

THE LEBANESE CIVIL WAR

- Religious Differences or Class Struggle

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1- HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Before discussing our question it would be necessary to look shortly at the historical events before the independence of Lebanon.

The country now known as Lebanon was, until the end of the First World War, part of the Ottoman empire. In that empire Christians and Jews - while not being treated as the equals of Muslims - were nevertheless generally given protection and they usually enjoyed a considerable degree of toleration. Within the Ottoman system of administration these communities possessed an officially - recognised and quite wide measure of autonomy in matters such as personal status, legal affairs and education under the leadership of their own religious authorities. This recognition of the religious community - the millet - as the basis of administrative authority was to have profound implications in such a religiously diverse area as Lebanon. ⁽¹⁾

When the Maronites after 1840 sought to assert their supremacy in the country, Druze reactions were set in motion which culminated in the massacre of 1860. ⁽²⁾ As a result the Ottoman authorities, under pressure from the European Great Powers, recognised the administration of this part of their empire. An autonomous sanjak (province) was created embracing the central parts of Mount Lebanon and the coastal plain, but excluding the town of Beirut and the area around Tripoli and Sidon. This new area was to be governed by a Christian who was non - Lebanese but who was still a subject of the Ottoman empire. He

was appointed by the Sultan and was responsible to Istanbul, but his appointment was subject to the approval of the European Powers. In his administration he was to be assisted by a local council consisting of twelve elected members - four Moronite Christians, two Greek Orthodox and one Greek Catholic Christian, three Druze, and one Sunni and one Shi'ite Muslim. The province had its own system of taxation and its own local gendarmerie. ⁽³⁾

Under the re - arrangement the old vilayets (administrative regions) of Tripoli in the north, and Sidon in the South, were absorbed into the newly created vilayet of Beirut. (It should be noted that Beirut, an important port, was an urban enclave within the sanjak of Lebanon, whereas the areas which it now governed lay to the north and south of that new province). The Bekaa Valley remained as part of the vilayet of Damascus (Now the capital of Syria).

It was during the middle and late 19th century that Beirut began to develop both economically and culturally. Numerous secondary schools were opened, mainly under European and American missionary auspices, and two universities, the Jesuit University of St. Joseph under French auspices and the American University, were established. Beirut was the intellectual home of many of the early Arab nationalist writers who, in the late years of the 19th and in the first years of the 20th century, expressed their irritation at Turkish domination and their desire for a separate political identity.

In that movement Christian Arabs - doubtless influenced by their older and closer ties with currents of thought in Europe - took a leading part, and religious differences between Christians and Muslims did not appear to matter so much as common resentment at the forceful desire of the Young Turks to emphasise the "Turkishness" of the Ottoman empire. This pattern of common political attitude between educated Christian and Muslim Arabs was not to survive the aftermath of the First World War. ⁽⁴⁾

In 1920, Lebanon came under a French mandate which lasted for some twenty years and terminated officially in 1943. During this period several important developments took place:

First, in order to create "Greater Lebanon", the French extended the boundaries of the autonomous province founded in 1864 to include Sidon, Beirut, Tripoli, and Tyre (which is more than twice the size of the Mountain). In this manner the Sunni population was increased almost eight times, the Shi'as four times, while the Maronite population increased only by one third. ⁽⁵⁾

Second, a new factor appeared - regionalism. While the Maronites favored a French mandate, the population of the annexed areas, predominantly Muslim, were reluctant participants in the enlarged country, and favored inclusion in Syria. ⁽⁶⁾

Third, the French, in addition to reintroducing confessionalism into political life, also introduced for the first time, what is known as "feudality" into politics through the famous "list" system. In practice this resulted in the formation of lists centred around a strong clan leader, usually land owners. Thus was the new "feudality" established. ⁽⁷⁾

Fourth, this period saw an extensive spread of the French language and culture, particularly among Maronites and other Catholics. For instance Emile Edde (Iddah); a Maronite and three times President under the French mandate - publicly states during this period that Lebanon was a "Christian Island" in a Muslim sea, and that its culture was Western and French.

Finally, during this period "Phoenicianism" and "Mediterraneanism" came into some vogue, mostly among Christians. Both were encouraged and fostered by the French. The first states that the Lebanese are racially and culturally Phoenician in origin and different from the Arabs; the second, that the Lebanese belong to the same racial group that inhabits the Mediterranean basin, and that this culture is "Mediterranean" rather than Arab. ⁽⁸⁾

Nevertheless, it was during the mandate period that the institutional framework and certain fundamental traditions for an independent Lebanon were elaborated. The Constitution was enacted in 1926 and revised in 1934. It was written mainly by the Maronite Ideologue and businessman Michel Chiha, it provided for a republican presidential and (ultimately) unicameral system in which each community would enjoy representation according to its size. ⁽⁹⁾

After world war II Lebanon gained her independence but the past continues to form much of the future. Since then, Lebanese have had to meet the challenges of their past on their own, without the support of the Concert of Powers or of any one extended power, be it Ottoman, Egyptian, or European. The greatest challenge had become to maintain her sovereignty and her integrity both against others and within herself. Some factors evident in Lebanon's historical experience before independence have been favorable to integration, others unfavorable.

One factor for integration over the centuries has been a remarkable continuity in the complex of families that have led one sect or another and provided Lebanon with some of its major leaders. In some cases the descendants of yesterday's feudal chiefs are today's party leaders: the Joumblatts and the Arslans among the Druzes; the Shihabs, Khuris, and Iddis among the Maronites; the Sulhs and the Karamis among the Sunnites; the Ussayrans and the Assads among the Shi'ites. Lebanon is a small place, and these families have had long experience with each other and with the rules and practices that make coexistence possible. Conversely, one could argue that the persistence of such traditionalism among the Lebanese reveals an underlying inflexibility that can inhibit experimentation and the adoption of fresh approaches. ⁽¹⁰⁾

Providing for both stability and relative political immobility, on the other hand, has been the rule of the game, persisting through Lebanon's historical experience, that issues never be pushed to their extreme, that they be resolved through compromise and give and take. It was to preserve this balance that Lebanon has supported the Arab side in wars with Israel but in fact never seriously become engaged. It was because they accepted the rule of everything in moderation that Bishara Khuri and Riad Sulh were effective leaders, and it was because he was seen as violating this rule that Camille Chamoun brought grief to his nation in 1958. The civil strife of that year deserves special consideration because during it masks were removed and screens covering political realities in normal times were drawn back.

2- THE ARGUMENT AND COUNTER-ARGUMENT

Our aim in this section is to look at the argument considered in our question: i.e. whether the Lebanese Civil war of 1975 was the product of religion communities struggling for supremacy and / or better position in the state's political status. Hence in the first part, we will be discovering the different reasons that convinced some scholars to suggest that the struggle between Christians, mainly Maronites, and the others, mainly Muslims (Sunnis, Shi'is, and Druzes), is the main cause that led to the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war. In the second part, however, a critic - in terms of presenting the other argument (Counter - argument) that suggests a class struggle instead of religion confrontation. This necessity came out of the reality that religion, although it is considered as an important element, it is not the only one cause of the complex so called Lebanese civil war.

2.1- The Argument: religious minority not permitting the majority of the population a preponderant role in government.

From the very beginning it should be mentioned that the conflict in Lebanon is complex, multidimensional and therefore one that does not lend itself easily to a simple definition and motif. The first dimension in this conflict is essentially Lebanese involving a confrontation between Muslims and Christians that has been a feature of the politics of the modern state of Lebanon since its independence.

Although Lebanon shares many features with other Middle Eastern societies, it has several highly distinctive characteristics. With a population of over two million (not including those citizens residing abroad or 185,000 Palestinians and 450,000 other non-citizen residents), Lebanon is composed of a variety of minority groups, the most prominent being the Christians Maronites, Sunni Muslims, Shi'i Muslims, Druzes, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholics, and the Armenians. Other smaller groups include Protestants, Jews Syrian Catholics, Syrian Orthodox, Latins, Chaldeans, Turks, Kurds, Assyrians and Alauites.

Before World War I the politics of the Mountain was dominated by two groups, the Maronite Christians and the Druzes, with the Christians as a whole

constituted two-thirds of the total. After the creation of the state of Greater Lebanon (and the Republic of Lebanon in 1926) the numbers changed. Indeed the borders of the traditional Mount Lebanon was extended to include the Beqa Valley (with a large number of Shi'ite Muslims) and the sea coast cities of Tripoli, Beirut, Sidon and Tyre (primarily Sunni Muslim areas except for the Tyre region which is Shi'ite). These additions made the Christian - Muslim ratio much closer reducing the Christian majority to a small figure which was increasing by offset by the higher Muslim birth rate and greater Christian emigration. Whereas previously there were two major groups with one of them holding a clear majority, Greater Lebanon became a composite of several large religious communities (and several small ones), but with no one sect an absolute majority.⁽¹¹⁾

The exact number of each sect today is hotly disputed. Nevertheless the country has operated on the political fiction that the 1932 census taken by the French. The census established the following distribution: Maronite 30% Sunni 21% Shi'ite 18% Greek Orthodox 10% Greek Catholic 6% Druze 6,5% Armenians 4% Others 2%. Accordingly all Christians formed 52% and all Muslims 45,5%.⁽¹²⁾

It is widely believed that this census was the base of the National Covenant (al-mithak al-Watani), which tended to divide the political power between the various religious communities. Indeed the confessional political system of today's Lebanon is defined in the constitution according to the unwritten National Covenant of 1943. Constitutionally, Lebanon is a republic and a secular state. The head of the state is the president of the republic who is "elected by secret ballot and a two-thirds majority of the Chamber of Deputies" for a period of six years. The head of the government is the prime minister. "The President of the Republic shall appoint and dismiss ministers from among whom he shall designate a Prime Minister" who is subject to the approval of the Chamber of Deputies. Moreover, "Ministers may all or in part be selected from among the members of the Chamber or from persons outside the chamber". Members of the chamber of Deputies are elected directly by the people, according to the electoral laws of the country. The constitution seems to provide democracy in a

framework of secularization. The only religious provision in the constitution is that: "for the sake of justice and amity, the sects shall be equitably represented in public employment and in the composition of the ministry, provided such measures will not harm the general welfare of the state".⁽¹³⁾

However, to understand the actual function of the confessional political system, we must grasp the ethno - religious and historical determinants of the Lebanese situation. Behind the constitution, there is the unwritten agreement of the national pact. The aim of the pact (or Covenant) is to maintain societal stability and harmony through the ballance of confessional power.⁽¹⁴⁾ Ethno - religious (confessional) equilibrium is equated with proportional representation in the Chamber of Deputies and in government according to the populations of the various ethno - religious subcommunes. The original agreement, still in effect, provides a fixed ration: six Christians for every five Muslims. According to one interpretation (mostly Christian), a "fixed ration" is intended to be a permanent and unvarying relationship. However, one must interpret the pact in historical perspective. The intention of the pact was to promote an equitable balance among the various sects according to the proportions of communal population in 1943 - which happened to favor the Christian commune. After thirty years, however, there is strong evidence that the Muslim population is now a majority.⁽¹⁵⁾ Hence to keep the confessional system viable, the fixed ration must shift. To coin an oxymoron, the fixed ration is one variable that is responsible for the 1975 - 1976 crisis in Lebanon. In fact the Maronites opposed any attempt to change their privileged position.

The National Covenant embodies the politics of accomodation. The embodied politics are most obvious in the structure of the confessional decision-making body, wich resembles a mosaic design of diverse and conflicting communal interests. At the time of independence, the Christian commune was in the mojority and the Muslim commune in the minority, the fixed ration bieng 6 : 5. Within the Christian commune, the Maronites composed the largest sect (which is to say "subcommune"). Consequently, the president of Lebanon must be a Maronite Christian. Within the Muslim commune, the Sunnites made up the

largest group, so the premiership was allotted to a Sunnite Muslim. In numerical order of population, the third largest subcommune was the Shi'ites; thus the chair of the speaker of chamber of Deputies was assigned to Shi'ites. Nor did confessionalism stop there; the Ministry of Defence, for example, was allotted to the Druzes, and the Foreign Ministry to the Greek Orthodox.

Article 95 of the constitution also provides for "equitable" representation of the sects in public employment. This has meant that in recruitment for administrative, diplomatic, judicial, and military position, the sectarian factor had to be taken into consideration. On the ground the Christians were usually over-represented. For instance, the three largest Christian communities taken together constituted 46% of the total population but held 60,7% of the higher administrative and diplomatic posts in 1955, while the three Muslim communities together made up 44% of the population but held only 37,8% of the same positions. ⁽¹⁷⁾ The Shi'ia community is particularly slighted, a point to emphasis for the purpose of our argument.

It should be mentioned that the great imbalance of power between the position of President and that of Prime Minister on the one hand, and the President and the legislative Assembly on the other, has remained a source of friction and unrest in the politics of the country. This lack of balance has further encouraged the feeling of the Muslim communities that they are being treated politically as second - class citizens and it has strengthened their determination to alter, in a fundamental manner, the constitution of the state in which they live. At the roots of the civil war, then, the feeling that the political balance worked out in the 1930's is hopelessly out of date. No census has been taken in Lebanon but there is good reason to believe that large-scale emigration and a higher Muslim birthrate have produced a situation in which the Muslim community may well be larger than that of the combined Christian population. ⁽¹⁸⁾ Moreover, the largest single community may be that of Shi'ite Muslim and not that of the Maronite Christians. The demand for a transfer of political power is thus twofold: from the Christian to the Muslim community, and possibly within the Muslim community from the Sunnis to the Shi'ites. ⁽¹⁹⁾

In other word, while the break down of the Lebanese policy in 1975 - 76 could be traced to incompetent and venal political leaders, its roots were essentially systematic: that is, "the Lebanese confessional solution was no longer adequate to the loads and demands of the present situation" .⁽²⁰⁾ The Maronites in the meantime stood against any change. Hence, the civil war was inevitable since the two views were strong and opposite each other.

The change was raised by the avowedly anti-status quo radical and Pan-Arab (mainly Muslims) groups and organizations under the leadership of the Druze Kamal Jumblat. When Jumblat fastened on deconfessionalism as the main axis of attack for the National Movement, the Maronites could see nothing but a leftist - Muslim conspiracy to dislodge them from their position guaranteed under the 1943 National Covenant and reduce them to a Christian minority living on Muslim - Arab sufferance. the ghost of Coptification (reduction to the status of the powerless ancient Christian Coptic minority in overwhelmingly Muslim Egypt) seemed to be knocking at their front door.⁽²¹⁾

The reason why deconfessionalization had such sinister implications to the Maronites is not difficult to discern. When Jumblat and the National Movement spoke of deconfessionalism, they fundamentally meant political deconfessionalism, i.e., doing away altogether with the distribution of political power between the Christian and Muslim "confessions" or sects upon which the National Covenant of 1943 had been established. The National Covenant had not only divided parliamentary power among the sects but had done so according to a fixed 6:5 ratio between Christians and Muslims. The implicit Christian - Muslim understanding at the time of the National Covenant in 1943 (or such at least was the Maronite perception of it) was that this ration would not be tampered with by the Muslims. This symbolized as much as it guaranteed Christian predominance in the country in perpetuity irrespective of demographic realities, i.e., the current or future numerical strengths of the Christian and Muslim populations in Lebanon.⁽²²⁾

The Muslims made this concession at the time (if indeed they made it) in order to wean the Maronites from dependence on their traditional foreign pro-

tector, France, which had been in actual occupation of the country since the end of World War I. What Jamblat and the National Movement in effect were by 1975 civil war saying was that the Lebanese Muslims had meanwhile become such an overwhelming majority of the total population in comparison to the Christian Lebanese that the 6:5 ratio in favor of the Christians was obsolete and no longer tolerable. Jamblat and the National Movement appealed to the majoritarian principles: let political power in the country be distributed according to the demographic realities. Although no one knows, as indicated earlier, what these realities are (since no official census has been undertaken in the country since 1932, precisely because of its explosive political implications), a fair guess would be that the Muslim Lebanese are today in a 55:45 majority compared to the Christian Lebanese. ⁽²³⁾ The cry of political deconfessionalism raised by Jamblat and the National Movement was therefore seen by the Maronites as an attempt to establish Muslim majority rule, albeit under the guise of secularization, at the expense of the predominant Christian status guaranteed by the 1943 National Covenant. To put it another way, one could argue that the Lebanese civil war was caused by the fact that the Maronites were not prepared to permit the majority of the population a preponderant role in government.

To go further Halim Barakat noted that Lebanon, until the outbreak of violence in 1975, has continued to be characterized by the following dominant features:

A- There is lack of consensus on the national identity of Lebanon. The Lebanese have continued to be divided on the question of whether or not Lebanon constitutes a nation. Some, predominantly Christian Maronites, conceive of Lebanon as an independent, separate, sovereign, complete, and eternal entity. For them, however, Lebanon is a national home for the Christians in the sense that their loyalty is mostly to the area of Mount Lebanon and not to the rest of the country, and in the sense that they insist on the sectarian system that guarantees their dominance.

On the other hand, for a large number of Lebanese, particularly the Muslims, the present arrangement of Lebanon was imposed by French mandate in 1920. To them Lebanon is an integral part of the Arab nation. ⁽²⁴⁾

This would explain why the Maronites defend the status quo, while the Muslims are more inclined to the Left and prefer to transform the existing order or to replace it with another order.

B- There is a lack of extensive and open dialogue. Sensitive issues were purposely kept out of discussion even in times of elections. There is no self-criticism and self-examination. The Lebanese Maronite Christians in particular tended to accept the status quo and fight for it even at those times when they would privately admit some faults. The Lebanese Muslims tended to reject the status quo without much clarity as to their vision for the country and with little commitment to secularism. (25)

C- Lebanese religious communities live in isolated regions of their own, rendering the society a mosaic even in shape and form. Some district and many villages are exclusively inhabited by one religious community. Even where different religious groups live in the same city, town, or village, they tend to live in separate neighborhoods. (26)

In the best of times, these characteristics among others rend Lebanese society and dim the prospects for unity, let alone harmony, between the dominant groups. Hence, one could be safe to suggest and therefore to admit our conclusion mentioned earlier. The 1975 civil war was the result of religion conflict where the Maronites were not prepared to loose their dominance over the Lebanese political life, although they were no longer forming the majority they use to.

2.2-The Counter-Argument: A class struggle

To some the argument elaborated in the first part is not completely satisfactory. To them, the religious conflict might not be sufficient to bring about a civil war, other developments have coexisted and contributed in turn to violence encounters. The dynamics which led to the outbreak of violence in 1975 are seen in terms of class struggle rather than religious confrontation. One could equally argue that there is no official prove which indicates that the Muslims became the majority of the population.

According to Halim Barakat, Lebanese society is characterized by a pyramidal social class structure. The majority of the Lebanese are relatively poor, a smaller proportion are middle class, and very few are ultrarich. A government-sponsored study conducted by a French research team revealed that 9 percent of Lebanese families were miserably poor, another 41 percent poor, and an additional 32 percent earned moderate income. The rest were the "well-to-do", constituting 14 percent, and "the rich", 4 percent. ⁽²⁷⁾ The wealthiest 4 percent received 32 percent of the total gross national product of Lebanon, or more than the lower half of the population who received only 18 percent of the country's GNP. ⁽²⁸⁾

Lebanon has also been characterized by two poverty belts, one surrounding the country itself and one surrounding Beirut. They became increasingly a miniature of the country itself. The poverty belt surrounding the country included the southern region, the Akkar region of the north, and the Bekaa (the eastern part of the country). These impoverished areas surround the prosperous Christian Mount Lebanon. Poor educational opportunities, roads, and hospitals, and a lack of commercial and industrial enterprises and other facilities at least partly explain the huge rural-urban migration to form another poverty belt around the city. Several areas around Beirut such as Ghbeiri, ash-Shiyah, and an-Nu'ba have become overcrowded, poverty-stricken slums. Quite often one single room would house ten or more persons and swarms of children filled the narrow, dirty streets and alleys. ⁽²⁹⁾

The gap between the poverty belts and Mount Lebanon and other rich neighborhoods of Beirut has increased in the years before the civil war. For instance, the country's student enrollment in pre-university schools had been increasing at a yearly rate of 9.6 percent in elementary schools and 24 percent in secondary schools since the mid-fifties, but at different rates among districts. The rate of increase in Mount Lebanon had been 18 percent in elementary schools and 57 percent in secondary schools, while in the south the rate of increase had been 8 percent in elementary schools and 16 percent in secondary schools - Furthermore, the proportion of students in private schools increased between 1955 and 1968 in the Beirut district from 66 percent to 86 percent and

in Mount Lebanon from 58 percent to 78 percent, while in the other districts this proportion remained the same (about 4 percent). The gap is not just a question of quantity only, but of quality also. The proportion of students attending public schools has decreased in Mount Lebanon and increased in the other districts. The private schools are becoming extremely expensive and thus destined to serve only the well-to-do, while the lower classes can afford to send their children only to public schools. ⁽³⁰⁾

It should be indicated that in the liberal professions and on an employer - manager level, 73 percent were non-Muslims in 1962. David Gordon recorded that among a sample of more than 200 entrepreneurs studied by Yusif Sayigh, only one sixth were Muslims. The annual per capita income in 1960 in Beirut was 803; in the south it was 151. The Mountain, with 29 percent of the population, had 38,2 percent of all school; the south, with 19 percent of the population, had only 14,8 percent of the schools. Among the roughly forty villages in the predominantly Muslim Akkar (the far north) there was no doctor available for a population of about 200,000. The death rate in the "Belt of Poverty" around Beirut was two to three times the national average. ⁽³¹⁾ Between 1961 and 1964 salaries increased 47 percent, the cost of living 95 percent. An important source of this inflation, especially after 1973, when the price of oil quadrupled, was the oil money that flowed into the country, much of it invested ostentatiously in luxury villas and the like. As Michael Hudson put it, this wave of money induced "acute modernization" and increased social instability. ⁽³²⁾

What should be noted here is that the poverty areas were overwhelmingly inhabited by Muslims (and particularly Shi'ites), while Mount Lebanon is overwhelmingly inhabited by Christians. Thus social class and religion overlap, a situation which blurs the nature of the split in Lebanese society. What is seen by some as religious strife is seen by others as class struggle. The Muslims, and particularly the Shi'ites, suffer most acutely from poverty and low social and political status. Most significant position in the socio economic and political structures in Lebanon are occupied by, and in many instances reserved for, the Christians and particularly the Maronites. In this way the Lebanese religious communities and not just individuals become arranged into hierarchical, strati-

fied and privileged and deprived communities. Such splits were aggravated by the increasing inflation immediately prior to the civil war.

Taking into consideration this analysis one could conclude that it was the class struggle which explains the dynamics which led to the outbreak of violence in 1975. Hence, the explanation given earlier which suggests a religious confrontation is not satisfactory. The fact of the matter therefore is that the privileged were not ready to give up their privileges and share the wealth of the country with the rest.

3- Contributing Forces:

It is widely argued that there are several other forces that contributed in the outbreak of the civil war in 1975. These may be arranged as interior and exterior, regional and international. In all these explain the dynamics that led to the outbreak of the civil war in 1975. In presenting the contributing causes we do not however intend to go into their details. In the meantime, we believe that it is necessary to indicate them in this separate section since many would argue that the religious confrontation alone and the class struggle alone or even both of them might not have been sufficient to bring about a civil war. Indeed other dynamics have coexisted and contributed in turn to violent encounters.

3.1- Internal Contributing Forces:

Politically, the Republic of Lebanon has been the product of its long experience of multiethnic coexistence (when this worked), of particular institutions and traditions elaborated under the mandate system, and of an agreement, the National Covenant, couched inevitably in negative rather than positive terms. On the positive side, this legacy provided for freedom and for participation in the affairs of the state by all groups, although in a descending scale of effective power. On the negative side, the peculiar system of checks and balances explicit or implicit in the system has after made for immobilism, log-rolling, compromise where decisiveness is called off, the resort to wasta (special personal influence), and the inability of leaders to make forceful decisions without putting the whole structure at risk. As a result, the freedom the system has offered has depended on luck and good fortune to a large extent, on economic

prosperity, a favorable and calm international atmosphere, and the predisposition of stronger neighbours ⁽³³⁾ and the great powers to tolerate or to protect Lebanon.

Internally, the government of Lebanon has been kept weak by the primacy of primordial loyalties over loyalty to the state, of transnational loyalties and connections, of the easy resort to the use of pressure of the "street" (or the university campus), and of the resort of some, and then virtually all, groups to the recruitment and employment of extralegal militias. The system has sometimes been described as a government of men rather than of laws; often one heard, even before 1975, the lament "mafi dawla ::: mafi hukuma" there is no state, there is no government. ⁽³⁴⁾ In study on cabinet politics in Lebanon, Elie Salem pointed out that "the crisis more accurately the civil war...revealed beyond doubt that in the moment of truth local leaders and established families held greater control of their followers than did the central government. Each religious and ethnic group had its own pyramid of power and its own internal source of strength, and it is with these pyramids that the cabinet must deal and at times even negotiate. ⁽³⁵⁾ In 1969 Lebanon lived without government for seven months during which Lebanese would not have noticed the difference had they not been constantly reminded by the press that there was no government.

The weakness and corruption of the central government manifested itself in several aspects and areas of Lebanese daily life such as (1) protection of outlaws by political leaders, even by those who held official positions and responsibility; (2) settlement of feuds and conflicts (including those involving criminal and civil offences) without interference of court or central authorities; (3) smuggling by political elites or with their partnership. With full knowledge of authorities (at one time a secret airport for smuggling was uncovered); (4) widespread evasion of taxation was almost limited to salaries and custom duties (themselves often corrupt); (5) establishment of private militias; (6) direct interference by foreign powers and Lebanese internal affairs and free movement of foreign agents including those of Israel and other enemies of Arab countries; (7) lack of authority on the part of government to collect data or conduct census at private institutions, such as private schools refusing to give estimates of

the number of students and staff to the ministry of education; (8) difficulty of enforcing laws and imposing solutions even when solutions were reached.

In short, the Lebanese political system has been a unique form not of governing but of nongovernment. Several states existed within the state. The Palestinian armed presence was only one of several sovereignties within the state. The civil war of 1975 has proved that the central government has no role in times of crisis. With a strong central government, Lebanon could have been spared the bitter course of the civil war itself.

Another weakness in the Lebanese political system that contributed in the making of the civil war possible is that the political parties are religion based. In this sense, although a party might proclaim to be secularist, its adherents are exclusively from one single or another religious community. Indeed except for the Kata'ib, its Muslim counterpart the Najjadah (Helpers), the Armenian Tashnag, and one or two minor groups, most political parties in Lebanon have been loose coalitions gathered around powerful figure. The Za'ims. ⁽³⁶⁾

The Phalangist party, the Kata'ib found by Pierre Gemayel in 1936 was completely formed of Maronites. This party was established partly on the model of some European fascist groups of the period, in reaction to the Pan - Syrian PPS of Antun Saadah, which was considered a danger to Lebanese sovereignty, and to the demands of some Muslim leaders that parts of Greater Lebanon be reincorporated into Syria. The Kata'ib's goal was to organize and train resistance to any threat to the integrity and special personality of Lebanon. By the outbreak of the civil war, the party may have had a membership of 65,000, and it boasted a well-disciplined militia of some 10,000. In 1975 it took the lead in the civil war against both the Lebanese left and the Palestinians. ⁽³⁷⁾

An important and growing movement has been the Shi'ite Movement of the Deprived (founded in 1974) which had leftist tendencies and which, during the civil war, was allied with the Syrians. Its militia (all Shi'ites), al-Amal (hope), has become well-organized and armed and has played a considerable role in the Lebanese scene.

Arab socialist in orientation have been the local branches of the Ba'th parties, one aligned with Iraq, the other with Iraq's rival, Syria. Marxist in orientation have been the Organization of Communist Action under Muhsin Ibrahim; the pro-Soviet Lebanese Communist party, founded in 1930 and usually banned; and Kamal Joumblatt's Progressive Socialist party. On the eve of the Civil war of 1975, these various parties of the left were combined under the umbrella Front for Progressive Parties and National Forces (FPPNF) under the leadership of Joumblatt.

Our argument here is that the Progressive Socialist party was not really Marxist at all. Much of its membership-it claimed 6,800 members in 1959 - was made up of Druzes whose loyalty to Joumblatt was sectarian, not ideological. Indeed most of his followers supported him only because he was their leader "Za'im", not because they had dipped into the pages of Das Kapital. Another example is that of Antun Saadah, who attracted many Greek Orthodox to support the Syrian Socialist Nationalist party (PPS). An Arab professor once said in the 1950s that had Saadah's first name been Mohammed rather than Antun he might have dominated the Arab world north of Egypt.

3.2- External Contributing Forces:

It is perhaps clear from the foregoing that one cannot look exclusively or even mainly inside the Lebanese box for an explanation of the course of events leading to the Civil War. No such explanation could be satisfactory without taking into account the impact of the external political environment - and particularly its regional dimension - on the Lebanese scene. Internal and external factors each fed the other. Crucial to Lebanon's destiny were the roles played in her land by Syria, by Israel and by the Palestinian diaspora.

To the Syrians, as well as to many Lebanese Muslims who initially at least felt a greater identification with Syria than with Lebanon, Greater Lebanon was not a legitimate state Syria refused to recognize her sovereignty in any direct fashion; no. Syrian Embassy, for example, was set up in Beirut. Over the years the two "sister" states travelled along increasingly divergent paths. Tensions between the two were inevitable. Often Syria would close her borders to Lebanon's

transit trade, would denounce the use of Lebanon's free press by its enemies, and deplore the use made of Lebanon as an asylum by Syrian politicians driven from power. Lebanon was pictured in Syria as a Babylon of corruption and as a "tool" of Western imperialism. Cases of Syrian intrusion into Lebanon's life abound. In 1958 Syria gave considerable support to Chamoun's opponents; in 1963 Syrian agents crossed the border to blow up a clandestine Nasserite radio station; in 1965 and later commandos of the Syrian - supported Al-Sa'iqa, launched forays into Israel across Lebanon's borders or provided assistance to Palestinians in difficulties or open conflict with the Lebanese Army, particularly in 1969 and 1973. In 1969 Syria supported dissident elements in the Akkar. In Lebanese elections her support for one candidate or another was important among the Lebanese Muslims, and her support of Faranjiyya in 1970 was an important factor in his victory. And, of course, in 1976 it was to be the Syrian that brought the Civil War under at least temporary control. ⁽³⁹⁾

The transformation of the Palestinian community in Lebanon was another development with which the Lebanese system was incapable of coping. Following the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, more than 100,000 Palestinian refugees fled to Lebanon. For the most part, the Palestinian community in Lebanon caused little difficulty until the 1960's. The humiliation of the Arab armies after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war convinced the Palestinians that they had no one to rely on but themselves. ⁽⁴⁰⁾ This transformation of attitudes radically changed the Lebanese - Palestinian relationship. The Palestinians armed themselves and formed commandos groups. For many Lebanese, particularly the Christians, the Palestinians became overbearing. Armed Palestinians on the streets of Beirut became the symbol of Palestinian arrogance. The weak Lebanese government and undermanned army, itself made impotent by sectarian politics, were incapable of dealing with the Palestinian militants. The inability of the government to cope with the situation was underlined by a growing cycle of Palestinian attacks on Israel followed by Israeli retaliation on Lebanon. Because of the failure of the government to assert Lebanon's interests over those of the Palestinians, Lebanese rightists built or expanded their own militias. Of all the Lebanese parties, the Phalangists were most determined to provide sufficient military force to counter the

Palestinians. ⁽⁴¹⁾ After the Jordanian army crack down on the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1970, Lebanon had become the only Arab state in which the commandos could still organize and operate freely. Moreover, thousands of armed Palestinians fled from Jordan to the relative security of Lebanon. This influx of armed Palestinians further upsed the military and political balance in Lebanon. Palestinians commandos became intimately involved in Lebanese politics and fought for one faction against another. ⁽⁴²⁾ By 1970 Palestinian sources estimated that 240,000 people of Palestinian origine were living in Lebanon. The effect of the Palestinian presence in Lebanon over the outbreak of the Civil War was remarked in January 1978 by President Sarkis. "One of the bloodiest civil war had been fought, from April 1975 to November 1976 , partly over the fate and the future of the Palestinians in Lebanon". ⁽⁴³⁾

Another contributing cause was the canstant Israeli raids aimed, among other things, at driving a wedge between the Lebanese and Palestinians. These raids threatened the Lebanese economy, drove thousands of peasants from the south into the cities and particularly Beirut, embarrassed the Lebanese army and demonstrated its inability to defend the country and its citizens, and pushed the Palestinian resistance movement to fortify their camps. ⁽⁴⁴⁾ These raids also strengthened the left, encouraged many Muslims to increase their identification with the Palestinians while, among many Maronites, the effect was to deepen the gulf between the Palestinians and themselves. Once the civil war started, Israel began directly to support the rightists and helped to keep the war going.

A related to this situation was the search for a peaceful solution to the Arab-Israeli Conflict. The Lebanese rightists, who have been anxiously hoping for a peaceful settlement, received support and encouragement from Israel. Israel was particularly involved and worked hard to sustain the civil war which served to (1) decimate the Palestinian resistance; (2) distract and divide the Arab countries; (3) strengthen its grip over newly occupied Arab lands; (4) end Israel's isolation (5) destroy the notion of establishing secular - democratic - pluralistic states; (6) prevent leftist victories; and (7) promote the establishment of other religious homelands in the area. ⁽⁴⁵⁾

CONCLUSION:

There are a number of question that one might ask regarding the Lebanese Civil War, even if answers to them can be only tentative or speculative. Was the Lebanese system bound to collapse? Was the collapse fundamentally a result of ethnicity? Religion? Class? Or was it of foreign and extrinsic provenance?

Prior to the civil war, scholars held two opinions as to the nature of the country's social and political system. The first was that of the optimists. They praised Lebanon as a country in which different religious groups had worked out a system of "ballanced confessionalist that apportioned political power fairly, protected freedom of the press, speech, and assembly, and povided Lebanese with a high standard of living through a free enterprise economy. The second position regarding Lebanon was held by the pessimists. They described Lebanon as a "precarious republic", an "improbable nation", and a "mosaic society" that was sorely fragmented by religious division and social classes. At best, the political system was simply a mechanism for maintaining truces among mutually hostile groups. The civil war has demonstrated that the pessimists were correct.

Several reasons may be advanced for the collapse of 1975. First, Lebanon had failed to develop an inner nucleus of sufficient extent to hold in orbit incompatible contending ideological and sectarian interests and ideals. Second, because of the absence of an inner core, extrinsic factors beyond Lebanon's own control, such as world inflation and rivalries between the powers, between Israel and the Arabs, and between Arab states, made Lebanon more than normally vulnerable. This had been the situation when external powers encouraged internal divisions by setting one faction against the other and so helped to produce collapse.

But even should this international problem ever be resolved, this will be only a condition for the solution of Lebanon's own problems, not in itself a resolution of them. The Lebanese themselves need to confront and to answer the question of what the intrinsic reasons were for the collapse of 1975 - and not as some are prone to do, to simply take the facile approach of blaming others ex-

clusively for their woes. Extrinsic reasons, to be sure, are of crucial importance, and lack has been unkind to Lebanon, but others have overcome extreme adversity, and no nation can hope to survive on international sympathy alone.

Clearly, economic, social, and ethnic factors have all played an important role in preventing Lebanon from becoming a viable and cohesive national entity. In a way, the argument as to whether the primordial or the class identification is the crucial factor smacks of the chicken and the egg. Each has reinforced the other. Indeed most writers agree that the Civil War was the result of a combination of factors, some social, others religious and ethnic. This is even true of Halim Barakat's semi-Marxist analysis, although he does try to keep his interpretation as wholly "Social" as possible by dismissing the support of the poorer Maronites to the Loyalist cause as a case of "false consciousness". It should be mentioned, too, that the Palestinian presence played a crucial role in producing the Civil War.

One interpretation of the Civil War that remains to be considered is that the war was stagemanaged, a result of one plot or another. One version of this plot theory is that the Civil War was orchestrated by the ultras in league with the United States - through the CIA, of course - and Israel, to crush the PLO once and for all and in the process neutralize the Lebanese left. Another version of the plot theory, one held by some ultras, is that the war was orchestrated by the left in Alliance with the Palestinians and supported by radical states such as Iraq, Libya, and Syria, with the Soviet Union's blessing, to seize power in Lebanon, destroy Lebanon as a system, use it as a base against Israel, and eliminate the U.S. presence in the area.

At the risk of repetition we conclude by arguing that the statement emphasizing that "the Lebanese civil war was caused by a religious minority not being prepared to permit the majority of the population a preponderant role in government" is not a complete satisfactory explanation of the dynamics which led to the outbreak of violence in 1975. In fact it explains a part of the causes but with other several forces which together contributed in the making of a ferocious dirty civil war.

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SYRIA UNDER THE FRENCH MANDATE: PART II

True Stakes and False Motives

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1920 is referred to in Arab annals as the " Year of the Disaster " (Am al-Nakba). This year had seen the uprising of the Arabs in Syria and their defeat by Gouraud [similarly] the occupation of Palestine and Iraq by Great Britain .

The question of the Mandate, as we have seen, was settled at the San Remo Conference on the 24th of April 1920. The map was drawn delimiting the spheres of influence for each of the powers in a joint Franco-British agreement. Some further territorial adjustments were made on April 1, 1924. It is to be mentioned also that the Supreme Council of the League of Nations approved the decisions of the San Remo Conference on July 21, 1922, within which Great Britain and France were predominant .

From the very beginning France sought to establish in Syria a political machinery for complete French control in all areas. France's policy in Syria was based on the old imperialistic rule "divide et impera" . In general the history of the French Mandate in Syria falls into three parts : the first from 1920 to 1926, the second from 1926 to 1936, and the third from 1936 to 1946. We shall examine each of these periods separately .

The First Period : 1920 - 1926

These years are referred to in the annals of history as the " period of military dictatorships". During this period three generals held office as high-commissioners exercising their power under martial law. The result was the 1925 Revolt that broke out in Jabal Al-Druz. This uprising, which many people prefer to call a revolution, started as a demonstration against the local governor