the conclusions of “the Commission of Inquiry into the Events at the Refugee Camps in Beirut”, headed by the Supreme Court Justice Yitzhak Kahan set up by the Israeli government shortly after the massacre. The Kahan Commission placed the personal responsibility on the Israeli political echelon blaming them for negligence of duty and refraining from taking appropriate action, however the direct blame was clearly placed on the LF:

Our conclusion is therefore that the direct responsibility for the perpetration of the acts of slaughter rests on the Phalangist forces. No evidence was brought before us that Phalangist personnel received explicit orders from their command to perpetrate acts of slaughter, but it is evident that the forces who entered the area were steeped in hatred for the Palestinians, in the wake of the atrocities and severe injuries done to the Christians during the civil war in Lebanon by the Palestinians and those who fought alongside them; and these feelings of hatred were compounded by a longing for revenge in the wake of the assassination of the Phalangist’ admired leader Bashir and the killing of several dozen Phalangist two days before their entry into the camps.\footnote{Kahan Commission, 8 February 1983. http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/kahan.html}
This condemnation demonized the Lebanese Forces both locally and internationally as this gruesome act lacked any claim of using violence for self-defense, a concept that Bashir had previously anchored as part and parcel of his political project. It also placed the LF with a collision course with President Amin Gemayel who soon after his election, refused to meet with any Israeli official and failed to honor his earlier commitment to stay on his brother’s chartered path. The LF had become a political liability to Amin Gemayel who was keen to reestablish political and economic relationship with the Gulf States and ultimately with Syria.
Chapter Six

The most devastating outcome of the Sabra-Shatila massacre on the Lebanese Forces went beyond the political and legal condemnation they received. The Kahan Commission further disadvantaged the LF as it recommended to Begin to sack his minister of Defense Ariel Sharon as it reminded Begin of his prerogatives “under Section 21-A(a) of the Basic Law to remove a minister from office.” Begin refused to adopt this recommendation at first, but finally conceded to local public opinion; but settled with the removal of Sharon’s portfolio and kept him in his cabinet as a minister without a portfolio.

The Israeli Tide Shifts

Replacing both Sharon and the IDF Chief of Staff Eitan were Moshe Arens and Lt. General Moshe Levi who according to David Kamchi “were made of a different fiber.” Kimche, the veteran spymaster and former deputy director of Mossad, was known for his zeal for the Maronite-Israeli alliance, which he himself solidified after 1975 as the head of the Mossad’s Lebanon operations. Naturally Kimche saw the removal of Sharon and his replacement with the more sober pragmatic Arens as having dire consequences on the Israeli-Lebanese political process. At the time, Kamche was leading the Israeli team which engaged in the peace negotiations between the two countries, later known as the May 17 Agreement and his main priority was obviously for these talks to be successful. Both Arens and Levi, however, had one priority, “to redeploy their troops to reduce casualties, and to cut the size of the army committed

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458 Ibid.
to the Lebanese front so that the training programmers could be resumed.”460 Therefore any earlier commitment their predecessors had issued to their Lebanese allies had to be secondary to their current policy.

Walid Joumblatt and the Druze were equally aware of this policy shift as the Israeli cabinet and the IDF started to slowly abandon their clear bias to the Maronites. At the beginning of the Israeli invasion, Joumblatt and the PSP were the main allies of the PLO and this naturally placed them at a disadvantage and lead the IDF to approach them with suspicion. Despite adopting a clearly anti-Zionist rhetoric, the Druze of Lebanon never exhibited any hostile actions to the invading Israeli forces. The reality was imposed by the elders of the community rather than by the consensus of the Druze political leadership which was divided over its support of the invasion. The Yazbaki faction led by Faisal Arslan was fully behind Bashir Gemayel and his quest for the presidency, while the Joumblattishar faction felt crushed with the defeat of their PLO allies.

Within this severe schism, the Druze Mashayekh (clerics) would set the perimeters of the relationship with Israel. Where the PSP and its supporters were politically embarrassed to reach out to the IDF, the Druze clerics felt no shame in contacting their fellow Israeli Druze across the border. However their initiative had no political implications nor entailed any normalization with the Israeli state, and restricted their interaction as much as possible to Israeli Druze or what they commonly veiled by referring to them as the Arabs of 48. Early on with the IDF entry into the Shuf and following some incidents which involved shooting at some Druze villages and the rumors of the intentions of the Israelis to confiscate their weapons, the clerics initiated contacts

460 Ibid, 175.
with the head of the Israeli forces in the area. Upon the request of the eminent Sheikh Abu Mohammad Jawad Walieddine of Baakline (see chapter), Sheikh Muhana al-Btadini accompanied by his brother and another member of his family marched up to the Israeli base in their village of Kfarnabrakh. After an hour’s wait, the three Druze clerics were given audience with the Israeli General, via a translator Btadini addressed his host “we the Druze preserve our dignity and our honor and our land. We have not fought you [Israelis], we have only fought those who have harmed us, and our weapons are to be used for this purpose alone.”

The Israeli general was extremely cooperative, as he assured Btadini and his companions that they can keep their weapons provided they are kept concealed and that they inform the IDF of the existence of any saboteurs, the name given to the Palestinian fighters. Before the Druze cleric departed they requested that the general provide them with a document which attests to his pledge to them, after which they headed back to Baakline to inform Sheikh Abu Mohammad of their triumph.

With the restriction on travel to and from Israel lifted, the Druze from both sides of the borders, especially the clerics among them, started to exchange social and religious visits. This naturally rekindled the relationship between the two communities which had been severed by the rise of the state of Israel in 1948. Yet this resumption of relations did not translate into practical measures as the IDF up until the assassination of Bashir Gemayel had treated the Druze of Lebanon with borderline hostility. This was even evident in the behavior of some Druze officers within the IDF, particularly Colonial Said Abdul-Hak who later commanded the exclusively Druze Herev (Sword) Battalion. The Druze of Israel had always occupied a privileged status in comparison to other non-Jewish communities, as they were drafted and allowed to enlist in the IDF, both as servicemen and officers. Their allegiance to the state of Israel, at least by the 1980’s

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461 Interview with Sheikh Muhana al-Btadini. PSP Oral History Project. My translation
462 Ibid.
was no longer in doubt, as they had served in many war and spilled blood defending the Jewish state. Furthermore, the head of the community Sheikh Amin Tarif was recognized by the state of Israel and awarded all the legal and political prerogatives that come with his post. For the IDF Druze soldiers dispatched to Mount Lebanon in 1982, including Abdul-Hak, the mission was clear to neutralize the Palestinian threat while limiting civilian casualties and collateral damage. Abdul-Hak was very uncouth and unbrotherly with dealing with many of the Lebanese Druze especially the PSP members who met him, earning him the nickname Abdul Mahiq (the dwindling slave). Raja Harb who faced off with Abdul-Hak on a number of occasions accused him of having anti-Joumblatti sentiments as he went out of his way to harass and restrict their movement. However Abdul-Hak aggressive attitude towards the Joumblatti clan was rather an isolated incident as the majority of the Israeli Druze were far removed from the Joumblatti-Yazbaki schism and essentially interested in supporting their Lebanese Druze brethren.

**Druze Follow-up Commission**

This was the attitude of member of the Israeli Knesset (Parliament) Zeidan Atashi, the first Druze to enter the Israeli Foreign Service having served in a number of posts including the Israeli Permanent Mission to the UN. On June 29, Atashi participated in a tour of Lebanon organized by the Knesset to demonstrate the progress of the IDF which was laying siege to the capital Beirut. During this tour, Atashi visited the Druze town of Aley where he heard his fellow Lebanese Druze protest over the continuing IDF cover and support for the Lebanese Forces and

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their intolerable infractions. According to his book, *Druze & Jews in Israel*, Atashi’s first of many trips to Lebanon was extremely revealing for this Israeli Druze lawmaker as “this was my first encounter with Druze on Arab soil and it was not pleasant to see the IDF, in which I also served, participating in acts of cruelty against my Druze brothers.” After his return home, Atashi started a series of actions which would greatly aid the Lebanese Druze in their upcoming confrontation with the Maronites. Tobias Lang in his study *Die Drusen in Libanon und Israel* (the Druze in Lebanon and Israel) explains how Atashi’s endeavor required one key element to succeed; the support of Sheikh Amin Tarif. Tarif was not merely the Sheikh al-Aqil of the Druze of Israel, his stature went beyond this legal framework as he also occupied a spiritual role in Israel and beyond. According to Atashi, however, Tarif and his immediate circle were extremely hesitant to extend their support to the Lebanese Druze because this would naturally entail directing criticism towards the Israeli state, something which Tarif refused to do especially during times of war. Faced with considerable pressure from within his community, Sheikh Tarif finally conceded and blessed the activities of Atashi’s group. Consequently, the Israeli Druze community set up a lobby group which approached Menachem Begin voicing their disapproval of the IDF actions visa-a-vis the Druze of Lebanon. In response to the Druze disgruntlement, Begin promised “that he would not permit that a hair should fall from the head of any Druze in Lebanon.” Begin affirmative attitude towards the Druze might have been promoted by a number of factors, as essentially the Druze represented a segment of the Likud party electorate and thus he was compelled to answer them in this fashion. The second more plausible reason is

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466 Atashi’s visit came on the second day of the Battle of Qoubbeir
467 Ibid.
469 Begin as quoted in Atashi, *Druze and the Jews in Israel*, 147.
that this issue was tackled by the Office of the Prime Minister's Adviser on Arab Affairs, whose duties were to ensure that the affairs of the non-Jewish minorities, chiefly among them the Druze, are always addressed. While some voices within the community objected to the Druze conscription and service in the IDF, the majority of the Israeli Druze were extremely supportive of the state and its policies. According to Atashi, the invasion of Lebanon, however, was the first time in the community’s history that placed the Druze in stark opposition to their state.470 This position was the crux of the committee known as “Druze Follow-up Commission on behalf of the Druze of Lebanon” Lajnat al-Tawāṣil formed of leading activists each with their own background and network of connections.471 The activities of Lajnat al-Tawāṣil constituted of a two track approach; the first was to address the Israeli public opinion through an orchestrated media campaign, the second was to lobby the Israeli government as well as key officers in the IDF. The main undertone that Atashi and his associates utilized to influence the Israeli public was to frame the Israeli invasion led by Sharon and the hawks as deceptive in nature; stressing that the Lebanese Forces failed to honor its promise to join the fight against the PLO as “the [Israeli] soldiers found themselves fighting the Phalangists’ war for them.”472 Moreover, Sharon by crossing the 40km range originally awarded to the operation had violated the trust of the Israeli government and its people and the IDF deployed throughout Mount Lebanon badgering the Druze of Lebanon was “acting beyond the declared operational targets.”473 Atashi admits that the main leverage which allowed them to effectively voice their protest was the rights awarded to them as “full” Israeli citizens but more importantly that they had officers and soldiers

470 Interview with Zeidan Atashi, August 2016.
471 Zeidan Atashi, Muhammad Rammal, Fadel Mansour, Ali Qadmani, Dr. Jamal Hassoun, Said Halabi, Jihad Azzam, Hassan Hibrawi, Raslan Abu Ruqun and Nawaf Azzam.
472 Atashi, Druze and the Jews in Israel, 145.
473 Ibid.
placed throughout the IDF and various state agencies. Many active and retired IDF Druze servicemen were asked to approach their comrades-in-arms and simply relay the following “why is the IDF supporting the Maronites that are killing our Druze brothers in Lebanon and what have the Lebanese Druze ever done to hurt Israel?” This simple yet powerful message slowly sipped through the ground throughout Mount Lebanon, as the IDF lessened the measures they formerly adopted against the Druze and also curbed the LF hostilities against them.

However the activities of the follow-up commission went beyond providing the Druze of Lebanon with moral support to more practical military measures which provide vital when the gauntlet finally dropped. Atashi and other members of the commission started to make regular trips to Lebanon where they would secretly meet with senior members of the PSP political and military arm. The commission was mindful of the importance of keeping their support to their coreligionists as covert as possible, to avoid embarrassing them in front of their Muslim compatriots as well as the wider Arab public. From the Druze side, much secrecy and reservation surrounds this relationship with the Druze of Israel as none of the PSP members publicly acknowledge that these meetings took place nor the intimacy and friendship that consequently formed. The only name which was publically known from the Lebanese side was that of Atef Salloum, a pediatrician who made his career in Saudi Arabia. Salloum was instrumental in coordinating the activities of the follow-up commission with the realities on the ground. According to Avner Yaniv, Salloum acted as Joumblatt's quasi Foreign Minister, as he made frequent trips to Israel where he met prominent members of the Druze community as well

474 Interview with Zeidan Atashi.
475 Ibid.
476 Ibid.
as high ranking state officials. Yaniv relates that on July 31 1983 Salloum was scheduled to meet the Deputy Prime Minister David Levi, however for reasons unknown at the last minute this meeting was canceled.

The choice of Salloum to handle the coordination with the follow-up commission is very revealing of how Joumblatt and his group took in their approach of their contacts with Israel. Atef Salloum was never a card-carrying member of the Progressive Socialist Party nor has he ever occupied any political post that can be traced to Joumblatt and his party. Most importantly, while Salloum was a close confident of Joumblatt, the latter can simply wash his hands and deny any involvement in his activities as well as any of Salloum’s commitments to the Israeli side. The core reason for Walid Joumblatt and his Druze constituency to keep their association with the Israeli Druze secretive, was not merely out of consideration to feelings of their Muslim compatriots but rather of a self-serving existential aim. The Druze collective self-perception of being descendants of the early Arab settlers defending the Syrian coast against Crusader attacks, clashes with that fact that they are collaborating or even neutral to the Zionist state. Just like the Druze suppress the fact that their Buhturid ancestors collaborated with the Crusaders or that the great Druze Emir Fakerdine used the Italian city states to rebel against the Ottomans, they also did not want this Israeli episode to feature in their community’s history.

Be that as it may, the follow-up commission was able to gain traction and to slowly influence Israeli public opinion. On 19 October 1982, upon the call of the follow-up commission,

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478 Ibid.
479 The Progressive Socialist Party archives has no record that Salloum was one of its members.
480 See chapter 3.
around 1500 people demonstrated outside the office of Prime Minister Begin. Atashi communicated the demands of the mob to their government, which amounted to a virtual threat:

The government of Israel must choose between the alliance with the Druze of Israel—which has proved itself- and the dubious collaboration with the Phalanges. This is an hour of testing and decision and we have had enough un-kept promises. Israel must know that the Druze have never bent their knee in history of the Middle East and will continue strong and upright as surety for their brothers.481

By stating that the Druze were in mere alliance with Israel, Atashi was virtually revoking his people’s Israeli citizenship for a far more important consideration, one which was at the core of his community’s faith. According to Atashi, the whole endeavor he led was merely his religious duty as a Druze because by “safeguarding his brothers and sisters (Hifiz al-Ikhwan) he was doing the proper thing which any other Druze in his position would do”482

To safeguard their Lebanese brothers, the follow-up commission set a number of practical goals which would rid them of their Maronite enemies.

- To bring about the removal of all roadblocks erected by the Phalange under IDF cover
- To secure the release of all Druze prisoners detained on the initiative of the IDF forces or as a result of Phalangist incitement.
- To find ways and means of transferring essential weapons from place to place with the aid of locals or of Druze IDF soldiers serving in various places.
- To raise funds among the Druze of Israel, to be remitted to the Druze leadership in Lebanon, so as to help purchase combat weapons and clothing for the combatants and ensure food supplies
- To effect gradual modification of the attitude of IDF officers and commanders responsible for the Druze villages and to attempt to foster understanding for the Lebanese Druze and the action of Israeli Druze on their behalf.
- To ensure that the Follow-up Commission confine its contacts to the Druze spiritual leadership in Lebanon, and elements representing the Progressive

481 Atashi, 154.
482 Interview with Zeidan Atashi.
Socialist Party headed by Walid Jumblatt, the militia in charge of Druze defense and security.

- To refrain from interfering in the internal Druze dispute between the Jumblatts and the Arslans
- Unambiguously to refute the claims of the Phalangists who were falsely accusing the Druze of Lebanon to the IDF commanders and policymakers of having given asylum to thousands fleeing Palestinians.  

To achieve these difficult goals, the Follow-up commission needed the help of the IDF officers and troops deployed across Mount Lebanon. Many of these troops started to slowly realize that they were entangled in a primordial conflict between the Druze and the Maronites. According to Thomas Friedman, General Amnon Lipkin-Shahak, the IDF supreme commander in the Shuf discovered how things in Lebanon are never what they appear and that he certainly “lacked the imagination Beirut and Lebanon required.” Shahak, a hardened solider who later assumed the post of Chief of Staff, found himself caught between the Druze and the Maronites with each one of them demonizing the other in hopes of gaining the support of the IDF. Shahak like many of his comrades reached the conclusion that he “was in the middle of a game I did not understand.” This feeling was even amplified within the ranks of the Druze IDF officers, chiefly among them, Amal As‘ad, whose paratrooper battalion was the first to enter the Shuf Mountains in 1982. As‘ad who was the first enlisted Druze to join the prestigious paratrooper brigade, admits that at first he was taken by the LF misinformation concerning the Druze of Lebanon. According to As‘ad, “as Druze officers we never cared about the politics involved, but slowly after we entered Shuf we realized that the Kataeb had lied to us.” The Maronites, As‘ad affirms, were using the IDF as cover to commit unspeakable acts against his people and therefore he felt obliged to act. Consequently, As‘ad made sure that all the IDF post and roadblocks had a

483 Atashi, 149.
484 Friedman, 22.
485 Ibid.
486 Interview with Amal As‘ad.
Druze soldier posted to it so as to intervene on behalf of their Lebanese brothers. As ‘ad who commanded respect among the elite IDF units explains that their support of the Lebanese Druze was never purely driven by logic but rather was deeply rooted in their emotional psyche.

In one of the firefights As ‘ad and his men were caught in the village of Qabr Chamoun, he saw an elderly Druze woman approaching his position accompanied by a small girl which appeared to be injured. As ‘ad admits that as he stood in front of the woman which wore the traditional white _mandil_ (veil) something unexplainable happened “it was as if I was looking into the eyes of my mother.” Immediately, As‘ad ordered his men to cease fire and proceeded to address the woman in Arabic, asking her how he can be of any assistance. The woman was taken aback by the fact that As ‘ad spoke Arabic, to which he jokingly replied “auntie, I am a calf like you, I am Druze, don’t worry.” In another similar emotional situation, As ‘ad was informed that the Druze religious shrines of Sit Sha‘awani in West Bekaa had sustained some direct hits but its content were still intact. Consequently As ‘ad, with permission from Sheikh al-Aqil, Muhammad Abu Shaqra, commandeered over 17 IDF trucks and evacuated all the content to the shrine of _Sheikh al-Fadil_ in the Wadi al-Tayem region. This gesture on the part of As’ad might not carry any real military implications but within this context it is a resounding authorization of Druze identity and their attachment to their land and traditions.

As the confrontations between the Druze and the Maronites escalated the Druze IDF soldiers took a more pro-active role, even participating in combat on the side of the PSP. These soldiers participation went beyond the actual combat as it provided a moral boost as it reaffirmed

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487 Ibid.
488 Ibid. Druze are accused in some sources as worshipping a calf, however this not substantiated by any of their texts or practices.
their belief that “the Druze are like a copper tray if you hit it on one side, the whole tray resounds.”\textsuperscript{489} While the IDF command allowed some of these transgressions to pass, one should not assume that it was their policy to support the Druze and the PSP. Many of the Druze IDF soldiers who disobeyed orders were court-martialed and even imprisoned; such is the case of Amal As ‘ad’s brother who spent time in the military stockade.\textsuperscript{490} Much of these Druze transgressions were permitted by the IDF as long as “no Israeli blood is spilled on Druze land” a pledge which the Follow-up Commission was able to exert from their PSP contacts.\textsuperscript{491}

The arrangement brokered by the Follow-up commission allowed Walid Joumblatt to further assert his command over the Druze. Despite having a clear majority over his Yazbaki opponents, Joumblatt still lacked the legitimacy and the experience which his father and his ancestors possessed. Furthermore, the Druze Yazbaki faction at the time was at its political apex, with its leader Faisal Arslan fully behind Bashir Gemayel’s political project. The election of Bashir, as it was rumored at the time, would soon find Faisal Arslan appointed to the next cabinet where he would naturally assume one of the key portfolios. Following Bashir’s election, Faisal led a huge delegation of his own supporters to the president’s-elect hometown of Bikfaya to congratulate his friend and ally on the resounding victory. Arslan’s congratulatory party which included a noticeable majority of senior Druze clerics, was intended to serve two goals; to assert Arslan as the paramount leader of the Druze and to declare that Bashir was, contrary to the Joumblatti allegations, indeed a friend of the community. Bashir, had always found the Arslans “more Lebanese”, as opposed to the Joumlatts whose international and regional affiliation particularly with the Palestinians and the international Left was the antithesis of his own vision.

\textsuperscript{489} Atashi, 152.  
\textsuperscript{490} Interview with Amal Asad.  
\textsuperscript{491} Interview with Zeidan Atashi.
In addition to Faisal Arslan, Joumblatt was further challenged by other elements within the Yazbaki faction as well as the community at large, these names included Fadlallah Talhouk (Aley MP), Bashir Awar (Maten MP) Malek Wahab, Salim al-Daoud, Hussein Talhouk, Kamal Abou Hamdan, Raouf and Wahib Abdul Samad, Kahtan Hamada and Farid Hamada. Essentially, this anti-Joumblatt front genuinely believed that it in their personal interest as well as the Druze to support the Maronite bid for power.492 Farid Hamada, the son of the last Yazbaki Sheikh Aqil Rashid Hamada (p112) went as far in his opposition to the Joumblatti faction to coordinate with Bashir Gemayel towards forming his own Druze militia which would face off against the PSP militia if needed. George Rouhana, one of the veteran Kataeb military instructors who trained the first cohort of fighters in 1975 admitted that “Sheikh Bashir sent me 20 men from the Hamada family to train in our camps, but he gave me strict instructions that none of our comrades should know that they were Druze.”493 According to Rouhana jokingly, “lucky enough some of these Druze trainees were blond with colored eyes and thus it was feasible to pass them on as foreigners.”494 Hamada’s military outfit the Druze Jihad Organization-Majd, according to Alain Ménargues was also funded and trained by the French external intelligence agency- DGSE which used Majd as an information-gathering tool.495 Hamada’s French connection was very evident and it continued long after the end of the war as he was given asylum by the French authorities after the Syrian army entered East Beirut where Hamada had been exiled since 1984. The anti-Joumblatt faction headed by Hamada attempted to reach out to the Druze clerics whose support was instrumental for Walid Joumblatt survival. Consequently, Hamada the scion of a

493 Interview with George Rouhana.
494 Ibid
495 Ménargues, 272.
family that fielded three Sheikh Aqil reached out to the Druze clerics of the religious seminary in Khalwat al-Bayada and the surrounding region trying to convince them of the futility of supporting Joumblatt.\textsuperscript{496}

**The Unification of the Druze**

Faced with the threat of the Lebanese Forces as well as the Yazbaki faction, Joumblatt was still struggling to win over the majority of the Druze who were either too afraid to act or traditionally hostile to the Joumblatt household. To unify his community, Walid Joumblatt had to employ a different method than the one employed by Bashir Gemayel who used brute force to get his way. Within the tribal structure any spilling of Druze blood would polarize and further divide the community, therefore Joumblatt and his veteran PSP crew deliberately avoided publically attacking their Yazbaki opponents so as not to turn the confrontation into a political tug-of-war. According to Hisham Nasreddine, member of the PSP Politburo and the head of the party’s Aley district during the War of the Mountain, the decision to avoid Druze bloodshed was both a conscious and practical decision the party leadership firmly implemented. Nasreddine, a key adviser to Joumblatt, warned him that “under no circumstance should the PSP suppress their Druze rivals by utilizing violence because spilling Druze blood would have dire consequences on the unity of the community and consequently on its ability to fight the Kataeb”\textsuperscript{497} Nasreddine professes that his advice was rooted in the history of the Druze particularly in the confrontation between Sheikh Bashir Joumblatt and the Abu Nakad family in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century which ultimately weakened the Druze and later prevented them from forming an effective front against Emir

\textsuperscript{496} Azzam, 362.

\textsuperscript{497} Interview with Hisham Nasreddine, September 4 2016. Deir Koubal.
Instead of adopting a Bismarckian approach to unifying the Druze, the PSP appealed to their non-partisan Druze network to discredit and refute the Yazbaki claims and to expose the existential threat that the LF poses on all the Druze regardless of their political inclinations. The PSP, subsequently conceded some of its political role and allowed other Druze elements to lead the confrontation against the Maronites. These elements included, both religious as well as secular Druze which were equally apprehensive by the Maronite infiltration of their areas. Despite its essentially secular doctrine, the PSP allowed the Druze Sheikhs to assume a more active role militarily as well as politically by including them in the meetings the PSP held regularly with either the Lebanese Forces or the IDF. Sheikh Kamal Ghanam, Abu Saleh, was delegated by the Druze clerics to partake in the various meetings which Toufic Barkat, head of the PSP Shuf district and Naji Butrus, the LF Shuf commander, routinely held to negotiate ceasefires or to secure the release of their hostages. Butrus recalls how Abu Saleh was always aggressive throughout their meetings as opposed to Barkat which was always willing to entertain his demands and suggestions. The PSP and subsequently the Druze adopted this “Good Cop, Bad Cop” tactic in their many rounds of negotiations with the LF. This strategy included Barkat playing the good cop and giving Butrus the impression that he is willing to cooperate with his demands, where Abu Saleh would then interject as the bad cop and take a more militant stance. This front, which the PSP wanted to maintain gave them a strategic advantage by allowing them to use the overall Druze community as cover and also relieved them from taking the blame for any potential setbacks while still retaining the ability to take credit for any future victories. Just like their Buhturids ancestors did at the battle of ’Ayn Jalut, the PSP did not want to shoulder the sole responsibility of their community because a defeat could mean their displacement and

498 Ibid.
499 Interview with Naji Butrus.
ultimately their demise.\footnote{See page 43.} One of the Druze anecdotes perhaps reflects this tendency of never conceding defeat but rather adapting with whatever outcome, all with the intention of preserving the community. The Druze, as the story goes, would never make a move or declare their real intention until the result of any situation can be clearly deduced so as to avoid conceding defeat. Consequently, the Druze are famed for saying “the matter can no longer wait, we need to congratulate them or go offer our condolences.”\footnote{\url{http://10452lccc.com/aaaaanews11a/arabic.april28.11.htm}. While this link mentions the proverb it fails to provide an explanation of its origin.}

The PSP similarly sought the legitimacy extended to their project from the office of Mashayikhit al-’Aql in the person of Muhammad Abu-Shaqra whose staunch opposition to the Lebanese Forces entry into Mount Lebanon was extremely palpable throughout the conflict. Contrary to the traditional Druze narrative, however, the support of Shaykh al-’Aql was neither rudimentary nor easy to acquire, as Abu Shaqra was not willing to fully adopt the PSP plan of actions vis-à-vis the LF or the Lebanese President, Amin Gemayel. Abu Shaqra, elected to office in 1949 through the initiative and support of Kamal Joumblatt, had previously conformed to all the Joumblatti policy’s especially when his faction was challenged. In 1958, during the short scrimmages between Joumblatt’s men and Camille Chamoun’s forces, Abu Shaqra took a firm stand behind his political patron “all for the good of the Druze community and as a living symbol of the community's religious foundation, unity and steadfastness.”\footnote{Judith Harik. “Shaykh al-’Aql and the Druze of Mount Lebanon: Conflict and Accommodation”, \textit{Middle Eastern Studies}, 30/3 (1994), 472.} In 1982 however, matters were different and this blind support to the Joumblatti factions had been weakened by a number of factors. First, Abu Shaqra was no longer competing with a Yazbaki contender as the death of the last Sheikh had virtually unified the post. Second, Abu Shaqra saw himself as more
experienced in Druze affairs as he himself had placed the symbolic mantle of leadership on the shoulders of the young Walid Joumblatt in 1977. The Maronite political establishment also tried to further empower Abu Shaqra with the intention of weakening Joumblatt who they ultimately wanted to portray as unfit to lead the Druze. Abu Shaqra had responded to this positively but restricted his interaction with Amin Gemayel who was ultimately, despite Joumblatt’s objections, the elected president of the republic. During the conflict, Gemayel ordered the installation of a direct telephone (hotline) between himself and Abu Shaqra to be used for deliberation as well as for emergencies. Naturally, this special relationship between Abu Shaqra and Gemayel was not welcomed by the PSP but nevertheless no public denunciation was ever issued from their part; most of the PSP senior official I interviewed spoke of their uneasy relationship with Abu Shaqra yet remained cordial with him. To overcome this challenge, the PSP used a similar method to the one used by the Israeli Druze to convince their own Shaykh al-'Aql Amin Tarif to cooperate with their cause. Consequently, Joumblatt and his circle never challenged nor questioned Abu Shaqra’s authority in public but at their private meetings with him at times included implicit threats if he failed to fall in line with their plans. The PSP’s success in finally reigning in Abu Shaqra was facilitated by the fact that in many parts of Mount Lebanon the Druze were subjected to random acts of violence by some elements of the LF contingents and their various checkpoints. Fouad Abi Nader admits that some of his men violated orders by insulting the Druze and especially their clerics, going as far in their humiliating acts to shave the moustaches and pulling down the traditional baggy trousers of these Sheikhs. Such transgressions made it impossible for Abu Shaqra to continue in his lukewarm support of the PSP; he soon began to, perhaps under moral duress, coordinate with Walid Joumblatt most

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503 Interview with Hisham Nasreddine.
504 Interview with Fouad Abi Nadir.
of his political statements especially during the winding months before the final military confrontation with the LF. Sheikh Sharif Abu Hamdan, the political aid to Abu Shaqra, remarks it was the “courageous and synchronized position of the great patriotic leader Walid Joumblatt and his eminence Sheikh Muhammad Abu Shaqra which helped the Druze survive,” adding that the Druze “never fear death nor shy away from war, as they had fought Ibrahim Pasha and the Egyptians, the Ottomans, the French and any future aggressor.”

Naturally the Druze religious and political establishment wanted to portray this image of internal cohesion despite that this so-called unity was lacking for most part of the period in question.

In a further attempt to strengthen their legitimacy, the PSP tried to widen the scope of support within the Druze by appealing to a segment of the community which usually remained outside the Joumblatti-Yazbaki dichotomy. This group of Druze notables had all achieved success in their own field and had the wealth or the stature to speak on behalf of the Druze. These individuals were also active within a number of Druze NGO’s and associations and were mainly based in Beirut. Upon their own initiative as well as the need for Druze media and political representation in Beirut, these people established the Permanent Bureau of Druze Associations-PBDA, which acted as a lobby for the Druze in front the local and international public opinion. While the PSP did possess the resources as well as the expertise to do their own media and mobilization efforts they could not adopt an explicitly denominational undertone, whereas the PBDA could do so without shame. Anwar al-Fatayri, the veteran PSP activist was appointed as the Commissioner for Mobilization, a Soviet inspired post which was especially conceived at that time. Fatayri who was a great orator and polemist was tasked with strengthening the resolve

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505 Interview with Sheikh Sharif Abou Hamdan. PSP Oral History Project
506 For a more detailed account of the founding of the PBDA see chapter 2.
of the PSP members and supporters across Mount Lebanon, however his scope remained restricted to this circle and thus was insufficient on its own. Hisham Nasreddine who assisted Fatayri by going from one village to another lecturing and rallying support for their cause admits that “on the Beirut scene however we [PSP] lacked the media presence and therefore the PBDA was needed to fill this void.”

According to Akram Saab, a founding member of the PBDA, their initial task was to ensure that the Druze point of view regarding the events of Harb al-Jabal was heard by the general public. This task was further augmented after Walid Joumblatt left Lebanon to Jordan after his life was at serious risk in winter of 1983, consequently the PBDA compensated for his absence by flooding the local and international media with articles and news stressing the defensive nature of the Druze military action. As the fighting escalated the PBDA joined in the Druze military effort by establishing the Emergency Fund which raised funds worldwide to serve a variety of needs ranging from the purchase of weapons and ammunition to basic medical and relief efforts and even food and supplies to both civilian and Druze combatants.

Sheikh Halim Takieddine, a member of the PBDA executive board and the head of the Druze religious courts, was a regular contributor to this information war, as his articles and commentaries appeared in the daily press, either responding to allegations by the Maronites and their Druze allies or simply explaining to the public the fears of his own people. Takieddine who became the voice of the PBDA would travel far to promote and explain the essence of the

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507 Interview with Hisham Nasreddine.
508 Interview with Akram Saab.
ongoing conflict. On one of his trips to Brazil, Takieddine was invited to the government house to address the Brazilian Premier and an assembly of Druze and Arab expats affirming:

The whole idea of Lebanon was the creation of the Prince of the Druze the Great Fakerdine Ma’an, when the Shuf was the heart of Lebanon and the base of the principality... in your quest today we have not attacked any of our Lebanese brothers [Maronites], and we have never challenged nor provoked them because this is simply not part of our principles and customs... the Druze have never assaulted anyone, and if any attack occurs they would object to it and demand justice for the victim. They [Druze] also have never allowed anyone to attack them and if this attack did happen their reaction would be brutal and more violent, for in peacetime they are loving, loyal and neighborly and in times of war they are brave, chivalrous and noble.  

The theme of self-defense was a staple of nearly all of the Druze political rhetoric and especially in the literature of the PBDA which was establishing grounds for the Druze’s use of excessive force against the Lebanese Forces as well as the civilian Maronite targets. The PSP and the religious Druze authorities had warned their followers against targeting civilians but these warning naturally fell on deaf ears, mainly because these measure were impossible to implement as violence within the rural tribal structure of Mount Lebanon was met with violence. This led Halim Takieddine to issue a statement at the peak of the clashes urging the religious authorities from both sides to take a firm stand from the killing, abduction and torture of civilians, destroying places of worship and looting of homes. Takieddine went as far as to declare that violators of these commandments would ultimately face excommunication. Takieddine’s threat certainly did not deter the Druze from what they brand as preemptive defensive strikes against their Maronite enemy, as they committed horrendous acts of violence which further bolstered their reputation of being bloodthirsty and ruthless.

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510 Al-Sha’ib newspaper, 18 June 1983.
On November 8 1982, the Christians of Kfarnabrkh in the Shuf were burying a victim of an earlier encounter with the Druze, when their procession was ambushed killing 7 and wounding several. The Druze followed up this ambush by attacking the Christian quarter of the village and torching 20 houses and 15 vehicles including the house of the Roman Catholic Bishop Mikael Ra’ed. According to Naji Butrus, the IDF prevented him and his men from leaving their barracks in Beiteddine to come to the aid of the innocent civilians being butchered by the Druze. The Lebanese Forces had earlier voiced their concern about the negligence and the possible collaboration of some of the IDF Druze troops with the PSP. On the day of the massacre, the IDF contingent stationed in the village had unexpectedly evacuated their positions, leaving the Christians fully exposed to any Druze attack. In a subsequent meeting with the commander of the IDF in Mount Lebanon Amnon Lipkin-Shahak, Butrus lost his temper and yelled at the Israeli general “who are your friends, us [LF] or the Druze? Why do you block the entrance of our barracks and prevent us from using our vehicles?” after which he threw an ashtray to the floor. This tantrum was not merely a reaction to incident at Kfarnabrkh but rather an overall frustration from the lukewarm support the IDF have shown to the LF over the past months and perhaps an omen for things to come.

The Druze on the other hand maintain that the Kfarnabrkh was not an isolated incident but rather the culmination of a series of events which started with the entry of the LF under the cover of the advancing IDF forces a few months earlier. A few days prior to the Kfarnabrkh massacre, three members from the Btadini family were found slaughtered in their house in a secluded farm

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512 Al-‘Amal, 9 November 1982.
513 Ibid.
515 Al-‘Amal, 9 November 1982.
area in the outskirts of Brih. While the perpetrators of this crime were never revealed, the Druze by tribal law were obliged to avenge their dead, and consequently decided to open fire at the funeral procession a few days later. This eye-for-an-eye process did not stabilize Mount Lebanon but rather added to the volatility of the situation. A PSP combatant explained why the Druze generally responded with such mercilessness, by narrating the anecdote of “the Cat”.\footnote{Interview with PSP combatant, name withheld} It was village custom that before “a man gets married, he has to yank the head of a living cat in the presence of his future wife, to send a message to his wife and all those present that he means business.” This tactic which the Druze employed was necessary due to the fact that they lacked both numbers and weapons at that stage; therefore, “what we lacked in numbers we compensated for by being brutal.”\footnote{Ibid.}

The Christian drive to arm and to militarize their community was a natural reaction to the Druze aggression in 1982 and earlier in 1977 after the assassination of Kamal Joumblatt and the massacre of innocent Christian civilians. Joumblatt’s murder and the events that followed, led to a general Christian insecurity, especially within the members who belonged to rival parties to the PSP, leading them to leave their villages and town only to return in 1982 with the start of the Israeli invasion. Prior to this date, these exiled patrons of the Kataeb and later the LF had been organized under the supervision of the Bureau of the Occupied Areas-BOA which was entrusted to Joe Eddé, the commander of the battle of Zahle. According to George Eid one of Eddé key aids, “Bashir Gemayel created the BOA to maintain contact with the parts which were under Syrian occupation and in order to recruit its [Christian] youth and train and arm them.”\footnote{George Eid as quoted in Shuwayfāti, Ḥarb al-Durūz wa-al-Mawārīnah fi al-Jabal, 10. My translation} The BOA which reported to Fouad Abi Nadir, the head of the LF operations, set up an elaborate
and secretive training program for hundreds of LF members which were living in the Shuf and Aley region. Simon Moussallam a native of the village of *Bire* in the Shuf was one of those adolescents who received his basic training through the BOA:

We used to go down to East Beirut where we used to receive basic military and infantry training and all this was done in secret. Most of these sessions used to take place in the Don Bosco barracks in the Byblos region. We used to assemble each village on its own or sometimes multiple and when we had 30 members we used to undergo a short training session and then go back home to our villages without letting our parents know what we were doing. Our main objective was to be prepared to protect our villages if needed, at first we could not bring in weapons to the mountain so we had to resort to the weapons we already had and use them to guard our villages.\(^{519}\)

These sleeper cells which by 1982 numbered in the hundreds deployed as soon as the IDF reached their villages and this consequently unleashed a series of bloody confrontations with the Druze with only worsened with time.

Khaled Btadini, a native of the village and a commander in the PSP militia recalls how the Christians of his village and the area started “to go to Beiteddine to receive basic military training and consequently started to parade in the villages with their guns and in their full Lebanese Forces uniform provoking the the Druze.”\(^{520}\) Btadini remembers how the mere sight of the LF uniform would provoke the Druze of his village who at one time attacked a uniformed LF supporter from a neighboring village and sent him back completely naked. In a more serious attack, the Druze blew up the gas station in the village of *Mas’ar Beiteddine* after the Lebanese Forces issued orders that anyone who wanted gasoline was obliged to obtain a coupon from their offices. The Druze according to Btadini were humiliated as they were forced to stand in line and subjected to moral and verbal abuse before they could obtain their coupon.\(^{521}\) Despite these

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\(^{520}\) Interview with Khaled Btadini. PSP Oral History Project.

\(^{521}\) Ibid.
tension both the LF and the PSP attempted to avoid future clashes by forming local village committees which included representatives and clerics from both communities. Fawzi Abu Abbas, head of the PSP for Arqoub (upper Shuf) was a regular attendee of these meetings which failed at preventing further bloodshed. The main problem according to Abu Abbas was the return of many Kataeb and LF members to their villages with the clear intention of exerting vengeance for years of displacement.\footnote{Interview with Fawzi Abu Abbas. PSP Oral History Project.} The LF insistence to assume the role of the Lebanese state invoked a violent reaction from the Druze who saw the militarization of their Christian neighbors a threat to their own existence. Both the Maronites and the Druze accused the Israelis publically of playing a negative role in the events, on one hand the LF kept demanding that the IDF disarm the Druze and thus defang them; on the other side, the Druze were demanding the immediate withdrawal of all LF armed presence from their areas. In fact, the IDF had only cared for the security of its own troops as well as maintaining control over the areas under their command. To achieve this the IDF would use the carrot and the stick approach when dealing with both the Druze and the Maronites. The PSP were allowed to rearm and to smuggle weapons under the watchful eyes of the IDF which knew quite well that the source of these weapons. One day Fouad Abo Nadir received a call from one of the LF advanced observation posts on the Beirut Damascus highway informing him that the Israeli had allowed for the sand barrier to be temporary removed after which a truck was allowed to cross over. Almost immediately, Abo Nadir reached the weapons filled truck and followed it on its journey to the city of Aley where it delivered it payload to the PSP. Abu Nadir later protested to the Israeli commander of the area that he himself “had seen the barrel of a mortar protruding from the back of the truck and that the many IDF roadblocks had waved the truck off knowing well that it was transporting arms for the Druze.”\footnote{Interview with Fouad Abi Nadir.}
The IDF commanders shocking reply was laden with realism as well as wickedness “of course we know where the Druze get their weapons, there arms are soviet made and they have to get them through the Syrians and for them to do so we have to allow them to pass.”

Hisham Nasreddine shows no restrain in talking about this episode of military cooperation with the IDF. For the PSP, arms were vital for their victory and thus Nasreddine and his comrades resorted to all means to smuggle these weapons across, going as far as to use money, drugs, alcohol and even women to bribe the soldiers manning these checkpoints.

Nasreddine jokingly narrates how he would gift the Israeli soldiers that stopped him on his way back from Damascus boxes of Barazek (Syrian sesame sweets) which they accepted with a smile.

The Battle of Mtolleh

However, this Israeli leniency had its limits, and when the PSP crossed any red lines, punishment was swiftly administrated, as the events of the Battle of Mtolleh proved. The PSP in an attempt to rupture the LF supply lines with their southern flanks attacked the Christians town of Mtolleh which divided the Shuf from the Iqlim el-Kharroub, the coastal Shuf. The possible success of this PSP attack would prevent the LF from reinforcing their forces through the port of Jiyeh which linked the LF with their heartland. However, the PSP overplayed their hand by carrying out their attack as they did not realize that this area was not included in

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524 Ibid.
525 Interview with Hisham Nasreddine.
the IDF Jabal sector but rather belonged to the Southern command. Consequently, the LF were successful in repealing the PSP assault after they were permitted by the IDF to call in reinforcements and arterially cover. Abu Nadir, the LF Chief of Staff accompanied by the LF elite fighting unit al-Saddam joined his men that day after he took the trip by sea through Jiyeh and assumed command of the battlefield. Al-Saddam, trained by the Israelis and fashioned after the IDF Sayeret Matkal unit which carried out the famous Entebbe raid in Uganda in 1976, experts in close quarter warfare provide instrumental on the battleground leaving the PSP with heavy casualties.526

The PSP had dispatched its top fighters to the battlefield, most of which had been trained in the Soviet Union and had field experience. Among those was Walid Safi, the youngest PSP officer to graduate the Soviet military academy at age 20, was tasked with the sector that supported the troops that assaulted the LF in Mtolleh and the adjacent area.527 Safi denies that the PSP had the intentions nor the resources to open the battle but rather that this confrontation was imposed on his party by the LF and the Israelis. In a similar manner to how the Lebanese Forces justify their defeat in the battle of Qoubbei the PSP refuses to acknowledge any fault in their military tactics nor its execution but rather equate their failure to Israeli direct intervention in the battle. Nearly all the combatant’s interviewed by the PSP Oral History Project reiterated the line above, adding that part of their battle was directly waged against the IDF, which led to killing one of their soldiers and capturing an armored transport in addition to a jeep which the PSP used to transport some of their wounded to hospital.528 Mtolleh was a resounding defeat to the PSP who until that day had a fairly good record in their confrontation with the LF, Alaa Tero

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527 Interview with Walid Safi. PSP Oral History Project.
528 Ibid.

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the PSP field commander was seriously wounded alongside 29 others and 17 dead, some of which the PSP could not retrieve their corpses until much later.

Interestingly, the Lebanese Forces declare that their win in Mtolleh came despite the Israelis not because of them, as they accused the IDF of aiding the Druze attackers as well as impeding the movement of their troops and preventing them from using their heavy artillery. The LF command’s bitterness was vivid when they met with General Meir Dagan, head of the Lebanon Liaison Unit (Yakal) shortly after the end of the battle. Dagan who was personally appointed by Sharon to run Yakal, assured his Lebanese interlocutors that the IDF had indeed dispatched forces to aid the LF, but those forces were ambushed by the Druze.529 Fadi Frem, who over the past days cabled Israel demanding they declare “who is their friend and who is their foe” was unsatisfied by Dagan’s justification, and heatedly asked him how could have been possible for the Druze mobilize 500 of their troops without the IDF taking notice. Furthermore, Frem blatantly accused his allies of helping the Druze, by supplying the PSP fighters with IDF uniforms which they used to infiltrate some of the LF lines; but what the LF senior commanders found extremely malicious was that Druze were allowed to use their artillery battery which was deployed a few miles away from the command post of General Lipkin-Shahak in the Aley region, a fact which Shahak himself admitted.530

The Lebanese Forces accusations and fears were not totally unfounded but rather a reflection of the political reality that was transpiring in Lebanon and the region. On 6 May 1983, shortly before the battle of Mtolleh the Israeli cabinet had voted on accepting the peace treaty

529 Ménargues, 249. In 2002, Dagan was appointed head of the Mossad by Sharon. 530 Ibid, 250-51.
with Lebanon, which was one of the top priorities of PM Begin which Bashir had promised his allies, and his successor Amin pledged to honor. Gemayel, under the auspices of the Reagan administration, hammered out a peace accord between Lebanon and Israel, which was signed on May 17 1983. Amin Gemayel who was a strong supporter of the National Pact, unlike his brother, did not want to antagonize the Sunnis who he considered to be an important pillar of the state, thus to use David Kimche’s words “could not afford to appear too forthcoming” in their negotiations with the Israeli side. Kimche who signed the treaty on behalf of Israel was fairly optimistic that:

> the work we have done together over these past months will have laid the foundations of a strong and lasting bond of friendship between our two countries. This is our destiny, and it will come about despite the contrary words of politicians.....we are, as you know, an ancient people, conscious of our past heritage which lives on with us. We had, as you know, excellent relations in the past with Hiram, King of Tyre, and with Lebanon in general. I would like to end my words with a passage from the book of Kings, which I believe is particularly apt today: "And the Lord, gave Solomon wisdom, as he promised him; and there was peace between Hiram and Solomon; and the two of them made a treaty.”

This Israeli vigor was not reciprocated by Kimche’s Lebanese counterpart, the seasoned diplomat Antoine Fattal whose main objective was purely aesthetical remarking “for us the wrapping is more important than the content of the parcel.” These were certainly the directives Fattal received from Gemayel, who directly after his election refused to meet with any Israeli official, but rather communicated secretly with them via his emissary and school friend Sami Maroun. The talks which Maroun conducted with the Israelis both in Beirut and in Tel Aviv, Gemayel never honored nor ever acknowledged of its existence.

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532 Statements by Director General Kimche at the two ceremonies making the signing of the Israel-Lebanon Agreement- 17 May 1983
533 Fattal as quoted in Kimche, 169.
Amin’s passive aggressive attitude antagonized Begin and Sharon who had promised the weary Israeli public a swift and decisive victory in Lebanon, and more importantly, a peace treaty. Ariel Sharon, shortly before relinquishing his post as defense minister went as far as publicly threatening Gemayel by saying, “he will end up not as president of Lebanon, or president of Beirut, or the president of Ba’abda. He will end up as president of the presidential palace and nothing else.” While the treaty was indeed signed on May 17, it was never presented to the Lebanese Parliament for ratification and thus remained in limbo up until it was finally abrogated by Gemayel a year later. Israel’s displeasure over Amine’s inactions were palpable in their dealings with the LF as they made it clear to Fadi Frem that he should publically denounce their president. This however was impossible to do, the LF as a body was technically subordinate to the Kataeb and its founder Pierre Gemayel, whose instructions were always to stand behind the state and its president. Amine knew this quite well as he used it to further weaken and isolate the LF which he ultimately wanted to abolish rather than incorporate it into the Lebanese state.

One of Amine’s most damaging moves towards his Christian comrades was perhaps his political empowering of their traditional arch nemesis, Walid Joumblatt and the PSP. While Bashir Gemayel had never dismissed the idea of cooperating with Joumblatt, it was obvious that he prioritized the Yazbaki faction within the Druze. Amine on the other hand adopted a contrasting policy which not only gave legitimacy to Joumblatt as the leader of his people but also placed the Yazbaki faction in a position which portrayed them as defending the Lebanese Forces which were killing, kidnapping and humiliating the Druze. The predicament of the Yazbaki faction was further exasperated as the PBDA periodically tried to sway the Druze public

opinion and paint the Yazbaki collusion with the Lebanese Forces as un-Druze like and ultimately disadvantageous to the whole community. On 18 March 1983, the PBDA issued a fiery statement attacking the MPs of the “Aley Independent Bloc” who have for the longest time “turned a blind eye to the actions of the Kataeb militia who since their entry into Mount Lebanon, disrupted 8 years of peace and harmony which existed between all the different elements.”

The PBDA statement further reminded the Druze, that their turncoat parliamentarians:

were harmed by the limited success of the fascists [Kataeb], for the success of the fascists ‘cultural’ project like their earlier accomplishments in Sabra and Shatila [massacre], would have left the Druze homeless and landless, perhaps then the Aley MPs would have taken a stand or even perhaps not.

Further weakening the anti-Joumblatt Druze was the rapprochement Amin Gemayel initiated with Joumblatt, which gave the latter a clear advantage over his Druze political opponents, who were originally hopeful that the ascendance of the Kataeb to power will translate in a number of ministerial appointments to their faction, something which never transpired under the mandate of Amin Gemayel. Instead, Gemayel empowered Walid Joumblatt by limiting the negotiations with the Druze side almost exclusively to himself or to people close to his circle. This naturally provoked a negative reaction from the Yazbaki side which felt deceived and abandoned by what they considered to be their historic allies. Emir Majid Arslan, the head of the Yazbaki party who played a pivotal role in both the elections of Bashir and Amin clearly expressed his growing discontent from the contentious underhanded approach towards his faction by saying “when will you [the Maronites] honor your promises?”

Sheikh Farid Hamada, was equally irritated by Gemayel’s unipolar approach to the Druze as he informed Elie Salam, Gemayel’s Minster of

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535 PBDA Newsletter, 19 March 1983.
536 Ibid.
537 Andary, Al-Jabal, 54
foreign affairs, of the need to have “a full Druze representation in any future national conference.” Naturally, Hamada used the word “full” to object to Joumblatt’s monopoly over the political hegemony of his community, something which was made possible with the facilitation of Gemayel. This frustration over the growing power of Joumblatt and the weakening of his Yazbaki rivals was equally shared by the members of the Lebanese Forces, who met regularly with the Yazbaki faction to try to address this serious crisis.

On 7 December 1982, a meeting was called at the Mar Antonius Monastery, the headquarters of the Lebanese Order of Monks in Sodeco, to devise a plan to deal with the deteriorating relationship with the Druze as a whole. Addressing the room, Bulus Na’aman assured that the Maronites should be aware that the Druze cannot be rooted out and thus a clear plan to deal and empower their Druze Yazbaki allies was seriously required. Na’aman further went one to diagnosis the crux of the challenge at hand:

We should have known better how to cooperate with the Arslani leadership, which has been patriotic since the beginning and refrain from reaching out to the Joumblattis who always look abroad for support. The policy which we have adopted has estranged both Druze factions. Walid Joumblatt one day told me “I am really grateful, you have united the Druze behind me. After Sheikh Amin [Gemayel] was elected president the Arslani Druze were expecting to play a major role in government but their wait was to no avail.

The Maronite urgency to address this Druze predicament came exactly one week after Walid Joumblatt narrowly escaped an assassination attempt that destroyed his convoy, injured his wife, and killed one of his bodyguards. The sight of their young leader rushed to the hospital, disoriented and bleeding, further affirmed to the Druze that their existence was indeed at stake.

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538 An-Nahar, 24 August 1983.
539 Andary, 54.
540 Ibid, 53.
541 As-Safir, 2 December 1982.
and that a political compromise with the Maronites was not really an option. Joumblatt and the PSP never accused the Lebanese Forces of this crime, but rather used this incident to further rally the Druze around Joumblatt as the legitimate and uncontested leader of the community. The Lebanese Forces decision to liquidate Joumblatt was reached after the former lost hope of containing him or investing in a Druze alternative. Years later, Elie Hobeika, the head of LF intelligence would admit to Joumblatt that he had planned and executed a number of assassination attempts to eliminate him among them the December 1982 operation.542

The fears of both communities were further reinforced by a number of local events and security incidents across Mount Lebanon. After the death of Bashir, the LF started to send reinforcements into the Shuf region and to establish military barracks and LF chapters within the different villages across Mount Lebanon, something which Bashir had consciously avoided in the past.543 These action on the part of the Lebanese Forces was a last attempt to reinforce their hold over a hostile area which was slowly slipping because of Druze resentment to their presence in addition to Israeli indifference or even compliancy with the Druze

542 Ménargues, 106.
543 See page 163.
Chapter Seven

On 6 January 1983, the LF dispatched Samir Geagea along with 200 fighters from the North to the Shuf Mountains. Geagea, a former medical student at the American University of Beirut, acquired a reputation for being efficient and ruthless during his command of the LF units in the North of Lebanon and for leading the assault on Ehden in 1978 which killed Tony Franjieh and his family. Naji Butrus originally assigned command of the Shuf soon found himself replaced by Geagea whose appointment was part of internal power struggle between the senior LF ranks, which after the death of Bashir started showing signs of disunity. Fouad Abi Nadir affirms that this was indeed the aim of the LF command, however this appointment ultimately was intended to act as a deterrent rather than merely a dare, and to urge the Druze to seize their attacks and perhaps negotiate with the LF.

The Maronite via Dolorosa

Paul Andary, Geagea’s second-in-command, describes the perilous task that was assigned to them as the “Passing of the Crucifix’ on their Via Dolorosa much similar to the route of grief Jesus Christ undertook on his way to the crucifix. Andary and his comrades took command of an area which had already been entrenched in mindless violence which further divided the mixed villages and led to more bloodshed. Furthermore, the morale of the Lebanese Forces deployed in Mount Lebanon were at its all-time lowest as they were not only fighting the Druze and the PSP but also caught up in a struggle with their allies the IDF; whose neutrality was

544 See Chapter 2
545 Interview with Fouad Abi Nadir.
546 Andary, S9.
regressively affecting the LF. Despite all these challenges, Samir Geagea unreservedly accepted the mission at hand as he addressed Andary:

Paul, if we [Christians] are not doing well in the Mountain, we will not be fine anywhere in Lebanon… I believe that the struggle of the Christians is interrelated and its impossible for the Christians to lose somewhere and yet win somewhere else… moreover the battle of the Mountain is a strategic one, if we win it we will be able to implement our strategic plan, and if we do lose a big part of this hope will be lost with it… we have waited years and years to recreate it[our plan] the chain of events have shown that we are losing the battle, therefore it is instrumental that we reorganize ourselves in the Mountain.”

Geagea’s remarks to his lieutenant were merely a reflection of the policy the LF senior command had fallen back on after the death of Bashir. In his bid to take over power, Bashir and his group were faced with two options. The first was the 10,452km² option where Bashir would seize power democratically and thus govern the entirety of Lebanon. The second option al-‘Aryin (the Sanctum), included taking power by force but restricting their control of pre-1920 Lebanon which Bashir and his men “knew well and were confident could serve as a Christian Lebanese homeland.” The death of Bashir and the 10452Km² project, left the LF with the ‘Aryin as their only recourse; however this also virtually placed the Maronites in direct opposition with the Druze who also inhabited the geographical area referred to as the sanctum. The LF, under Geagea, intensified its obligatory military service to all able-bodied Christians between the age of 16 and 30 years old, which was intended to field more fighters as well as raise moral that was at an all-time low. This program however had the opposite effect as many Christians avoided joining the draft by either leaving their villages to Beirut or by all together emigrating from Lebanon. According to Simon Moussallam, an LF fighter who originally hails from the Shuf, “over 2200 young men across the mountain received basic military training, over 90% of whom

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547 Ibid, 60.
548 See Chapter 4, p 136.
549 Interview with Fadi Frem, Bashir Gemayel: The Series.
deserted and refused fight.” Many of the Christian villages across both the Shuf and Aley area slowly started to lose its young inhabitants leaving the sick and the elderly which proved to be a liability to the LF that needed to cater to their daily needs especially during the harsh winter season.

**General Beaufort Resurrected**

The Druze-Maronite cycle of violence was mostly driven by reprisal measures with each side accusing the other with instigating the killings, abduction and indiscriminate shelling of civilians. In reality, none of the two sides required any pretext to justify any of their barbarous acts, as they had sufficient historical grievances in their collective perception of themselves and their enemies, enough to make an already volatile political standoff even worse. Toufic Barkat’s PSP Oral History Project interview clearly reflects that the confrontation with the LF went beyond the day-to-day scrimmages and was part of an imagined primordial feud going back hundreds of years. Barkat who was part of a joint PSP-LF commission tasked with hostage release and ceasefire negotiations was enraged when he met one of the LF field commanders in Shuf, Joseph Abou Samra, known as Beaufort. Abou Samra had never personally harmed or even addressed Barkat, but his nom-de-guerre was enough to offend this highly educated PSP official. During a visit to the village of Brih, Barkat asked Abou Samra about the meaning of his nickname, to which he replied it had no real meaning but rather a Latin initial B4 which he acquired growing up. Barkat unsatisfied by this answer, snapped back at Abou Samra “you call yourself Beaufort after the General Beaufort d'Hautpoul who led the expeditionary force in 1860 to punish the Druze, and if you think that you will be able to hurt the Druze then you are utterly mistaken. We will take our revenge

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551 Barakat’s level of education and his cultural cultivation is evident in many of his examples and analogies he employs throughout the interview includes references to works of history as well
from the original Beaufort and his descendants [the Maronites].”

Naji Buturs, Beaufort’s commanding officer, laughingly dismissed this incident as totally unfounded, as Abou Samra had no intellectual depth to be aware of such a historic figure as General Beaufort. Abou Samra picked up the name B4 because as a young man he used to play a juvenile game which included shaking a fizzy soda bottle and trying to consume it, thus he was known as B4 which means “the one that shakes the soda bottle.”

The Druze paranoia however was not totally unfounded as some of the LF rhetoric, especially in the months leading to the final confrontation, were hinting or plainly framing their conflict with the Druze as going back to 10th century AD. While delivering a eulogy to one of the martyrs of the battle of Mtolleh, Salim Kassab, the Kataeb chief in al-Zahrani district, declared that “the battle we [LF] won is part of a struggle dating back 1300 years.”

In practical terms, Kassab, saw the Druze as Abbasid frontier warriors who defeated the Mardaites/Maronite army and occupied a land which rightfully belonged to its Christians inhabitants. This same analogy was also shared by the head of the LF women’s fighting unit al-Nizamiyat Jocelyn Khoueiry who equally framed the confrontation as going back 1400 years if not more.

The Druze replied to these historic references by equally drawing connections between the current conflicts and the experiences of their so-called ancestors, going back as far as the times of the prophet. This collective memory molding process can also be observed in al-Anbaa, the PSP’s official publication, for despite the PSP’s secular doctrine, the months leading to the war marked a clear departure from earlier secular practices with avoided identifying the PSP with the Druze.

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552 Interview with Toufic Barkat, PSP Oral History Project.
553 Interview with Naji Butrus.
554 Ibid.
555 Kassab as quoted in Interview with Toufic Barkat, PSP Oral History Project
556 See chapter 4, p 93.
community. Consequently, a number of articles appeared in *al-Anbaa* under the alias ‘Salman’ with blatant sectarian and confessional undertones. The author of these articles promotes a rather unlikely notion that all Druze share a common ancestry, and that warfare is the Druze’s way of life, rather than an anomaly.\(^{557}\) In response to an earlier call by Fadi Frem urging the Druze to relinquish their support to Joumblatt and the PSP, Salman addresses the Druze as “Sons of Salman and Soldiers of Abu Ibrahim”, reminding them that they are “a primordial people as old as the oak trees of this proud mountain.”\(^{558}\) The choice of oak itself is interesting as it stands in stark opposition to the cedar tree which was the symbol of the Maronite church. Beyond its aim to mobilize the Druze behind Joumblatt, the article affirms that the Druze are direct descendants of Prophet Mohammad’s companions Salman al-Farsi, the champion of the Battle of Khandaq (the trench) in 627AD. Just like Salman stood by the Prophet in his war against the Meccaian infidels, his Druze ancestors were similarly resisting the Christian infidels and their Israeli allies.

**The Faustian Deal Revoked**

The change of the LF field command in the Shuf coincided with the appointment of Moshe Arens as the new Israeli defense minister.\(^{559}\) While Arens was equally as hawkish as his predecessor Sharon, he was nevertheless dissatisfied by Israel political catastrophe in the Lebanon especially the failure of the Lebanese president to honor his earlier commitments.\(^{560}\) Consequently, Arens and the IDF command started to look for an exodus from Mount Lebanon for they had no interest nor intention in being caught up in a Maronite-Druze sectarian shootout. This Israeli policy was also evident in the appointment of Uri Lubrani, as the coordinator of the Activities of IDF

\(^{557}\) *Al-Anbaa*, 22& 30 May 1983.
\(^{558}\) *Al-Anbaa*, 23 May 1983.
\(^{559}\) See Chapter
\(^{560}\) Hanf, 275.
in Lebanon. Lubrani selection came jointly by both PM Begin and Arens who felt the need to engage and appease other Lebanese communities particularly the Druze and the Shiites.\textsuperscript{561}

Though Lubrani worked closely with the Yakal who were very fond of the LF, he himself believed that in order to properly protect the IDF, Israel needed to abandon its unilateral Maronite track. To follow Lubrani’s logic, the best way to protect Israel was to establish concentric circles of protection by collaborating with the different Lebanese communities even the most aggressive of them, mainly the Shiites. More importantly Lubrani realized that it was futile to continue to isolate and antagonize Walid Joumblatt and thus invested time and effort to reach out and agree with the Druze warlord about the period to come. While Lubrani’s relationship which with the Druze remained outside the limelight, the Israelis plainly informed their LF allies of this major shift in policy. In January of 1983, Dagan the head of Yakal, was tasked with breaking this news to the LF leadership:

\begin{quote}
We have reached an agreement with the Druze, although it certainly not as strong as our alliance with you [LF]. We wish Amin [Gemayel] was more reasonable! We wish the Americans did not stick their nose in this. The Druze at the moment are confident that you intend to keep fighting them and your appointment of Geagea has further provoked them. I am talking to you as a representative of the state of Israel. Do not withdraw your troops from the Shuf! Do not even consider this! We have brought you there, so you have to stay. However, I suggest that you remove your roadblocks and seize immediately any action which might provoke the Druze. My government’s instructions are clear: order must be restored in the Shuf.\textsuperscript{562}
\end{quote}

This naturally did not go well with the LF which neither had the intention nor the ability to reach a settlement with Walid Joumblatt and the PSP. Nevertheless, following the ominous Israeli proclamation and upon the insistence of the IDF, the LF tried to reach an agreement with the PSP to put an end to the cycle of violence. Consequently, and under IDF patronage, the LF and the PSP hammered out a security arrangement which established joint operation rooms that

\textsuperscript{561} Rabinovich, 194. \\
\textsuperscript{562} Ménargues, 145. My translation
included civilian and military representatives from both sides, with a senior Israeli officer present to act as mediator if needed.\textsuperscript{563} This agreement was signed by Meir Daghan himself, Nizar Nazarian and Sami Khoueiry from the LF and Salem Reaidi from the Kataeb, Hisham Nasreddine from the PSP as well as Fadlallah Talhouk Druze MP for the Aley district.\textsuperscript{564} Talhouk was in fact an anti-Joumlatti Druze notable, but the PSP seemed to have included him in these talks for strategic reasons primarily to weaken Faisal Arslan and to fend off any allegations that it was only one faction of the Druze that were opposing the LF.

The Druze Canton

This agreement soon collapsed as neither side including the IDF honored their part of the deal, as both militias tried to take advantage of the occasional lull in fighting to fortify their positions by moving in ammunition and reinforcements. While the LF ostensibly went along with the Israeli request to appease the Druze, they launched in tandem an attack on Joumblatt accusing him of trying to establish a Druze canton with the help of the Israeli Druze. In its March 15 edition, \textit{al-`Amal} newspapers published a document which it claimed was being circulated amongst the Druze stressing the “unavoidability of establishing a Druze state.”\textsuperscript{565} This document which initially surfaced through a shadowy local news agency \textit{Akhbar al-Yawm}, gives a historical and political rationalization why the Druze must work towards establishing their own entity. Highly spirited with realpolitik, the documents asks the Druze the following:

\begin{quote}
Why should we [Druze] allow the Lebanese Christians which are operating under the protection of the Israel to continue to kill and destroy as they please? Instead we should follow suit and establish good relations with the Israelis in order to reverse the situation and consequently take the fight into the Christian heartland and get rid of them [Christians] once and for all.\textsuperscript{566}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{563} For the full text of the LF-PSP agreement see Andary, 77.
\textsuperscript{564} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{565} \textit{Al-`Amal}, 15 March 1983.
\textsuperscript{566} Ibid. My translation
In the same issue of the newspaper, Joseph Abu Khalil was blunter in directing his accusations towards the PSP and Joumblatt for this separatist scheme stating, “We are amazed how this project [the Druze state] or any other like it is being circulated at the moment; because it means that the Joumblatti dominance over the rest of Lebanon has failed.”567 The Lebanese Forces also reached out to Joumblatt’s Druze archenemies, Faisal Arslan who flooded the local and international media with statements framing Joumblatt and the PSP as serving the Israelis by trying to create an ethnic Druze state. Arslan published a fairly extensive op-ed in *al-`Amal* entitled “The Druze State: a Feeble and Unsustainable Entity.”568 Arslan and other Yazbaki and anti-Joumblatti figures had been equally affected by Lubrani’s shift in policy and thus found it favorable to highlight the Joumblatt-Israeli dealings which would discredit Joumblatt that uses Arab nationalism and anti-western rhetoric as merely cover. Arslan attacked Joumblatt without actually naming him by declaring:

As we have said before, the project of the Druze state is not really as tempting as it seems, however we are afraid of some weak spirited individuals which do not look favorably at the central Lebanese state because it would weaken their own control of their areas. This has lead them to cheer for the Druze state and to convince people of its necessity. Coincidently, they have gone out of their way to escalate the fighting and to drive a schism with their [Christian] compatriots. This has also led to a terrible economic and living conditions across Mount Lebanon which makes the project of the Druze state a way out from their predicament rather than a willful choice.569

Joumblatt responded to the Maronite allegations by issuing an extensive memorandum which included Druze demands of reform, underscoring the need for both administrative as well as constitutional reform. The “Druze Memorandum” as it was known, endorsed by both Sheikh Muhammad Abu Shaqra and Emir Majid Arslan, was addressed to President Amin Gemayel

567 Ibid.
568 Ibid, 27 May
569 Ibid.
reminding him that “a strong sovereign state entails all its citizens to be equal in front of the law as well as to be equal in their rights and obligations, for without this equilibrium, the state cannot exist.”\textsuperscript{570} The memorandum goes on to propose amendments to the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government, most important amongst them is the reestablishment of the Senate, presided by a Druze.\textsuperscript{571} These demands were intended to affirm that the Druze indeed had a vested interest in the Lebanese state provided the Maronite establishment adopts these inclusionary reform measures which would make the Druze feel that they are not second class citizens. The Druze had never flaunted their Lebanese identity in the same manner as their Maronites counterparts did, but they have always considered themselves to be both Lebanese as well as Arab. However, the various standoffs which Kamal Joumblatt and later his son Walid had with the Maronite political establishment, lead them to adopt a somewhat reactionary position which branded Lebanese nationalism as essentially racist.

This inferiority complex was clearly reflected in many of the Druze rhetoric and literary productions before and throughout the war with the Maronites. In an article entitled “Freedoms and Constitutional Rights in Lebanon” Rajeh Naim, the editor of the PBDA newsletter underscores to what extent the Druze saw the Lebanese constitution as basically racist and unjust towards its non-Christian citizens.\textsuperscript{572} Naim, narrates a story about a Lebanese law professor at the Lebanese University which lectures his students about US President Abraham Lincoln who in 1865 signed the Congress 13\textsuperscript{th} amendment to the US constitution which ultimately ended slavery. However, the professor goes on to explain how despite their emancipation, the blacks were never treated equally because they were considered to possess $5/6$\textsuperscript{th} of the rights the White

\textsuperscript{570} The Druze Memorandum
\textsuperscript{571} In the 1926 Lebanese constitution passed by the French Mandate established the Senate which was composed of 16 senators. This body was annulled almost a year later.
\textsuperscript{572} PBDA Newsletter. (1983 Undated).
Man possessed. According to Naim, “even though the Negros, 118 years later got their freedom, the Lebanese constitution still only grants the Lebanese Muslims 5/6th of the rights granted to the Christians. Imagine what racist civilization these people [the Maronites] are flaunting.”

**Israel Exits the Inferno**

Despite the many efforts to reconcile the Druze and the Maronites, the events which were slowly unfolding on the ground made the confrontation ever more precarious and imminent. Shortly after the signing of the May 17 accord, Israeli officials met with the LF on a number of occasions to inform them of their intention to partially redeploy their troops. On August 6 1983, Ariel Sharon visited Lebanon and met with Pierre Gemayel and the LF command in Beirut, before going to Ain Trez Samir Geagea’s command post deep in Mount Lebanon. Sharon, equally frustrated by Amin Gemayel’s attitude as well as the Reagan’s administration appeasement of Syria gave his Lebanese allies a clear notice:

> My visit today might be the last chance to warn you that we will leave Shuf soon, I cannot tell you the exact date but soon. Eight month ago in January, I warned you that you are putting too much hope on the Americans who are telling you what to do. You have to accept the peace deal between Israel and Lebanon, you should take the road to Jerusalem and stop turning your backs to us.

Surprisingly, and according to many of the people present in this meeting Pierre Gemayel was certain that Sharon and the Israelis were merely bluffing and that they would never actually abandon their most trusted allies, the Maronites. Amin Gemayel also shared his father’s view and played down these warnings and continued to refuse to meet any of the Israeli delegates or to even communicate with them through proxies. However, the IDF’s intention to redeploy was neither a bluff nor a secret as it was being circulated in the news, with all senior IDF officers

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573 Ibid.
574 Sharon as quoted in Andary, 108.
575 Ménargues, 320.
plainly declaring that their Shuf incursion was nearing its end. On August 16, the IDF Chief of Staff Moshe Levy inspected his troops deployed across Lebanon. Following his tour, Levy announced to the Israeli radio that “Israel cannot be held responsible for any violence that might break out between the Maronite and the Druze after our withdrawal, especially that this withdrawal will be very soon.” On the same day Arens flew to Beirut in a last attempt to convince the Lebanese government of the need to prepare for the IDF impending evacuation from the Shuf. Arens had also expressed his willingness to delay the IDF redeployment if the Lebanese President officially asks that of the government of Israel. Arens which was joined by Uri Lubrani and other senior IDF officers were on a mission to meet with Amin Gemayel but having been denied the chance, the Israeli delegation met with Pierre Gemayel and Camille Chamoun and the LF central command.

The LF command were more pragmatic and looked at Arens visit as a chance to coordinate the IDF withdrawal and possibly replace them especially in some of the essential strategic positions across Shuf and Aley. The Israelis however were not willing to entertain such a transitional process giving the LF a clear military advantage over the Druze, which were by that time in a clear military pact with the IDF. According to one of the architects of this understanding with the IDF, the PSP established a solid relationship with Lubrani who was well aware of the Druze’s mental state as well as obsessions. The PSP leadership was quite mindful that the IDF would finally evacuate and therefore it was not in their advantage to oppose them during their temporary presence in the mountain.

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576 Ibid, 325.
577 Andary, 
578 PSP senior member, requested anonymity.
This Druze-Israeli pact was clear in the press conference Arens held prior to his return to Israel, as he affirmed:

- The IDF will redeploy to south of the Litani river no later than the 15th of September
- If the Lebanese army does not deploy in the Mountain this will leave a big security void
- Israel will not abandon the Druze of Lebanon
- The Lebanese government should look for means to reconcile the feuding factions.\(^{579}\)

Arens repeated these points in his meeting with the Lebanese Forces responding to their multiple requests for weapons and ammunition with the sober remark “it is more proper for you and Lebanon to reach a compromise with the Druze, they are only scared for their lives.”\(^{580}\) Lubrani on the other hand was less ashamed to flaunt his pro-Druze sentiments as he addressed his Lebanese Forces interlocutors with his understanding of what should come next:

> They [Druze] want to leave in peace and go back to their normal business. They say that you have the option to move to Beirut whereas they have no other place to go to. They are after their security and existence and not merely supporting Joumblatt. You should negotiate with them, you can either do it harshly or moderately but you have to do it. Mr. [George] Adwan\(^{581}\) wants us to discipline [Druze] them and to tell them what to do. This method is possible with the Syrians and not with the Druze.\(^{582}\)

Lubrani’s realism was not merely based on his own preferences but also grounded on the political reality back in Israel. By the summer of 1983, the Druze in Israel had leveled the playing field for their Lebanese brethren as Arens was well aware of the need to appease the Druze soldiers in the IDF. As the new defense minister, Arens visited various Druze villages to offer condolences to their fallen sons who died in action in Lebanon, he heard their appeals and fears as well as their requests to support the Lebanese Druze. This naturally gave the Druze

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\(^{579}\) Choueifaty, Vol 3, 32.

\(^{580}\) Arens as quoted in Ménargues, 327. My translation.

\(^{581}\) Adwan a member of the LF War Council representing the Tanzim organization an ultra-right wing faction. Adwan was from Deir al-Qamar and was amongst the first to endorse an open alliance with Israel.

\(^{582}\) Lubrani as quoted in Ménargues, 328. My translation.
further leverage which helped Zeidan Atashi and the Druze Follow-Up Commission negotiate better terms for the Lebanese Druze especially post-IDF withdrawal from the Shuf.

**The Lebanese Army: One Last Try**

Although no official document indicates that the Druze and the IDF have coordinated the Israeli partial withdrawal from Shuf, one can presume that these meetings did take place. The Druze according to David Kamchi were willing to accept a security arrangement by allowing Lebanese Army troops to replace the IDF, provided the former are preceded by a contingent of the Multi-National Forces- MNF (US- French-Italian).\(^{583}\) The Druze had earlier refused to allow the Lebanese army to exclusively deploy in the Shuf unless Amine Gemayel recognizes their demands of political reforms set forth by the “Druze Memorandum.” Gemayel however utterly rejected this Druze bullying which ultimately impedes on the state’s sovereignty. Elie Salem, professes that Joumblatt’s demands were set to fail as they were “impractical” to say the least as they went beyond the Druze sphere and were in fact part of the reform plan of the Lebanese National Movement.\(^{584}\) Almost a month earlier on July 14, Gemayel tried to dispatch a small division of Lebanese Army troops commanded by Colonial Michael Aoun, however the Druze inhabitants of the area mobilized by the PSP attacked Aoun’s jeep and refused him entry to the town.\(^{585}\) The PSP had used a mob of Druze women armed with knives and butcher cleavers as cover to attack Aoun who was on a reconnaissance mission of the area. Although the Israelis had escorted Aoun they refrained from suppressing the Druze assailants and merely helped in the safe extraction of the stranded soldiers. This incident led Gemayel to further stand his grounds and refuse a peaceful settlement with Joumblatt and the Druze, who on the outside

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\(^{583}\) Kamchi, 174-5.
\(^{585}\) Interview with Hisham Nasreddine.
expressed their intention to do so with all delegates they meet. Having failed to reach a compromise, Lubrani looked towards Robert "Bud" McFarlane, Ronald Reagan’s Special Representative in the Middle East, to avoid the crisis which the IDF withdrawal would cause. Lubrani and McFarlane worked to reach an American sponsored deal which would prevent the inevitable bloodbath between the Druze and the Maronites. David Kamchi who followed closely this initiative remarked that the US envoy was keen to deploy the Marines who were part of the MNF. The Americans had high hopes on the Lebanese Armed Forces- LAF as Amin Gemayel through his lobbying efforts both in Washington and Beirut led the Reagan administration to commit itself to the Lebanese Army Modernization Program.\textsuperscript{586} This US$ 500 million program aimed to create a strong and skilled western equipped cross-sectarian army capable of rebuilding the Lebanese state. Therefore it was expected that the Americans would support a political settlement which involved deploying the troops it invested both time and money in training. On 1 September, a few days prior to the start of the IDF redeployment, Kamchi met with McFarlane to discuss the details of their arrangement, however contrary to the set plan, the US envoy informed his Israeli counterpart that the US Marines part of the MNF would not participate in any activity in the Shuf. Kamchi was taken by surprise as he originally went to this meeting very optimistic, given his earlier meeting at the IDF command post with a Druze emissary which Lubrani had summoned to go over the last details of the withdrawal. It seems however that the Lubrani-McFarlane initiative was thwarted by the US Defense Minister Casper Weinberger who vetoed his troop’s participation in any mission which would further implicate them in the Lebanese conflict.\textsuperscript{587} Weinberger’s concerns were not totally unfounded, for back


\textsuperscript{587} Kamchi, 175.
in April the bombing of the US embassy in West Beirut, by a shady faction unknown calling itself the Islamic Jihad Organization, left 63 dead including 17 American nationals.\textsuperscript{588} The consequent attack on the US Marine barracks on 23 October 1983, killing 241 US servicemen further engrained Weinberger’s conviction to avoid confrontation unless ultimately strategically mandatory. The Weinberger Doctrine amongst other items endorsed that “the United States should not commit forces to combat unless the vital national interests of the United States or its allies are involved.”\textsuperscript{589} Obviously, neither the Druze nor the Maronites where of vital national interests to the United States and therefore the Americans opted out. Perhaps crucial in Weinberger’s decision was the fact that Hafez al-Assad had not endorsed such a move and demanded the abrogation of the May 17 agreement before he would cooperate over Lebanon; therefore sending US troops into the Shuf would leave them vulnerable to attacks by the Syrians and their PSP allies.\textsuperscript{590}

Walid Joumblatt and the Druze had always perceived the Lebanese army to be their enemy, however this sentiment was further augmented with the election of Amine Gemayel. The PSP media routinely equated the LAF with both Gemayel and Lebanese Forces going as far as branding it “the Army of the Ruling Family”.\textsuperscript{591} The PSP had issued a number of statements expressing their refusal of the Lebanese Army stating “no to the [Lebanese] Army. No to the partial security arrangements. Yes for a comprehensive political settlement.”\textsuperscript{592} Furthermore, the PSP saw the Lebanese army as serving “a Lebanese isolationist scheme which

\textsuperscript{588} \url{http://www.usdiplomacy.org/history/service/harmsway.php#dillon}. Accessed 2 October 2016.


\textsuperscript{591} Al-\textit{Anbaa’}, 3 July 1983. 8.

\textsuperscript{592} Ibid.
for over a century have tried to subjugate the Druze in order to totally control Lebanon.”

More importantly, according to the PSP the army was a tool which would help the Maronite political establishment realize an age old dream:

A dream which goes back as far as the alliance between Bashir II and Ibrahim Pasha this alliance has now been renewed by summoning all the nations’ armies to crush us [Druze] dream and setting a racist fascist state all at the expense of the unity of the people and the land.

This anti-LAF sentiment would finally spill out as the majority of the Druze officers went on an open mutiny against what they perceived to be a sectarian Maronite Army. A few days prior to the IDF evacuation Joumblatt publically called on the “parotic” army officers to refuse to fight alongside the Kataeb and the Lebanese Forces. Subsequently, these midcareer officers issued a call to all the Druze and Muslim officers and soldiers to join them in the army barracks of Hammana which they had earlier occupied. Most of these officers, not to say all were supporters or clandestine members of the PSP. Raja Harb for example which played an instrumental role in orchestrating this rebellion had been openly engaged in training and leading some of the PSP militia as early as 1976. By 1983, however, the situation had changed, the PSP felt the need to go public with its mutiny which aimed to delegitimize and prevent Gemayel from further using the LAF to promote his agenda. In a press conference held in Hammana shortly after the end of the fighting, these officers publically accused the Lebanese army of collaborating with the Lebanese Forces and perpetrating some of the massacres against the Druze:

Today under the same deceitful mottos which call for fighting the foreigners, our towns and villages are being shelled by the arterially and the air force and our people in Kfarmatta, ‘Abey, Ba’auerta and Bnaiyye are being driven off their land. Which army are we building and what country do we want and we see in front of our eyes how the army is being exploited to serve the Kataeb and the Lebanese Forces militia, which has totally controlled it and drove it to commit massacres against our people in the mountain and the southern suburbs of Beirut?

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593 Ibid.
How could we continue to follow these military orders after we the protectors of this nation have been driven to rupture it and to be the knife that slays it?595

In practical terms, the Hammana mutiny and others similar acts that followed, transformed the LAF from a western trained and financed state army to merely one of the militia engaged in the petty civil war.

**The Battle of Bhamdoun**

In the late afternoon of September 3, the IDF started to pull out its final troops from the Shuf and the Aley Mountains. The Israeli redeployment left the Lebanese Forces under the mercy of the Druze, who by that time had received ammunition and reinforcements from the USSR via their Palestinian and Syrian allies. According to Raja Harb, the PSP by 1983 had amassed impressive firepower as well as the required technical skills to use them, something which the Lebanese Forces refused to acknowledge.596 This LF denial was perhaps rooted in their belief that their western/Israeli training and arsenal was far superior to the Soviet weapons the Druze were fielding.597 But more importantly, the Lebanese Forces saw their conflict to be with the Syrian regime which was merely “using Joumblatt and the Druze as cover” to implement its sinister plan to control Lebanon.598 Fadi Frem constantly referred to their fight as directed against the outsiders amongst them the Joumblatti leadership which:

> Since the 19th century has worked against Lebanon as it imported its ideas and directives from abroad and in 1975 it stood with Palestinian terrorism against Lebanon. The Progressive Socialist Party which is currently headed by Walid Joumblatt has been armed by the terrorist Syrians and the international communists. Its members were trained in the Palestinian camps and the camps of terror, and his officers received military training in the Soviet Union and Syria.599

595 *Al-Jabal*, 248.
596 Interview with Raja Harb.
597 Interview with George Radi.
Militarily, the LF under Geagea had reinforced their positions by adding more fortifications and by opening new military routes which were safe from the shelling and ambushes of the Druze. However, the 5000 strong LF had to cover a huge area and their supply lines were weak and at times had to pass through or near Druze villages.\footnote{600} According to Alain Ménargues, having served in the French army and despite his limited military knowledge, the LF were at a very difficult disadvantage. First their ability to maintain their supply lines were always in question, second their structure as militia was in itself a handicap. While the LF were the model of a professional Spartan fighting force with a clear structure, the bulk of the PSP forces was composed of recruits which joined the militia as village units, and thus fought alongside their cousins and neighbors. This family structure was at the heart of the Druze fighting tactics which placed the blood relations at the forefront; the sheer fact that they would be defending their immediate family members rather than merely fighting for an abstract cause made the Druze extremely ferocious fighters. This naturally excluded the more professional technical units such as the arterially and the armored divisions which were to a large extent very similar to the ones the LF fielded. Despite this bleak military assessment, the LF had always hoped that Amine Gemayel will eventually send the Lebanese army to salvage them from their impending doom. However, whatever had existed of mutual respect and trust between Gemayel and the LF had by that time nearly faded, as the later felt that Gemayel wished them to lose this confrontation and thus end the legacy that his brother Bashir had left behind. Consequently, on the final days before the IDF withdrawal, a growing number of voices within the LF senior command called for overthrowing Gemayel and taking command of the state and the army. One

\footnote{600} These are rough estimate based on many sources I used including Alain Ménargues.
of the most ardent supports of such a move was Antoine Najm who demanded that Frem takes a firm stance declaring:

Neither Pierre nor Amine Gemayel are true leaders anymore. The policy of Lebanon is determined abroad. We are going through a very important historic transformation and I unreservedly stand beside you Fadi, provided you act with resolve. You are the only hope for the Christians. Go ahead assume leadership and establish LF offices both in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.  

This wishful coup d'état simply died out as the Lebanese Forces had too many items on its plate at that time, primarily the impending battle of the Mountain. One of the factors which perhaps nipped this coup in the bud was the promise Amin Gemayel had issued to Geagea when he met him at the presidential palace one week before the IDF withdrawal. Geagea who was explaining to the President and his army commander General Ibrahim Tannous the perilous task ahead and the many challenges that awaited him was assured by Gemayel, “do not worry do not be afraid.” Gemayel then asked Geagea bluntly “what is the maximum time you can withstand the Druze attack before you need me to send the army to intervene.” Geagea equally replied with his own question “how much time you need me to withstand the attack”, Gemayel after whispering something in Tannous’s ear answered “12 hours” after which Geagea declared “let it be 24 hours but not more.”

Geagea main concern was the Bhamdoun which was expected to be the main front which the Druze would assault. Bhamdoun which lay on the Beirut Damascus highway was strategically important because it stood at the intersection of three different regions in Mount Lebanon. From the south was Aley, to the East was al-Maten and to the west the vast Jurd region which intersected with the Druze heartland in the Shuf.

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601 Antoine Najm as quoted in Ménargues, 359.
603 Ibid.
604 Ibid.
605 See Map.
According to Paul Andary who was tasked with defending the Bhamdoun front it was nothing short of a nightmare. With only 250 fighters under his command Andary was overstretched and was facing the Druze who were successful in mustering the support of the surrounding Druze villages, something which the LF failed to achieve in Bhamdoun and its vicinity.

On the eve of the War of the Mountain, Walid Joumblatt, who had left Lebanon after his attempted assassination, addressed the Druze asking them to prepare themselves for the difficult task ahead. Joumblatt’s words however were not merely a battle cry, but rather a synopsis of his community’s collective memory as they entered the battle against their historic Maronite foe:

Our people in the Mountain, sons of Maruf, ancestors of Salman [al-Farisi], the hour of challenge is upon us. The intentions are clear and the preparations are underway; it is the time to preserve and protect your dignity… it is dignity and your existence at its best. The land is yours and you are the custodians of history, your sons, your future, your existence, values, and your noble wisdom (hikma) are all at stake; either you crush your enemies as you did time and again over the past years, or be shattered by this new barbarian gale.

Joumblatt use of religious imagery and undertones was a clear departure from his own secular demeanor and that of the party he belonged to, however it was obvious that at this moment in time all what was needed was to invoke the horrors of the past and through it win over all the Druze.

Consequently, Joumblatt goes on to remind the Druze what awaits them if they falter in front of the upcoming challenge:

It is the hour which Kamal Joumblatt described “as to be or not to be.” Do not be intimidated by their media or the number of their guns; how many times has a small group defeated a bigger foe? History is repeating itself, and is harshly and unprecedentedly imposing itself on us; survivability and steadfastness is the only solution. You will defend your honor and our dignity, as no one can uproot you from your homes and force you to leave the soil and the country of our forefathers. We will die and our heads held high. We will die as martyrs convinced of our destiny… to the heroic confrontation, to victory, “Life is the triumph of people of strong souls, not of the weak in spirit”, to a dignified and

606 Andary, 85.
607 Ibid.
608 Al-Anbaa’, 25 August 1983
free life, to the stands of glory which await you on the summits of the Mountains. Your strength is in your unity and determination. Your strength is in your allies, friends; your strength is in your right to live.\textsuperscript{609}

The aforementioned rhetoric clearly depicts how the Druze’s leadership reinforces and molds its community’s remembrance process, and directs it to serve the communal wellbeing, which in this case happens to be detrimental to the Maronites.

Both the PSP and LF commanders eagerly awaited the last IDF vehicle to depart singling the start of the race to capture the key positions and fortified hills the Israelis had evacuated. As the IDF field commander of Bhamdoun was departing he looked towards Andary and in a blunt cold manner addressed him “now you can eradicate each other, but first let us get out of the way.”\textsuperscript{610}

Within the span of two days (4-6 September), both the Druze and the Maronites fought to redeem 123 years of their history. On one hand, the Druze aspired to repeat their 1860 victory; while the Maronites simply wanted to avoid their ancestor’s debacle. Ironically, the 1860 scenario was repeated with the same brutality and bloodshed, if not worse. The Druze who were better acquainted with the terrain and supported by Syrian and Palestinian logistics and artillery mowed down the Lebanese Forces, who were only able to hold out for two days. Geagea true to his word fought for 48 hours but the reinforcement which Amin Gemayel promised never arrived. The Druze on the other hand were clearly assisted by the Syrians and their pro-Syrian Palestinian factions, which supplied the much needed artillery cover as well as an abundance of fighters which the PSP used to further fortify their positions. Also joining the PSP was a hodgepodge of Leftist and Communists factions chiefly among them Joumblatts traditional allies, the Lebanese Communists Party and the Communist Action Organization. While the Israelis did not interfere

\textsuperscript{609} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{610} Andary, 120
in the fight, they had previously warned the Syrians and the PSP, that any visible Syrian or Palestinian involvement in the war would be forcefully dealt with. Consequently, the PSP could not count on the Syrian armored divisions but they had to settle for four tanks given to them by the pro-Libyan Arab Socialist Union. Ghanem Tarabay who led the PSP charge from the Maten had one objective in mind, to cut through the Beirut Damascus highway encircle the LF and link up with the PSP forces in the Jurd region commanded by Fadi al-Ghraizi. 611 To achieve this goal Ghanem used the tanks he had commandeered from the Bekaa valley to assault the LF fortifications. One visible advantage the Druze fighters had, was their familiarity with the terrain as well as the fact that they were fighting to preserve their land against what they perceived to be a foreign crusader invasion.

Devastated by this loss, the Lebanese Forces along with what remained of the Christian inhabitants of Southern Mount Lebanon retreated to the town of Deir al-Qamar; which triggered a Druze siege of the town which lasted for over three months. According to Raja Harb and other military commanders I interviewed, the PSP deliberately created a safe passage to allow the thousands of Christian civilians to escape to Deir al-Qamar. While this was perhaps the case, the Druze did not spare any of the Christian combatants and civilians who remained behind in their villages, as Fouad Abi Nadir remarks. 612 Abi Nadir, admits that his own LF troops targeted Druze civilians but they did take some prisoners of war which they later handed over to the Red Cross, something which the Druze did not do, as they simply took no prisoners. Samir Geagea professes that the decision to fall back on Deir al-Qamar was based on a number of factors, some of which were purely military in nature, while others were apparently rooted in the Maronite memory.

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611 Interview with Ghanem Tarabay.
612 Interview with Fouad Abi Nadir.
Because of the 1860 war, this historic town occupies a paramount place in the collective psyche of both the Druze and the Maronites, as it was the second biggest catholic town in the east as well as the hometown of former Lebanese president Camille Chamoun. Therefore the siege of this town would rally the local and international public support required for the Maronite cause.613

Among the people besieged was Raji Achkouti, a poet and a renowned man of letters, who shortly after the lifting of the siege published his account of *The Siege of Deir al-Qamar*.614 In the introduction, Achkouti says that his book is intended to mirror the reality of the people under siege: their feelings, reactions and revolts. The ultimate product however is ethnography of the entire Christian population of southern Mount Lebanon, who from September 1983 to December 1983 (almost 98 days) were held captive at the same town and perhaps represents a window into the Maronite collective memory. An interesting idea echoed in Achkouti’s work, is the perception of the people under siege that Joumblatt’s victory was a bum check, “and that he will soon face the reality that this so-called victory is fake or with insufficient balance; as they say, history is deemed to repeat itself and he will end up facing the same fate as his ancestors (In reference to 1860 and Said Joumblatt).”615. Perhaps this might have been the same lens through which Samir Geagea looked when he made his decision to retreat to Deir al-Qamar.

While the Druze won the day in Aley and the Shuf they nevertheless were dealt a huge blow in the Gharb region as their forces were decimated by the LF forces led by Fouad Abi Nadir supported by the Lebanese army as well as the US navy gunships docked in the Mediterranean. The Gharb region was of great strategic importance as it directly overlooked Beirut as well as the international airport. But more importantly, it protected the southern flank of the presidential

615 Ibid, 114-115
palace in Ba’abda and it also connected Aley to the Shuf as well as the coast (see map above). For the Druze, however this region was of great historic and religious importance as it was home of the Buhturids (see chapter 3) the famed defenders of the coast against crusader invasions. Moreover, the village of Abey housed the shrine of the famous Druze religious reformer Sayid Abdallah al-Tanoukhi which the LF later desecrated and razed to the ground. The Lebanese army’s intervention in the Gharb was of utmost importance to the LF victory, however, Gemayel’s reason for involving his troops in this fight was purely egotistic. Gemayel wanted to simply protect the presidential palace which would fall next had the PSP captured the strategic town of Souk al-Gharb overlooking Ba’abda.

The Siege of Deir al-Qamar

Both sides of the conflict perpetrated the most heinous crimes by targeting civilians and by indiscriminately shelling villages and roads, going as far as to desecrate religious sanctuaries and temples of worship. Nearly all Druze and Maronites combatants I interviewed confess to committing these acts but usually follow up their admittance with either the claim “it was an act of self-defense” or by simply “they would not have spared us if they had the chance”. Walid Joumblatt gave a more truthful yet bleak justification for the crimes his people committed against the Christians, as he saw that this war merely part of the Arab tradition of raiding admitting, “following in the Lebanese and Arab tradition, simply they raided us and we raided them back,
and this war, who ever said that there is a clean and there is a dirty war.”\textsuperscript{616} Shortly after the end of the war of the Mountain, Joumblatt also declared in what amounts to a mea culpa:

I tried to spare the Druze this barbaric tendency of murder and mayhem but I failed, therefore on behalf of the Druze I take full responsibility for the massacres which the Druze committed against the other sects and the blood of the innocent Christians which were spilled and I demand that I as well as the other leaders of the various communities be brought to justice.\textsuperscript{617}

The siege of Deir al-Qamar was yet another episode where both sides used innocent civilians to serve an immediate political goal. After being dealt a severe military blow, the Lebanese Forces wanted to repair its image which Bashir had created for them of being protectors of the Christians in the Levant. Perhaps in a twist of irony, Deir al Qamar, which overnight became a haven for over 40 thousands Christians refugees was much similar to the last stand the crusaders and their leader Balian of Ibelin had taken during the siege of Jerusalem in 1187 AD. \textit{Al-Masiraa}, the Lebanese Forces bimonthly magazine which started appearing immediately after the assassination of Bashir, made Deir al-Qamar a central theme of its content. One of the early articles that appeared entitled “Deir al-Qamar…. The whole title” underscore that this mountainous town was indeed fighting the battle for Lebanon and its resurrection, affirming:

Deir al-Qamar do not be afraid, as long as you have men which do not fear death. We today have become the masters of our own fate, we will reclaim all of our Lebanese land without the help of any side, for liberation to be worthwhile it has to be the product of our own sacrifices and martyrdom or else we will be a worthless people. Oh Deir al-Qamar…. The Whole title, to whoever is suffering, think of the one who suffered on the cross before you and keep these joyous words in mind “for your pain oh Lord Jesus Christ”\textsuperscript{618}

\begin{footnotesize}
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\textsuperscript{616} Walid Joumblatt as quoted in http://www.aljazeera.net/programs/lebanonwar/2005/1/10/%D8%AD%D8%B1%D8%A8-%D9%84%D8%A8%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%87%D8%B2%D9%8A%D9%85%D8%A9-%D9%82%D9%88%D8%A9-%D8%B9%D8%B8%D9%85%D9%89-%D8%AC11
\textsuperscript{617} https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LVenEkHb_Kg
\textsuperscript{618} \textit{Al-Masiraa}, 1 October 1983, 21.
\end{footnotesize}
After their defeat, the Lebanese Forces rhetoric clearly took a more religious sectarian undertone as the aforementioned article clearly demonstrates. This departure was mainly aimed at achieving two goals, to appeal to the Western world especially the Catholic Church and Europe to come to their aid and rescue them from the barbarous Druze who aspire to repeat the 1860 massacre; and second to portray their stand in Deir al-Qamar as a victory rather than an outcome of their defeat.

The Druze were equally aware of the historical implications of Deir al-Qamar and what the siege meant both for them and their besieged enemy. The images of the 1860 Druze massacre were very vibrant in much of the propaganda which the LF disseminated to the public both locally and abroad, as they wanted to draw direct parallels with the atrocities the forces of Said Joumblatt perpetrated with what his grandson Walid Joumblatt was doing a century later by preventing the entry of food and supplies to Deir al Qamar. Consequently, the PSP, through its Commissioner for Mobilization Anwar al-Fatayri, responded to these allegations by accusing the LF of holding the civilian population of the Shuf hostage by using them as human shields. More importantly, Fatayri’s main assertion throughout his response centered on the Druze historic claims that their use of violence has always been out of self-defense, and the War of the Mountain and the siege which followed was no different. Walid Joumblatt’s took a more condescending attitude by publically downplaying the siege of Deir al-Qamar which “they [Maronites] have transformed it to the Shirt of Uthman [pretext] in a midst of a Crusader global campaign.” Joumblatt goes further by dehumanizing his LF opponents publically shaming them for the massacres they had perpetrated in the past against fellow Christians in Ehden and Safra, in reference to the killing of Tony Frangieh and the wiping out of Chamoun’s NLP. The insistence on stressing the LF

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620 An-Nahar, 5 December 1983.
621 Ibid.
crusader past, also allowed Walid Joumblatt to reassert the image he upheld for the Druze as ultimately being the descendants of the great Arab warrior tribes whose existential aim is to fend off the attacks of the Crusaders.

**The Maronite Exodus**

A hundred days after the start of the battle of Bhamdoun, and following an arduous negotiation process that required the intervention of the Vatican and other international actors, the siege of Deir al-Qamar was lifted. In a theatrical manner and on the birthday of his late father (6 December), Walid Joumblatt declared, “after deliberation with the Sheikh al-Aqil Mohammad Abu Shaqra we have agreed to allow all the civilians in Deir al-Qamr, including the militia of the Kataeb, to leave the town within the next ten days to allow them to spend Christmas with their loved ones.”

While Joumblatt used this occasion to flex his muscles and take the moral high ground by claiming that he had willingly spared their lives, Deir al-Qamar however was a redline which Joumblatt was not allowed nor perhaps ever intended to cross. While Israel refrained from publically supporting any of the two factions on the eve of its withdrawal from Mount Lebanon, it made it clear to Joumblatt that Deir al-Qamar was not to be breached and that the siege would only be used to exert more pressure on Amine Gemayel, who was still refusing to honor his earlier promise and go forth with the ratification of the May 17 treaty. Perhaps it was no coincidence that the siege of Deir al-Qamar was lifted shortly after the return of President Gemayel from a stateside visit where he met Raegan and other senior members of his administration who promised “to break the siege and open the road in and out of Deir al-Qamar.”

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623 *Al-`Amal*, Friday 2 December 1983.
On 15 December, the 2500 LF fighters defending Deir al-Qamar assembled in the historic town square in preparation for their evacuation to Beirut. Units from the IDF, commanded by General Daghan were present to escort the LF fighters through the Druze lines and the many villages on the way leading to the port of Jiyeh. From there a French helicopter carrier transported to the LF HQ in Beirut; where the LF senior leadership and Pierre Gemayel gave them a hero’s welcome. In an ironic twist of fate, the LF mechanized column which made its way unopposed to the Shuf in June of 1982 was now showered with insults, curses and rocks flung by the Druze militants and civilians who lined up to see their defeated enemies vacate the sieged city. The Lebanese Forces who coincidentally never admitted their defeat in the War of the Mountain, wanted to use their heroic stance in Deir al-Qamar in a very similar fashion to the battle of Zahle in 1981. However, this was impossible to achieve as mainly Bashir Gemayel was gone and more importantly the LF had no plan moving forward except to protect themselves from Amine Gemayel who was keen to control and disband them. Paul Andary, who was among those “survivors which were unloaded by the two massive ships” felt utter humiliation and sorrow because the sons of the mountain were transformed from brave fighters to people who are treated “like mere criminals, disarmed and thrown in jail, to the unknown, to oblivion, to Beirut.”624 Gradually, nearly the entire Christian civilian population of southern Mount Lebanon made the trip down to the coast and into the Eastern part of Beirut where they officially became refugees awaiting return to over 60 villages, the majority of which was demolished by the Druze.

The Druze on the other hand felt that their victory was yet incomplete with the Gharb region and the Iklim al-Kharoub (coastal Shuf) still under LF control. While both regions were strategically important, the reclaiming of the Gharb with its historic and religious status, became an obsession

624 Andary, 197.
for the Druze. Consequently, on February 14 1984, in what was dubbed “Operation Sayyid Abdallah al-Tanukhi” the PSP fighters aided by a contingent of Druze cleric- Quwwāt Abou Ibrahim “Forces of Abu Ibrahim” - were able to infiltrate the enemy lines. Some sources claim that members of the Israeli Druze, some on active duty within the IDF, participated in the attack which seized all the LF and Lebanese army positions in the Gharb, and liberated the mausoleum Sayyid Abdallah al-Tanukhi. While it has never been substantiated that Israeli Druze took part in this operation, the religious significance of Sayid Abdallah would naturally provoke these elements to partake in such a venture. The religious tribal implications of the liberation of al-Gharb was evident in the celebratory rhetoric of the Druze, as it was framed as an act of “liberation of a pure and sacred land” rather than merely a military win. This was further reinforced in the poem Sheikh Sami Abou al-Mona, delivered a few month later on the occasion of the Druze holiday of Nabi Shu‘ayb (Jethro) which radiated with socio-religious Druze imagery conforming to their collective identity. This annual occasion which the Druze celebrate between 20 and 27 April, see Druze from around the Levant flock to Kfar Zeitim in the lower Galilee. Abou al-Mona who made the trip from Lebanon declared to his Druze brethren assembled from the region:

Oh Great Spirit of our lord prince [Sayyid Abdallah] rejoice
We have reclaimed glory in your name my lord
To the Gharb we have returned by force
In the name of the sword and faith and you fresh face
Whoever survived the battle, be grateful to god and whoever perished god has chosen him
We have returned to tell a story that will become a legend
We have returned to raise the Druze banner over the rubble of our sanctuary
We want the whole world to be aware that we are a people that arms yearn to be in our hands.626

Beyond the poem’s pride and triumphant undertone it was a reiteration of one of the basic Druze facts, all Druze are brothers and will come to each other’s aid regardless of time and space.

The War of the Mountain as much of the preceding events have demonstrated was much a war over which collective identity would triumph and what historical banner would remain supreme. Each battle and each act of violence perpetrated by both sides throughout these bloody confrontations, was framed to serve one of these banners and to either justify and legitimize the extent they were willing to go to avoid defeat and ultimately annihilation. However when everything was said and done, the military triumph of the Druze’s historical banner left the Druze somewhat orphaned especially with their arch nemesis the Maronites gone. Much of the historical construction of both community’s collective identities, as much of my examples has thus far demonstrated, required a historical anti-thesis which ultimately came to define and give meaning to the groups own self-perception. With one of these two elements gone or damaged the other was perhaps at risk of vanishing.
Chapter Eight

No sooner than the actual combat ended, that both centers of power within the Druze and Maronites looked towards active agents to promote collectiveness as well as to recast and adjust their respective communities’ memories. At that particular stage in time both the PSP and the LF wanted to capitalize on their victories and their failures coming out of a war which depleted their resources, took many of their lives and in the case of the Maronites even their land. The post-conflict need to create this feeling of collectiveness, as the following chapter will illustrates, was equally important to the process both groups had undergone in the period leading up to the War itself.

Collecting the Collective

This chapter will draw on two prime examples of active agents used by centers of power to promote collectiveness as well as to recast and adjust the respective communities’ memories of themselves as well as ‘the other’. In the Maronite context, Al-Masiraa published “the Story of a Hero called Charbel,” a weekly illustrated comic book using collegial Lebanese dialect. By using cartoonish illustration, the Lebanese Forces clearly wanted to win over the young generation which is the most age group susceptible to memory retention. However, these comics are also effective on other age sections and transcend generational barriers. Comparatively, the Druze context utilized the works of Taleh Hamdan, a prominent Druze strophic poet (Zajal) which are latent with of examples of the way the Druze centers of power wanted their community to remember the war as well as their supposed enemies, the Maronites.

The centers of power within the Druze and the Maronite community, in this case the Progressive Socialist Party and the Lebanese Forces respectively, wanted to use the events of the
war to recast and perhaps fortify their communities collective memory of earlier, current and potential future conflicts.

The Story of a Hero called Charbel

Shortly after the assassination of Bashir Gemayel, Al-Masiraa, the official publication of the Lebanese Forces, started to appear mainly as newsletter for internal circulation. According to its founder, Elie Khayat, al-Masiraa was born out of necessity rather than luxury. Khayat professes that after the assassination of Bashir, he felt a personal responsibility to remind or refocus the people around him to the real aim of the LF cause and who was their real enemy. In his capacity as the head of the 5th Branch [the Media and Guidance Unit of the LF] in Kfarshima barracks, Khayat was mostly surrounded by fighters between the age of 18 and 25 most of which lacked a high school or university education and often came from underprivileged families. Consequently, he felt that they needed some sort of political guidance as well as a source to entertain them. This was the main reason why Khayat started producing what he called al-Masiraa (the March) which was initially an internal newsletter using plain paper and a stencil machine which catered to the militiamen.627

This newsletter was soon adopted by the LF central command, as a tool mainly to respond to the changing realities after Bashir’s assassination. The LF felt the need to reaffirm its main ethos of being an institution geared towards defending the Christians and upholding the true values of Lebanon. In its inaugural issue published on 25 October 1982, the opening reaffirms the aforementioned point. Using a very elementary colloquial dialect al-Masiraa stated that its main task is “to be the voice of freedom, the voice of the fighters coming from the trenches of the farthest

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627 Interview with Elie Khayat
mountains to the seashore." This reaffirmation was also in part due to the pressure the newly elected president Amin Gemayel was exerting on the Lebanese Forces. Right after the election of Amin Gemayel, *al-Amal* the official Kataeb mouthpiece in a clear departure from earlier practice under Bashir Gemayel largely ceased to run the news of the LF. As a result the LF had to create its own print platform to get its message across both to its supporters as well as respond to its foes. These factors are evident throughout the articles and stories which *al-Masiraa* ran on its pages which amounted to rebuttals to attacks from within the Christian community as well as to the accusations of the Muslims to them as being cold blooded killers. Immensely damaged by the Sabra and Shatila massacre of the Palestinian refugee camps which the LF were accused of partaking in, a media outreach plan was needed to repair their image both locally and internationally. It is against this backdrop and other contributing factors that the story of Charbel unravels.

*The Story of a Hero called Charbel*, a weekly illustrated comics using colloquial Lebanese dialect started appearing in March of 1984, a month after the end of the hostilities in the *Gharb*. The choice of name is very interesting as Charbel is the patron saint of Lebanon as well as the icon to the LF fighter who wielded his pendant as a good-luck charm. The Lebanese Forces were blatantly straightforward in this exercise to influence the Maronite collective memory, proclaiming that to be a Christian Lebanese hero, one needs to walk in the footsteps of Charbel:

> This is a story about a hero named Charbel. It is the story of all of our heroes… It is the story of a hero that has dedicated his life to protecting his people, his land and his faith. This story we choose to narrate through sketches so it would be more expressive and so that every one of us, including our children, remembers our real history and never forgets.

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628 *Al-Masiraa*, 25 October 1982
Charbel was born to a mother and a father entrenched in faith in a village near the cedar trees and near the skies…

Coincidently, Charbel is a member of the 1958 generation discussed previously (p 119) which realized that Lebanon under its current political structure was only doomed to fail as:

He remembers his dad carrying a rifle and going away one day (a reference to the 1958 civil war)... He grew up to the harsh reality that the [Palestinian] refugees wanted to get rid of us… So he joined the LF and began training, and he looked up to Bashir who taught him that our existence is tied to our resistance. Subsequently, Charbel graduated a new man full of vigor and faith and became a LF fighter.631

The subsequent episodes of “Charbel” informs the reader how this embodiment of a warrior-monk fought in nearly all the battles that the LF were engaged including Zahle (1980) and the Mountains, and along with his comrades refused to retreat even though they were outnumbered and ill-equipped, before they ensured the safety of the civilians population. After the LF’s retreat to Deir al-Qamar, Charbel helped the people under siege while observing his religious duties by regularly attending Mass (see Fig 7).632

Interestingly, the story of Charbel never depicts the Lebanese Muslims and Druze, as malicious rivals but rather as “brothers that strayed from the path, preferring to collaborate with the Outsiders (Palestinians and Syrians)”633

By using cartoonish illustration, the Lebanese Forces clearly wanted to win over the young generation which - as discussed earlier- is the most age group susceptible to memory retention. The artist constantly used pictures

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631 Ibid.
632 Al-Masiraa, 30 April 1984. 36.
633 Al-Masiraa, 25 March 1984. 37

Figure 7. Charbel addresses Priest who resembles Abbot Bulus Na’aman: Forgive me father for I have sinned, to which the priest replies go in peace my soon you are forgiven.
of famous LF leaders especially Bashir Gemayel to hammer in the notion that martyrdom and sacrifice are prerequisites for belonging to the Christian nation. The example below (Fig 8) depicts the famous ceremony which the Lebanese Forces held after the Battle of Zahle in 1981. Bashir is seen pinning the “Medal of Zahle”- a cultural tool for memory production- on Keyrouz Barkat, the leader of the LF Special Forces who fought the better equipped Syrian army to a standstill.

![Figure 8](image.png)

**Figure 8.** Pictured to the left, Keyrouz Barkat receiving the Medal of Zahle from the leader of the Lebanese Forces Bashir Gemayel. To the right is the same image as illustrated in the Story of Charbel series.

Barkat, a native of south Lebanon who lost his life fighting in the War of the Mountain, consequently became the object of commemoration to both his comrades in arms and to the Christians at large. The fact that Barkat was from the South is extremely important because it shows, at least in the LF doctrine, that all Christians are obliged to come to the aid of their coreligionists and that the LF militia was the guardian of all the Christians in Lebanon and perhaps the Levant. The same notion was echoed by George Radi, a LF combatant, who affirmed that geography was irrelevant for himself and his comrades, “we were a professional fighting outfit and would carry out our mission regardless of place and time.”

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634 *Al-Masiraa, 13 April 1984.*  
635 *Al-Masiraa* 31 October 1983.  
636 Interview with George Radi
According to Elie Khayat, *The Story of Charbel* or the reason behind its invention is not as complex as one thinks, nor was it part of a master plan originally devised by the LF’s central command to indoctrinate or even spread propaganda. It was rather the initiative of a first year pre-med student named Christiane Nasr who approached Khayat inquiring of ways he could lend his support to the cause. Nasr happened to be a talented illustrator and thus Khayat came up with the idea to getting these simple messages to the “Shabab” -usually a synonym used often to denote fighters- using a comic book presentation and thus the *Story of Charbel* was born. Khayat however affirms that he was mainly “preoccupied with teaching the youth about the history of Lebanon and what had happened recently so they can understand the situation now and for the future.” This is clearly depicted in the 17 issues of *Charbel* either indirectly through the voice of the narrator or clearly such as in the example below.

On more than one occasion, Charbel is pictured during his spare time on the frontline reading about the history of Lebanon and behind him stands a cross (Fig 9). When his comrade in arms asks him why is he is reading history, Charbel goes off stressing how important it is to understand the history of Lebanon and the Christians in the East so to understand the challenges that lay ahead (Fig 10). This deep obsession for historical teaching, makes Charbel a tool to mainly frame how the future generations must view the history of the Maronites

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637 Interview with Elie Khayat. I tried to reach out to Nasr who is currently a physician at Cleveland Clinic. Despite the fact that he agreed to give me an interview but his busy schedule prevented that from happening.
638 *Al-Masiraa, 31 July 1984. 34.*
Also the Lebanese Forces clearly tried to refurbish the image they acquired of being ruthless killers only bent on death and unprincipled destruction. This is was clear in the Charbel series as well as in other forms throughout *al-Masiraa*.

Charbel attends a LF rally where the newly elected leader Fouad Abu Nader is reminding his troops that “any gun which is yielded by a nonbeliever is in fact being yielded by a killer or a criminal”; the illustration also shows Charbel in the background silently repeating this phrase (Fig 11).639 By designating the Maronites and the LF as believers the Story of Charbel was in fact branding his enemies the Druze as cold blooded godless killers. Furthermore, this particular scene coupled with the one that includes Charbel confessing to the priest, asking for forgiveness for the sins he committed, i.e. the people he killed fighting the enemy, among them the Druze is very revealing as it

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639 *Al-Masiraa*, 30 April 1984. 35.
attempts to vindicate Charbel and his comrades for their crimes. The Maronite Christian element is essentially the crux of Charbel’s identity as nearly all episodes depict him praying or alternatively features a crucifix in the background further underscoring the religious aspect of the conflict (Fig 12).

To mark the one year anniversary of Harb al Jabal, *al-Masiraa* published a commemorative issue exclusivity dealing with this event. This issue also included a poster that echoes the above ethos. This poster depicts the difference between believers, in this case a group of LF fighters in full military gear praying and next to it the word, the fighter; while above it stands a Druze combatant dressed in the traditional clerical cloth wielding a bayonet and screaming at the camera, plainly labelled “the killer” (Fig 13). The Lebanese forces through these exercises wanted to reinforce their military ethos within their ranks as well as to appeal the young generation. Khayat admits that although the intention was not to target the younger generation but the popularity of

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640 *Al-Masiraa, September 4 1984*
al-Masiraa and Charbel boosted the Magazine’s circulation from 5000 to 60,000 within a year. According to a number of people I interviewed who were between the ages of 5 and 10 during that time; they vividly recall the *Story of Charbel* which they used to follow regularly.

Beyond its primary goal to form a sense of the collective, the *Story of Charbel* also served to answer some of the main challenges and questions which were plaguing the Christians at large especially after their exodus from the Shuf. These questions sought to learn from the failure of the LF in their fight against the Druze but more importantly how to preserve the legacy of Bashir Gemayel after his passing. One night as Charbel and his comrades were deployed on the front, Bashir Gemayel pays them a surprise visit, and dines and spends the evening conversing with them (Fig 14).  

The main message which Bashir Gemayel delivered to his men that evening is that his ascension to the presidency was not the ultimate goal of the Lebanese Resistance but rather “one more step in our never-ending struggle.” These insinuations reflect the frustration of the Lebanese Forces from President Amin Gemayel who had abandoned his brother legacy and had in fact conspired against the Lebanese Forces during the War of the Mountain.

Despite its resounding military defeat the Lebanese Forces never conceded this fact, but rather maintained that their ability to withstand the assault by the united forces of the Druze and their

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641 Al-Masiraa, 14 September 1984, 41.
642 Ibid.

*Figure 14.* Bashir Gemayel visiting the frontlines where he meets Charbel and has dinner with his men.
Syrian allies was a triumph on its own. This sentiment was upheld by the Lebanese Forces during and after the conflict, going as far as issuing a commemorative medal to celebrate their victory in the war of the Mountain. This medal, (Fig 15) which was awarded to the fighters which partook in the Mountain campaign, depict an LF combatant leaping forward weapon in hand and underneath it the slogan “Bashir is alive within us”.

Despite Khayat’s affirmation that the original intention of Charbel was never, to use his terms, “to brainwash people” its impact nevertheless had a visible mark in creating the sense of the collective. The Story of Charbel propagates nearly all the elements which constitutes the Maronite historical identity, as presented in chapter 3 of this study, framed and presented in a vivid manner which appeals to the young audience yet still serves a didactic purpose. Furthermore, the character of Charbel is cast in a way that urges the Maronite youth to style themselves and follow in the footsteps of this simple, honest, faithful, and educated warrior; a companion of Bashir Gemayel and the generation who aspire to make Lebanon great again.

The preoccupation with forming or recasting Christian historical memory was not solely restricted to the Story of Charbel as earlier a much similar project was undertaken by the Holy Spirit University- USK. In 1979, Bulus Na’aman as chairperson of the Department of History at USK co-supervised with Prof. Kaiser Nasr the publication of Qisṣat al-Mawārinī (the Story of the Maronites), comic book written and illustrated by Antoine and Maiva Bahkus (Fig 16). This two volume children book tells the history of the Maronites in the 7th century AD at the eve of the Islamic conquest of
the Syrian lands. According to Na’aman, this publication which exclusively uses Lebanese vernacular “aims to introduce the upcoming Christian youth to the history of their forefathers and what they had endured and accomplished throughout the centuries.” The introduction of Qiṣṣat al-Mawārinī stresses the aims of this project explaining that:

A Maronites real concern is to live free, to discover, develop his roots and open up to his fellow man. To do so he has to know himself. The Maronites has written his history since eternity, however he remains unsatisfied about this product. A Maronite needs to write his history on a daily bases, not merely on paper but rather in life as well.

Beyond the philosophical projection which the publishers of Qiṣṣat al-Mawārinī try to portray, this project is better understood as part of the efforts the Kaslik Research Committee- KRC was undertaking at that particular time. Mainly to lend material and ideological support to the Lebanese Resistance as embodied by Bashir Gemayel. The key theme which the KRC wished to promote, is that the Maronite people or their Mardaite ancestors had existed in the land of Lebanon since eternity and had in fact fought the many invaders including the Islamic conquest of the Levant in 638AD. This supposed Maronite pedigree or simply “who are the Mawārinī” is clearly defined in the beginning of the book and mirrors the Maronite myth as created and propagated through a number of outlets, chiefly among them the Lebanese Monastic Order.

Al-Mawarni before they were known as such were a semantic and Indo-European people who settled in the land stretching from Turkey to Mount Lebanon. These many nations were forged into one people whose main quest was to fight persecution and keep their freedom and liberty. They were referred to as Aramaic people because they simply spoke Aramaic but in times of war they were called the Mardaites or the Jarajimah meaning heroes… we are the sons of a civilization

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643 Antoine and Maiva Bahkus, Qiṣṣat al-Mawārinī; al-ḡuz’ al-auwal (Holy Spirit University- USK, 1979).
644 Na’aman, 245. My translation
645 See page 92.
647 The book never uses the formal Arabic name for the Maronites but rather refers to them with the colloquial term Mawārinī
648 See Chapter 2, page 75.
which stems back 5000 years, these [the Muslims] were born just yesterday, they are crying out because this is what new born babies simply do cry out once they are born.649

Resembling the Story of Charbel, readers are introduced to the history of the Maronites through two mains heroes, the brave Mardaite warrior Moran and his son Sema’an (Simon). Despite its countless historical fallacies, this publication is extremely effective in forging the Maronites collective memory in the light of the developments which were unfolding in Lebanon and the region at the time. Our main protagonist Moran who is described by his friends and foes as a reckless and persistent man who resembles the rocky Lebanese Mountains which he hails from, is a 7th century version of Bashir Gemayel (Fig 17).

Much of Moran’s rhetoric throughout the story is directed towards his Christian coreligionist who have failed to live up to the challenge and properly defend their people against the foreign Muslim invaders. Moran, just like Gemayel, was fixated with unifying the Maronites, a prerequisite for defeating their Muslim enemies. In one scene, Moron address his fellow Maronites and other Mardaite generals and orders his men to draw a map of the Lebanese Mountain with the corresponding districts with their visible respective boundaries. After which he walks over the map and erases the different boundaries with his foot declaring that “from now on, the mountain is one district and I am its leader. We have to be one body, with one head, or else.”650

This scene which was published in 1979, one year before Bashir Gemayel carried out his plan of “Unification of the Christian Gun” is very interesting because it shows how Bashir Gemayel

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through the help of the Monks were working towards unifying their community even if it mean spilling Christian blood.\textsuperscript{651} Moreover, just like Moran met and collaborated with the monk Youhana Maroun, later the first Patriarch of the Maronites, Bashir Gemayel had approached the Lebanese Monks and through their association were actually continuing the same fight their Mardaite forefathers had stared centuries earlier.\textsuperscript{652} In one of their fictitious encounters, Moran accompanied by Patriarch Youhana Maroun ride into Damascus to meet the famous Umayyad Caliph Mu’awiyah I, who is ecstatic by this sudden call. This meeting concludes by Moran forcing the Muslim Caliph to relinquish the poll tax required by the Maronites and instead paying them an annual tribute (Fig 18).\textsuperscript{653}

Beyond the declared educational aim of both the \textit{Story of Charbel} and \textit{Qiṣṣat al-Mawārini} the Maronite centers of power, in this case the Lebanese Forces and their allies the Lebanese Monastic Order, use these imagined or real historic encounters to draw parallels to their current and future project, and more importantly to secure the much needed legitimacy for the success of these ventures. In this respect, the Druze leadership followed suit by using similar methods rooted in popular culture to interact with their constituency and to keep the Druze collective remembrance process lucid and regulated by the perimeters set forth by Joumblatt and the PSP.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\linewidth]{moran_meeting_with_caliph_muawiya.png}
\caption{Scene depicting Moran and Youhana Maroun meeting with Caliph Mu'awiyah.}
\end{figure}

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{651} See page 137.
\textsuperscript{652} Ibid, vol. 1, 39
\textsuperscript{653} Ibid, 39-41.
\end{footnotesize}
**Zajal Harb al-Jabal**

One such method was the use of strophic poetry (*Zajal*) to disseminate and forge the memory of the group with regards to the recent Druze victory. *Zajal* as a popular form of poetry is deeply rooted within the popular culture of Mount Lebanon. Both the Druze as well as the Maronites maintain a tradition of producing and encouraging *Zajal* which was the only available means of disseminating information and entertainment at certain times. *Zajal* as an art form entails many styles ranging from ‘Ataba, Mijana, Abou Zuluf, Rouzana and other variants that differ in their poetic scales and measures. More importantly, villages and towns depended on the poet which is commonly referred to as the *Qawal* (the Sayer) to record the history of their community and disseminate it through the various *Zajal* verses he utters in public and private events and are often transmitted orally. *Zajal* became extremely popular as it was institutionalized through *Zajal* competitions that featured two opposing *Zajal* Chorus accompanied by a few musical instrument mostly percussionists. The advent of the radio and later Television, which usually transmitted these *Zajal* battles added to the popularity of this form of literary competition. These usually masculine events included a huge consumption of local alcoholic beverage, Arak, as well as the crowd partaking in the *Zajal* by shouting praise and repeating verses. The *Qawal* more often than not played the role of the propagandist by defending his family, tribe or village against those who verbally criticized them through other *Zajal* mediums. According to Butrus Gemayel, *Zajal* was a predominately Maronite endeavor, as 192 out of the 244 *Zajal* poets between the periods stretching from the 16th to the 20th century were Maronite, followed by the non-Maronite Christians (22), Druze (17) and Shiite (13).  

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The work of Kamal Salibi on the Medieval Maronite historian and Bishop of Nicosia Jibrā‘l Ibn al-Qilā‘ī reveals how Zajal was an important form to record history, which in the case of Ibn al-Qilai included defending the faith of the Maronite Church against the Jacobite ideological threat that had struck roots within his community. Ibn al- Qilā‘ī, a native of Lahfid in Byblos (Mount Lebanon) looked towards Zajal, popular at the time, to educate the Maronites on proper Catholic orthodoxy and turn them away from the heresy of Jacobites. His Catholic zeal was the product of the education he received at the Maronite College in Rome and his 23 year stay in Italy which made him an ardent defender of the Maronite church’s unity with Rome. Consequently, to achieve his goal al-Qilā‘ī addressed his people in the most common form known to them writing nearly all of his liturgics and historical works in Zajal form. Salibi maintains that Ibn al-Qilā‘ī works cannot be technically classified as works of history and that in fact the authors main intention was never to write a history of his people but rather underscore the dangers of the Maronite digression from the Roman faith. Madiha ʿala Jabal Loubnan (Ode on Mount Lebanon) Ibn al-Qilā‘ī’s most famous Zajalya is a case in point, as it incorporates historical accounts, some of which is unsubstantiated or contradictory, with catholic liturgical rhetoric with the intention to educate the Maronite clergy as well as the layman at large. Later Maronite scholars particularly through the works of Istfān al-Duwayhi used Ibn al-Qilā‘ī as the pillar to write the history of their community as well as that of Lebanon.

According to the Druze, this Maronite account of history intentionally wrote out the Druze who were the true founders of the Lebanese entity, prompting the former to launch their own history

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655 Kamal Salibi. Maronite Historians of Mediaeval Lebanon.
656 See page, 59.
657 Salibi, 30.
658 Ibid, 33.
project.\textsuperscript{659} Among these Druze counter-narratives is the works of Taleh Hamdan, a prominent Druze strophic poet, which clearly depict the manner the Druze centers of power wanted their community to remember \textit{Harb al-Jabal}. Hamadan a native of the village of \textit{Ain Anoub} in the Aley region of Mount Lebanon was born in 1944. Hamdan started his \textit{Zajal} career as a member of Zagloul al-Damour’s chorus before he branched out and formed his own outfit. While Hamdan is not officially a member of the PSP, his \textit{Harb al-Jabal Zajal}, clearly serving the PSP and his communities end game of capitalizing on their recent military and political conquest. Long assumed to be an individual initiative by Hamdan, these \textit{Zajal} performances in fact came upon the incitement/recommendation of Walid Joumblatt. Shortly after the end of the battle of Bhamdoun, Joumblatt summoned Hamdan to Moukhtara and asked him to “to record the history of this period [war], just like the great poet Shibli al-Atrash recorded the achievement of the Syrian Revolution with Sultan Pasha al-Atrash and Sheikh Nayef Talhouk memorable poetry about the Druze.”\textsuperscript{660}

Walid Joumblatt’s commission was mainly prompted by his self-consciousness of his family’s history and that of his Druze community. In 1860, the Druze military victory over their Maronites foes was translated into a political defeat; as the Druze were portrayed as the aggressors and ultimately a number of their leading chiefs were incarcerated, banished and executed, among them Joumblatt’s great grandfather Said Joumblatt. Certainly, Walid Joumblatt wanted to avoid his ancestor’s debacle, by framing his men’s excessive use of force as a purely defensive measure against a Maronite foe bent on defeating and annihilating the Druze. Moreover, the Druze victory at least for Joumblatt was a chance to recast the history of Lebanon, to acknowledge the Druze’s contribution to the Lebanese Idea, and Taleh Hamdan’s poetry was one means to achieve that goal.

\textsuperscript{659} See chapter 1, 29.
\textsuperscript{660} Interview with Taleh Hamdan, Ain Anoub, 21 January 2016.
The preface of Hamdan’s book by Walid Joumblatt unequivocally reveals the latter’s contentious relationship vis-à-vis Maronite historical scholarship:

For so long, we have lived as captives of Ibn al-Qilāʿī, this forged account which historian have used to twist the facts and write the history of Lebanon according to isolationists [Maronite] interests. For the first time, Taleh Hamdan faces the challenge and records the history of the period we are living, adding to this history the fragrance of poetry and the freshness and his gentle perhaps unmatched touch.  

Joumblatt’s direct reference to Ibn al-Qilāʿī as a distorted source of Lebanese history and presenting Hamdan Zajaliya as the corrective measure, places this Druze project of collectiveness in the crux of the ideological conflict which continued even after the end of the actual warfare.

Produced during and after the war in 1983-84, Hamdan’s public performances clearly reiterate the Druze’s religious doctrine of fatalism and their belief in reincarnation, which explains the bravery and fearlessness of their warriors. Equally, the choice and the setup of these Zajal parties was a statement on its own, as Hamdan would usually perform while being surrounded by iconic Druze emblems. Behind Hamdan would be the Druze flag (R) and the PSP flag (L) and pictures of Kamal Joumblatt, the Syrian rebel Sultan Pasha al-Atrash, Emir Majid Arslan and Walid Joumblatt (Fig 19). The branding of the venue sought to project the image that the Druze are all united under one banner regardless of their political ideological or their geographic location. Noticeably the only missing Druze element is that of the Israeli Druze, who

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despite their full support of their Lebanese brethren were deliberately excluded from this display, simply because they do not fit within the pro-Arab tale Hamdan wishes to convey.

Hamdan commences his recitation or “singing”\(^{662}\) as he himself calls it by “asking God to protect the Druze across the world”\(^{663}\) then proceeded as it is customary in Zajal with a poem known as an Iftitāḥiyyah (opener). This long introduction entitled “Leave our Precious Mountain” imparts the Druze interpretation of Harb al-Jabal and in turn reaffirms the Druze reading of history:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Leave our precious mountain and leave you aggressor, you wild thorns don’t hurt our precious flowers}, \\
\text{You are drunk on alcohol and cups of wine and you left the Druze of the Mountains intoxicated on Blood.} \\
\text{What did you come to do on the land of glory and revolution that was a garden of flowers, you burnt the green meadows and planted agony and sorrow, and these were not the teaching of Jesus Christ, who was humanitarian.} \\
\text{You have come to uproot a people that bleeds blood on a land that has time and again drunk vessels of their blood.}\(^{664}\)
\end{align*}
\]

The Druze deep attachment to their land is a central theme which Hamdan repeats throughout his recital, stressing that much of the violent reaction of the Druze and the massacres they committed was a reaction to the Maronite attempt at uprooting them from the land of their ancestors. In the process Hamdanboosts about the infinite bravery and valor of all Druze regardless of gender or age

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\(^{662}\) Interview with Taleh Hamdan.
\(^{663}\) Zajal Harb al- Jabal Recording 1. My translation
\(^{664}\) Ibid. my translation

اترك جبلنا المفدى وقل يا جاني
يا شوك بري لا تجرح وردنا الجاني
اذ كنت انت سكران على كأسات
نامي دروز الجبل غصد سكراني
شو فيك تعمل بارض المجيد والثورات
لكنيت جنيه زهر للزهر حلياني
A son would die in front of his sister just to defend their honor and pride and so they can live proud how arrogant if you think you can remove the stars and move mountains unless god wills it. You cannot even uproot a Druze child because this child will cry out my “dad has raised me so I die for this land.”

Our most gorgeous girls will say I will only marry a Druze man who is willing to fight for honor as a gift I want a rifle instead of a purse.....

Hamdan further adds a socio-religious twist by linking the Druze fearlessness to their intrinsic belief in reincarnation:

A brother would tell his sister “do not weep for my death,
I will just change my shirt which has been ruined by a few bullet holes saving you the trouble of constantly washing my shirts.

To respond to the Maronite distortion of history, Hamdan’s performance pillars his people’s myth that Lebanon has always belonged to the Druze, mainly because they have defended it ever since their forefathers settled in the mountains ten centuries ago:

This land spoke to the Druze and told them the land of Lebanon has been created for your sake you are the most noble of people and the bravest beings ever.
You have defended Lebanon ever since the Tanukhs and the Arslans even when there were no such things as Byblos and Jounieh and no person existed in the lands of Kisrwan *
We [Druze] were born way before the cedar trees were born
Lebanon is Druze long before it was Maronite.

These Zajal performances repeated over a long period of time were recorded on cassette tape and widely circulated and even sold in West Beirut by street vendors, and soon became a feature of many male drinking rituals. My own encounter with Hamdan’s Zajal came at a young age when my late maternal grandfather used to play his cassette during our various road trips. Although too young at the time to decipher the verses of his poetry it nevertheless did impart a

665 Ibid. My Translation
* All references to Maronite regions
sense of Druze belonging in me. Much of what Hamdan sang in defense of his community he drew from his own understanding of the political events at the time, coupled with the historical framework he was familiar with growing up. According to Hamdan, while his poetry output is the product of celestial inspirations as “ideas are revealed to him through a muse”, as a poet he made a living delivering numerous eulogies and poems in nearly all Druze villages across the country. This gave him access to the fears and concerns of the Druze and their many intimate stories, which he spun into an epic that celebrates both myth and reality.

Although his Zajal recitals might appear as very similar in their content one does notice additions or changes to the Zajal which corresponds with certain events of that time. This is particularly interesting when analyzed against the work of Elizabeth Token on Africa discussed earlier in chapter one. Token argues that much of what oral histories reveal, Hamdan’s Zajal being an example, is how people read and record their past in the light of what they hope to achieve in the future. Hamdan in this case plays a more interactive role as he receives immediate feedback from the audience and has the ability to effectively adjust from one recital to another.

In a very similar fashion to the Story of Charbel, Hamdan consecutive recitals respond to local developments with more immediate political implications. In his second recording for example, Hamdan introduces Nabih Berri, the leader of the Amal Shiite Movement, who is portrayed as an partner in the Druze war against the regime of Amin Gemayel; thus cementing the notion that the conflict carries an Islamic Arab subtext. Other adjustments in Hamdan’s Zajal are noticeable as the United States took an active role in the conflict when its USS New Jersey battleship shelled Druze villages to prevent the fall of the strategic town of Souk al-Gharb. Consequently, Hamdan

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sang one of his most memorable melodic poems the “New Jersey” in which he rebukes all the enemies of the Druze including the American government:

The people who have dangled a noose for you in all battles,
would never be intimidated by the [USS] New Jersey or the tanks,
Even if you ask of [Ronald] Reagan to send you one or even two armies
you have bombarded Ain Anoub and no one even blinked.
Even if you bring not one but two Souk al-Gharb
you would never drink from the water of Aytat*.669

While Hamdan’s Zajal is overwhelmingly charged with sectarian and racial undertones he nevertheless distinguishes that the main clash is rather with the Lebanese Forces aggressors not with the Christians, who despite their “inconsequential servant rank throughout history” where friends of the Druze and loyal subjects.670 In a similar fashion to Charbel, Hamdan and perhaps the Druze felt the need to leave an open door for reconciliation however unlikely that may have seemed at the time.

Similarly the Druze also used posters and graphic illustrations to fortify the Druze collectiveness through creating, a “Druze Charbel”. The poster left, released on March 16 1984, the anniversary of the assassination of Kamal Joumblatt, shows a Druze teenager around the age of 15 wielding an AK47 and underneath is written the “Son of the Mountains” (Fig 20) in a clear

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669 شغب أعطلك مُرسِي نَكل العركات
لا يُهِمُو تَوْجيرِي ولا الدبابات
من رَيْحِي لولا طُلُبَتْ جيش وجيشين
تا عين غروب ضَرِيرو مَا رَبِيْثت عين
وش سوق العرب تُجِبِيِّو نُجِبِيِّو العربين
تَشْرِين الدَّم وما شَرْيتو مَيْتَيْنُكَات

message that all segments of the community are willing to take arms to defend its existence. Moreover, the same picture of the Druze cleric waving a dagger was also used by the Druze but instead of depicting Sheikh Kamal Ghanam as a killer the caption reads “he raised his dagger in front of their faces” in a positive manner.

**Bashir…We have Returned**

On the one year anniversary of the War of the Mountain, Walid Joumblatt called for a huge parade in Beiteddine to celebrate the Druze victory and the liberation of the Shuf and Aley from the LF aggressor. The choice of venue is particularly of interest, by designating the palace of Bashir II, the historical foe of the Druze to celebrate the Joumblatti Druze victory, Walid Joumblatt was avenging the death of his ancestor Bashir “the Pillar of Heaven” Joumblatt. The conventional account goes, that upon his arrival to Beiteddine, Walid Joumblatt gazed at Bashir’s palace, and in an reenactment of the gesture of the French High Commissioner upon conquering Damascus, proclaimed “Bashir…We have Returned”. While there is no official documentation of this incident occurring, much of the proceedings of what the PSP dubbed as the “the Lighting of the Torch Festival” and the concluding speech Joumblatt delivered that September day supports this story (Fig 21). The PSP which had earlier declared the establishment of a civil administration to run the affairs of the Shuf and Aley district, wanted to parade its Soviet-trained and equipped

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671 The story goes that Henri Gouraud kicked the tomb of Saladin and shouted “awake, Saladin. We have returned.”
Popular Liberation Army-PLA and to practically declare quasi independence. In a military display resembling the Soviet Victory Day celebration, the Beiteddine Palace was decorated with PSP and PLA flags and featured divisions of PLA soldiers in full parade gear waiting for the arrival of Joumblatt or simply “the President”. Making his way into the historic palace yard, Joumblatt flanked by three of his generals proceeded to ignite the celebration torch singling the start of the ceremony, after which he paraded the several PLA military divisions as well as a contingent of Druze fighting clerics (*Quwwāt Abou Ibrahim* “Forces of Abu Ibrahim” and the “Rebels of 58” a unit which fought in the 1958 war.

Much of the setup and details that went into this event were instrumental for the collective memory formation which Joumblatt and the PSP wanted to impart in the Druze. From the banners hoisted to the German style military marches which the band played that day, to the high ranking religious and political attendees, the message was clear; the Druze had avenged the blood of Sheikh Bashir and with it 159 years of history. More importantly, Walid Joumblatt’s speech that day wrote the last chapter in this primordial feud between the Druze and the Maronites, as much of what the Druze were expected to remember were framed by Joumblatt’s ironclad historical lens:

> This is your flame my Mouallam [Kamal Joumblatt] our greatest martyr, this is the flame of liberty, democracy and socialism this is your flame oh Hafez and Fawzi and Jamal, this is your flame Sheikh Halim [Takieddine] by killing you they wanted to kill the voice of righteousness, but the voice of justice is much stronger than all of them and the sword of vengeance is stronger and higher.

The opening of Joumblatt’s speech took a more traditional approach, recognizing the sacrifices of great men from his late father, Kamal Joumblatt to his own bodyguard (Jamal Saab) who perished in the attempted assassination he narrowly escaped a year earlier. Joumblatt then and there

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672 Bashir Joumblatt was killed in 1825.
673 Video recording of Walid Joumblatt speech at Beiteddine, 2 September 2016.
transitions into a historical journey which links his own victory to that of his ancestors in the 18th century:

This is Beiteddine, this is your Beiteddine oh Bashir Joumblatt, for the injustice of history and many generations have gone forever, and here we are now rebellious, victorious and triumphant, hear these you hateful monks in the crypts of Kaslik, remember that our God is the God of Righteousness and Justice and he is the ever capable. This is your flame oh Bani Maruf [Druze] this is the flame of light and wisdom. This is the flame of [Prophet] Mohammad PBUH, this is the flame of al-Miqdad and Salman* this is the flame of Emir al-Bayan [Shakib Arslan] and Adel Arslan.

By reaffirming the Arab-Muslim identity of his sect, Joumblatt was placing his own struggle and that of his party in line with the struggle of his ancestors which he links to the Prophet Mohammad and his companions. Likewise, by anchoring this Arab persona to his people, Joumblatt was in fact placing the Druze in stark opposition to the supposed non-Arab Christian Maronite establishment, represented by the Order of Monks. Perhaps, Joumblatt fait accompli is proclaiming himself as the ultimate designator of the perimeters of Druze remembrance as his military victory placed the Joumblatti faction virtually uncontested at the helm of his community.

Despite the end of the conflict both sides, felt the need to readjust and develop their collectiveness to serve their immediate as well as a long-term goal. Much of these cultural tools, comics and Zajal are two such examples, of how the Druze and Maronites centers of power used to trim their group’s collective memory, which underscores the following; despite the hegemony of these centers of power, memory requires an almost constant framing and readjustment. This process becomes more precarious when such collective perceptions are part of a political or cultural project which is by nature exclusionary or simply fails to allow any counter narratives to exist. Moreover, much of these collective identity(s) projects, by aspiring to create one metanarrative, ended up not only rejecting the other sect but also suppressing local elements within the group, the domestication of the Yazbaki and the Chamouni factions are a paradigm of such a
claim. This reality, at least on the long run had major repercussions on the political resilience and standings of both the Druze and the Maronites vis-à-vis the Lebanese political structure.
Conclusion

Post-war Lebanon: The Quest for Reconciliation

With the end of the War of the Mountain, the Lebanese civil war continued for the next seven years, until regional developments, primarily the Palestinian Intifada and the looming prospect of a war in the Gulf, dictated a cessation of hostilities in Lebanon. In 1989, the different Lebanese political factions involved in the conflict, represented by the surviving members of the 1972 parliament, met at the Saudi city of Taif, and passed the National Reconciliation Accord, commonly referred to as the Taif Accord. Coincidently, this constitutional arrangement theoretically addressed some of the key grievances which had originally led to the outbreak of the civil war in 1975, primarily the issue of participation of the Muslims in governance and achieving legal equality with their fellow Christians. The Taif accord succeeded in “silencing the guns” and bringing peace to almost all parts of Lebanon, excluding the south of the country which remained under Israeli occupation until May 2001. In line with this post-war arrangement, an amnesty law was passed by parliament for crimes perpetrated prior to 28 March 1991, after which various militias, including the PSP and the LF were decommissioned, and the majority of their members integrated into the Lebanese armed forces. This law was intended to pave the way for an open national dialogue which would allow the warring factions to air out their objections. However, the Lebanese political establishment, instead of opting for establishing a truth and reconciliation commission (similar to the South African model), went ahead and buried the hatchet among the formerly warring parties along with the memories of what happened. This course of political action deprived both the victims and the perpetrators of the war from the “right to memory, which would create spaces for the nation to confront its memories of a horrific past, and in so doing provide the
potential for dialogue to occur."\textsuperscript{674} This deliberate avoidance of addressing the somewhat thorny issue of the civil war is due to a number of factors, some of which are local in nature while others are purely external.

One of the most important factors was the Syrian military presence in Lebanon which was legitimized in the provisions of the Taif Accord, thus giving Syria a mandate over Lebanese political affairs. In 1976, under the rule of Hafez al-Assad, Syria decided to directly intervene in the Lebanese civil war. It initially entered the war on the Maronite side before switching to the Druze side. Naturally, the Syrians did not want a public debate amongst the Lebanese which would ultimately implicate Syria. To achieve this, the Syrian regime collaborated with their Lebanese allies to ensure that Syria remains outside the scope of criticism, and rather be depicted as an element of stability to all the Lebanese. Consequently, a rhetoric surfaced which promotes that the Lebanese civil war was the “war of others” which used Lebanon as a venue. As a result, a master narrative was spun by the Syrian-Lebanese ruling establishment blaming the civil war on Israel, Palestinian armed presence and ultimately the sectarian political system. In a recent study, Sune Haugbolle concludes that this “war of others rhetoric dominates public culture throughout the post-war period as an attempt to externalize collective guilt, and as a means to break with the past and pave the way for a new political culture.”\textsuperscript{675}

However, this externalization of guilt did not pave the way to a new Lebanese culture; instead, it brought back the 1943 system with one major change. The Maronites, who had the ultimate say in prewar Lebanon, were persecuted by the Syrians, and forced to share power with

\textsuperscript{675} Sune Haugbolle, “The Politics of Remembering in Post-War Lebanon: Civil War, Memory and Public Culture” (PhD Dissertation, Oxford University, 2006) 303.
the Muslims. Perhaps, the only challenge to this perpetual political amnesia came from within the midst of Lebanon’s civil society, the majority of whom were leftists. Subsequently, these NGOs launched a number of “never-again” campaigns to force the government to jumpstart a public debate over the civil war. In addition, these NGOs also tried to lobby the Lebanese parliament to erect a civil war memorial. This memorial goes beyond its physical significance because it can be used as one of the tools to deconstruct the different collective memories of the war and start a unifying national narrative. The late Samir Kassir, a historian and columnist, encouraged the writing of the history of the civil war; as this process was extremely important because remembrance can be a tool of creating a collective identity, which the Lebanese currently lack. He also viewed the policy of amnesia, which the successive Lebanese governments had adopted following the end of the war, as counterproductive and extremely dangerous. To address these issues, Kassir and a group of civil society activists established an NGO under the name of “Memory for the Future.” Despite the fact that the Syrians were still in virtual control over Lebanon, this NGO was able to organize its first conference in March 2001. These efforts however never received the needed popular support due to number of factors. To begin with, these annual activities, usually organized on the 13th of April, remained an elitist exercise in which the masses never participated. Second, the ruling establishment with its different religious sects felt no pressure to allow these NGOs access to their communities so that their collective memories would be addressed, thus weakening their grip over their constituency.


677 The proceedings of this conference were published under Amal Makarem, ed., Memory for the Future (Beirut: Dar An-Nahar, 2002).
While the Taif accord brought a number of structural amendments to the 1943 National Pact, one of its more practical provisions was its dealing with the problem of the 847,000 displaced persons since the start of the war in 1975. Among these displaced were primarily the 240,000 Christians of Mount Lebanon which were driven out by the Druze in 1984. To answer this challenge, the Taif included an article acknowledging that:

The problem of the Lebanese evacuees shall be solved fundamentally, and the right of every Lebanese evicted since 1975 to return to the place from which he was evicted shall be established. Legislation to guarantee this right and to insure the means of reconstruction shall be issued.

Consequently, in 1993 the Lebanese parliament passed law 193 establishing a Ministry for the Displaced tasked with “funding the housing and the return of the displaced to all the regions across Lebanon and improving their social and economic conditions by rebuilding or renovating homes or paying money to ensure the fulfillment of this return.” In an ironic twist of fate, the first minister to be appointed to carry out this objective was no other than Walid Joumblatt, the warlord who was largely responsible for displacing the Christians of the Shuf and Aley districts. Joumblatt, with the help of some of the individuals which formerly made up the cadres of his militia, launched a series of meetings to pave the way for the return of the Christians to their villages. Among those tasked with leading this reconciliatory mission was the newly appointed Director General of the MOD, Hisham Nasreddine, who repeatedly met with the same people he confronted in 1983, but now to discuss the steps needed to resolve the many thorny issues hindering the return of the displaced. These facilitators main challenge rested in their ability to reconcile the Druze and Maronite inhabitants of the villages and towns which witnessed some of the most atrocious

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678 Dagher, 84.
massacres of the war. According to the tribal traditions of Mount Lebanon, bloodletting could be resolved through three main mediums; retaliating by killing the perpetrator or anyone of their immediate family, the permanent exodus of the killer’s family from the village or more practically paying the victims next of kin a hefty amount of money or diyya (blood money). Following arduous talks with the different Christian and Druze village committees, the MOD was able to conclude a number of reconciliation pacts, slowly promoting the return of several Christians to their villages. This return however was made possible only after the Lebanese state via the MOD paid both sides’ enormous sums of money to compensate the loss of lives as well as to help in the reconstruction of the villages, some of which were totally razzed to the ground.

Shortly after the end of the hostilities in 1984, Joumblatt and the Druze were left with a huge dilemma; what to do with the many vacant houses which the Christians had left behind. While some of these houses were confiscated by the Druze that were displaced by the fighting, this was not enough on its own to populate these Christian ghost towns. The PSP devised a practical plan for this challenge by systematically demolishing many of these vacant villages and town which they could not exploit. While this might appear as one more sinister and revengeful scheme on the part of the Druze, this act however reveals the Druze’ anxiety and the future implications of the Christian flight on both communities. According to one of the senior PSP commanders who supervised and personally carried out part of these demolitions, the Druze had in fact dynamited these towns to prevent non-local elements particularly the Shiites, which were displaced from the South of Lebanon, from moving in and occupying these vacant houses.\footnote{Interview with PSP senior commander. Name withheld.} Despite the cruelty of this act, it nevertheless showed that the Druze did not fully dismiss the return of their primordial enemy to their homes someday. In fact even before the official end of the civil war and the adoption
of the Taif, Joumblatt had attempted to start his own reconciliation process, which was unsanctioned by his Syrian allies at that time and thus was swiftly nipped in the bud.

On 8 Feb 1989, upon the instructions of Joumblatt, Anwar al-Fatayri and Toufic Barkat with the help of the Mayor of Deir al-Qamar George Dib Nehmé and Fouad el-Saad organized a meeting in Deir al-Qamar which brought together Druze and Maronites with the intended aim of discussing ways to jumpstart the return of the displaced to Mount Lebanon. Soon after the end of this meeting, Fatayri proceeded to the adjacent villages of Jahliye and Serjbâl where he was scheduled to meet with their Druze residents. Fatayri however failed to meet his appointment as he and his body guard were gunned down by a native of Jahliye who had lost one of his family members during the War of the Mountain. While this was made to appear as a crime perpetrated by a mad Druze keen on revenge, many signs at the time indicated that this was an implicit warning to Joumblatt from the Syrians that their consent was required for any settlement especially one that involves empowering the Christians. Nevertheless, both example cited above, leads one to infer that despite the Druze’s’ utter contempt to their Christian enemies, they still wanted them to return to Mount Lebanon, for without the latter, the entire region which the Druze were in complete control of amounted to nothing more than a ghetto. This bleak reality was neither reflective of the diverse of Mount Lebanon nor economically sustainable on the long run.

Starting 1993 onwards, many of the displaced across Lebanon started to return to their homes and villages. In the case of the Mount Lebanon the Christian return was shy to say the least, as many of those displaced had set up new lives elsewhere and thus it was also impractical for them to relocate. Besides, many regions across Mount Lebanon had lagged behind in social services and

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682 Dagher, 88.
its primitive infrastructure (schools, hospitals, essential services) could not cater to these potential returnees. Despite the many reconciliation efforts carried out by the MOD and Joumblatt, neither side discussed the actual events which took place during the actual fighting or more importantly, why did these neighbors engage in this mindless bloodbath which left both the Maronites and Druze orphaned and practically weaker than before. This obvious disregard of the importance of public truth sharing continued with the Maronite Patriarch’s reconciliation visit to the Mountain in 2001, which fell short of jumpstarting the process at the grassroots level. This visit in the summer of 2001 saw the Maronite patriarch, Nasrallah Boutros Sfeir, acting in his political capacity visited the Shuf and Aley region, where he was received by Walid Joumblatt. The political rhetoric however, which surfaced as a consequence of this “historic visit” remained restricted to the political actors who agreed on the challenges which lay ahead of them without necessarily reconciling with the events of the past.

According to Ghanem Tarabay, who despite being fully convinced of the need to keep and foster these positive elements between the Druze and the Maronites, a major leap is still necessary. Ghanem, who spent his adult life fighting and defending his community, has never been given the chance to sit down with the Christians he fought and air out the grievances which promoted him in 1975 to originally take up arms.683 This is also essentially true for many of the Maronite combatants I have interviewed during the course of my study, as the ones who have engaged in any serious dialogue were those who have remained politically active within the senior echelon of the PSP or the Lebanese Forces. Yet this limited exercise, important as it is, never trickled down to the lower party ranks nor has it touched upon the many non-partisans who experienced the war both as combatants as well as victims. The importance of public testimony vis-a-vis violence and

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683 Interview with Ghanem Tarabay
civil conflict resides not in merely remembering the past but rather as a form of “remembering for
the future.”684 By admitting and implicitly condemning the atrocities of the past, the agent of
remembering is in fact expressing to his listeners their intention to not only share his past but also
their future. More importantly, this testimony, if done right, potentially has the ability to render
these weaponized frames of collective memory harmless.

The 18 different sects which makeup Lebanon perceive their communal memories as part of a self-
defense mechanism and hence an extension to their survival. This study has restricted itself to
exploring the Druze and Maronite collective memory; however, the other Lebanese sects are not
so different, and each of them has collective perceptions that are as dangerous as the ones discussed
above. These examples of projects of collectiveness as exhibited throughout the study can have an
extremely valuable quality as they allow us a better understand of the real essence of the conflict
and how these respective centers of power exert and form collective memory.

Ultimately, a true reconciliation in Lebanon still awaits certain prerequisites, among which
is chiefly the unpacking and the public discussion of the different communities’ collective
memories. This unpacking process can prevent the violent past(s) from being used as active agents
by the sectarian power centers to mold their group’s collective memory. The failure of the Druze
and the Maronites to publically discuss their problems in 1860 and 1958, permitted them to mold
their own collective remembrance, which proved to be a recipe for disaster, especially when these
groups are threatened by internal or external challenges.

In May 2008, a series of local and regional events pitted the pro-government Druze under
against the anti-government, Hezbollah militia. The Druze under the leadership of the now veteran

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684 Sue Campbell, Christine M. Koggel, and Rockney Jacobsen. Our Faithfulness to the Past: The Ethics and Politics
Walid Joumblatt used the same process to the one detailed in my study, to mobilize their folks to confront and defeat the invading hoards of Shiite Hezbollah fighters. In 1982, the Druze demonized their Maronite opponent in order to unify their ranks behind Joumblatt and the PSP. In 2008, the Druze merely replaced the word Maronite or Lebanese Forces for Shiite and Hezbollah and they were able to exert the desired effect of total mobilization. I believe that the above process of collective memory formation, although with some variation, also exists in other communities in Lebanon and perhaps beyond. The conflict in the city of Tripoli between the Sunni inhabitants of Bab al-Tabani and the Alawites of Jabal Mohsen is one such example. These two communities which have clashed in 1985 and on multiple other occasions starting 2008, have exhibited similar symptoms and expressions to the conflict which the Druze and the Maronites have exhibited over the years.

Much of the rhetoric and the manner in which these groups exchanged words and blows were reminiscent of the manner the Druze and the Maronites faced off at one time or another. On the macro level, the process of collective memory formation can be also applied to the ongoing apocalyptic Sunni-Shiite regional conflict. Much of this allegedly primordial hatred these two Muslim sects currently harbor for each and which takes on an elaborate and interact doctrinal and religious discourse is in fact an invention of later centuries.

The enduring legacy of this state sponsored amnesia pertaining to Lebanon’s violent past, either with the Druze-Maronite conflict or any other community, can only set the stage for more conflicts in the future. As long as the Lebanese state, and the oligarchs that run it, continues to adopt this reluctant attitude towards remembering the civil war, the beast of memory will always haunt the people, and a hazard that different factors would come together and unleash a new wave of violence will be ever present. Many have looked towards creating a unified history text book...
for Lebanon, one which the various schools across the country can use to bring in the sons and daughters of the 1958 generation in from the cold. Yet, even this somewhat primitive approach to nation-building did not get the necessary consensus by the various sects, who continue to carry out their own uninterrupted projects of memory. The real breakthrough however is not to create one super narrative but rather to allow these differing narratives to grow side by side yet identify the elements which weaponize these collective perceptions and make them a foundation of conflict rather than diversity and pluralism.

Kamal Salibi, adapted\textsuperscript{685} the title of his groundbreaking work on Lebanese history \textit{A House of Many Mansions}, both as a descriptive term for the diversity of Lebanese society as well as a basis for how historians should perhaps write the history Lebanon. A history(ies) which incorporates these conflicting collective perceptions and historical banners, yet seeks to deconstruct them in a manner which aids in creating a common vision for Lebanon’s future.

\textsuperscript{685} John 14:2 King James Version (KJV), In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.
## Appendix

### Table of Interviews

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<th>Interviewee</th>
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<th>Place</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Abbas Khalaf</td>
<td>VP-PSP (1977)</td>
<td>Beirut, Lebanon</td>
<td>12 Dec 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>Akram Saab.</td>
<td>Board Member of PBDF</td>
<td>Beirut, Lebanon</td>
<td>14 June 2016</td>
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<td>Alain Ménargues</td>
<td>Radio France Internationale</td>
<td>Kaslik, Lebanon</td>
<td>30 Dec 2015</td>
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<td>Amal As ‘ad.</td>
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<td>7 June 2016</td>
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<td>Antoine Najm</td>
<td>LF</td>
<td>Beirut, Lebanon</td>
<td>10 Feb 2016</td>
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<td>Augustine Tegho,</td>
<td>LAF General (Ret)</td>
<td>Beirut, Lebanon</td>
<td>10 Aug 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bulus Na’aman.</td>
<td>Head of Maronite Order of Monks</td>
<td>Kaslik, Lebanon</td>
<td>July 2011</td>
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<td>Elie Khayat</td>
<td>LF, Founder of Al-Masiraa Magazine</td>
<td>Beirut, Lebanon</td>
<td>21 Dec 2012</td>
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<td>Fouad Abi Nadir.</td>
<td>LF Commander (84-85)</td>
<td>Beirut, Lebanon</td>
<td>23 Feb 2016</td>
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<td>George Freiha.</td>
<td>Chief of Staff to Bashir Gemayel</td>
<td>Beirut, Lebanon,</td>
<td>11 Jan 2010</td>
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<td>George Radi</td>
<td>LF Fighter</td>
<td>Beirut, Lebanon</td>
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<td>George Rouhana</td>
<td>LF Fighter</td>
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<td>12 Aug 2016</td>
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<td>Ghanem Tarabay</td>
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<td>Qoubbei, Lebanon</td>
<td>23 June 2013</td>
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<td>Ghazi al-Aridi</td>
<td>PSP</td>
<td>Beirut, Lebanon</td>
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<td>Hisham Nasreddine</td>
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<td>4 September 2016</td>
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<td>Imad al-Awar</td>
<td>PSP Combatant</td>
<td>Beirut, Lebanon</td>
<td>6 May 2016</td>
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<td>21 Dec 2013.</td>
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<td>Joseph Abu Khalil,</td>
<td>Editor-in-Chief Kataeb Newspaper</td>
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<td>30 Dec 2015.</td>
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<td>Massoud Achkar</td>
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<td>Paul Andary</td>
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<td>Rajeh Naim</td>
<td>Editor of PBDA Newsletter</td>
<td>Beirut, Lebanon</td>
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<td>Samir Franjieh,</td>
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<td>12 August 2016</td>
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<td>Taleh Hamdan,</td>
<td>Druze Zajal Poet</td>
<td>Ain Anoub, Mount Lebanon</td>
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<td>Zeidan Atashi</td>
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<td>Proxy</td>
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