WALKING ON KNIFE’S EDGE: THE QUEST FOR LEBANESE NATIONAL RECONCILIATION IN THE FACE OF THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT

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By

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ABSTRACT

Despite the presence of exogenous internal divisions, Lebanon was not destined to become the embattled state that it is today. Rather, the Arab-Israeli conflict has both brought external conflict to Lebanon’s doorstep and taken Lebanon’s domestic affairs hostage. While this paper will acknowledge that the Lebanese political system of consociationalism is indeed a root cause of much of Lebanon’s instability, it will argue against the point that Lebanon’s system of government is currently the biggest hurdle to reconciliation. This paper will argue that although Lebanon’s system of consociational government has played a major role in hampering domestic political stability and national reconciliation, the most significant factor that has hamstrung the formation of a stable, sovereign, reconciled Lebanon is the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Arab-Israeli conflict gave Syria both the compelling motive—strengthening its position against Israel—and the opportunity—the Lebanese Civil War, for which the catalyst was the presence of Palestinian refugees resulting from Israel’s inception—to force itself into a position of control over Lebanese politics. All of this was made easier by the inherent weakness of the Lebanese state. That the Arab-Israeli conflict continues with no sign of being resolved perpetuates the hampering of national reconciliation and the instability of the Lebanese state.
The research and writing of this thesis is dedicated to Dr. Byman for putting up with my shenanigans, to all of my professors in the Security Studies Program for helping me grow as a scholar and, hopefully, into a productive member of the work force, to my parents for supporting me through nineteen years of education, and to my platonic soul-mate for being my rock throughout the entire graduate school gauntlet.

Many thanks,
E. Kaplan
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I. Introduction

Undoubtedly, especially considering the recent conflagrations that were sparked by an incident in Tunisia and have since spread to much of the Middle East, many people in the world must believe that it is in the nature of Middle Eastern states to remain in a state of perpetual conflict. Lebanon is no exception to this popular perception. When Lebanon comes up in the international news, it is, more often than not, crisis related: a bombing, an assassination, a war, political chaos, or some other such upheaval. But despite the presence of exogenous internal divisions, Lebanon was not destined to become the embattled state that it is today. Rather, the Arab-Israeli conflict has both brought external conflict to Lebanon’s doorstep and taken Lebanon’s domestic affairs hostage.

A study examining Lebanon’s internal conflict through the lens of the Arab-Israeli conflict is critical because studies on the history of modern Lebanon have typically focused more on domestic issues and internal political realignments.\(^1\) This narrow focus has come at the expense of in-depth examinations of the regional realities following the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 and its far-reaching effects on “the fledgling and fragile Lebanese State and polity.”\(^2\) While this paper will acknowledge that the Lebanese political system of consociationalism is indeed a root cause of much of Lebanon’s political divisions and instability, it will argue against the point that Lebanon’s system of government is currently the biggest hurdle to national reconciliation. Because Lebanon finds itself as one of the main arenas in which the Arab-Israeli conflict plays out, even the most brilliant modifications of Lebanon’s political system would be insufficient to bring conflict in Lebanon to an end—there is no one-step miracle constitutional reform that will solve all of Lebanon’s woes. Events both

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\(^2\) Ibid., 56-7.
within Lebanon and regionally have shifted Lebanon’s circumstances to the point that Lebanon cannot effectively realize a unilateral solution.3

Since Lebanon’s formation as an independent state, it has faced a variety of conflicts, springing from both endogenous and exogenous factors. This paper will argue that although Lebanon’s system of consociational government has played a major role in hampering domestic political stability and national reconciliation4, the most significant factor that has hamstrung the

3 Some scholars, such as Mohammad Mattar and Youssef Choueiri, do actually opt to focus their studies on Lebanon’s instability and internal conflict solely on Lebanon’s system of government. These authors tend to believe that Lebanon’s weak power-sharing agreement is not only the root of all conflict in Lebanon, but also that systemic reform will prove to be the solution to all of Lebanon’s problems, both domestic and regional. For example, Mattar, in his article “Is Lebanese Confessionalism to Blame?” argues that confessionalism is the stumbling block to building a strong state. He believes that “[governmental] reform is the only way to neutralize external pressures.” [Matar, 62, 64.] Choueiri also asserts that the abolition of sectarianism would have kept the Lebanese Civil War from occurring [Youssef M. Choueiri “Explaining Civil Wars in Lebanon” in Choueiri, Youssef, ed., Breaking the Cycle: Civil Wars in Lebanon, (Stacey International: London, 2007): 31, 29]. There exist other scholars who share the same opinion, as, according to Brenda Seaver, some studies blame Lebanon’s collapse entirely on its confessionalism [Brenda M. Seaver, “The Regional Sources of Power-Sharing Failure: The Case of Lebanon,” Political Science Quarterly, 115, no. 2 (2000): 252].

The majority of scholars, however, including Andrew Rigby [Andrew Rigby, “Lebanon: Patterns of Confessional Politics,” Parliamentary Affairs, 53, no. 1 (2000)] and Walid Moubarek [Walid E. Moubarek, The Position of a Weak State in an Unstable Region: The Case of Lebanon, (The Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research: Abu Dhabi, 2003)], choose to blame both Lebanon’s internal structures and external regional pressures for Lebanon’s current predicament. These scholars recognize that Lebanon’s confessional system of government was and is the factor that keeps Lebanon weak and open to outside influences, but they recognize that because Lebanon has become so deeply embroiled in the Arab-Israeli conflict, it will be impossible for any internal reform in Lebanon to take root in a significant way until the greater Arab-Israeli conflict is resolved.

A great deal of scholarly work regarding Lebanon has been done. From Lebanon’s internal strife to its place within the Arab-Israeli conflict. The issues within and surrounding Lebanon have been quite salient locally, regionally, and internationally from the start, so it is unsurprising that scholars are drawn to the topic. Lebanon’s unique situation gives scholars a significant amount of material through which to dredge, and, over the years, different scholars have chosen to focus their research on varying aspects of Lebanon. As can be seen from the thesis of this paper, I side with the scholars who believe that Lebanon’s problems derive from both a weak power-sharing government and regional activity. This paper adds robustness to the extant literature on the topic, however, by taking more recent events into account.

4 In political science literature, “national reconciliation” remains one of those terms that defies creation of a singular definition. Because of the nature of the concept, it actually makes sense that it remain mutable, as national reconciliation should and does look different among various states and societies. For the purposes of this paper, national reconciliation in Lebanon would consist of the following: an absence of political violence, a popular perception of government legitimacy, and the creation of a government monopoly on the use of force in the country.

formation of a stable, sovereign, reconciled Lebanon is the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Arab-Israeli conflict gave Syria both the compelling motive—strengthening its position against Israel—and the opportunity—the Lebanese Civil War, for which the catalyst was the presence of Palestinian refugees resulting from Israel’s inception—to force itself into a position of control over Lebanese politics. All of this was made easier by the inherent weakness of the Lebanese state. That the Arab-Israeli conflict continues with no sign of being resolved perpetuates the hampering of national reconciliation and the instability of the Lebanese state.

Section II discusses Lebanon’s independence and the formation of its system of government. Section III covers the descent into civil war as spurred both by endogenous factors and by the Palestinian presence. Section IV analyzes the Civil War as the beginning of direct intervention by external actors. Section V looks at the end of the Civil War and the lingering Syrian military occupation. Section VI examines Lebanon in the wake of the Cedar Revolution. Section VII explores the current state of regional affairs. And Section VIII concludes, looking toward Lebanon’s future and offering policy recommendations.

II. Independence and Government Formation

When Lebanon gained its independence in 1943, it faced the challenge of developing an appropriate system of government. What emerged was a power-sharing arrangement. In order to successfully understand the formation of Lebanon’s system of government, it is necessary to understand Lebanon’s demography, which encompasses an extremely diverse group of people. Lebanon is home to eighteen different confessions, which are religious and/or ethnic groups. So when Lebanon became independent, it was clear that some sort of compromise among the various parties would be necessary in order for Lebanon to maintain a stable, functioning

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5 Although this paper uses the Arab-Israeli conflict as a lens through which to view the actions and decision making of various actors involved in Lebanon’s predicament, the Arab-Israeli conflict is by no means the central topic. Therefore, an absence of discussion of various aspects of the Arab-Israeli conflict should not be construed as an inadvertent omission by a careless author. Rather, because of the scope of the paper, it should be viewed as the avoidance of material extraneous to the thesis of the paper.
government. Based on Lebanon’s demography, a method of power-sharing seemed to be the only viable option. What resulted from this awareness was the National Pact, a verbal agreement based on sectarian representation and a desire to promote stability through “accommodation, cooperation and representation.” The National Pact was a compromise solution that stipulated that the country’s Christians would forgo Western protection and ties, while the country’s Muslims agreed to set aside any pan-Arab desires and accept Lebanon’s existing geographic boundaries. The National Pact was formed in accordance with demographic data gathered in Lebanon’s 1932 census, the last census taken in Lebanon, at which time the Maronites represented the majority of the Lebanese population. Besides stipulating a 6:5 Christian to Muslim ratio of representation in the Parliament, it was agreed upon that the President must be a Maronite Christian, the Prime Minister a Sunni Muslim, and the Speaker of the Parliament a Shi’a Muslim. With this, the Lebanese political elite appeared to have developed a workable, if slightly tenuous, power-sharing agreement.

Consociationalism and Its Dangers

Lebanon’s system of government has come to be known as consociationalism, a term first coined by Arend Lijphart in his first major work, *The Politics of Accommodation*, a study of the Dutch political system, and expounded upon in his 1977 book, *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration*. Lijphart defines consociationalism as having four characteristics: 1) “government by a grand coalition of the political leaders of all significant segments of the plural society; 2) “the mutual veto or ‘concurrent majority’ rule”; 3) “proportionality as the principal standard of political representation”; and 4) “a high degree of autonomy for each segment to run its own internal affairs.” One of the main keys to successful

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7 Ibid.

consociationalism is a commitment to system maintenance by the “grand coalition” of political elites.\textsuperscript{9} However, even if internal elites maintain this commitment, a turbulent regional system can strain elite consensus and ultimately lead to regime collapse.\textsuperscript{10} Additionally, remaining too inflexible in the institutionalization of consociational principles—refusing to adapt even in light of new circumstances or demographic realities—can lead to system failure.

III. The Descent into Civil War: The Palestinian Presence and Internal Discontent

In a state as fragmented as Lebanon, the threat of civil war always looms overhead, especially when that state embraces a divisive and weak form of government such as consociationalism. And Lebanon’s power-sharing system of government certainly makes it inherently more unstable than most other forms of government. The Civil War would not have occurred without the power vacuum caused by the absence of a legitimate and efficient state.\textsuperscript{11} Lebanon’s government proved incapable of reacting to issues as they arose, and Lebanese political institutions failed to respond to change with mechanisms to direct social transformation through peaceful channels.\textsuperscript{12} Because Lebanon’s government was so constrained in the action it could take, it did not have the flexibility that would have been necessary to avert the brewing civil conflict. Considering Lebanon’s demography and the rigidity and weakness of the Lebanese state, it is far from unlikely that Lebanon would have avoided a civil war indefinitely. But what really acted as the proximate cause to drive Lebanon into civil war in 1975 specifically was the presence of the Palestinian refugees. According to Michael Kerr, the shifting dynamics of the Arab-Israeli conflict, which, as we will see,  

\textsuperscript{9} Ibid., 53.  
\textsuperscript{10} Seaver, 268.  
\textsuperscript{11} Choueiri, 29.  
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 31
revolved around the actions of the Palestinian Resistance, was the catalyst for the outbreak of the civil war in Lebanon in 1975—regardless of the National Pact’s inherent weakness.\textsuperscript{13}

\textit{The Palestinian Presence}

So how did the Palestinian resistance come to be Lebanon’s problem? Lebanon plays host to a large number of Palestinian refugees, and the Lebanon’s failure to successfully integrate its Palestinian refugee population accelerated the destabilization of the Lebanese state, ultimately leading to the Civil War. With the year 1948 came the creation of Israel and, with it, the Palestinian refugee question. The Arabs term this incident, in which approximately 805,000 Palestinian were driven out of both Jewish and Arab lands between 1947 and 1949\textsuperscript{14}, “al nakbah,” meaning “catastrophe” or “cataclysm.” According to Simon Haddad in his book \textit{The Palestinian Impasse}, the Palestinian refugee situation is the most contentious issue of displacement in modern times.\textsuperscript{15} In 1948, approximately 140,000 Palestinians fled the newly-established Israel and entered Lebanon.\textsuperscript{16} This number only continued to increase. After the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, another 100,000 Palestinian refugees left Israel to take up residence in Lebanon. According to current estimates, there are now approximately 400,000 refugees living in Lebanon.\textsuperscript{17} Although many of the first Palestinian refugees in 1948 were initially welcomed with open arms and treated as guests in Lebanon, according to Simon Haddad, they had little desire to naturalize or even obtain permanent residency.\textsuperscript{18} In fact, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) projects aimed at facilitating resettlement in Lebanon had to be shut down by the end of the 1950s because of such strong

\textsuperscript{15} Haddad, vi.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 122.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 44.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 25. The ubiquity of this sentiment is questionable, however, as, according to Dr. Daniel Byman, both Palestinian nationalists and Lebanese people against granting citizenship to the Palestinians have reasons to speak untruths about the lack of desire for citizenship.
Palestinian opposition to them.\textsuperscript{19} But why would a people who have just fled their homeland be so averse to settling down in a new country, at least as a temporary solution? The answer stems from United Nations Resolution 194.

\textit{Resistance to Resettlement}

In 1949, the United Nations passed Resolution 194, which gave the Palestinians what has been termed the “right of return.” This Resolution stated that “the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date.”\textsuperscript{20} The Palestinian refugees believed that by accepting resettlement in Lebanon, they would be giving up their right of return. Trusting that the international community, especially the Arab world, would take up their cause, they chose to remain politically and militarily inactive in the diaspora.\textsuperscript{21} They fiercely rejected all UN efforts at encouraging resettlement, preferring to remain refugees rather than giving up claims to their land.\textsuperscript{22} And, for a time, as the Palestinian cause became the rallying cry for Arab nationalism\textsuperscript{23}, it appeared that the Arab states would provide political support to the Palestinians. To the detriment of the Palestinians, though, the support staunchly espoused by other Arab states turned out to be largely rhetorical—the states were intent on championing the state of Palestine as a cause, but not the Palestinian people themselves.

This aversion to resettlement was easily accepted by the Lebanese people, who saw this massive influx of Sunni Muslims as a threat to their fragile political system—the Palestinians, they believed, were capable of upsetting the delicate balance that had been achieved. Not only were the Lebanese fearful of a temporary imbalance, but they, just as the Palestinians did, believed that any extension of rights, be they political, economic, or civil, would be seen as an

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{21} Haddad, 22.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 26.
invitation to take up permanent residence. They did not want to give the international community any indication that the Palestinians had found a new home and that Resolution 194 was no longer necessary.

**The Growth of the Palestinian Resistance Movement**

The Palestinian refugees did not create the circumstances that made Lebanon prone to civil conflict, but their presence in Lebanon greatly accelerated Lebanon’s descent into civil war. As should have been expected, the lack of integration and the Palestinian commitment to repatriation led to the creation of a number of organizations that made up the Palestinian Resistance, an umbrella movement dedicated to fighting the Israelis and reclaiming Palestine. One of the most important of those organizations was the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), which encompasses a number of groups dedicated to the Palestinian cause. Once it became clear that the international community would not be coming to the Palestinians’ rescue, the PLO quickly emerged as the most prominent of the umbrella organizations. The backbone of the membership ranks of the PLO was Fatah. Formed in 1959, its adoption of military action as a tool in 1964 constituted a major change in policy among the Palestinians, since it introduced an aggressive military dimension to the already progressing political movement.  

According to Avner Yaniv in his book *Dilemmas of Security*, “by the very nature of its objectives and internal structure, the PLO was inexorably impelled to be hyperactive both militarily and politically.”

Although this military hyperactivity in the form of attacks on northern Israel from the area of southern Lebanon quickly began to attract Israeli reprisals, it soon became clear to the weak Lebanese government that it would be unable to take any action to constrain the Palestinian militias themselves or the widespread Syrian support for the Resistance Movement.

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24 Ibid., 29.
Not only because the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) were too weak to really do anything, but also because it would have been detrimental to both domestic politics and to regional political relationships, especially Lebanon’s relationship with Syria. In its quest for a leadership position in the Arab world, Syria knew that it was imperative that it be seen as a strong backer of the Palestinian cause in order to enhance its credentials. Domestically, identification either for or against the Resistance sharply polarized Lebanese politics. The Lebanese people became divided over the issue, largely along Christian/Muslim lines, or between those with a Lebanese orientation versus those identifying primarily as Arabs. As the Palestinian operations attained a symbolic status as the manifestation of Arabism, the Lebanese government realized that it would be unwise to take decisive action to constrain the Palestinian Resistance. Other than their own consciences compelling them to resist attempts to curb the Palestinians, they were also pressured by other Arab governments to pursue a middle-of-the-road policy, even to the detriment of the Lebanese state.

Ultimately, the question of how to deal with the PLO became “hopelessly entangled with the political struggle inside Lebanon between a fragmented coalition of forces generally supporting the status quo [the Maronites dominating politics] and an equally heterogeneous coalition, of which the PLO became a part, of forces seeking to upset this delicate status quo.”

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26 According to Naomi Weinberger, “Lebanon’s Army had no official political role and was intentionally kept small. The function foreseen for the Army was to serve as a neutral force, able to check any faction seeking to threaten the status quo. However, the logic of Lebanon’s constitutional arrangements negated the creation of a superior force able to impose order in the face of a determined opposition” [Naomi Joy Weinberger, Syrian Intervention in Lebanon: The 1975-76 Civil War, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986): 95]

27 Syrian support, however, was solely on a self-serving basis. This would be seen even more clearly during the course of the Lebanese Civil War, when Syria eventually withdrew its support from the main Palestinian factions. Weinberger, 116.


29 Yaniv, 41.
Lebanon could neither sustain an endless stream of Israeli reprisals nor risk a break with the Arab world by taking decisive action to curb the actions of the PLO.\textsuperscript{31}

What was already a precarious situation was greatly exacerbated in the aftermath of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. Not only did the refugee population sharply increase, but they became much more militant. According to Mubarek, the failure of the Arab states in the 1967 war “enhanced the Palestinians’ sense of nationhood and strengthened their commitment to shape their own destiny rather than relying on Arab governments for the liberation of Palestine.”\textsuperscript{32}

The protracted military conflict with Israel spurred the rise of the Palestinian armed resistance movement after the 1967 war. After a series of clashes in 1968 and 1969 between the LAF and the emerging Palestinian guerilla forces, the Lebanese government, conceding that it could not rein in the militants, signed a secret agreement with the Palestinians, the Cairo Agreement. This agreement granted the Palestinians a great deal of autonomy in the refugee camps. The Cairo Agreement gave the Palestinians explicit permission to use southern Lebanon as a base from which to participate in the Palestinian Resistance through the use of armed force.\textsuperscript{33} What had been a series of actions undertaken in an environment of uncontainable impunity became legalized. This allowed the Palestinian groups to ramp up their military efforts. Many Lebanese remain convinced that “Lebanon’s tragedy began with the signing of the Cairo Agreement.”\textsuperscript{34}

The extent to which this was true, though, was yet to be seen.

*The PLO Base of Operations Moves to Lebanon*

The Cairo Agreement became far more significant in the next year. In September 1970, the Jordanian government launched an attack known as “Black September” against Palestinian refugee camps in response to Palestinian military activities in Jordan. This operation successfully expelled the PLO from Jordan. With nowhere else to go, the PLO relocated its

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 40.
\textsuperscript{32} Mubarek, 4.
\textsuperscript{33} Evron, 8.
\textsuperscript{34} Mubarek, 20.
power base to Lebanon, consolidating the Palestinian presence there.\(^\text{35}\) Southern Lebanon quickly came under increasing Palestinian influence, and, by the mid 1970s, the PLO, for all intents and purposes, controlled large parts of southern Lebanon, creating what was essentially a “state within a state.”\(^\text{36}\) Although the Palestinians initially attempted to steer clear of Lebanese domestic politics, as it was this sort of involvement through which they found themselves forcefully expelled from Jordan, they eventually became involved—it is nearly impossible for any group to operate within Lebanon without somehow becoming entangled in the political arena. The Maronites, resenting this de facto Palestinian state, reacted by establishing and training their own militias to counter those of the Palestinians.\(^\text{37}\) Soon, the weakness of the central government and the increasing level of insecurity encouraged the other individual communities to create militias for their own protection.\(^\text{38}\) Tensions among the various militias began to mount until, in 1975, tensions exploded after a group of Palestinians attacked a Maronite gathering.\(^\text{39}\)

Unfortunately for Lebanon, the Civil War did not remain domestic. Rather, there were three types of war at play in Lebanon: war within Lebanon, war over Lebanon, and war through Lebanon.\(^\text{40}\) The fact that the Palestinians were so highly involved in the Lebanese Civil War meant that the war expanded to include regional and international actors, and that the consequences of the war were much different than they would have been had the war remained purely domestic. The hand the Palestinian Resistance had in bringing about the Civil War and in causing pandemonium in general brought the regional spotlight glaring harshly down on Lebanon. The Palestinian presence in Lebanon is what initially drew Israeli interest toward Lebanon. Aside from historical ties, it is also what drew Syria’s interest to Lebanon. The

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35 Haddad, 27.
36 Evron, 9.
37 Haddad, 31.
38 Evron, 9.
39 Ibid., 10.
40 Moubarek, 5.
onslaught of the Civil War and “the splintering of Lebanon along sectarian, socioeconomic, and ideological lines...gave rise to unstable coalitions...and invited external manipulations.”

Israel and Syria specifically were given the opening they needed to get their hooks into Lebanon.

**Sectarian Discontent**

It is important, though, to acknowledge the other factors leading to the war. One of the major causes of the civil war outside of the Palestinian presence was dissatisfaction with the Christian-dominated power-sharing formula. The Muslims in Lebanon felt that they were not fairly represented in the government. These tensions only continued to grow worse as time passed and it became increasingly clear to the Lebanese people that the Maronites were no longer the majority. Although these divides were a source of tension, the Palestinian resistance movement accentuated the deep-seated social and political fissures between the Muslim and Christian confessions in Lebanon. In this way, the Palestinian resistance operating in Lebanon brought havoc in its wake.

In Lebanon, the movement for social change, which was a reaction against the Maronite-dominated system, became linked with the Palestinian liberation movement. In fact, the level of Palestinian-leftist cooperation “exemplified the extent to which socioeconomic and political discontent was becoming inextricably intertwined with the Palestinian issue.”

The socioeconomically and politically disadvantaged Muslims in Lebanon were the people pushing to support the pan-Arab cause of the Palestinian resistance movement. According to Seaver,

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41 Weinberger, viii.
45 Seaver, 262, 256.
“had there been no Palestinian crisis—an inherently regional problem—the Lebanese regime might have persisted beyond 1975-1976 despite its internal centrifugal tendencies.” Michael Johnson contends that, more than any other factor, the Palestinian armed liberation movement contributed to the militarization of Lebanese politics. This militarization is what ultimately led to the Civil War.

Lijphart states that the main weakness of consociational democracy in Lebanon was “the inflexible institutionalization of consociational principles,” which made it impossible to adjust to changing circumstances. Although Rigby agrees with Lijphart, arguing that at the core of the collapse of the Lebanese state was the failure of the political elites to form a strong and flexible political system—the system was neither powerful enough to overcome rising tensions, nor responsive enough to cope with the pressures put on it—he astutely points out that

if Lebanon were an island in a distant sea, the ethnic and religious make-up of its population would still pose difficulties. In fact, Lebanon is a small state sandwiched between Syria and Israel, which, hating each other, have looked for allies among Lebanese society and have fought their battles by proxy among its citizens. External peace, therefore, is a precondition of internal order.

Also, according to Mubarek, in the context of security, Lebanon has been globalized since its inception. Regional disputes and their consequences were the main source of elite discord that fragmented the fragile ruling consensus and eventuated in regime failure.

46 Ibid., 258.
48 Lijphart, 149.
49 Rigby, 172, 175.
50 Ibid., 169.
51 Moubarek, 2.
52 Seaver, 258.
IV. The Civil War as the Beginning of Intervention by External Actors

The meddling done by external actors during the Lebanese Civil War had far-reaching negative consequences for Lebanon that are still being felt today. The beginning of the Civil War really signified what would become the modus operandi for Lebanon: intense meddling by outside powers only involved for their own gains. As Youssef Choueiri states, “between 1975 and 1990 Lebanon became the theatre of a plethora of overlapping wars.”53 The domestic facet of the war mainly boiled down to the Christians versus the Muslims, including the largely Sunni Palestinian refugees. But there was also the proxy conflict between Syria and Israel, with Israel propping up the Maronites and Syria supporting a variety of factions as would benefit it at any given time.

Syria’s Motivations for Intervention

Although Syria had deep historical ties with Lebanon and, on some level, believed that Lebanon was rightfully a part of Greater Syria, this historical claim does not explain Syria’s actions toward Lebanon. The historical ties that gave Syria intimate knowledge of Lebanon’s political system and society54 represent a facilitating factor, but hardly a sufficient one to explain the depth of Syrian involvement in Lebanon. The Syrian stake in Lebanon was three-fold: politics, security, and economics.

Lebanon became politically important to Syria with the appearance of the Palestinian refugees. The ruling elite in Syria is composed of the Alawites, a religious minority. Taking up the Palestinian cause, at least rhetorically, seemed an effective way to prove its legitimacy. This ideological battle and continuous low-intensity conflict have served to legitimize the Syrian regime domestically. Additionally, Syria’s “title as champion of the Palestinian cause”55 was

53 Choueiri, 28-30.
54 Weinberger, vii
55 Ibid., 5.
integral to Syria’s claim to leadership in the Arab world.\textsuperscript{56} In fact, from 1969 until the Syrian Army entered in June 1976, “the Syrian government intervened in Lebanon indirectly through Sa’iaq, the pro-Palestinian guerilla group and through political and economic support to various factions.”\textsuperscript{57}

In terms of security, an unstable Lebanon poses two security threats to Syria. For one, Lebanon could harbor political movements hostile to the Syrian regime. Secondly, it would present a security liability in any conflict with Israel.\textsuperscript{58} According to Naomi Weinberger,

\begin{quote}
Militarily, Syrian leaders were well aware of Lebanon’s actual and potential significance. Both before and after the June 1967 war with Israel, Syria’s line of defense was vulnerable to an Israeli force passing through Lebanese territory to attack Syria’s ‘soft western underbelly.’ Syrian military planners also appreciated the potential value of Lebanon to a Syrian offensive strategy. By being able to station troops in Lebanon, Syria could activate an additional front against Israel, diverting to that front Israeli forces that otherwise might have been deployed against Syria.\textsuperscript{59}
\end{quote}

The 1982 Israeli invasion into Lebanon only served to reaffirm Syria’s belief that Lebanon was its first line of defense in any conflict with Israel. This attack was one of the main factors that led Syria to block the 1983 peace agreement between Lebanon and Israel.\textsuperscript{60}

Economically, Lebanon has always served as a safety valve for Syria.\textsuperscript{61} The Lebanese market allows Syrians to satisfy consumerist urges without endangering Syria’s socialist economy.\textsuperscript{62} Lebanon also provides employment for unemployed Syrians and a great deal of remittances to bolster the Syrian economy. The fact that the Lebanese economy functions so much to Syria’s advantage is the reason that Lebanon’s economy is the only aspect of Lebanon that Syria has not endeavored to control.

\textsuperscript{56} Mubarek, 13.
\textsuperscript{57} Haddad, 34.
\textsuperscript{58} Zahar, “Peace,” 575.
\textsuperscript{59} Weinberger, 114.
\textsuperscript{60} Ellis, 13.
\textsuperscript{61} Deeb, 3.
\textsuperscript{62} Zahar, “Peace,” 575.
The Syrian Military Occupation Begins

In May 1976, the first Syrian forces entered Lebanon, beginning what would become a twenty-six year military occupation. Syria managed to convince both the United States and Israel, as well as the other Arab states, that Syrian intervention was both necessary and desired by Lebanon.\(^{63}\) Indeed, both the insurgents and members of the Lebanese establishment had appealed for Syrian support by January 1976, as the Lebanese “acknowledged the paramountcy” of Syrian influence over that of any other external actor.\(^{64}\) And, as surprising as it may seem, the Israeli government agreed to a Syrian deployment in Lebanon, believing that only Syria had the power to keep the situation in Lebanon from spiraling completely out of control. Israel prevented Syria from extending its pacification efforts, however, by establishing its “Red Line,” defined as a point somewhere midway between Sidon and Tyre on the coast and the Syrian border.\(^{65}\) The Syrian presence was further legitimated when the Riyadh Conference established the Arab Deterrent Force.\(^{66}\) Additionally, developments in the Gulf, especially the fact that Syrian troops joined the US-led coalition against Iraq during the Gulf War, cleared the way for Syrian ascendancy in Lebanon.\(^{67}\) Once its military arrived in Lebanon, Syrian policy included preventing any Lebanese party from gaining the upper hand in the war, neutralizing any regional or international objections to its presence, obstructing agreements that did not give Syria a special role in Lebanon and replacing the West in protecting the Christian population.\(^{68}\)

Although Syria was forced to dramatically shift its alignments during the course of the war, Syrian leaders maintained constant objectives throughout.\(^{69}\) The main objective was “to

\(^{63}\) Deeb, 16-7.
\(^{64}\) Weinberger, 5-6, vii.
\(^{65}\) Ellis, 12.
\(^{66}\) Zahar, “Peace,” 569; Ellis, 11.
\(^{67}\) Zahar, “Peace,” 575.
\(^{69}\) Weinberger, 9.
assure that Lebanon’s authority structures were compatible” with Syria’s own preferences. Thus, throughout the civil war, Syria was required to play a dual role in Lebanon. Initially, Syria staunchly supported the Muslims and the PLO, both politically and militarily. Once it appeared, though, that that side was gaining too much of an upper hand, Syria switched its support. Syria vacillated between “diplomatic and military coercion, repeatedly changing alliances according to its perceptions of its own interests in order to prevent any Lebanese faction from defeating and dominating the others.” Syria continuously flip-flopped in its support in order to ensure that no single group would gain preeminence: if one party were to attain a position of power, Syria would not have been able to easily manipulate events in Lebanon.

Syria wants a controlled level of chaos to reign in Lebanon—just enough that events can be easily manipulated, but not enough that the entire state dissolves into uncontrollable anarchy. During the war, Syria pursued a two-prong strategy: to divide the Christian conservative parties and continue to support the PLO-LNM alliance while trying to establish a separate coalition of organizations that would be loyal to Syria. Despite any outward appearances, every track Syria pursued was motivated by self-interest and nothing more. Syria meddled in Lebanon in many ways, but it did not want to reform or uproot the sectarian system of government. Syria merely wanted to manipulate the political situation to its own strategic advantage. During the Civil War, Damascus could “realign and recalibrate the balance of power between the different Lebanese players” to its own advantage.

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70 Ibid., 10.
71 Mubarek, 12.
72 Deeb, 12.
Despite the influx of Palestinian refugees and Lebanon’s alignment internationally with the rest of the Arab world in dealing with the Arab-Israeli conflict, Lebanon did not initially threaten Israel’s security or national interests. In fact, by the mid-1950s, Israel considered Lebanon its only harmless neighbor. From Israel’s point of view, Lebanon was of little military significance until after 1967, when the Palestinian refugees, who were anxious to join in the intifada, began utilizing military tactics against the Israelis on a regular basis. Although Lebanon was not often directly involved in the various Arab-Israeli conflicts, the fact that the armed Palestinian factions operated from within Lebanon often brought the wrath of Israel down on Lebanon.

To enumerate every Palestinian attack on Israel and every Israeli reprisal is unnecessary. However, a few illustrative examples will demonstrate the extent of the negative Israeli attention the Palestinian militants brought down on Lebanon. After Palestinian guerillas lobbed rockets at an Israeli plane on the runway in Athens on 28 December 1968, the Israelis responded by landing commando units at Beirut’s International Airport. These commandos blew up oil tanks and destroyed virtually the entire fleet of Middle East Airlines planes on the tarmac. According to Dr. Hassan A. G. Al-Khatib,

When the Palestinian commandos attacked the Lydda Airport on 30th May 1972 and the Israeli section of the Olympics in Munich on 5th September of the same year, the Israeli [sic] charged Lebanon with responsibility for the operations owing to the Palestinian military presence on its territory and reacted by conducting retaliatory actions inside Lebanon and in Beirut itself.

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74 Ibid., 30.
Likely, Israel’s harsh reprisals on Lebanon for actions Israel knew had been carried out by Palestinian organizations were meant to compel the Lebanese government to clamp down on the militants.

Eventually, the Palestinian incursions reached such a fever pitch, and Lebanon’s response remained so lackluster, that Israel decided that its national security required the creation of a buffer zone in south Lebanon. With this goal in mind, Israel, determined to demolish the PLO in Lebanon once and for all, launched Operation Peace for Galilee on 6 June 1982. This massive military operation aimed to destroy the PLO’s military and political power base in Lebanon and to expel them from the country. Israel was successful in its expulsion of the PLO, but this did little to bring relief to the Lebanese political scene or to bring security to Israel’s border with Lebanon, as the PLO was soon supplanted by Hizballah (which will be discussed in-depth below) as southern Lebanon’s resident enemy of Israel.

Israel’s motives for intervention can be boiled down to security. Israel viewed a weak Lebanon as a major security risk, as it would be easily manipulated by Syria or other unsavory actors, the Palestinians specifically. Therefore, although Israel did not desire to control Lebanon in the same manner that Syria did, it was unwilling to sit back and freely allow Syria to gain a huge regional advantage. Israel could not directly confront Syria over the matter, though, because since the 1973 war, Israel has sought to maintain a strategic deterrent relationship with Syria, prioritizing the avoidance of military conflict. It was left for Israel to fight it out with Syria by proxy during the Lebanese Civil War.

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77 Evron, 29-30.
78 Evron, 121; Haddad, 33.
80 Mubarek, 9.
**Overlapping Motives**

Both states had, and still have, a desire to use their weaker neighbor as the theater for their confrontations.\(^8\) During the war, “whenever progress was made toward peace by some third party, [Syrian President] Asad resorted to violence whether by escalating the conflict in Lebanon, or by engaging in acts of terrorism to undermine the peace initiative. He then blamed the violence on those who had taken the step toward peace.”\(^8\) Syria was not the only party to engage in this sort of manipulation, however. Both Syria and Israel sought to thwart efforts to end the Lebanese conflict when either perceived those efforts as giving the other the upper hand in the country.\(^8\) As an example, Syria scuppered the 17 May 1983 agreement between Israel and Lebanon, which would have formalized Lebanese-Israeli relations while calling for an Israeli withdrawal coincident with Syrian withdrawal.\(^8\) And the Lebanese Forces, a Christian political party and militia supported by Israel, spoiled a number of Syrian-mediated peace settlements, notably the 1985 Tripartite Agreement.\(^8\)

**The Rise of Hizballah**

Although it began operations in 1982 in the wake of the PLO’s expulsion, with the release of its manifesto, Hizballah was officially born in 1985. The stated aims of Hizballah are to rid Lebanon of Western forces and influences, to transform Lebanon into an Islamic state, and to eradicate Israel.\(^8\) The ascendance of Hizballah as a powerful new actor proved detrimental both to the Lebanese state and to Israel. Although Hizballah has different goals than the PLO and is made up of Lebanese citizens as opposed to Palestinian refugees, it still

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\(^8\) Kail Ellis asserts that Syria, Israel, and the Palestinians have each influenced Lebanon’s political system, and each “continues to be inextricably involved in Lebanon’s internal affairs. Each has fought wars on Lebanon’s soil that continue to imperil both the future of the region and Lebanon itself.” [Kail C. Ellis, “Lebanon: The Struggle of a Small Country in a Regional Context,” *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 21, no. 1 (Winter 1999): 5].

\(^8\) Deeb, 11.

\(^8\) Zahar, “Peace,” 569.

\(^8\) Zahar, “Peace,” 569; Mubarek, 10.

\(^8\) Zahar, “Peace,” 569.

\(^8\) The most notable being the 1983 suicide attack on US Marine barracks in Beirut.

served to invite Israeli reprisals, as Hizballah’s main goal was to force the end of the Israeli occupation. Also, while this politico-military movement is not composed of Palestinians, it advocates for the Palestinian cause as a secondary objective and it was the situation brought to Lebanon by the Palestinians that fostered its creation. Had Israel never occupied Lebanon and had Syria not felt the need to become involved in Lebanese politics, Hizballah would have no need to exist and would not have the same grassroots support among the Lebanese people as it does.

Syria and Iran were in full support of the inception of this organization and these goals were formed and undertaken with the complete knowledge and backing of both countries. Syria merely wanted to dominate the political system in Lebanon in order to maintain control of Lebanon. Hizballah serves as Syria’s hand in Lebanon and Syria maintains Hizballah as one of its tools it can use to maintain its position of power and influence in the region. Although Syria and Iran are allies and share influence in Lebanon, Iran conceded to Syria’s dominance in Lebanon. Iran provides more off-site support, while Syria is more directly involved on the ground. Iran provides financial backing and military training, while Syria provides strategists and politicians. Hizballah’s military strength is almost entirely thanks to Iran: “Initially trained by Iran’s Revolutionary Guards, [Hizballah] continues to receive extensive funding and weapons from Tehran, including the arsenal of more than 13,000 short-

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89 Ibid.; Iran’s main goal was, through Hizballah, to create another Islamic state within the region (Shay, 31). After Iran’s own successful Islamic revolution in 1979, Iran felt the desire to try to export it revolution to other states in the region. Because Iran’s motivations for supporting Hizballah are not directly related to Lebanon’s place in the Arab-Israeli conflict, it lies outside the scope of this paper and will not be discussed further. The benefits Hizballah reaped from Iran’s support and the results of that support, however, remain on the table, as they enabled Hizballah’s effective operations, which fall within the purview of this paper.
90 Ibid.
91 Ibid., 35.
and medium-range rockets and missiles."93 Also with Iran’s financial support, Hizballah managed to embark on “an ambitious enterprise to build an entire social welfare infrastructure for the Shiite community."94 This served to secure allegiance to Hizballah among the Lebanese people.95 The fact that Hizballah was able to take over the role of the largely impotent Lebanese government, through the money garnered from its association with Iran96, was a huge boost for Hizballah’s popularity. As long as the Lebanese government remains incapable of providing social and public services, Hizballah is able to fill that vacuum, thereby gaining power and widespread support.97 Were it not for Hizballah’s ability to provide these social services, it would have been much more difficult for Hizballah to build a wide base of support among the Lebanese people. And without this broad support, Hizballah would have been unable to maintain such a position of strength and influence within Lebanon or to step successfully into the political arena.

V. The End of the Civil War and the Lingering Syrian Military Occupation

One of the most serious problems that comes from being controlled by Syria and greatly influenced by outside powers is that conflicts in Lebanon consistently end with the imposition of a settlement or with a settlement brokered by outside forces. Rarely has a conflict in Lebanon ended as a result of direct and unmediated negotiations by the involved parties.98 Because Syria’s desire to control Lebanon stems from the Arab-Israeli conflict, every action

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93 Dickey, “The Hand That Feeds the Fire.”
94 Jaber, 147.
96 Hizballah receives five to ten million dollars per month from Iran, both money given independently from official sources (Jaber, 151) and money piped through official channels.
97 Harik, 93, 81.
98 Choueiri, 21.
Syria took and continues to take to keep Lebanon as under its thumb as possible is tied to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Unfortunately, in 1989, with the signing of the Syrian-brokered Ta’if Accord, Lebanon “traded state sovereignty in return for having its civil war brought to a close and its constitutional vacuum filled.”99 After the war, to which Syria effectively brought an end, Lebanon was not enthusiastic about a continuing Syrian presence, but found that it needed Syria to remain in order to stop the outbreak of war again. Syria was certainly not averse to this, as maintaining a military presence in Lebanon was critical to ensuring the domestic legitimacy of the ruling government and had been Syria’s goal all along.

Although Ta’if did not present the best solution for Lebanon, it was a solution that effectively addressed the desires of the three main parties. The Christians wanted recognition of Lebanon with guarantees for independence and sovereignty; the Muslims wanted a redistribution of political power between the Muslim and Christian communities, along with the acknowledgement of Lebanon’s Arab identity; and Syria wanted to ensure its privileged relations with Lebanon.100 Ta’if effectively “recognized the role of a hegemon.”101 The Syrian presence affected the reality of power sharing after 1989 because Syria could creatively interpret the Ta’if Accord to suit its own purposes,102 as Ta’if is ambiguous regarding the size of Syrian forces, their exact positions, their role in Lebanon, and the duration of their stay.103

For example, although Ta’if called for the dissolution of all militias, it was not enforced across

99 Kerr, 241.
100 Frangieh, 107.
101 Ibid., 232-4.
102 Ibid., 232-4.
103 Mubarek, 18-9.
the board. In Ta’if, Syria pushed Lebanon to allow Hizballah’s militia to remain intact and functioning; and this special status is what allowed Hizballah to have military and civil conquest over southern Lebanon in effect.\textsuperscript{104} And even though Syria was supposed to withdraw its military, it never did. In addition to its other faults, Ta’if also managed to institutionalize confessionalism even further.

Outside of the Ta’if Agreement, “Syria…enveloped Lebanon politically and diplomatically. A web of agreements and pacts now link the two countries and serve to legitimate Syrian meddling in Lebanese affairs.”\textsuperscript{105} As an example, on 22 May 1991, Lebanon and Syria signed the Treaty of Brotherhood, Cooperation, and Coordination.\textsuperscript{106} This treaty practically legalizes Syrian involvement in matters of internal Lebanese security.\textsuperscript{107} It was through treaties such as this that Syria effectively bound Lebanon within its sphere of influence, basically ensuring that Lebanon could not take any regional or international political action to which Syria was averse. The fact that Lebanon, at least ostensibly, continued to willingly subordinate itself to Syria is what made Syrian influence legitimate and so insidious and difficult to fight.

Between 1990 and 2005, Syria effected a number of detrimental political changes in Lebanon. For one, Syria and its local Lebanese proxies—using time-tested gerrymandering techniques to which the Christian population of Lebanon responded to by largely boycotting—“blatantly stage-managed the parliamentary elections in 1992 and 1996.”\textsuperscript{108} Syria also severely curtailed press freedoms in what had previously been a country with a robust and free media. The combination of these two things was exceedingly harmful to the health of Lebanese civil society.

\textsuperscript{104} Shay, 66.
\textsuperscript{106} Frangieh, 108.
\textsuperscript{107} Zahar, “Peace,” 576.
One action taken that will have major repercussions for the future was the Naturalization Act. This act gave citizenship to a huge number of, mostly Syrian, Shi’a Muslims, which drastically altered the demography of Lebanon. With a population hovering around four million people, and considering that the majority of domestic Lebanese conflict springs from confessional politics and imbalances, an addition of 300,000 members of mainly one religious sect posed an enormous threat to an already unstable political balance composed of an ominously seething demographic cauldron.\textsuperscript{109} These new members of Lebanese civil society also provided an instant boost to Hizballah’s base of support.

A factor demonstrating that Syria created these new Lebanese citizens solely for its own benefit is that it did not push for similar citizenship rights to be extended to the 400,000 Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon. As was discussed earlier, Lebanon did not want to give citizenship to the Palestinians for two main reasons. One, it would have upset Lebanon’s already delicate demographic balance, and, two, the Lebanese people feared that it would negate the right of return for Palestinians. Clearly, Syria had no qualms about altering Lebanon’s demography, so that is not their reason for continuing to exclude Palestinian refugees from Lebanese citizenship. However, Syria did and still does want to keep the right of return in play so that the Arab-Israeli conflict can continue unabated.

The Lebanese government was unable to negotiate with Israel in its own right because it was subordinate to Syria.\textsuperscript{110} Few political decisions were made without consulting Damascus and it was widely understood that Syria routinely intervened in the processes of the Lebanese government.\textsuperscript{111} However, if Lebanon tried to extricate itself from under Syria’s wing, not only would it provoke Syria, but Lebanon would also find itself in a weaker position in terms of its

\textsuperscript{109} Malik, xiv.
\textsuperscript{110} According to Michael Johnson, “there can be little doubt that left to themselves after the civil war, freely elected politicians in Lebanon would have negotiated a peace settlement with Israel” (Johnson, 162).
\textsuperscript{111} Norton, 42.
interactions with Israel.\textsuperscript{112} This was made especially clear in 1996, when Israel’s Grapes of Wrath operation reemphasized the weakness of the Lebanese government and strengthened Syria’s political role in the country.\textsuperscript{113}

Despite Syria’s seemingly uncontested and iron-clad control over Lebanon, opposition to the Syrian occupation began to grow after the Israeli withdrawal in 2000.\textsuperscript{114} According to Habib C. Malik,

\begin{quote}
The Lebanon war has not really ended. Though the guns are silent and security has improved on some levels, a heavy price is being exacted for those modest normalizing steps in the form of a tighter noose around freedoms and a steady erosion of Lebanon’s distinctive characteristics. The war therefore has merely assumed a different form, with subtle new demarcation lines separating the two warring sides. The decisive confrontation for the foreseeable future is between Lebanon’s beleaguered civil society in all its aspects…and the relentless hegemonic onslaught on this civil society by the Damascus regime. Thus, after years of bloody internecine strife fueled by outside interference, the Lebanon war has metamorphosed into a showdown pitting Syria and its local proxies against the vast majority of the Lebanese population.\textsuperscript{115}
\end{quote}

Although Malik’s statement must be taken with a grain of salt, considering that unbiased scholars typically refrain from arguing with such ill-concealed vitriol, he, penning that statement in 1997, did anticipate that eventually there would be a backlash against the Syrian occupation. This opposition came to a head in 2005, with what would be termed the Cedar Revolution.

\textbf{VII. Hizballah and Lebanon after the Cedar Revolution}

In 2005, after the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, for which Syrian agents were implicated, there were huge popular protests against the Syrian occupation. These protests were enough to compel Syria to finally withdraw its military forces after twenty-six years of occupation. This seems like an event of great significance, but what were the actual implications of Syria’s redeployment? The military presence is gone, but the

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid.  \\
\textsuperscript{113} Ellis, 17.  \\
\textsuperscript{114} Johnson, 152.  \\
\textsuperscript{115} Malik, 23.
\end{flushleft}
Lebanese political sphere remains rife with specters of the Syrian occupation and with Syrian proxies. So, this seemingly significant event did little to help the actual situation in Lebanon in terms of increasing Lebanese sovereignty and facilitating steps toward reconciliation. After the Syrian withdrawal, hope emerged that Lebanon might finally have the freedom to choose its own path. Unfortunately, that hope was squashed as it quickly became clear that, through political maneuvering, Syria would remain a political force to be reckoned with.\textsuperscript{116}

Despite the numerous political parties in Lebanon, Syria’s long-term presence had obviated the need for one ascendant political sect.\textsuperscript{117} During the Syrian occupation, Lebanon effectively functioned under a “pax Syriana,”\textsuperscript{118} but with Syria’s departure, the need for one such political party has emerged, deeply polarizing the Lebanese political scene.\textsuperscript{119} The Syrian withdrawal left a political vacuum, causing the political divisions between pro- and anti-Syrian political parties to crystallize into the March 8\textsuperscript{120} and March 14\textsuperscript{121} coalitions respectively.\textsuperscript{122}

\textsuperscript{116} Choueiri, 33.  
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., 31.  
\textsuperscript{118} Johnson, 140.  
\textsuperscript{119} Choueiri, 31, 33.  
\textsuperscript{120} The March 8 camp is a coalition of opposition political parties, aligned against the March 14 government. The coalition is considered to be pro-Syrian, and takes its name from a mass demonstration in downtown Beirut organized on March 8, 2005 by various political parties, thanking Syria for its role in stopping the Lebanese Civil War and in stabilizing Lebanon. Hizballah, the Amal Movement, and the Syrian Social Nationalist Party were among the major parties involved.  
\textsuperscript{121} The March 14 Coalition is named after the date of a large anti-Syrian demonstration held after the February 14, 2005 assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri and organized by several parties that are currently members of the Coalition. The group is composed of anti-Syrian political parties and independents in Lebanon, and is led by Future Movement MP Saad Hariri, Lebanese Forces leader Samir Geagea, former President Sheik Amin Gemayel, and MP Walid Jumblatt of the Progressive Socialist Party. General Michel Aoun’s Free Patriotic Movement left the coalition before it was officially established, due to political disagreements with the camp.  
\textsuperscript{122} The time period during which Syria occupied Lebanon militarily and maintained iron-fisted control over the political sphere as well was time lost among the various Lebanese political factions. Because of Syria’s complete control over the political system, there was neither the need nor the ability for political negotiations among various sects. Because of this lost time, no parties had managed to work on or hone negotiation skills by the time of the Syrian withdrawal in 2005. This is not to say that national reconciliation would have been achieved in the years following the Civil War had the Syrian occupation not occurred. However, because a process such as national reconciliation takes time, especially in a state as deeply divided and with such deep-seated mistrust among confessions, it is conceivable that Lebanon could have been farther along in the reconciliation process.
The leader of the March 8 coalition is Hizballah. After Israeli completed the withdrawal of its military from southern Lebanon in 2000, Hizballah began more and more to join in mainstream politics, largely halting its use of terrorist tactics. Hizballah leads the opposition coalition and is currently the most powerful political movement in Lebanon. Especially since the Syrian military was forced to redeploy, Hizballah and its pro-Syrian political allies serve as Syria’s proxy presence in Lebanon; although it has become more of a cooperative arrangement rather than one where Hizballah plays the subordinate role.

According to Choueiri, the Syrian presence had frozen the Shi’ite drive for change, which refers to the Shi’ite desire to push for a more equitable distribution of political power. As can be seen at present, that drive for change has reemerged with a vengeance. This Shi’ite political movement is exemplified by Hizballah. Syria’s role in all of this is that they support Hizballah politically and militarily and would prefer for Lebanon to remain divided. A country wracked by conflict is much easier to manipulate. Were Lebanon to become united under a pro-West government, Lebanon might pursue a separate peace agreement with Israel, something Syria will not allow to happen.

Because Hizballah is growing to become the most powerful political movement in Lebanon, with a militia more powerful than the LAF, its actions have a huge impact on Lebanese politics. The manner in which Hizballah interacted or continues to interact with each of the following issues underscores the party’s influence and the manner in which it challenges Lebanon’s goals of peace and reconciliation.

2006 War

In July of 2006, Lebanon was rocked when a minor border incident between Israel and Hizballah quickly escalated into a full-blown war. Though this war lasted only thirty-four days, its repercussions were far-reaching. The war directly aided in Hizballah’s path to ascendancy.

123 Choueiri, 33.
In terms of politics, Hizballah gained a great deal of power for a couple of reasons. For one, Hizballah was able to crack Israel’s aura of invincibility—a rare feat for an Arab government and an even rarer one for a militia. Hizballah touted the war as a victory, and, while it really was more of a stalemate, the fact that Israel had not defeated Hizballah was amazing to the Lebanese people. This victory of sorts, combined with the fact that Hizballah was able to provide the social services that the national government could not in the wake of the severe damage inflicted on the economy and the billions of dollars of damage done to Lebanon’s infrastructure that wiped out fifteen years of economic recovery and reconstruction\textsuperscript{124}, led to a groundswell of popular support for Hizballah.

Additionally, the war interrupted the fledgling National Dialogue, which was the first time political parties had come together for the purpose of discussing national reconciliation without Syria looming overhead, at least in terms of a physical presence.

\textit{Eighteen-Month Political Crisis}\textsuperscript{125}

Unfortunately, even after the war came to an end, the National Dialogue did not pick up where it left off because of a burgeoning national political crisis. In the past, Lebanon has generated civil wars as a result of its confessional structures and their contradictory interests. These confessions are triggered into violent confrontations when a certain sect feels itself capable of tipping the balance of power in its favor.\textsuperscript{126} This is exactly what occurred in 2006 when Hizballah and its allies started a series of political protests that would turn into an eighteen-month political crisis that ground the functioning of the Lebanese government to a halt. This crisis began when the ruling government, and overtly anti-Hizballah government, would not meet demands for certain governmental reforms and political concessions. In November 2006, Hizballah, the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM), and the Amal Movement

\textsuperscript{124} Ibid., 42.
\textsuperscript{125} Kaplan, Esther and Hanna Camp, eds. \textit{Briefing Book for President Carter’s Trip to Lebanon and Syria.} Atlanta: The Carter Center, 2009.
\textsuperscript{126} Choueiri, 44.
jointly demanded the establishment of a national unity government, in which they would have one third of the Cabinet seats plus one, giving them effective veto power. When negotiations with the ruling coalition failed, five Cabinet Ministers from Hizballah and Amal resigned their positions. On 1 December 2006, these groups began a series of sit-ins, in downtown Beirut, in opposition to the government of Prime Minister Fouad Siniora. These first sit-ins signified the beginning of the political crisis. While the government managed to continue operating throughout most of this crisis, it deadlocked when it came time to select a new president. This brought the government to a standstill for months. The situation spiraled out of control in May 2008, sparked by government moves to shut down Hizballah’s private communications network and to take control of the Beirut airport and Hizballah’s retaliatory seizure of several West Beirut neighborhoods, which were strongholds of the March 14-allied Future Movement. The resulting street battles left eleven dead and thirty wounded. With this outbreak of violence, the worst Lebanon had seen since the Civil War, many people, both in Lebanon and internationally, feared that Lebanon was on the brink of descending into civil conflict once again.

The conflict ended with the 21 May Doha Accord, a peace agreement brokered by Syria. The Doha Accord provided for the creation of a national unity government. This agreement also called for a National Dialogue to be held and for the parties to agree not to use violence in the future. Additionally, under the terms of this agreement, the opposition March 8 camp was granted effective veto power in Lebanon’s Government with a “blocking third” of eleven of the thirty seats in the Cabinet. The power of the Maronite president was also reduced. So, by using violence rather than political negotiations, Hizballah and its supporters got the political concessions for which they had been pressing. This series of events clearly did nothing to improve national morale or engender feelings of national unity and reconciliation.

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127 Kaplan, Esther and Hanna Camp, eds.  
128 Ibid.
Intra-Religion Conflicts

Although the majority of Lebanon’s woes are tied to the Arab-Israeli conflict, it is critical to recognize that some of Lebanon’s conflicts stem solely from within Lebanon. One set of clashes making reconciliation even more difficult in Lebanon is that the various religions are not necessarily even reconciled within themselves. In Lebanon, the Shi’ite community is the only one that is able to speak with a unified voice.

Conflict between Christians

Intra-Christian reconciliation is not progressing well, despite the continued urgings of former Prime Minister Fouad Siniora and President Michel Suleiman. Former Prime Minister Siniora emphasizes the importance of intra-Christian reconciliation within the ongoing atmosphere of national reconciliation. President Suleiman has also enlisted the assistance of Pope Benedict XVI and Maronite Patriarch Nasrallah Butros Sfeir, with no results to date.

The main struggle is between the pro-government faction, led by Dr. Samir Geagea (Lebanese Forces, LF) and Former President Amin Gemayel (Kataeb), and the pro-Syrian faction, headed by Suleiman Franjieh (Marada) and General Michel Aoun (FPM). Dr. Geagea’s Civil War record has been a major point of contention, with Mr. Franjieh saying that he was not “in a hurry to clear Geagea’s slate.” This was a reference to Dr. Geagea’s former role in the Phalange Party, which was blamed for the 1978 Ehden massacre in which Mr. Franjieh’s family was killed. Dr. Geagea denies taking part in the massacre, arguing that he was shot before making it to the family’s residence. While Dr. Geagea has apologized for “mistakes” made by the LF during the Civil War, he has not made a direct apology to Mr. Franjieh. Mr. Franjieh insists Dr. Geagea must “admit to his crimes, apologize publicly, [and] then quit politics” if reconciliation is to be achieved.

129 Ibid.
Former President Gemayel, for his part, has expressed reservations about General Aoun’s coalition with Hizballah, calling it dangerous for Lebanon and Christian interests, since Hizballah works to “achieve the Iranian strategic scheme in the Middle East.” Former President Gemayel also said that both sides must cease denigrating their political opponents in the media. Some parties believe Syria is working against reconciliation between Mr. Franjieh and Dr. Geagea, as a means of preventing Dr. Geagea from acquiring power.

Conflict between Muslims

In the northern city of Tripoli, Alawite and Sunni factions engaged in months of sporadic clashes in 2008, leaving twenty dead and many more wounded, a state of affairs that led Syrian President Bashar al-Assad (an Alawite) to repeatedly demand that the Lebanese government take steps to end the fighting and to protect Alawite Lebanese. A cease-fire was signed on 8 September, following a meeting between Alawite leader Ali Eid and Sunni leader MP Saad Hariri. The agreement called for six steps toward reconciliation, including the removal of armed men from the streets of Tripoli and economic revival programs for the impoverished area. The signing of the Tripoli Agreement represented the most significant success in the intra-Muslim reconciliation process so far.

VIII. The Current State of Regional Affairs

In order for Lebanon to successfully reconcile, regional peace needs to be achieved. Considering the current state of upheaval in the entire region, regional peace will not be occurring in the near future.

Syrian-Israeli Peace Negotiations

In 2008, Syria and Israel began indirect peace negotiations with the help of Turkey, but, just as they appeared to be making a small amount of progress, the negotiations ground to a halt on the Israeli side when the Israeli Prime Minister announced he would be stepping down in the face of a corruption scandal. And, with the hard-liner Benjamin Netanyahu now in power, it is
even more unlikely that Israel will reinitiate peace talks at this point in time. And with the protests currently taking place in Syria, it is unclear what the state of the Syrian political arena will be in the months and years to come. Exact political circumstances aside, the issue of contested territory continues to hurt the chances of a Syrian-Israeli peace accord.

The question of the Golan Heights stretches back more than forty years. Israel occupied this territory, located between Syria, Israel, Lebanon, and Jordan, during the 1967 Arab-Israeli War and it is a continuing point of contention between Syria and Israel. The dispute over the Golan is one of the main issues that hampers peace negotiations between Syria and Israel. This affects Lebanon because Lebanon has committed itself to not making a separate peace with Israel—if Syria does not make peace with Israel, than neither can Lebanon. Some analysts believe that Syrian President Assad wants Israel to maintain its occupation of the Golan Heights in order to legitimate ongoing conflict between the two states. In the past, the PLO was already confronting Israel on the Israeli-Lebanese border. Therefore, Syria had to find another border on which to confront Israel—the Golan became that arena. Because Lebanon’s fate remains tied to Syria’s in terms of a peace process with Israel, Lebanon cannot get out of the arena of the Arab-Israeli conflict if Syria and Israel do not make peace.

*Conflict Relating to Palestine*

Palestine currently faces a number of intractable and complicated problems. For one, what once was a somewhat unified Palestinian Resistance movement has fractured into a number of groups with differing opinions, goals, and tactics. The Fatah-Hamas split is widely known, as they are the two most powerful of the Palestinian groups and control the West Bank and the Gaza Strip respectively. But the lesser known conflict among the numerous groups has put the Palestinians in the situation of being unable to unified front in order to conduct peace negotiations with Israel. Although attempts have been made to mediate and solve this conflict, notably by Egypt, the parties do not appear to have reached a point where they are truly ready
to negotiate. However unfortunate it is that the Palestinians remain divided, a unified Palestinian voice would not really matter, since, with Benjamin Netanyahu, a known hawk, as Prime Minister, successful negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians would be unlikely anyway.

Lebanese-Israeli Peace

Assuming Lebanese political autonomy from the desires of Syria, including Hizballah by proxy, peace between Lebanon and Israel would be a distinct possibility. It is true that there is a lack of trust between the two states—Israel has invaded and severely damaged Lebanon and its people a number of times and there are also a number of unfulfilled UN Resolutions, including UNSCR 1559 and UNSCR 1701, that continue to create tension between the two governments. But what is currently cited as the real sticking point in the relationship, or lack thereof, is the Sheba’a Farms area in the Golan Heights. The contestation of Sheba’a Farms is absolutely a pretext, fostered by Syria, to give Hizballah a reason to maintain its militia and to keep peace negotiations from moving forward. Therefore, with Hizballah and its militia still in play as the dominant military force in the country any steps toward peace are unlikely at best.

The issue of Sheba’a Farms has cropped up more recently. Although Hizballah states that the Israeli occupation necessitated its continuing maintenance of its militia, Hizballah did not regard the 2000 withdrawal of the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) as the end of the conflict. In fact, continued conflict with Israel is a central component of its ideology and the main justification for its perpetuation as an armed power in the Lebanese arena. Hizballah will find any excuse to maintain legitimacy as an armed resistance organization. This became even clearer when, after the Israeli withdrawal in 2000, a Syria backed Hizballah raised the issue of Sheba’a Farms for the first time. Sheba’a Farms is a small bit of Israeli-occupied territory in southern Lebanon that had, until 2000, not fallen under the Israeli-Lebanese dispute, as it was

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130 Shay, 136.
believed to belong to Syria. Israel claims that the area is owned by Syria, while both Syria and Lebanon argue that Lebanon owns the territory. Up to this point, any UN investigations regarding ownership of the area have proved inconclusive. Syria and Lebanon use this argued Israeli presence in Lebanon as proof that Israel has not yet fully withdrawn from Lebanon pursuant to UN Security Council Resolution 425. Most people believe that the fact that Syria is supporting the Lebanese claim to this territory as proof that Syria just wants to help give Hizballah a pretext for legitimately maintaining its militia.

In the past, Hizballah had maintained a position of “calculated ambiguity” in terms of what it would do when Israel withdrew from the south.\(^{131}\) Since the Israeli withdrawal, though, Hizballah has made its position more explicit. Statements from Hizballah’s leader, Hassan Nasrallah, have indicated that even were Israel to make a full withdrawal (as defined by Hizballah), Hizballah would not relinquish its arms. In *Al-Hayat* newspaper in 2000, Nasrallah stated that Hizballah’s attitude toward Israel is “a matter of principle and ideology, and therefore the struggle against Israel is not dependent on mutable political circumstances, such as an Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon.”\(^{132}\) It is becoming ever clearer that with the aid of Syria, Hizballah will find any reason to maintain its military wing.

**VIII. Conclusion: Looking Forward**

*The National Dialogue in Lebanon: Stuck on the Issue of Military Power*

As was mentioned earlier under the discussion of Hizballah, in 2006, Lebanon attempted to hold a National Dialogue, the first such discussion held without Syria hovering overhead, at least physically. The fact that “exclusive sectarian representation was the only criterion for being included in the dialogue” highlighted the state of fragmentation of Lebanese socio-politics.\(^{133}\) This nascent attempt at a National Dialogue was torpedoed first by the war

\(^{131}\) Norton, 51.

\(^{132}\) Mubarek, 29.

\(^{133}\) Choueiri, 40.
with Israel, and then by the national political crisis. In May 2008, the Doha Agreement, which put an end to the clashes and the paralysis of the government, empowered new President Michele Suleiman to organize a dialogue on national reconciliation. The main focus of this dialogue was to be the determination of a national defense strategy. The current status of the Lebanese National Dialogue is not promising. After years and years of conflict, of course one of the problems is a lack of trust. But the biggest sticking point that has emerged is the issue of creating a “national defense strategy,” which would have to involve a compromise regarding Hizballah’s militia. Since the talks began, each session has as unproductive as the last. The parties appear to have reached an impasse regarding the future of Hizballah’s militia.

At this point, Lebanon is held up on the first step of reconciliation. It comes down to military power. Hizballah’s militia being more powerful than the LAF means that Hizballah could potentially just do again what it did in 2008, when it turned its weapons against the Lebanese people in order to gain political concessions. And although Hizballah was ostensibly founded in order to resist the Israeli presence, recent statements by the Hizballah leadership have clearly indicated that Hizballah would not disarm even were Israel to completely withdraw from every bit of contested territory. It is hard to have national reconciliation with the threat of armed conflict hanging over your head. So how is Hizballah currently interacting with the reconciliation process? Right now, Hizballah has no incentives to make concessions and help facilitate reconciliation. Militarily, they still have legitimacy as a resistance movement and are more powerful than the LAF. And it is the sticking point of Hizballah’s militia that continues to hamper any progress in the National Dialogue. Because Hizballah has not yet come to the table truly ready to compromise, nothing has really been achieved.

*The Special Tribunal for Lebanon and the Current Political Crisis*

Another issue with its roots in the Arab-Israeli conflict that continues to divide Lebanon is the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL), a body created to investigate the assassination of
former Prime Minister Hariri.\(^{134}\) The Lebanese government has again found itself in a state of turmoil since 25 January of this year, when unity government Prime Minister Saad Hariri’s Cabinet was toppled. The catalyst for this event was largely volatile disagreements over the STL. Hizballah and March 8 allies, the ones responsible for the toppling of the cabinet, do not want to allow the STL to move forward in its investigations, while the March 14 Coalition wants to see the STL fulfill its mandate. A new Prime Minister, Najib Mikati, was quickly selected. However, because he has been unable to meet the demands of or successfully broker an agreement between the two main coalitions in the Lebanese government, the March 14 and March 8 alliances, he has been unable to successfully form a new Cabinet as of the writing of this paper. This could be the precursor to a crisis like the series of political protests and subsequent government deadlock that lasted for eighteen months.

\(^{134}\) In April of 2005, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1595, which set up the United Nations International Independent Investigation Commission (UNIIIC), after a UN mission found that Lebanon’s own inquiry into former Prime Minister Rafiq’s Hariri assassination was seriously flawed and that Syria was primarily responsible for the political tensions that preceded the attack. The UNIIIC was charged with investigating the assassinations of former Prime Minister Hariri and several others. UNSCR 1636, passed in October of 2005, obligated all UN member states to prevent the entry into or transit through their territory of any individual designated by the Commission or the Government of Lebanon as suspected of involvement in the assassination of former Prime Minister Hariri. States were also required to freeze all economic assets of such individuals. Syria, in particular, was ordered to detain all individuals that the Commission suspected were involved in the assassination. Several Resolutions that followed (UNSCR 1644, 1664, 1686 and 1748), extended the mandate of the Commission and requested that the UN Secretary-General negotiate an agreement with the Government of Lebanon for the establishment of a special tribunal.

At Lebanese Prime Minister Siniora’s urging, the Security Council passed UNSCR 1757 on 30 May 2007, establishing the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, which entered into force on 10 July 2007. Because the move was strongly opposed by Syria and its allies in Lebanon, Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon requested that the tribunal be hosted at The Hague, out of concern that basing it in Lebanon could make the tribunal a potential target of violence.

On 28 March 2008, the 10th report of the UNIIIC found that, “a network of individuals acted in concert to carry out the assassination of Rafiq Hariri and that this criminal network – the ‘Hariri Network’ – or parts thereof are linked to some of the other cases within the Commission’s mandate.” It is not clear, however, who the tribunal will prosecute. Damascus has denied any knowledge of Hariri’s assassination, arguing that it has cooperated with the investigations, and it has insisted that if any Syrian nationals are found to be involved, they will be tried within Syria on charges of high treason.

The STL, which superseded the UNIIIC when its mandate expired on 28 February 2009, officially opened on 1 March 2009. On 17 January, the prosecution filed an indictment, which is currently being reviewed by the pre-trial judge. The President of the STL, Antonio Cassese, anticipates that the court will complete the bulk of its work by 2015. (Esther Kaplan and Hanna Camp, eds.)
Internal Balance Requires External Balance (ie, Regional Peace)

While it would be great for Lebanon if its confessions could reconcile and determine a system of government that is workable for the current make-up of Lebanon, “even if Lebanon’s elites agreed on the arrangements for a pact of national coexistence, a power-sharing government on that basis might never be realized if the external elites held no interest in the implementation and maintenance of that system.”\textsuperscript{135} While Syria and Israel still have a stake in what goes on in Lebanon as a part of the greater Arab-Israeli conflict, they could easily destabilize any government the Lebanese people manage to form. It only takes a minority to destabilize a coalition. According to Marie-Joelle Zahar, “domestic political issues might have been resolved differently were it not for the inside-outside dialectics that linked developments within the Lebanese political system to wider international issues.”\textsuperscript{136} Because the Arab-Israeli conflict continues to fester, the exogenous pressures on Lebanon will not abate just because everyone agrees they want them to.

While deconfessionalization remains the ultimate goal in Lebanon, problems in Lebanon have grown to the point that systematic reform in isolation will be unable to solve the issues completely. Especially if Syria has not been placated, it has the power to undermine any elite consensus that might be reached. The “persistence of parallel agencies capable of sidestepping [the government’s] authority as the sole representative of the country”\textsuperscript{137} is a problem, exacerbated by Syria, that continues to hurt Lebanon’s chances at achieving national reconciliation.

Policy Recommendations

As was discussed at the beginning, for the purposes of this paper, national reconciliation in Lebanon would consist of the following: an absence of political violence, a popular

\textsuperscript{135} Kerr, 251.
\textsuperscript{136} Zahar, “Power,” 231.
\textsuperscript{137} Choueiri, 42.
perception of government legitimacy, and the creation of a government monopoly on the use of force in the country. So what steps can be taken, by the international community or by Lebanon itself, to help move Lebanon closer to this ultimate goal?

Although Lebanon’s problems cannot entirely be solved by instituting domestic political reforms, certain political changes might not be amiss. Because Lebanon’s political sphere is so delicate, however, all factors must be considered before making a decision to implement changes. Even if the utmost consideration is used, there could be unforeseen consequences.

Looking at Hizballah through a lens of the economic point of view (provided by the aforementioned Eli Berman, Laurance Iannaccone, and Daivd Laitin), shows that, to Hizballah, the Lebanese government lies somewhere on the spectrum between being a soft and a hard target. The Lebanese government is not a soft target, so to speak, because not all government positions are open to everyone—positions are allotted based on confession. And the government of Lebanon cannot alter itself into a hard target or it will cease to be a democracy. Therefore, the only way in which to remove some of Hizballah’s leverage is to make the government a completely soft target so that it is no longer negatively competitive. The Lebanese government could either remove the constraints on government positions laid out by the National Pact and repudiate the idea of power sharing altogether or take a new census and reformulate the power sharing agreement based upon current demography.

Based on my definition of national reconciliation, the simplest path for Lebanon to take might be one that leads to the ascendency of Hizballah. The Lebanese government could authorize and carry out a census, reformulate the make-up of the government based on the census results (which would undoubtedly indicate that the Shi’a have become the majority confession), allow Hizballah and its allies to take control of the government, and live in peace under Hizballah’s leadership. While this would lead to a government monopoly on the use of
force—Hizballah would have no trouble either consolidating its militia and the LAF or simply dismantling the LAF—whether the government would be perceived as legitimate and whether political violence would disappear is questionable. If Hizballah and its supporters actually make up the majority of the population and take control of the government legally, then the government would have to be deemed legitimate. However, because there is such rabid animosity between Hizballah and its political opponents, this solution would be unlikely to stem political violence—Hizballah’s adversaries would never accept the situation.

Another option would be to take the military route: for the Lebanese government to build up the LAF to the point that they could successfully challenge Hizballah’s militia. Without its militia waiting in the wings to take action if working through political channels fails to achieve the desired results, Hizballah would be greatly weakened. However, it is unclear what actions Syria would take in response.\textsuperscript{138} Similarly, Lebanon could appeal to the United Nations to expand UNIFIL in order to help the Lebanese government regain sovereignty and military control over its entire territory. Even if Lebanon is unable to build up its military to the point of directly challenging Hizballah, the LAF needs to work to harden Lebanon’s borders to keep weapons from Syria from crossing into Lebanon, which would be a first step in neutralizing Hizballah’s.

The United States also has a few policy options that could aid Lebanon in its quest for reconciliation and peace. As a corollary to advising Lebanon to build up the LAF, the United States could provide assistance with the endeavor with funding, weapons, and training. The United States should also do everything within its power, which, admittedly, has become more limited of late, especially in the Middle East, to encourage both Syria and Israel to keep their hands to themselves as far as Lebanon is concerned. The United States should also give aid for economic recovery and reconstruction. The Lebanese government needs to take away

\textsuperscript{138} Although considering the domestic problems with which Syria is currently contending, now might be the best time to undertake such a plan.
Hizballah’s monopoly on the market for the provision of social services, but it is unlikely to be able to do so without assistance. The United States should also help the Lebanese government find a way to cut off, or at least stem the flow of, the money Hizballah receives from Iran, which would devastate Hizballah’s ability to continue to provide social services. Additionally, the United States should give both verbal and financial support to the Special Tribunal for Lebanon. If the assassination of Rafiq Hariri and suspicion of Syrian involvement was enough to push the Lebanese people to finally evict the Syrian military after twenty-six years, then the Syrian government or Hizballah being found accountable for the assassination might be enough to rally the Lebanese people to reject Syrian machinations even more fiercely and to push Hizballah more onto the sidelines of Lebanese politics. As the situation in the Middle East changes daily, it will be vital for those who would effect change to keep their eyes open and their ears to the ground in order to be alert to arising opportunities for change.

The Place of Reconciliation in Lebanon

As this paper has demonstrated, Lebanon has faced a variety of endogenous and exogenous pressures that have contributed to its numerous conflicts. Although Lebanon’s system of consociational government has been acknowledged as playing a major role in hampering domestic political stability, this study has hopefully proven that the Arab-Israeli conflict continues to have the most salience as an agent of division, particularly as it has manifested in Syrian and Israeli intervention in Lebanon, the rise of Hizballah, mounting internal political tensions, unresolved territorial disputes, and the stagnation of regional peace negotiations. Right now, as bleak a prediction as it is, it appears that reconciliation currently has no place in Lebanon. A number of parties want very much for there to be political space for reconciliation, but regional circumstances are such that, as of right now, reconciliation appears to be out of Lebanon’s reach. I hope to be wrong in my assessment of the situation, for an achievement of reconciliation in Lebanon would be a fantastic occurrence.
And perhaps I am making falsely grim conclusions. Because, according to Mark Farha, “the hope remains—however feeble—that secularism and political liberalism may take root in Lebanon as they did in the West, i.e. as a result of sheer exasperation and nausea with confessional wars of extinction and the bloody experience of a theocratic tyranny.”\textsuperscript{139} The Middle East is currently roiling and what will happen in the days, weeks, months, and years to come is anyone’s guess. The past few years of turmoil have pushed many Lebanese people to the end of their patience with the government. Now, when much of the population is fed up with the goings-on in the government, is the time to make political changes. According to an article in a Lebanese newspaper, \textit{The Daily Star}, activists all over Lebanon have been planning and executing protests “to topple the sectarian system” in Lebanon.\textsuperscript{140} Lebanon, along with the entire Middle East, may currently be ripe for change. Lebanon’s problems do not need to be solved in an all-or-nothing fashion. And making changes when conditions create sufficient political space can help lay the groundwork for more sweeping changes and reforms. Those who would see positive change effected need to step up to the plate and push for that change to occur. Opponents of political freedom do not balk from loudly voicing their opinions or pushing for politics the way they want to see them, which means that adversaries of those peddlers of political mismanagement cannot shy away either.

\textsuperscript{139} Farha, 223.
\textsuperscript{140} The Daily Star, \<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition_id=1\&categ_id=2\&article_id=126978\#axzz1JAIBsli2> (10 April 2011)
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