

# A Dangerous Sideshow

*The US and the Lebanese Civil War*

*1975-1976*

Geir Bergersen Huse



Master's Thesis in History

Department of Archaeology, Conservation, and History (IAKH)

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

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The phrase “a dangerous sideshow” is taken from: Gerges, Fawaz A. ”Lebanon” in: Sayigh, Yezid and Shlaim, Avi (eds.). *The Cold War and the Middle East*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997: 94

<http://www.duo.uio.no>

## **Preface**

The process of writing this thesis has been rewarding and educational, even if it has been painful at times. I have learned a lot about Lebanon, the US and myself. Most of all, the process has been fun.

I would like to thank numerous people, though I will probably forget to mention even half of them. Firstly, I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Hilde Henriksen Waage. She has helped me more than anyone, with her seemingly endless knowledge and capacity. Hilde is also one of the most patient, supportive and hard working people I have ever met.

I would like to thank Sarah, who shown remarkable patience and has given me unconditional support. Speaking of unconditional, I would like to thank my family as well. Especially my mother and father, whose emotional and financial support I will be hard pressed to return. Great thanks go to Mocca and the rest of the Forsudd family. I would like to thank all my friends, who must have forgotten what I look like by now.

Amy and Lars have been of immense help, sacrificing their own spare time to read, reread and proofread. Their feedback has been invaluable. Thanks to Madelen and Sarah, who also volunteered to read. The other students at Hilde's seminars have also provided much appreciated insights and contributions. I am forever grateful to all my fellow history students. You made these past years memorable, not to mention lots of fun.

I would like to think the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library in Ann Arbor and everyone there. The staff was fantastic, guiding me through the immense jungle of sources. I am immensely grateful to Alice, who was great company and gave me a place to stay during my weeks in Ann Arbor. My thanks go out to Annie and RJ, who also stayed at Alice's. Alice and RJ were the best friends anyone could ask for and treated me like we had known each other forever. They showed me around Ann Arbor, took me to Detroit and taught me to appreciate American football. I hope I will get a chance to return to Ann Arbor one day.

Lastly, I would like to thank the US Border Agent who let me into the US. When I told him why was going to Ann Arbor, he almost denied me entry. He could not comprehend why anyone would want to study Gerald R. Ford.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

The Lebanese civil war of 1975-1990 had roots in centuries of sectarian rivalries and decades of social and political inequality. The financial and political inequality led to increased sectarian enmity and unrest. The sectarian and social tensions were amplified by increasing numbers of Palestinian refugees and guerrillas. The enmity between the affluent, conservatives and Christians on the one hand, and the poor, leftists, Muslims and Palestinians on the other escalated into civil war in April 1975. After a year of fighting, the leftist-Palestinian militias were nearing a military victory over the Christian militias.<sup>1</sup>

The first phase of the civil war was brought to an end between June and November 1976, when Syria intervened militarily to save the Christians. Syria wanted to control Lebanon for geopolitical and traditional reasons. Lebanon was a part of historical Syria, from a Syrian point of view. The administration of US President Gerald Ford learned that Syria had plans to intervene in March 1976. The US was afraid that Israel might counter-intervene, turning the civil war into a regional war. Such a war would sabotage the contemporary US initiatives in the Middle East, led by Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. Israel did not counter-intervene, at least not at the time. Israel first intervened in Lebanon in 1978.<sup>2</sup>

What were the US policies toward the Lebanese civil war in from 1975 until the Syrian intervention on June 1, 1976? Why was the US so eager to stay on the outside? Why did the

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<sup>1</sup> Cleveland, William L. and Bunton, Martin. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. Fourth edition. Westview Press, Philadelphia, PA, 2009: 217-20, 225-30, 382-5; Hirst, David. *Beware of small states. Lebanon, Battleground of the Middle East*. Nation Books, New York, NY, 2010: 11-13, 81-94, 99-111; Khalidi, Walid. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon: Confrontation in the Middle East*. Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, 1979: 37-8, 40-2, 53-8, 58-65; Khazen, Farid El. *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon, 1967-1976*. I.B. Tauris Publishers, London, 2000: 38-40, 106-8; Kimmerling, Baruch and Migdal, Joel S. *The Palestinian People. A History*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 2003: 264-272; O'Ballance, Edgar. *Civil War in Lebanon, 1975-92*. MacMillian Press Ltd, Basingstoke, 1998: vii-viii, 5; Rogan, Eugene. *The Arabs. A History*. 2011: 264-274, 303-4, 477-8, 478-80; Traboulsi, Fawwaz. *A History of Modern Lebanon*. Pluto Press, London and Ann Arbor, MI, 2007: 105-9, 156-83, 194, 206; Waage, Hilde Henriksen. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. Cappelen Damm Akademisk, Kristiansand, 2012: 217-20, 224-31; Yapp, M. E. *The Near East Since the First World War. A History to 1995*. 1996: 107, 268-70

<sup>2</sup> Cleveland and Bunton. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. 2009: 385-7; Hirst. *Beware of the Small States*. 2010: 112-15; Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 58-65; Khazen. *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 340-2, 345-9; Kissinger, Henry. *Years of Renewal*. Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, New York, NY, 1999: 1039-51; Rogan. *The Arabs*. 2011: 484-6; Gerges, Fawaz A. "Lebanon" in: Sayigh, Yezid and Shlaim, Avi (eds.). *The Cold War and the Middle East*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1997: 93-5; Shlaim, Avi. *The Iron Wall. Israel and the Arab World*. Penguin Books, London, 2000: 340-7; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*. 2007: 199-201; Waage. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. 2013: 230-4; Yapp. *The Near East Since the First World War*. 1996: 270-2

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Americans wait so long, and why did they do so little? And last, how important was the US effort in preventing an Israeli counter-intervention?

### The Making of US Policy Toward the Middle East

To understand how the US approached the Lebanese civil war, it is important to look at how US policy has been formed towards the broader Middle East.

US Middle East policy was – and still is – a struggle between foreign interest and domestic pressure, which the principal foreign policymakers attempt to balance.<sup>3</sup> These policymakers are usually the President, the Secretary of State and a handful of key advisors. These advisors are mainly connected to the President in the White House or the State Department. The White House advisors include the National Security Council, which Kissinger led from 1969-1975. The advisors in the State Department are made up of both elected officials and civil servants. Additionally there is the Director of Central Intelligence, head of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the Defense Department. In special emergencies Kissinger would gather representatives from all of these groups in a *Washington Special Actions Group* to discuss US policy. The influence of foreign interests, domestic pressure and individual policymakers are discussed below; with emphasis on the Cold War and the Ford administration.<sup>4</sup>

### US Interests in the Middle East

American post-war foreign policy has been dominated by realism, a theory of international relations. From the realist perspective the world is in a state of anarchy, where states struggle for power. The state must ensure its own security. The self-preservation of the state has preeminence over other foreign policy priorities, such as moral considerations. The state makes rational assessments of its international interests and threats, and forges policy based on these assessments.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Quandt, William B. *Peace Process. American Foreign Policy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict Since 1967*. Brookings Institution Press, Washington D.C., University of California Press, California, 2005: 7-11; Shannon, Vaughn P. *Balancing Act. US Foreign Policy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*. Ashgate, Burlington VT, 2001: 3-4

<sup>4</sup> Dallek, Robert. *Nixon and Kissinger. Partners in Power*. Penguin Books, London, 2007: 84-85; Hanhimäki, Jussi. *The Flawed Architect. Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy*. Oxford University Press, New York, NY, 2004: 24

<sup>5</sup> Dunne, Tim and Brian C. Schmidt. "Realism" in Baylis, John, Steve Smith and Patricia Owens (eds.) *The Globalization of World Politics. An introduction to international relations*. Fourth edition. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2008: 92-5; Hook, Steven W. *U.S. Foreign Policy. The Paradox of World Power*. Third edition CQ Press, Washington, 2011: 70-71; Shannon. *Balancing Act*. 2001: 4

In the Cold War era the US had three primary interests in the Middle East: Limiting Soviet influence, securing access to Arab oil and supporting Israel.<sup>6</sup>

The US adopted a policy of *containment* toward the Soviet Union, to prevent Moscow from expanding its influence throughout the world. Washington actively avoided direct military conflict with Moscow. During the 1960s the US grew more reluctant to military intervention in the Middle East. The concern was that a US move would be matched by the Soviet Union. The strategic implementation of containment has varied greatly, but the basic policy remained unchanged throughout the Cold War.<sup>7</sup>

The principal material interest in the Middle East was securing access to inexpensive Arab oil to the US and its Western Allies. The US grew increasingly dependent on Arab oil in the 1970s. It was in US interest to maintain a stable Middle East, secure a steady supply of oil. Access to Arab oil was perfectly compatible with limiting Soviet influence. The principal oil producer in the region was anti-communist Saudi Arabia.<sup>8</sup>

Israel-US relations were strengthened during the presidencies of Ford's predecessors John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson and Richard M. Nixon, marked by increased economic and military support. There were already domestic reasons for supporting Israel, as will be presented below. Additionally, Nixon and Kissinger came to see Israel as an intrinsic part of containment.<sup>9</sup>

A key feature of US Middle East policy throughout the Cold War is *globalism*, and its preeminence over *regionalism*. Globalists, largely represented by politicians, perceived the world as a Cold War struggle between Moscow and Washington. Regionalists, largely represented by experts in the State Department, saw the Middle East as region with causes and actors separate from the Cold War.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Quandt. *Peace Process*. 2005: 11

<sup>7</sup> Quandt. *Peace Process*. 2005: 11-12; Shannon. *Balancing Act*. 2001: 4

<sup>8</sup> Karsh, Efraim. "Israel" in: Sayigh and Shlaim (eds.). *The Cold War and the Middle East*. 1997: 165; Quandt. *Peace Process*. 2005: 12-13; Shannon. *Balancing Act*. 2001: 4-5, 9-10

<sup>9</sup> Karsh. "Israel." 1997: 163-6; Quandt. *Peace Process*. 2005: 13-14

<sup>10</sup> Christison, Kathleen. *Perceptions of Palestine. Their Influence on U.S. Middle East Policy*. University of California Press, California, 1999: 125-9; Spiegel, Steven L. *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict. Making America's Middle East Policy, from Truman to Reagan*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1985: 4

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### Domestic Pressure and Foreign Policy

US foreign policy has also been shaped by domestic pressure. A largely pro-Israeli population and powerful pro-Israeli lobbies has dominated the domestic pressure on US Middle East policy, and still does. The lobbies directly affect the US Congress, while the popular opinion makes for electoral considerations. Their impact stems from a pro-Israeli consensus in the American population and media, as well as networking contacts and funds.<sup>11</sup>

The US population perception of the Middle East has generally followed Israel's perspective on the Arab-Israeli conflict. This is derived from a sense of political and religious identification, amplified by the atrocities of the Holocaust. From an American perspective Israel is a Western democracy surrounded by dictatorships. Unlike European democracies, Israel and the US have a shared identity as pioneers. The religious identification stems from the Bible and the Torah's common roots.<sup>12</sup> Many Christians also support Israel with reference to the Bible: According to the Bible, the Jews' return to Palestine is a prerequisite to the Second Coming of Christ.<sup>13</sup>

The Israel-centered perspective is present in American policymakers, who represent the public.<sup>14</sup> The policymakers' perspectives on the Middle East form their assumptions about the region, and thus the shaping US foreign policy.<sup>15</sup> US foreign policymakers have a vast supply of academics specializing in Middle East and other regions, especially in the State Department. These experts rarely influence decision-making in foreign policy. Assistant Secretary of State for Intelligence and Research from 1975-1978 Harold Saunders remarked that policymakers, notably Kissinger, often acted on their assumptions and instincts. Facts and perspectives supplied by experts that do not fit their perceptions are disregarded.<sup>16</sup>

Electoral considerations also play a role in policy making. Jews make up only a few per cent of the US population. However, most of the Jewish population has traditionally lived in swing states, states that are especially important to the outcome of the Presidential Election. Still, the most influential pro-Israeli group in a US election is not the American Jewry, but rather

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<sup>11</sup> Shannon. *Balancing Act*. 2001: 5-8

<sup>12</sup> Christison. *Perceptions of Palestine*. 1999: 2-3; Quandt. *Peace Process*. 2005: 13

<sup>13</sup> Mearsheimer, John J., Walt, Stephen M. *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*. Penguin Books, London, 2007: 133

<sup>14</sup> Christison. *Perceptions of Palestine*. 1999: 11-12

<sup>15</sup> Christison. *Perceptions of Palestine*. 1999: 9-10

<sup>16</sup> Christison. *Perceptions of Palestine*. 1999: 9-13

Conservative Christians. Arab lobbies and voters do not make up any comparable pressure or electoral group.<sup>17</sup>

Between popular opinion, media and pro-Israeli lobbies, the members of the US Congress have strong incentives to support Israel. The incentive to oppose a president that criticizes or pressures Israel is even stronger – especially for a Member of Congress who opposes the president. The president wields executive power, but Congress might restrain or pressure the president in the shaping of Middle East policy. A US initiative that pressures Israel is likely to meet strong opposition from the US Congress. Congress will pass legislations and resolutions or block presidential bills in order to keep the executive branch aligned with Israel. Generally, there has been political benefit in a pro-Israeli stance, for congressmen and presidents alike.<sup>18</sup>

The domestic and popular reasons for supporting Israel were not always compatible with the strategic aim of access to Arab oil. This has created a general discrepancy between the elected officials in Congress and the civil servants in the State Department. The former have generally leaned toward an Israeli perspective, while the latter have generally been more sensitive to the Arab states' point of view. Developing policies that would achieve both of these goals were left to the individual administrations.<sup>19</sup>

### **The Individuals: Ford and Kissinger**

US Middle East policy is shaped by the chief foreign policymakers in an administration. These policymakers are usually the President, the Secretary of State and some key advisors. A new presidential administration is bombarded with numerous arguments from lobbies, Congress and the State Department who attempt to guide the policymakers through the Middle East. Faced with this “mountain of “facts”” policymakers simplify and generalize in order to develop a Middle East policy.<sup>20</sup>

Overarching foreign interests and domestic pressure made up the general guidelines for Middle East policy during the Cold War. Still, there was room for personality and creativity.

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<sup>17</sup> Shannon. *Balancing Act*. 2001: 6-8

<sup>18</sup> Shannon. *Balancing Act*. 2001: 5-6, 9

<sup>19</sup> Quandt. *Peace Process*. 2005: 12-13; Shannon. *Balancing Act*. 2001: 4-5, 9-10

<sup>20</sup> Quandt. *Peace Process*. 2005: 9

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The individual policymaker's beliefs, values, experiences and background might lead to innovative assessments and strategies.<sup>21</sup>

US administrations would assess US foreign policy interests at the beginning of the tenure.<sup>22</sup>

Altered perceptions at the start of the presidential period were likely to abate over time.<sup>23</sup>

The globalist-regionalist struggle had its heyday when US foreign policy was a struggle between President Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger in the White House and Secretary of State William Rogers at Foggy Bottom. The struggle was toned down as Kissinger replaced Rogers in September 1973.<sup>24</sup>

The perceptions of the president and his closest circle of foreign policy advisers is an important party in the way each administration tackles the Middle East.<sup>25</sup> In 1975-1976 Kissinger was the most defining figure in US foreign policy, due to Ford's lack of foreign expertise. Ford had decades of political experience from the House of Representatives, but had virtually no experience with foreign policy. He had only been Vice President for eight months when the Watergate scandal forced Nixon to resign. Ford had full confidence in Kissinger's abilities and judgment. In the words of Jussi Hanhimäki, Professor of International History, "Ford was convinced that Kissinger was a genius."<sup>26</sup>

Kissinger grew up as a Jew in Nazi Germany. Kissinger fled Germany in 1938, but lost several family members to the Holocaust. He returned to Germany as a part of the US Army. In the US, Kissinger had studied International Relations. Kissinger belonged to the realist and globalist tradition of International Relations and held a professorate at Harvard University before entering office in 1969, first as National Security Advisor, then as Secretary of State from 1973.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Shannon. *Balancing Act*. 2001: 8

<sup>22</sup> Christison. *Perceptions of Palestine*. 1999: 10

<sup>23</sup> Quandt. *Peace Process*. 2005: 9

<sup>24</sup> Christison. *Perceptions of Palestine*. 1999: 10, 125-9; Yaqub, Salim. "The Weight of Conquest: Henry Kissinger and the Arab-Israeli Conflict." in Logevall, Fredrik and Andrew Preston (eds.) 2008. *Nixon in the World. American Foreign Relations, 1969-1977*. Oxford University Press, New York, 2008: 227-8

<sup>25</sup> Quandt. *Peace Process*. 2005: 9

<sup>26</sup> Hanhimäki. *The Flawed Architect*. 2004: 362-3. For Hanhimäki, see: [http://graduateinstitute.ch/directory/\\_people/hanhimaki](http://graduateinstitute.ch/directory/_people/hanhimaki), visited on November 10, 2014

<sup>27</sup> Christison. *Perceptions of Palestine*. 1999: 10; Dallek. *Nixon and Kissinger*. 2007: 79-82, 432-3; Hanhimäki. *The Flawed Architect*. 2004: xix, 2-6, 30-1

As a statesman Kissinger was secretive and manipulative. He preferred covert action, inspired by the 19<sup>th</sup> century politics on which he had written his doctorate. At one point Kissinger's machinations and paranoia made President Nixon consider firing him, wondering if "Henry needed psychiatric care."<sup>28</sup> Despite his clandestine traits, Kissinger was a successful negotiator, a trait that proved beneficial in the Arab-Israeli talks from 1974 to 1975. Despite his popularity, he had a disdain for domestic politics.<sup>29</sup>

Kissinger was firmly rooted in realism and globalism: His primary policy goal was to increase the US' power at the expense of the Soviet Union. Kissinger's Middle East strategy was to strengthen the US' allies, while thwarting Soviet allies and initiatives. Whether a certain decision was beneficial to US interest in itself was subordinate. Soviet initiative with merit should be sabotaged, as the overriding perspective was the Cold War power struggle.<sup>30</sup>

The most prominent example of Kissinger's globalist approach to the Middle East is the Egyptian-Israeli disengagement agreement of January 1974. The agreement relieved international pressure on Israel to withdraw from occupied territory, without great concessions from Israel. The agreement also strengthened Egypt-US relations, at the expense of Soviet influence.<sup>31</sup>

### Primary Sources

The *Gerald Ford Presidential Library* is located on a campus belonging to the University of Michigan, in Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA. The library holds millions of written documents, including foreign relations sources. The library has provided this thesis with some 9000 pages. Most of these are telegrams, or cables, between the State Department in Washington D.C. and US embassies in the Middle East. Most of the cables related to Lebanon went to and from the Beirut, Damascus and Tel Aviv embassies. The rest of the cables are communication between the State Department and the US delegations in Amman, Cairo and Jeddah (Jidda).

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<sup>28</sup> Hanhimäki. *The Flawed Architect*. 2004: 8

<sup>29</sup> Hanhimäki. *The Flawed Architect*. 2004: xiv-xv, 7, 187-8

<sup>30</sup> Christison. *Perceptions of Palestine*. 1999: 125-9; Hanhimäki. *The Flawed Architect*. 2004: 30-1; Spiegel. *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict*. 1985: 4

<sup>31</sup> Yaqub. "The Weight of Conquest" 2008: 227-8

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The Beirut cables describe the situation in Lebanon, meetings and interviews with Lebanese actors and assessments of the situation and Middle East actors. The Damascus cables are largely concerned with Syrian leaders and their reactions to the situation in Lebanon.

The Tel Aviv cables concern Israeli reactions, but are less detailed and comprehensive than their Syrian counterparts. The US would have had several channels of communication to Israel and thus be less dependent on the embassy. Kissinger had frequent contact with Israel's ambassador to the US, Simcha Dinitz.

The Amman cables include contact with the Jordanian leadership, who sometimes worked as an intermediary between Syria and the US. The Egyptian and Saudi cables are mostly contact with the leaderships.

The cables make up the most abundant sources, but also the least informative. Most of the cables go to the State Department. A cable from Beirut tells nothing of how they were received in Washington. The cables that were sent from Washington are more informative. Even cables with direct instructions from the State Department only reveals fragments of US policy. However, large numbers of cables might indicate the strategies US policymakers employed.

Among the presidential library sources are also several memoranda, talking points for meetings, contingency papers etc. It is not always self-evident what the policymakers made of this information or who even saw them. It can be equally difficult to discern which policymaker requested the papers and for what purpose. Combined, these cables, memoranda etc. help give a comprehensive picture of Washington's foreign policy.

The archives of the State Department in Maryland might also have contributed valuable information. The Ford library was chosen over the National Archives for several reasons: Firstly, the principal executive power was the president, not the State Department. Secondly, the National Archives are digitalized to a greater extent than the Ford sources. These online sources, *The National Archives, Access to Archival Databases* have supplied the Ford-



sources. There is a great deal of overlap between the two archives. There is not apparent consistence in why two similar documents are available in one archive or another.<sup>32</sup>

More concrete information is found in memoranda of conversations, so called memcons. The memcons of the Ford library are largely digitalized and have been obtained online. The *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)* also provided valuable memcons.

*The Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library Digital Collections* has mostly supplied the thesis with memcons. Memcons are transcripts or summaries from meetings. The level of detail varies greatly. There is no way of determining what might have been omitted, simplified or misunderstood. Still, these documents provide valuable information. In meetings among US policymakers the conversation is informal and direct, as opposed to the diplomatic and often vague language used in cables. In meetings with foreign officials the conversation is more formal or even deceptive, but still more direct than written communication.<sup>33</sup>

The *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)* collection on the Ford administration has been accessed online.<sup>34</sup> The volume of the Ford FRUS that have been most valuable to this thesis has been volume 26, “Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1974–1976”.<sup>35</sup> Chapter five of volume 26 focuses on the Lebanese civil war.<sup>36</sup> All the documents within this chapter are memcons, largely from the spring of 1976.

### Literature

The secondary sources used for this thesis can be roughly divided into two groups: Those on Lebanon and those on US foreign policy. The literature on Lebanon includes books on Lebanon’s history and works that focus on the civil war period. The latter provide the bulk of the material for this thesis, supported by the former. Most literature includes the entire civil war (1975-1990) or later periods of the war.

*The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon* by Farid el Khazen is the most detailed book on the 1975-1976 phase of the Lebanese civil war and its causes.<sup>37</sup> Khazen provides an in-depth

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<sup>32</sup> <http://aad.archives.gov/>, visited on October 11, 2014

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/docs.asp>, visited on October 11, 2014

<sup>34</sup> <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/nixon-ford>, visited on October 11, 2014

<sup>35</sup> <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v26>, visited on October 11, 2014

<sup>36</sup> <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v26/ch5>, visited on October 11, 2014

<sup>37</sup> Khazen, Farid el. *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon. 1967-1976*. I.B. Tauris Publishers, London, 2000

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analysis of the socio-economic and sectarian disputes that dominated the pre-war years and the civil war itself. Khazen devotes much attention to the Palestinian guerrillas and how their presence and armed struggle affected Lebanon. Khazen's sources include Lebanese media, interviews with and testimonies of principal Lebanese actors, official data and unpublished documents regarding the Lebanese and Palestinian groups.<sup>38</sup>

While Khazen provides a Lebanese perspective, a Palestinian point of view is provided by *Armed Struggle and the Search for State* by Yezid Sayigh.<sup>39</sup> Sayigh's timespan and focus is not centered on the Lebanese civil war. Still, hundreds of pages of the massive book cover the PLO's presence in Lebanon. Like Khazen, Sayigh has a greater level of detail than most books on the subject. Sayigh's sources include interviews with numerous Palestinians leaders. Sayigh has also seen the Palestinian resistance movement from the inside, as a part of the Palestinian delegation in the period surrounding the 1993 Oslo Accords.<sup>40</sup> Sayigh has had unique access to several Palestinian guerrilla archives, as well as personal insights to several PLO officials.<sup>41</sup> Sayigh's occasionally even refers to secret US documents that are still classified in 2014.<sup>42</sup> Sayigh thanks Professor Fawwaz Traboulsi at the Center for Arab and Middle Eastern Studies at the American University of Beirut for the sources. It is not clear how Traboulsi has obtained these sources.<sup>43</sup>

Both Khazen and Sayigh mention the US involvement in the 1975-1976 period of the civil war. The sections on the US resemble conclusive summaries, compared to the in-depth analysis that otherwise characterize their works.

None of the works are dedicated to the Ford administration's policy toward the Lebanese civil war. The different works illuminate different parts of US foreign policy. The literature can be divided on two levels. On the first level: Some works cover the foreign policy of several administrations, while others focus on specific administrations or policymakers. On the second level: Some works cover foreign policy in general, while others focus on the Middle East.

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<sup>38</sup> Khazen. *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: Unpaginated, "Preface" and "Acknowledgements"

<sup>39</sup> Sayigh, Yezid. *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*. The Palestinian National Movement, 1949-1993. Oxford University Press

<sup>40</sup> <http://carnegieendowment.org/experts/?fa=412>, visited on October 12, 2014

<sup>41</sup> Sayigh. *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*. 1997: xviii-xxiv

<sup>42</sup> For an example, see: Sayigh. *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*. 1997: 779, notes 76 and 77.

<sup>43</sup> [http://www.aub.edu.lb/fas/comes/faculty\\_staff/Pages/faculty\\_staff.aspx](http://www.aub.edu.lb/fas/comes/faculty_staff/Pages/faculty_staff.aspx), visited on November 10, 2014

*The Flawed Architect* by Jussi Hanhimäki is a comprehensive study of Kissinger as a statesman during the presidencies of Richard Nixon and Ford.<sup>44</sup> The Lebanese civil war is only briefly mentioned, as is the case with most works concerning Ford and Kissinger. However, Hanhimäki supplies an understanding of the inner workings of US policymaking under Kissinger.

Several books cover the US and the Middle East. However, they do not focus on the Nixon-Ford administrations specifically. These give valuable insight to the general development of the US' Middle East policy. All the literature on US foreign policy touch upon the Nixon-Ford administrations' major Middle East efforts; the bilateral Arab-Israeli agreements of 1974 and 1975. These Middle East efforts provide the backdrop and framework for how the administration tackled the Lebanese civil war.

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<sup>44</sup> Hanhimäki, Jussi. *The Flawed Architect. Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy*. Oxford University Press, New York, NY, 2004



## Chapter 2: Origins of the Lebanese Civil War

“Nobody wins civil wars. The losers lose, the winners lose”<sup>45</sup>

Lebanon is a bountiful country, largely separated from the rest of the Middle East by mountains. Throughout history present day Lebanon has been home to several of small or persecuted groups of the Middle East. The Maronites arrived present day Lebanon in the 600s. They were Christians, named after the Syrian saint Maron. Other Christian groups followed, notably the Greek Orthodox. Muslim forces conquered Lebanon during the Muslim expansions of the 630s. After the Muslim schism, Lebanon was home to both Sunni and Shia. An offshoot of Shia Islam called the Druze appeared in the present day Lebanon 11<sup>th</sup> century. These five groups, or sects, make up present day Lebanon, along with 13 others. The sects' struggle for power has resulted in several violent clashes and civil wars, notably the civil war of 1975-1990.<sup>46</sup>

### Osman Rule

In 1516 the Osman Empire conquered the Mamluk dynasty, gaining control of present day Lebanon.<sup>47</sup> Until the end of the First World War, the central areas of contemporary Lebanon would remain under the control of Istanbul. During the four hundred Osman years power shifted between Beirut and Istanbul.<sup>48</sup>

Periods of free trade and semi-autonomy made the appointed leaders of Lebanon rich and ambitious. The Osman Empire allied itself with different groups; beheading or deposing one leader and replacing him with another. Istanbul was first allied with Druze chiefs. Istanbul later relied on Sunni and Maronite chiefs as well. During the 1700s a Maronite-Sunni alliance emerged, leaving the Druze in the cold. The powerful Chehab family converted from Sunni

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<sup>45</sup> Druze Sheikh Hussein Talhuq on the 1860 Lebanese Civil War, in: Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*. 2007: 24

<sup>46</sup> Rogan. *The Arabs*. 2011: 39-40; Salibi, Kamal. *A House of Many Mansions. The History of Lebanon Reconsidered*. University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA, 1988: 13-14; Waage. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. 2012: 51-53, 210-3

<sup>47</sup> The Mamluk dynasty of Cairo had controlled Egypt, the Arabian Peninsula and Greater Syria. Rogan. *The Arabs*. 2011: 15 pp; Salibi. *A House of Many Mansions*. 1988: 4-10; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*. 2007: 5

<sup>48</sup> Rogan. *The Arabs*. 2011: 45-49; Salibi. *A House of Many Mansions*. 1988: 65-7; Waage. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. 2012: 51-53, 212-213

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Islam to Maronite Christianity before the 1800. Maronite rule was consolidated during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Maronite families dominance over Lebanon was repeatedly challenged, especially by the Druze. However, Maronites have been the dominant sect since the 1800s.<sup>49</sup>

### The French Mandate

France created present day Lebanon in 1920. The Maronite's ties to France stretch back for centuries. The Maronites joined the Catholic Church in the 1180s, entering a formal union in 1736. During the 1800s foreign powers sought to increase their influence in this prosperous area. The European powers started arming the rivaling sects. Russia supported the Orthodox Christians, France supported the Maronites and Britain supported the Druze. The involvement of the great powers fuelled sectarian violence, culminating in the Druze uprising of 1838 and the civil war of 1860. The Second French Empire saved the Maronites, when the Christian group was about to be wiped out by the Druze. Napoleon III was eager to increase France's power in the Levant. French ambitions in the area stretched back to Napoleon Bonaparte, uncle of Napoleon III. France sought to weaken the Osman Empire, and demanded the Maronites be given greater security and autonomy. The common Catholicism of French and Maronites made them natural allies. France's involvement further consolidated Maronite rule.<sup>50</sup>

The Osman Empire was on the losing side of the First World War and its Levantine areas were divided as spoils. France and Great Britain were victors and set about dividing the Middle East amongst them, creating the present day borders.<sup>51</sup> In the Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916, Britain and France planned to divide the Levant among them. The French mandate of present day Lebanon and Syria were established in 1920. France carved Lebanon out of Syria to create a state for the Maronites. The Maronite heartland, Mount Lebanon, stretches from the area around Beirut and north along the coast toward Tripoli. To the French Mount Lebanon seemed a small area for a state. Pressed by Maronite leaders, France expanded Mount Lebanon to the south, east and north, creating a Greater Lebanon. Mount Lebanon was

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<sup>49</sup> Rogan. *The Arabs*. 2011: 45-49, 82-102, 109; Salibi. *A House of Many Mansions*. 1988: 65-7; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*. 2007: 8, 11, 12-15, 41; Waage. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. 2012: 51-53, 212-213

<sup>50</sup> Cleveland and Bunton. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. 2009: 65; Hirst. *Beware of small states*. 2010: 8-10; Rogan. *The Arabs*. 2011: 40, 111, 115-20, 264-6; Salibi. *A House of Many Mansions*. 1988: 13; Waage. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. 2012: 54, 210, 215

<sup>51</sup> Hirst. *Beware of small states*. 2010: 8-13; Waage. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. 2012: 66-70

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far from homogenously Maronite, or even Christian, in 1920. Adding the eastern Beqaa valley and today's southern Lebanon made Lebanon even less homogenous. The newly created Greater Lebanon consisted of a multitude of sects, with differing ideas of nationality. The Muslim communities of Lebanon felt Arabic, Muslim or Syrian; not Lebanese.<sup>52</sup>

### The National pact and Independence

There has not been a Lebanese census since 1932. It is still disputed. The 1932 census showed a slight Christian majority. The three largest groups were, in descending order: the Maronites, the Sunnis and the Shias.<sup>53</sup>

Lebanon gained independence in 1943. Leaders from the major Lebanese sects agreed to divided power among themselves. The agreement is referred to as the National Pact. As a French Mandate, Lebanon had been established as a republic. However, rather than a traditional democracy, each sect was given a certain share of power. The balance of power was based on the 1932 census, giving the Christians a 6 to 5 majority in the Lebanese Parliament. Governmental positions were distributed accordingly, as they had been during the French Mandate: A Maronite President, Sunni Prime Minister and Shia speaker of the Parliament. The Druze, Orthodox Christians and other groups held various lesser positions. Over the following decades the Muslim population growth outstripped the Christian population growth. The National Pact remained unchanged, despite the shift in population ratio. Between 1943 and the mid-1970s, Muslim's grew increasingly discontent with the disproportionate distribution of power.<sup>54</sup>

### The 1958 Crisis

From an American and European point of view, post-war Lebanon appeared to be a well functioning, prosperous and relatively free country. Centuries of lucrative trade and ties to France had made Lebanon by far the most Western of the Arab states in the region.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Cleveland and Bunton. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. 2009: 162-3, 217-20; Hirst. *Beware of the Small States*. 2010: 5-13; Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 29-30, 33-6; Khazen. *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 37-8; O'Ballance. *Civil War in Lebanon, 1975-92*. 1998: vii; Rogan. *The Arabs*. 2011: 39-43, 189-90, 201-2, 264-266; Salibi. *A House of Many Mansions*. 1988: 25; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*. 2007: 75-6; Waage. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. 2012: 66, 210-20; Yapp. *The Near East since the First World War*. 1996: 104-5

<sup>53</sup> Waage. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. 2012: 218

<sup>54</sup> Rogan. *The Arabs*. 2011: 303-4; Salibi. *A House of Many Mansions*. 1988: 185-6; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*. 2007: 104-110; Waage. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. 2012: 218-220

<sup>55</sup> Cleveland and Bunton. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. 2009: 332-3; Rogan. *The Arabs*. 2011: 390-3; Waage. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. 2012: 220-2

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At the other end of the political spectrum, pan-Arabism was on the rise. This brand of pan-Arabism was a secular Arabic nationalism infused with socialism, seeking to unite the Arab peoples and nations. The Egyptian revolution of 1952 and Gamal Abdel Nasser's subsequent rise to power started a wave of pan-Arabism in the Middle East. In February 1958 Egypt and Syria formed The United Arab Republic. Though short-lived, the alliance caused pan-Arabist sentiments to spike in Lebanon. Pan-Arabism appealed to those that saw themselves as Arab or Syrian, rather than Lebanese. The pro-Western Chamoun government starkly opposed Pan-Arabism.<sup>56</sup>

The pan-Arab uprising converged with the discontent with the 1943 National Pact. Lebanon's *laissez-faire* economy had led to economic inequality. Nepotism and sectarian bias ensured low social and geographical mobility. The class divide largely followed the sectarian divide: Muslim's, especially Shias and farmers, did not fail to notice that the suburban Christians had more money and more power.<sup>57</sup>

The presidential election to elect Chamoun's successor was scheduled for the fall of 1958. The 1923 constitution stated a Lebanese president could not be reelected. Chamoun bought votes and tried to change the constitution to get himself reelected. His political opponents took to arms and revolted in July 1958. Muslim-dominated, rural areas joined the uprising. Some of Chamoun's opponents were Christian, but the 1958 crisis turned into a sectarian civil war, pitting Christians against Muslims. Lebanon became *de facto* fragmented: The government's authority was limited to central Maronite areas, while Muslim provinces were under rebel control.<sup>58</sup>

President Chamoun wanted the US to save the Christians, rather than the Maronites traditional ally, France. The Suez Crisis two years earlier, made Chamoun realize that the US

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<sup>56</sup> Cleveland and Bunton. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. 2009: 334-7; Hirst. *Beware of small states*. 2010: 69-71; Rogan. *The Arabs*. 2011: 390-3, 396-7; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*. 2007: 164-5, 133-5; Yapp. *The Near East since the First World War*. 1996: 114-15

<sup>57</sup> Cleveland and Bunton. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. 2009: 334-7; Hirst. *Beware of small states*. 2010: 69-71; Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 38-9; O'Ballance. *Civil War in Lebanon, 1975-92*. 1998: viii; Rogan. *The Arabs*. 2011: 390-3, 396-7; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*. 2007: 164-5, 133-5; Yapp. *The Near East since the First World War*. 1996: 114-15

<sup>58</sup> Cleveland and Bunton. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. 2009: 334-7; Hirst. *Beware of small states*. 2010: 69-71; Rogan. *The Arabs*. 2011: 390-3, 396-7; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*. 2007: 164-5, 133-5; Waage. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. 2012: 222; Yapp. *The Near East since the First World War*. 1996: 114-15



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was a more valuable partner. In the Suez Crisis of 1956, Britain, France and Israel had mobilized their forces to prevent Egypt from nationalizing the Suez Canal. The US, led by President Dwight D. Eisenhower, had restrained the European and Israeli powers. In July 1958 Chamoun invoked the Eisenhower doctrine, formulated in 1957. The doctrine promised US assistance to states threatened by Soviet aggression. There were communists among Chamoun's pan-Arabist enemies, but the rebellion of 1958 was not of Moscow's making. The Eisenhower administration was suspicious of Chamoun, who they perceived as antidemocratic. However, Chamoun's request was just preceded by the Iraqi revolution, which toppled Iraq's pro-western democracy. The CIA wrongly asserted that the Iraqi revolution was inspired by Moscow, convincing Eisenhower to send forces to Lebanon.<sup>59</sup>

The 1958 civil war lasted three months. Some 2000 Lebanese died in the 1958 civil war. The 15 000 US Marines did not fire a single shot, but US mediation brought about a compromise. Chamoun was succeeded by Fouad Chehab, a candidate acceptable to both Christians and Muslims: He was perceived as moderate, and less pro-Western than his predecessor. Additionally, Chehab had the army commander during the crisis, and largely kept the army from participating. Chehab's more Arab-friendly government helped lessen the sectarian animosity. In the end there was "no vanquished and no victor."<sup>60</sup> The conflict was resolved, but not its causes.<sup>61</sup>

### The Palestinians

The presence of 300 000 Palestinian refugees was one of the contributing factors to the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war in 1975. At least 100 000 Palestinians refugees had arrived in Lebanon by 1950, following the Arab-Palestinian War of 1948.<sup>62</sup> The Palestinian refugees were initially beneficial to Lebanon. The Arab countries' economic boycott of Israel increased Lebanon's trade, further strengthened by the arrival of wealthy and middle class

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<sup>59</sup> Cleveland and Bunton. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. 2009: 334-7; Heller, Peter B. *The United Nations under Dag Hammarskjöld, 1953-1961*. Scarecrow Press, Inc., Lanham, MD and London, 2001: 53; Hirst. *Beware of small states*. 2010: 69-71; Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 38-9; O'Ballance. *Civil War in Lebanon, 1975-92*. 1998: viii; Rogan. *The Arabs*. 2011: 375-383, 390-3, 396-7; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*. 2007: 135-7, 164-5; Waage. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. 2012: 222-4; Yapp. *The Near East since the First World War*. 1996: 114-15

<sup>60</sup> Rogan. *The Arabs*. 2011: 7

<sup>61</sup> Hirst. *Beware of small states*. 2010: 69-71; Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 38-9; Rogan. *The Arabs*. 2011: 390-3, 396-7; Waage. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. 2012: 222; Yapp. *The Near East since the First World War*. 1996: 114-15

<sup>62</sup> Disputed: Morris, about 100 000; Khalidi, 150 000; Traboulsi, some 120 000; Waage, nearly 130 000; Yapp, 150 000 in Lebanon

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Palestinians.<sup>63</sup> The following waves of Palestinian refugees were increasingly poor, making the Maronite establishment increasingly skeptical of the refugees. By the 1950s, stateless and impoverished Palestinians populated refugee camps throughout Lebanese coastal towns and the underprivileged southern Lebanon. Before long, the Maronites wanted the Palestinians moved to Syria or returned to Israel.<sup>64</sup>

In addition to the coastal towns, there was a large Palestinian presence in southern Lebanon. Southern Lebanon was largely rural, poor and Shia dominated. In the 1960s and 1970s, the Lebanese economy waned. The vast majority of the population was already poor compared to the elites, causing increased unrest as the cost of living rose. The Six-Day War of 1967 displaced further Palestinians, increasing their numbers in Lebanon. By ca. 1970 the number of Palestinian refugees was at least doubled. The Palestinian presence in Lebanon further polarized the country's population. One side wanted the Palestinians gone; the other sympathized with the Palestinian's circumstances.<sup>65</sup>

The wealthy Maronite community in particular, along with their Christian and Muslim allies, saw the refugees as a burden to their society. The Christians had gradually realized that they were a minority, and would never grant citizenship to more than a hundred thousand Palestinians. Being predominantly Muslim, citizenship to several hundred thousand Palestinians would ruin the Maronite's claim to power.<sup>66</sup>

Many Muslims, especially the poorer Shia dominated population of southern Lebanon, sympathized with the Palestinians. They lived largely in the same urban or southern areas. Both groups were relatively poor, compared to the Maronite and Sunni elites. They also found common ground in their lack of political influence over the lands they deemed their own.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*. 2007: 113;

<sup>64</sup> Morris, Benny. *Righteous Victims. A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-2001*. John Murray Publishers, London, 1998: 260; Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 37; O'Ballance. *Civil War in Lebanon, 1975-92*. 1998: viii; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*. 2007: 113-14; Waage. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. 2012: 224; Yapp. *The Near East since the First World War*. 1996: 301

<sup>65</sup> Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 40-1; Sayigh and Shlaim. *The Cold War and the Middle East*. 1997: 359; Waage. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. 2012: 225, 440; Yapp. *The Near East since the First World War*. 1996: 267

<sup>66</sup> Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 40-1; Sayigh and Shlaim. *The Cold War and the Middle East*. 1997: 359; Waage. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. 2012: 225, 440; Yapp. *The Near East since the First World War*. 1996: 267

<sup>67</sup> Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 40-1; Khazen. *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon, 1967-1976*. 2000: 44; Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle and the Search for State*. 1997: 359; Waage. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. 2012: 225, 440; Yapp. *The Near East since the First World War*. 1996: 267

### **The Cairo Agreement and the Palestinian State-Within-a-State**

The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was founded in Cairo 1964, as a puppet organization controlled by Egypt and Nasser.<sup>68</sup> Israel's Arab neighbors were humiliated in the 1967 Six-Day War. The Palestinian national movement became disillusioned with the Arab states. They no longer believed that the Arab countries would deliver their homeland and decided to take matters into their own hands.<sup>69</sup> In 1967 Yasser Arafat's party Fatah joined the PLO. Being the largest of the Palestinian groups, it immediately gained control of half of the seats in the PLO's legislative branch, the Palestine National Council (PNC). In 1969 Fatah gained executive control over the PLO. Arafat was appointed chairman. The PLO had grown out of Nasser's shadow and become an independent organization.<sup>70</sup>

The PLO that emerged after the Six-Day War was controlled by Palestinians. The new PLO was independent of Arab tutelage, pan-Arabism and was more militant than before. As of 1968, Palestinian refugee camps in southern Lebanon were used as bases for Palestinian guerrilla attacks on Israel. Israel answered with counter attacks. The violence quickly escalated and both sides were attacking and killing civilians. Southern Lebanon became an Israeli-Palestinian battlefield, further polarizing and destabilizing the volatile country.<sup>71</sup>

The Israeli counter attacks were a direct message to the Lebanese government to control the Palestinian guerrillas. The Lebanese government had neither the strength nor the will to answer the Israeli attacks. However, the government was equally unable to control the Palestinian guerrillas. The Lebanese government did not have the strength to expel or subdue the Palestinian guerrillas. The presence of the Palestinians caused a rift within the government, which had to be reformed. Popular support for the Palestinians was on the rise.

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<sup>68</sup> Khazen. *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon, 1967-1976*. 2000: 105; Kimmerling and Migdal. *The Palestinian People*. 2003: 254-5; Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle and the Search for State*. 1997: 218-21; Waage. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. 2012: 226

<sup>69</sup> Khazen. *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon, 1967-1976*. 2000: 44, 106, 140; Kimmerling and Migdal. *The Palestinian People*. 2003: 252-4; Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle and the Search for State*. 1997: 143, 155; Waage. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. 2012: 225-6, 352-5; Yapp. *The Near East since the First World War*. 1996: 267, 304

<sup>70</sup> Khazen. *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon, 1967-1976*. 2000: 105; Kimmerling and Migdal. *The Palestinian People*. 2003: 254-5; Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle and the Search for State*. 1997: 218-21; Waage. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. 2012: 226

<sup>71</sup> Khazen. *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon, 1967-1976*. 2000: 44, 106-7, 140; Kimmerling and Migdal. *The Palestinian People*. 2003: 252-4; Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle and the Search for State*. 1997: 143, 155; Waage. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. 2012: 225-6, 352-5; Yapp. *The Near East since the First World War*. 1996: 267, 304

## **Chapter 2 – Origins of the Lebanese Civil War**

Fighting broke out several times between guerrillas and the Lebanese army, as the latter attempted to stop their attacks. The PLO, however, wanted to increase the military presence in Lebanon and did not yield. Army officials met with PLO representatives several times to end the fighting, without success.<sup>72</sup>

The Israeli-Palestinian and Lebanese-Palestinian violence escalated throughout 1968 and 1969. Sunni Prime Minister Rashid Karami finally asked Nasser for help. A deal was struck on the November 3, 1969, known as the Cairo Agreement. The PLO promised to coordinate its guerrilla attacks with the Lebanese Army. This was ignored. The concrete effect of the Agreement was that the PLO was free to attack Israel from Lebanon, much to the dismay of the Maronite community. While promising to respect Lebanon's sovereignty, the PLO gained control over the Palestinian refugee camps. In reality, the Palestinian refugee camps became autonomous areas under PLO control. The PLO introduced taxes and conscription. The long-term consequences were, firstly, increased cross border violence between Palestinians and the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). Secondly, the PLO was able to build a Palestinian mini-state within Lebanon, a State Within a State. A Palestinian mini-state was not compatible with a sovereign Lebanon. This paradox became increasingly obvious in the following years, as the Israeli-Palestinian retaliation spiral continued.<sup>73</sup>

### **Black September – Palestinian Expulsion from Jordan**

Jordan had received even more Palestinian refugees than Jordan after the 1948 war. In the Six-Day War Israel occupied the rest of what had been Palestine. 300 000 Palestinians fled east from the West Bank, in to Jordan. The number of Palestinians in Jordan was 750 000 by 1970, rivaling the same size as the Jordanian population. The Palestinian refugees and guerrillas posed a direct threat to Hussein bin Talal, King of Jordan: The Palestinian state-within-a-state in Jordan was operating independently of the Hussein government. By 1970 the Palestinian mini-state had its own administrative, social, and economic networks. Radical left-wing Palestinians openly plotted Hussein's downfall. As in Lebanon, the mini-state became a safe haven for Palestinian guerrillas. From their bases in Jordan, they launched attacks on goals in Israel. Israel answered by conducting military raids against the Palestinian

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<sup>72</sup> Khazen. *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon, 1967-1976*. 2000: 140-3; Kimmerling and Migdal. *The Palestinian People*. 2003: 264; Rogan. *The Arabs*. 2011: 440

<sup>73</sup> Hirst. *Beware of small states*. 2010: 87; Khazen. *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon, 1967-1976*. 2000: 143-157; Kimmerling and Migdal. *The Palestinian People*. 2003: 264, 267-8; Rogan. *The Arabs*. 2011: 440; Waage. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. 2012: 226

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camps in Jordan, harming both Palestinians and Jordanians. Both Palestinians and Israel defied King Hussein's jurisdiction. Hussein could not hope to challenge Israel successfully, as he had learned from the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. Hussein's only solution to save his throne was to subdue the Palestinians.<sup>74</sup>

Within the Levant, Hussein was a comparatively weak head of state, but he maintained close relations with his Bedouin military troops. In June 1970 he attacked Palestinian refugee camps. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) had abducted the US Embassy's first secretary and occupied two Amman hotels, holding some eighty guests hostage. The PFLP was a radical left wing member of the PLO.<sup>75</sup>

On September 6, 1970, Hussein got the excuse he needed to go to war against the Palestinians. The PFLP landed three hijacked civil airplanes in the Jordanian desert. TV stations from all over the world covered the story, propelling the Palestinian cause to the center of international attention. The passengers were released, before the planes were spectacularly blown up. The Jordanian Army stood by, unable to stop the PFLP. Hussein was humiliated. The PFLP had showed the whole world that they would not abide Hussein's authority, and that Hussein was unable to hinder them.<sup>76</sup>

Hussein moved against the Palestinians camps again on September 15. The attacks were indiscriminate, killing civilians and guerrilla members alike. Over the next ten days, 3000 Palestinians were killed. After ten days of fighting, Hussein and Arafat signed an armistice agreement brokered by Nasser. The Egyptian leader died just days later, on September 28.<sup>77</sup>

By July 1971 the guerrillas were largely expelled from Jordan. The PLO headquarters were relocated to Beirut. In 1971 the numbers of Palestinians in Lebanon reached 300 000. Undaunted by their expulsion from Jordan, the guerrillas continued their attacks against

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<sup>74</sup> Cleveland and Bunton. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. 2009: 362-3; Rogan. *The Arabs*. 2011: 440; Waage. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. 2012: 305-8

<sup>75</sup> Cleveland and Bunton. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. 2009: 362-3; Hirst. *Beware of small states*. 2010: 85-6; Rogan. *The Arabs*. 2011: 441-4; Waage. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. 2012: 309-11; Yapp. *The Near East since the First World War*. 1996: 298

<sup>76</sup> Cleveland and Bunton. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. 2009: 362; Rogan. *The Arabs*. 2011: 441-3; Waage. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. 2012: 308

<sup>77</sup> Cleveland and Bunton. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. 2009: 362-3; Hirst. *Beware of small states*. 2010: 85-6; Rogan. *The Arabs*. 2011: 441-4; Waage. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. 2012: 309-11; Yapp. *The Near East since the First World War*. 1996: 298

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Israeli targets. Israel continued their counter attacks. The Palestinian-Israeli violence was now concentrated on the already volatile country.<sup>78</sup>

### Discontent and Civil Unrest

Lebanon experienced economic growth between 1965 and 1975, but the growth mainly benefited the wealthy. In the 1950s 50 per cent of the population worked in farming, but by 1975 the number had dropped to 20 per cent. The changing job market caused large migrations and emigration. Syrian workers immigrated to do manual labor and construction for lower wages than the Lebanese, resulting in increased unemployment. Economic growth in combination with unchecked speculation doubled the cost of living between 1967 and 1975.<sup>79</sup>

In a society of sectarianism, nepotism and privileges, the economic growth did not alleviate the uneven distribution of wealth; it accentuated it. This caused a rapid centralization and urbanization of the population. The periphery, particularly the south, became sparsely populated and poorer. The intellectual and economic elite flocked to the cities. The major factor in the urbanization was not the elites, but unemployed farm workers and those displaced by the Israeli counter-attacks in southern Lebanon. Property speculation made central Beirut rich and luxurious. The eastern and southern suburbs were transformed into a poverty belt, comprising of impoverished Lebanese and Palestinian refugees. The sectarian divisions mirrored the economic division. Christians dominated the wealthier areas, while Shias and Palestinians dominated the poverty belt.<sup>80</sup>

By the presidential election of 1970, there was broad support for reforming Lebanese finance. Farmer revolts started in 1968 and from 1970 there were clashes with Lebanese gendarmerie. Members of the Saiqa guerrilla joined the farmers. The Saiqa guerrilla was sponsored and partially controlled by Damascus. Salah Jadid, Syria's head of state had founded Saiqa as a Palestinian group of the Syrian Ba'ath party. As Hafez al Assad replaced Jadid as the leader of Syria, Damascus briefly lost its control over Saiqa. The Lebanese left and opposition parties soon adopted these struggles and gained leadership of the rural uprising. President

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<sup>78</sup> Cleveland and Bunton. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. 2009: 363; Hirst. *Beware of small states*. 2010: 86-7; Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 42; Kimmerling and Migdal. *The Palestinian People*. 2003: 263-4; Rogan. *The Arabs*. 2011: 478; Waage. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitik i Midtøsten*. 2012: 227, 310-11

<sup>79</sup> Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*. 2007: 157-160

<sup>80</sup> Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*. 2007: 159-62

## Chapter 2 – Origins of the Lebanese Civil War

Suleiman Frangieh (1970-1976) appointed Saeb Salam (1970-1973) his first Prime Minister. Salam tried to restructure Lebanon's sectarian system of education and finance. He feared that ignoring the unrest might lead to a national uprising. His ministers found themselves thwarted by the clandestine economic elite. Salam's first cabinet collapsed in 1972. Instead of reformation, Frangieh's term as President saw increased nepotism and corruption.<sup>81</sup>

### Sectarian Violence

After Black September thousands of Palestinian refugees arrived, followed by more Palestinian guerrilla fighters and the PLO leadership. Black September strengthened the Palestinian guerrillas resolve to remain independent of the Arab states. Palestinian guerrillas took revenge on King Hussein by assassinating the Jordanian Prime Minister in November 1971. The influx in guerrilla fighters led to an increase in Maronite-Palestinian violence, as well as further escalating the Palestinian-Israeli spiral of reciprocation.<sup>82</sup>

The Palestinians guerrillas allied themselves with the Lebanese opposition. Like the Palestinians and the opposition, Maronites also had paramilitary branches of their organizations. The two most prominent Maronite militias in the mid-1970s were Pierre Gemayel's Phalangists and the *Tigers* of former President Camille Chamoun. Both Gemayel and Chamoun thought that the growing Muslim population and their increased discontent was a threat to the Christians' position and safety in Lebanon.<sup>83</sup>

In March and April 1973, fighting broke out between the Lebanese army and Palestinian Guerrillas. In April three Fatah leaders were assassinated in Beirut, in an Israeli raid. The Lebanese National Movement arranged massive demonstrations against the government. The National Movement, founded in 1969, was a coalition of left wing and Arab nationalist parties. Prime Minister Salam demanded the resignation of newly appointed army commander, Maronite General Iskandar Ghanem. President Frangieh's supported Ghanem,

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<sup>81</sup> Cleveland and Bunton. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. 2009: 383-4; Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 42-43; Sayigh. *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*. 1997: 366, 685; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*. 2007: 164-5

<sup>82</sup> Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 42-43; Khazen. *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon, 1967-1976*. 2000: 187-8; Waage. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. 2012: 226-7

<sup>83</sup> Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 42-43; Waage. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. 2012: 226-7

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and Salam stepped down from his last period as Prime Minister. Unchecked by Salam's protests, the violence between the PLO and the Lebanese army spiraled.<sup>84</sup>

Kamal Jumblatt and his Progressive Socialist Party led the National Movement. Jumblatt was a prominent leader of the Druze and had been one of Chamoun's principal opponents in the 1958 civil war. Jumblatt had political pedigree. The Jumblatt family was among the prominent Druze tribes in the uprising in 1838.<sup>85</sup> It had been created as an alliance of communist, Druze and Pan-Arabist organizations. The PLO and the National Movement were both opposed to the sectarian and *laissez faire* economic politics of Lebanon. Both groups wanted the Lebanese government to protest the Israeli raids in Lebanon. The National Movement and the PLO were both opposed to the Lebanese *status quo*, making them natural allies. In the conflicts leading up to the Civil War, two blocs would rise as the prominent protagonists. The PLO-National Movement alliance made up the opposition-bloc. They attracted Shia, the left wing, Palestinians, Druze and anyone else in favor of reform. The Phalangists and Tigers of Gemayel and Chamoun made up the conservative bloc, attracting Maronites in particular, as well as some Sunni and others who benefited from not reforming the Lebanese society.<sup>86</sup>

Salam's successor, Amin Hafiz, managed to bring about a new settlement with the PLO, but was soon relieved of his duties. The conservative Sunni oligarchs did not approve of Hafiz, and Frangieh did not challenge their view. In an effort to reconcile with the opposition, the President asked National Movement leader Jumblatt to name the next Prime Minister. Jumblatt chose Taquiyuddin Solh, from the important Sunni family bearing his name. Frangieh's courtship with Jumblatt did little to appease the National Movement. To make matters worse, he estranged his Sunni allies. Frangieh made several attempts at forming new governments, but they all proved short-lived. Frangieh's presidency was characterized by inability and instability.<sup>87</sup>

The Arab-Israeli War of 1973 provided a slight breather for Lebanon. The war had shown the Palestinian guerrillas that Israel was not invulnerable. After the war, the Palestinian-Israeli

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<sup>84</sup> Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 43; Khazen. *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon, 1967-1976*. 2000: 203-5; O'Ballance. *Civil War in Lebanon, 1975-92*. 1998: 4

<sup>85</sup> See previous references, under *Osman rule*.

<sup>86</sup> Cleveland and Bunton. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. 2009: 384; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*. 2007: 174-7, 187; Waage. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. 2012: 225

<sup>87</sup> Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 43;



## Chapter 2 – Origins of the Lebanese Civil War

raids escalated again.<sup>88</sup> Israel was eager to strike hard against the Palestinians. With the increased violence of late 1973, Israel had a pretext for increasing their retaliatory strikes. Israeli launched air strikes against Lebanon, carrying out more than fifty air strikes in 1974.<sup>89</sup> Only one fifth of the Israeli attacks struck guerrilla bases. Most of them struck civilian targets, harming both Lebanese Shia Muslims and Palestinians. The spiral of violence caused a two front pressure on the Lebanese government. On the one hand, the Muslim and Palestinian communities and guerrillas called for the government to bring an end to the Israeli raids. On the other hand, Israel was pressuring the Lebanese government to control the guerrillas.

In the first half of the 1970's the 1932 census was further from the truth than ever. Even the Maronites realized that there was certainly no Christian majority. Social, economic and political inequity was greater than ever. The Palestinian presence heightened these differences. By allying themselves with the National Movement and jeopardizing Lebanon's relationship with Israel, they became the ultimate enemy of the Maronite elite. By 1975, the number of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon was nearing 350 000.<sup>90</sup>

The years of Israeli-Palestinian violence strained the Lebanese society. Shias and the opposition blamed the government for not defending them from Israeli attacks. The Maronites blamed the Palestinians for attracting Israel's attention in the first place. In the first half of the 1970s, thousands of people fled southern Lebanon to escape the Israeli attacks. Those displaced by the Israeli attacks flocked to the cities. President Frangieh had been unable or unwilling to stop the urbanization and centralization of the economy. Rural migrants joined those fleeing from the violence of southern Lebanon. The poverty belt encircling Beirut reached 500 000 inhabitants by 1975. The belt was made up of everything from squatters and unemployed Shia farmers, to Palestinian refugee camps and guerrilla bases. The increased number of Palestinian camps and bases in Beirut led to increased violence and Israeli attacks in and around the capital, increasing the pressure on the government.<sup>91</sup>

The clashes in the spring of 1973 had started an arms race between the Lebanese factions. One side wished to maintain the political system, the other to reform it. Maronites dominated

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<sup>88</sup> Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 44-5

<sup>89</sup> Khazen. *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon, 1967-1976*. 2000: 223, note 21 on 233; Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle and the Search for State*. 1997: 356, 358

<sup>90</sup> Cleveland and Bunton. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. 2009: 382-3; Rogan. *The Arabs*. 2011: 477-80

<sup>91</sup> Cleveland and Bunton. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. 2009: 383; Rogan. *The Arabs*. 2011: 478-80

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the former, particularly Chamoun, Gemayel and their respective guerrilla groups. On the reformist side were Jumblatt and the National Movement, and the Palestinian groups. The spring of 1973 had taught the Maronite leaders that the Muslims could not be controlled, no matter who was appointed Prime Minister. The violence increased, fuelled by Israeli attacks, civil unrest, political impotence and an abundance of firearms.<sup>92</sup>

Lebanon's problems began at its conception. A Lebanese newspaper editor likened the creation of Greater Lebanon to "the squaring of the circle."<sup>93</sup> The sects of Lebanon had too diverging identities to be fused in to a cohesive and sovereign state. The sects' continued segregation was enabled by the sectarian system of the 1943 National Pact. The 1932 census, and thus the distribution of power, was increasingly unrepresentative of the population. Decades of economic inequality created increased envy and enmity between the Lebanese sects. The arrival of ever more impoverished Palestinians, Palestinian guerrillas and Israeli-Palestinian violence brought the tension of the Lebanese society to the breaking point. The tension peaked in the spring of 1975, culminating in a civil war that would last fifteen years.

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<sup>92</sup> Cleveland and Bunton. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. 2009: 383; Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 43; O'Ballance. *Civil War in Lebanon, 1975-92*, 1998: 1-4; Rogan. *The Arabs*. 2011: 477-80

<sup>93</sup> Hirst. *Beware of small states*. 2010: 13

## **Chapter 3:**

### **The Civil War begins**

“I have no particular interest in Lebanon’s internal affairs if they do not involve outside countries. I don’t want us involved in their internal affairs.”<sup>94</sup>

By 1975, Lebanon was home to over 300 000 Palestinians. Following the 1969 Cairo Agreement, the Palestinian refugee camps had turned into a *state within a state*. The camps were under the control of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) rather than the Lebanese government. Following the Six-Day War in 1967, southern Lebanon became a scene for cross-border violence between the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and Palestinian guerrillas. Southern Lebanon was generally rural and poor, predominantly inhabited by Shia Muslims. Shias were the most politically underrepresented of Lebanon’s three major religious groups. The government’s inability to provide security for the southerners led to increased discontent from the Shias in the south towards the Maronite Christian dominated leadership. Spearheading the Lebanese pro-Palestinians was the Lebanese National Movement. The National Movement was a coalition of leftists and Arab nationalists, led by Druze chief Kamal Jumblatt. The Maronites, on the other hand, blamed the Palestinians for provoking Israel.<sup>95</sup>

By 1975 the Lebanese powder keg was ready to blow. The uneven power distribution of the sectarian democracy, the economic inequality, the Palestinian refugees and the Israeli-Palestinian violence had polarized Lebanese politics. Every faction was armed to the teeth.

#### **Step-by-Step. Kissinger’s Diplomacy**

At the heart of US’ Middle East effort at the time was Kissinger’s Shuttle Diplomacy, a reaction to the Arab-Israeli War of 1973. Egypt’s President Anwar Sadat had tried in vain to reach out to Israel and the US since the early 1970s. Having exhausted his diplomatic capabilities, Egypt and Syria launched a coordinated attack on Israel on October 6, 1973. The

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<sup>94</sup> Kissinger, in: *Foreign Relations of the United States* (hereafter *FRUS*), 1969-1976, Vol. 26, Memcon, October 10, 1975, Doc. 264. Kissinger, Sisco, Saunders *et al.*

<sup>95</sup> Cleveland and Bunton. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. 2009: 383-4; Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 40-1; Rogan. *The Arabs*. 2011: 478; Sayigh. *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*. 1997: 359; Waage. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. 2012: 225, 440; Yapp. *The Near East since the First World War*. 1996: 267

### Chapter 3 – The Civil War Begins

first Arab attack was a success, and took Israel by surprise.<sup>96</sup> By the end of the month, Israeli troops were approaching Cairo and Damascus. A cease-fire was arranged.<sup>97</sup>

Rather than bringing Israel and all its Arab neighbors to the negotiation table, Kissinger talked to the Arab countries one by one. Kissinger would mediate, shuttling between Israel and the Arab states in question. Kissinger preferred a step-by-step approach: Each agreement was consciously limited in scope, rather than comprehensive and final. Kissinger found it easier to get concessions from the polarized opponents when focusing on a limited set of issues, rather than forcing Israel to deal with all Arab states and all issues simultaneously. Kissinger largely avoided discussing what to do about the Palestinians. Kissinger learned that the Arab countries were more willing to ignore the Palestinians when approached one by one, than when the Arab-Israeli conflict was raised in the UN. Kissinger also found that in bilateral agreements, the Arab states would settle for very small concessions.

Shuttles with Egypt, Jordan and Syria were planned. The first Egyptian-Israeli agreement was signed on January 18, 1974. An Israeli-Syrian agreement followed on May 31, 1974. Both were characterized by partial withdrawals of Israeli troops and UN peacekeeping forces in buffer zones between the Israeli and Arab armies. After the Syrian-Israeli agreement, it became difficult to secure another agreement. The first attempts at an Israeli-Jordanian agreement were unsuccessful. In October 1974 the Arab League summit in Rabat recognized the PLO, not King Hussein, as the sole representative of the Palestinians and the occupied West Bank, which had been under Jordanian control prior to the Six-Day War. When Hussein could no longer negotiate with Israel over the West Bank, the unborn Israeli-Jordanian agreement fell apart.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Dawisha, Adeed. "Egypt" in: Sayigh and Shlaim (eds.). *The Cold War and the Middle East*. 1997: 40; Rogan. *The Arabs*. 2011: 462-4, 466-7; Shlaim. *The Iron Wall*. 2000: 320-1; Waage. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. 2012: 271, 389-93, 396; Yapp. *The Near East since the First World War*. 1996: 224; Yaqub. "The Weight of Conquest: Henry Kissinger and the Arab-Israeli Conflict." 2008: 235

<sup>97</sup> Dawisha. "Egypt" 1997: 40; Hanhimäki. *The Flawed Architect*. 2004: 315-7; Halliday, Fred. "The Middle East, the Great Powers and the Cold War" in: Sayigh and Shlaim. *The Cold War and the Middle East*. 1997: 10; Quandt. *Peace Process*. 2005: 104, 121, 124-9; Rogan. *The Arabs*. 2011: 464, 466, 469, 487; Shlaim, Avi. "Conclusion" in Sayigh and Shlaim. *The Cold War and the Middle East*. 1997: 282; Shlaim. *The Iron Wall*. 2000: 321; Spiegel. *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict*. 1985: 283-305; Waage. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. 2012: 271, 392-4, 396; Yaqub. "The Weight of Conquest" 2008: 235-6

<sup>98</sup> Dawisha. "Egypt" 1997: 40; Hanhimäki. *The Flawed Architect*. 2004: 324-32; Quandt. *Peace Process*. 2005: 141-3, 148-54, 157-9, 166-71; Rogan. *The Arabs*. 2011: 468, 487; Shlaim. *The Iron Wall*. 2000: 322, 329, 334-40; Spiegel. *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict*. 1985: 305-12; Waage. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. 2012: 398-400; Yapp. *The Near East since the First World War*. 1996: 423; Yaqub. "The Weight of Conquest" 2008: 239, 241-2

The step-by-step diplomacy was a part of Kissinger's globalist policy: Demonstrating to the Arab countries that progress could be made, but only by abandoning Moscow for Washington.<sup>99</sup> It was a limited success: Kissinger helped contrive the first Arab-Israeli agreements. From a US realist and pro-Israeli perspective, he managed to relieve the pressure on Israel without Israel making major territorial concession. Israel was allowed to reinforce its occupation and the shuttles wrested regional influence away from the Soviet Union, which was largely kept outside of the US-led political process. Kissinger's diplomacy also had negative ramifications: Firstly, the agreements did not solve any substantial problems. Secondly, the rest of the Arab world was estranged; which would haunt Israel and the US for decades to come. Lastly, Moscow understood that Washington was trying to lure its allies away from the Soviet Union. This proved a setback to American-Soviet relations.<sup>100</sup>

### January Violence

1975 started with several IDF raids against Palestinian guerrilla bases in southern Lebanon. Lebanese and Palestinians alike were displaced from homes and farms, disturbing the crucial tobacco harvest. Angry locals stormed the municipal building in the town of Marjayoun, where they came to blows with Lebanese security forces. By the end of January, fighting erupted between Christian and Palestinian militias in Beirut. Police was dispatched, but proved unable to enforce a cease-fire. The Lebanese government was criticized left and right. The political left, spearheaded by Kamal Jumblatt and the National Movement, criticized the government for not protecting the southern population, largely made up of underprivileged Shia and Palestinian refugees, from Israeli attacks. At the other end of the political spectrum was Maronite Pierre Gemayel, leader of the Phalangists (also known as the Kataeb). This fascist-inspired Maronite party and its militia criticized the government for not controlling the Palestinians and breaking down their state within a state.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Dawisha. "Egypt" 1997: 40; Hanhimäki. *The Flawed Architect*. 2004: 320-2, 324-5, 329; Quandt. *Peace Process*. 2005: 138-41; Rogan. *The Arabs*. 2011: 467-8, 487; Shlaim. *The Iron Wall*. 2000: 321-2; Spiegel. *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict*. 1985: 283-305; Waage. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. 2012: 396-8; Yapp. *The Near East since the First World War*. 1996: 423; Yaqub. "The Weight of Conquest" 2008: 228, 237

<sup>100</sup> Dawisha. "Egypt" 1997: 40; Hanhimäki. *The Flawed Architect*. 2004: 320-2, 324-5, 329; Quandt. *Peace Process*. 2005: 138-41; Rogan. *The Arabs*. 2011: 467-8, 487; Shlaim. *The Iron Wall*. 2000: 321-2; Spiegel. *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict*. 1985: 283-305; Waage. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. 2012: 396-8; Yapp. *The Near East since the First World War*. 1996: 423; Yaqub. "The Weight of Conquest" 2008: 228, 237

<sup>101</sup> Khazen. *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 267; O'Ballance. *Civil War in Lebanon, 1975-92*. 1998: 7; Sayigh. *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*. 1997: 360; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*. 2007: 24

### Chapter 3 – The Civil War Begins

The cross-border violence was followed by rumors that Israel was going to intervene militarily in southern Lebanon, to put an end to the guerrilla activity. Israeli Foreign Minister Yigal Allon told the US that he was disappointed with the Lebanese government. Allon thought Lebanon should have suppressed the Palestinian guerrillas, like Jordan did in 1970.<sup>102</sup> Robert B. Oakley of the *National Security Council* (NSC) assessed the situation for Kissinger: In Oakley's opinion, Allon misunderstood the Lebanese situation: Lebanon could not wage war on the guerrillas as Jordan had done in 1970. The Lebanese government did not have the military strength or stability of King Hussein.<sup>103</sup> Allon was also worried about the Saiqa guerrilla's presence in Lebanon.<sup>104</sup> Saiqa was a Palestinian militia under Damascus's leadership.<sup>105</sup> Israel would consider Saiqa operations against Israeli targets as a direct threat from Syria. Kenneth Keating, US Ambassador to Israel, asked Allon if Israel would use the guerrillas or the Syrian presence as an excuse to occupy southern Lebanon. Allon replied that Israel had "no current plans to invade". The threat of an Israeli intervention in Lebanon would continue to dominate the Ford administration's perspective on the Lebanese Civil War.<sup>106</sup>

Oakley did not judge the situation to be an immediate threat to Washington's diplomatic strategy in the Middle East. At the time, Washington was planning to produce a second Egyptian-Israeli agreement. A shuttle was scheduled for March. However, Oakley stressed that continued or escalating violence between the IDF and the guerrillas was likely to trigger an Israeli-Syrian war in Lebanon. Such a war would jeopardize Kissinger's Shuttle Diplomacy. Oakley reasoned that increased Israeli military action short of an invasion would tighten Syria's power over Lebanon. Oakley reckoned the US' best option was to keep the IDF out of southern Lebanon.<sup>107</sup>

Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Director William Colby sent Kissinger a memo on January 30. Colby largely agreed with Oakley's analysis. The CIA Director saw the weak Lebanese government holding the shortest straw, being under pressure on two fronts: The first front was Israel and the Phalangists, who wanted Beirut to control the Palestinian guerrillas. The second

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<sup>102</sup> For Jordan 1970, see chapter two. Cable, TEL AVIV 134, Tel Aviv to Secstate *et al.* January 8, 1975, Box 24, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>103</sup> Memo, Oakley to Kissinger, January 15 1975, Box 1, GF-NSA-PC-MESA; Dallek. *Nixon and Kissinger*. 2007: 85; Hanhimäki. *The Flawed Architect*. 2004: 298-9

<sup>104</sup> Cable, TEL AVIV 134, Tel Aviv to Secstate *et al.* January 8, 1975, Box 24, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>105</sup> Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*. 2007: 165; Sayigh. *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*. 1997: 366, 685

<sup>106</sup> Cable, TEL AVIV 134, Tel Aviv to Secstate *et al.* January 8, 1975, Box 24, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>107</sup> Memo, Oakley to Kissinger, January 15 1975, Box 1, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

front was made up of the victims of the IDF attacks and their leaders.<sup>108</sup> Colby and Oakley's analysis both mentioned Lebanon's sectarian divide, but failed to point out its centrality to the Lebanese problem. This lack of interest in Lebanon's internal affairs was in accordance with Washington's prevailing realism and globalism. The important question was whether the violence in Lebanon would jeopardize the upcoming negotiations for a second Egyptian-Israeli agreement.<sup>109</sup>

The overarching US policy goal was the planned Egyptian-Israeli agreement. Unless Lebanon escalated into a regional war, it was no threat to US policy – and by extension of no interest. The only proposed strategy was to restrain Israel. There were two problems with this strategy. Firstly, it did not attempt to provide a solution to the violence. Secondly, as Oakley noted, this approach would meet resistance from the Israelis. Israel preferred violence in southern Lebanon to violence near Israeli settlements.<sup>110</sup> The US sought to avoid dealing with Lebanon before the spring shuttle.

#### **The Sidon Shooting**

In late February, fishermen in the Lebanese city Sidon were demonstrating against the Maronite-owned fishing company *Proteine*. Maarouf Saad, a Sunni opposition politician and parliament member, led the demonstration. Led by former president Camille Chamoun (1952-1958), *Proteine* had received a grant on fishing in the high season. The *Proteine* conflict was relatively small and the company was preparing to make amends to the fishermen. However, the Lebanese opposition presented the *Proteine* conflict in a national perspective, painting it as a symbol of the Maronite's oppression of the Muslims. During the demonstration, Saad was fatally wounded by a gunshot. Rumors started circulating immediately. Some claimed that Saad was shot by leftists hoping to inflame the Lebanese conflict. Other's thought Saad had been liquidated by the army, acting on the behalf of the government or Chamoun. Several accusations and theories have been launched, but Saad's murder remains unsolved. After the shooting, Muslim and Palestinian militias took control of Sidon and closed off the city. The government dispatched the army to regain control over Sidon. Five days of fighting ensued.

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<sup>108</sup> The 1970-71 war, when PLO was expelled from Jordan. See chapter two. Memo, Oakley to Kissinger, January 15 1975, Box 1, GF-NSA-PC-MESA; Memo, "Possible Ramifications of Serious Hostilities in Southern Lebanon," Director of Central Intelligence to Kissinger, Box 24, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>109</sup> Memo, Oakley to Kissinger, January 15 1975, Box 1, GF-NSA-PC-MESA; Paper, "Possible Ramifications of Serious Hostilities in Southern Lebanon," Director of Central Intelligence to Kissinger, Box 24, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>110</sup> Memo, Oakley to Kissinger, January 15 1975, Box 1, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

## Chapter 3 – The Civil War Begins

This added to the leftist perception of injustice: The Maronite capitalists and the Maronite army had seemingly allied against the Shia fishermen.<sup>111</sup>

Jumblatt came under pressure from the left to react to the government's handling of the Sidon shooting. The National Movement had a de facto veto over the government. At the other end of the political spectrum, the Phalangists had equivalent veto over the government. The Lebanese government was based on a fragile compromise between these archenemies, and both had the power to render the government ineffective. Jumblatt did not want to topple the fragile government and blamed the army instead. He subsequently called for the resignation of the army commander, the Maronite Iskandar Ghanem. The Maronite camp led a rally in support of the army, attended by 35 000 people. Saad's funeral turned into a counter-demonstration supporting the PLO, where 150 000 attended. While the violence in January had increased polarization and enmity, the Sidon shooting brought Lebanon's precarious peace to the breaking point.<sup>112</sup>

### The March Shuttle

Kissinger's March shuttle was a failure. Following the previous agreements, both Israel and the US had changed heads of state. Golda Meir was eventually toppled by consequences of the 1973 war and succeeded by Yitzhak Rabin. Rabin was less experienced than Meir and led a weaker government. Rabin was under domestic pressure. After three weeks of shuttling, Kissinger returned to the US without a new agreement. Ford and Kissinger were furious with Israel. They found the Rabin government weak and inflexible. The Ford administration stopped signing arms deals with Israel and the White House's relationship with both Israel and Congress plummeted.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 44-5; Khazen. *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 268-70; O'Ballance. *Civil War in Lebanon, 1975-92*. 1998: 4-5; Rogan. *The Arabs*. 2011: 480; Sayigh. *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*. 1997: 360; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*. 2007: 183; Waage. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. 2012: 227-8

<sup>112</sup> Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 44-5; Khazen. *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 268-70; O'Ballance. *Civil War in Lebanon, 1975-92*. 1998: 4-5; Rogan. *The Arabs*. 2011: 480; Sayigh. *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*. 1997: 360; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*. 2007: 183; Waage. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. 2012: 227-8

<sup>113</sup> Quandt. *Peace Process*. 2005: 162-6; Rogan. *The Arabs*. 2011: 468, 487; Shlaim. *The Iron Wall*. 2000: 334-40; Spiegel. *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict*. 1985: 291-5; Yaqub. "The Weight of Conquest" 2008: 241-2



The NSC assembled central policymakers on March 28, just after the failed shuttle, to discuss the possibility of a new regional war in the Middle East.<sup>114</sup> Kissinger said that Israel would soon see mounting tension along its Syrian and Egyptian borders, coupled with increased PLO guerrilla activity from Lebanon. Kissinger also feared another war would draw in the Soviet Union and possibly the UN, bringing a halt to the US' unilateral diplomacy. Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger thought a potential Israeli attack on Syria would go through Lebanon. Two weeks before the Lebanese civil war, the US' greatest concern regarding Lebanon was not the Lebanese conflict itself, but an Israeli-Syrian war in Lebanon. This would remain the Ford administration's primary concern.<sup>115</sup>

#### Civil War

The fighting in Sidon had brought Lebanon to the brink of civil war. Lebanon took the plunge on April 13: Phalangist leader Gemayel and his entourage were attacked outside a church in the Beirut district Ain el-Rammaneh. Gemayel's bodyguard was killed. The assailants were rumored to be Palestinian. Bent on retribution, Maronite militiamen attacked a bus passing through Ain el-Rammaneh, killing the nearly 30 Palestinian passengers. The tensions that had been mounting between the leftist- and Palestinian militias and the Phalangist militias exploded in violence and retaliation throughout Beirut. Different militias built roadblocks and checkpoints, sealing off the Beirut districts they dominated. Civil life in the capital dissolved. Security forces were dispatched, but could not stop the fighting. The government was losing control over Lebanon. As Gemayel pointedly stated: "There is not one government, but many in Lebanon."<sup>116</sup> Fighting quickly spread to different parts of the country.<sup>117</sup>

Kissinger's globalist perspective led him to ignore the sectarian aspect of the Lebanese conflict. On April 14, Ford asked Kissinger about the "significance" of the violence in Lebanon.<sup>118</sup> Kissinger replied that it was a conflict between the Lebanese government and the PLO over the Palestinian state within a state. However, the principal actor fighting the PLO in

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<sup>114</sup> The NSC meeting included representatives from the State and Defense Departments and the CIA, among others. For a full list, see: Memcon, March 28, 1975, Ingersoll, Simon, Schlesinger *et al.*, Box 1, GFD-NSA-NSCM

<sup>115</sup> Memcon, March 28, 1975, Ingersoll, Simon, Schlesinger *et al.*, Box 1, GFD-NSA-NSCM

<sup>116</sup> Quoted in: O'Ballance. *Civil War in Lebanon, 1975-92*. 1998: 2

<sup>117</sup> Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 47-8; Khazen. *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 279, 285-8; O'Ballance. *Civil War in Lebanon, 1975-92*. 1998: 1-2; Rogan. *The Arabs*. 2011: 480-1; Sayigh. *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*. 1997: 361; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*. 2007: 183; Waage. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. 2012: 228

<sup>118</sup> Memcon, Ford, Kissinger, Atherton, U.S. Ambassadors Keating (Israel), Eilts (Egypt), Pickering (Jordan) and Murphy (Syria), April 14 1975, Box 10, GFD-NSA-MC

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early April was the Phalangist militia, not the Lebanese government's forces. Kissinger might have oversimplified the Lebanese situation to convey what he perceived as a Maronite-Palestinian conflict. Still, Kissinger's statement seems to show a lack of knowledge about or interest in the actual conflicts in Lebanon.<sup>119</sup> Nearly six months later, on October 10, Kissinger still showed little understanding of Lebanon's problems. CIA Director William Colby and William Clements of the State Department informed Kissinger of Lebanon's complex problems, but Kissinger was uninterested.<sup>120</sup>

#### Government Breakdown

The conflict soon reached the Lebanese government. In response to the Ain el-Rammaneh events of April 13, Jumblatt and the National Movement called for the isolation of the Phalangists and dismissal of their cabinet ministers. Arafat and his entourage were reluctant to support the National Movement's demand, as they tried to maintain an image of non-interference in Lebanon. Arafat would rather have the Phalangists disarm and enter into a political dialogue, than to see them politically isolated. After pressure from its members and allies, the PLO leadership endorsed Jumblatt's demand for isolation. Sunni Prime Minister Rashid Solh publically blamed the Phalangists for the Ain el-Rammaneh incidents. In response, the Phalangists withdrew its support for the government. On May 15 Prime Minister Solh was forced to resign.<sup>121</sup>

President Suleiman Frangieh appointed a new cabinet on May 23, comprised of army officers. The Maronite camp, especially the Phalangists, supported the new government, which was seen as anti-Palestinian. For the same reason, the Military Cabinet was opposed by the National Movement and widely unpopular with the Muslim population. The otherwise politically diverse Sunni population was unified in its opposition to the new government. Syria also disliked the new government. Syrian Foreign Minister Abdul Halim Khaddam went to Beirut to confront the President. Frangieh buckled under Syrian pressure and the cabinet resigned after only a few days. From now on, Syria would be instrumental in Lebanon. Sunni

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<sup>119</sup> Memcon, Ford, Kissinger, Atherton, U.S. Ambassadors Keating (Israel), Eilts (Egypt), Pickering (Jordan) and Murphy (Syria), April 14 1975, Box 10, GFD-NSA-MC

<sup>120</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 26, Memcon, October 10, 1975, Doc. 264. Kissinger, Sisco, Saunders *et al.*

<sup>121</sup> Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 47; Khazen. *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 288-91; O'Ballance. *Civil War in Lebanon, 1975-92*. 1998: 4-6; Sayigh. *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*. 1997: 361

leaders rallied behind their preferred candidate for the premiership, Rashid Karami. Karami started working to assemble a new cabinet.<sup>122</sup>

US Ambassador George McMurtrie Godley sent Kissinger his analysis of the Lebanese conflict on June 11. This was the first comprehensive American analysis in the 1975-1976 Lebanese Civil War. Godley presented it as mainly three conflicts: Firstly between Lebanese nationalists and Palestinians, secondly between the right- and left wing, thirdly between Christians and Muslims. He highlighted the Palestinian's role, remarking that the National Movement-Palestinian alliance seemed to have the upper hand in the fighting. Godley saw the Lebanese conflict intrinsically linked with the Palestinian question. As long as the Palestinian situation remained unsolved, Lebanon's problems could only be contained. To contain the situation, Beirut needed a stronger and more effective government. Godley was optimistic that Karami might be the right man for the job.<sup>123</sup> The ambassador did not offer policy advice: "no one can see what can be done other than to preach moderation, negotiation of cessation of bloodshed, etc."<sup>124</sup> By the end of June, Lebanon was becoming so dangerous that Americans travelling to Beirut were being stopped at the airports. Some American citizens in Beirut had been relocated to remove them from the fighting. Godley recommended making basic planning for a potential evacuation of American citizens.<sup>125</sup>

#### **The Karami Government and the July Cease-Fire**

Karami had a hard time forming a new government, as the Phalangists, the National Movement and the PLO all had a say. In the end it was Syria who strong-armed an agreement. The Karami-cabinet was officially formed on July 1, due to Damascus' ability to negotiate with the Christians and put pressure on the Muslims. A cease-fire was established, which lasted until mid-August. The PLO, however, mostly stayed out of the violence throughout the fall.<sup>126</sup>

US Ambassador to Syria, Richard Murphy, lauded Damascus' conciliatory role in Lebanon in a cable to Washington. He acknowledged that Syria had self-serving interests in Lebanon, but

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<sup>122</sup> Khazen. *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 294-5; O'Ballance. *Civil War in Lebanon, 1975-92*. 1998: 7-97

<sup>123</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 7382, Beirut to Secstate, June 11, 1975, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA; BEIRUT 7609, Beirut to Secstate, June 16 1975, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>124</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 7382, Beirut to Secstate, June 11, 1975, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>125</sup> Cable, TOSEC 50073, State to Secstate, July 1, 1975, Box 15, GF-NSA-THAK

<sup>126</sup> Khazen. *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 295-7; O'Ballance. *Civil War in Lebanon, 1975-92*. 1998: 7-9, 10-11

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rejected the view of “some Israelis,” that the Syrians were driven by territorial ambitions. Murphy acknowledged Damascus’ ambitions, but argued that the current Syrian effort was an attempt to stabilize Lebanon. As Murphy saw it, Damascus hoped to avoid choosing between the PLO and a stable Lebanon. The Syrian leadership tried to increase Damascus’ control over the PLO, to rid them of their Lebanese dilemma.<sup>127</sup>

#### Abduction

As the Karami-cabinet was coming together, US Colonel Ernest Morgan was abducted in Beirut. Morgan arrived Beirut 29 June for a layover. According to the State Department, Morgan was returning to his post in Ankara after an exercise in Pakistan.<sup>128</sup> The Colonel took a taxi to the airport for some “reading matter”, and was seized on his return to Beirut.<sup>129</sup> The perpetrators handed Morgan over to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, General Command (PFLP-GC); a Palestinian organization under Syrian influence. The perpetrators demanded food and supplies for the Beirut district Karantina.<sup>130</sup> Karantina was an impoverished refugee camp and the base for several Palestinian guerrillas.<sup>131</sup>

Arafat was eager to demonstrate his usefulness to the US: The PLO, and Arafat personally, started working for Morgan’s release, for which he received a discrete acknowledgement from the US.<sup>132</sup> Arafat had been eager to establish contact with the US since the spring of 1973.<sup>133</sup> The PLO had made two overtures to the US during the first half of 1975. In February, the US Embassy in Beirut had received a Lebanese envoy claiming the PLO leadership was prepared to recognize Israel in exchange for involvement in the US peace process.<sup>134</sup> However, Kissinger was not interested in the PLO: Kissinger instructed the embassy to neither rebuff nor encourage further overtures from the PLO.<sup>135</sup> The second advance came on March 28, when Arafat met US Senator George McGovern in Beirut. Arafat

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<sup>127</sup> Cable, DAMASCUS 3158, Damascus to Secstate, August 18 1975, Box 31, GF-NSA-PC-MESA;

<sup>128</sup> Cable, STATE 156942, Secstate to Damascus, July 3, 1975, NARA-AAD

<sup>129</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 8377, Beirut to Secstate *et al.*, July 2, 1975, NARA-AAD

<sup>130</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 8377, Beirut to Secstate *et al.*, July 2 1975, NARA-AAD; Cable, BEIRUT 8489, Beirut to Secstate, July 5 1975, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>131</sup> Khazen. *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 307, 342; O’Ballance. *Civil War in Lebanon, 1975-92*. 1998: 13-14; Sayigh. *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*. 1997: 344, 365-6

<sup>132</sup> Cables: TOSEC 050115, State to Secstate, July 3 1975, Box 15, GF-NSA-THAK; BEIRUT 8495, Beirut to Secstate, July 7, 1975, NARA-AAD; Cable, STATE 170887, Secstate to Beirut *et al.*, July 19, 1975, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>133</sup> Christison. *Perceptions of Palestine*. 1999: 140-1

<sup>134</sup> The envoy was Sheik Khalil al-Khoury, son of Lebanon’s first president, Bishara al-Khoury. Khoury claimed to be informed by Abu Hassan Salameh, Arafats bodyguard and occasional emissary. Cable, BEIRUT 2526, Beirut to Secstate, 25 February 1975, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA; Khazen. *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 333; Sayigh. *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*. 1997: 364, 380, 392, 403

<sup>135</sup> Cable, STATE 48682, Secstate to Beirut, 4 March 1975, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

told the senator that the PLO had a realistic and pragmatic attitude to a settlement with Israel. McGovern was not thoroughly convinced. Moreover, McGovern was a Democrat and would likely have little influence on Republican foreign policy. Arafat's repeated overtures did not bring him closer to negotiations.<sup>136</sup>

The Egyptian, Lebanese and Syrian governments also began efforts to secure Morgan's release.<sup>137</sup> Syria used the Saiqa guerrilla to investigate.<sup>138</sup> Ambassador Godley told Lebanese Foreign Minister Philippe Takla that the US held the Lebanese government responsible for Morgan's security, to which Takla consented.<sup>139</sup> The US did not want to act independently in Lebanon.<sup>140</sup> Kissinger thought the US should not meet the abductors demands. He told Ford and presidential advisor Brent Scowcroft that paying would encourage abduction of Americans. Kissinger did not believe that Morgan's life was at risk.<sup>141</sup>

On July 8, the State Department started suspecting that the Lebanese government might not secure Morgan's release.<sup>142</sup> Washington started considering other means, estimating that meeting the demands would be about \$300 000.<sup>143</sup> Godley replied that publically denying paying could be coupled with a delivery through a third party.<sup>144</sup> On July 11 food and aid poured into Karantina, under the auspices of Lebanese Prime Minister Karami.<sup>145</sup> Officially, the US did not comply with the abductors' demands. However, historian Edgar O'Ballance claims the US Embassy paid for Karami's Karantina project.<sup>146</sup> O'Ballance's claim cannot be confirmed, but this solution, meeting the demands through a third party, had been suggested: Washington had calculated the cost and Godley had suggested using a third party.<sup>147</sup> On July 12 Colonel Morgan was released unharmed. Washington knew that Syria had worked behind

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<sup>136</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 4044, Beirut to Secstate, 29 March 1975, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>137</sup> Cable, CAIRO 06730, Cairo to Secstate, July 8 1975, NARA-AAD; Cable, BEIRUT 8489, Beirut to Secstate, July 5 1975, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>138</sup> Cable, DAMASC 02568, Damascus to Secstate *et al.*, July 7 1975, NARA-AAD

<sup>139</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 8489, Beirut to Secstate, July 5 1975, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA; Cable, STATE 159778, Secstate to Cairo *et al.*, July 8 1975, NARA-AAD

<sup>140</sup> Cable, STATE 158939, Secstate to Beirut, July 7 1975, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>141</sup> Memcon, Ford, Kissinger, Scowcroft, July 7 1975, Box 13. GFD-NSA-MC

<sup>142</sup> Cable, STATE 159778, Secstate to Cairo *et al.*, July 8 1975, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA; Cable, STATE 160366, Secstate to Beirut, July 8 1975, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>143</sup> Cable, STATE 160366, Secstate to Beirut, July 8 1975, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>144</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 8625, Beirut to Secstate, July 9 1975, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>145</sup> O'Ballance. *Civil War in Lebanon, 1975-92*. 1998: 14; Sayigh. *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*. 1997: 344, 366

<sup>146</sup> O'Ballance. *Civil War in Lebanon, 1975-92*. 1998: 14

<sup>147</sup> Cable, STATE 160366, Secstate to Beirut, July 8 1975, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA; Cable, BEIRUT 8625, Beirut to Secstate, July 9 1975, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

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the scenes to release Morgan and reckoned Damascus had played an important part in Morgan's release.<sup>148</sup>

It seems strange that a US officer travelling from Pakistan to Turkey would make a stop in war-torn Beirut. Kissinger told Ford it was a "State-Defense foulup" that Morgan was ever in Beirut.<sup>149</sup> Seeing the fighting in Beirut first hand, it seems even stranger that the officer would hail an unprotected taxi for something as trivial as newspapers. American newspapers printed rumors that Morgan had claimed to be on a mission to arm the Phalangists, which the US denied.<sup>150</sup> The Lebanese press and leftists circulated several rumors and speculations: that Morgan was on a covert mission for the CIA or that his capture was orchestrated in order to legitimize US intervention.<sup>151</sup> The abduction was nonetheless widely condemned by both the PLO and the Lebanese press.<sup>152</sup> The US State Department and the Beirut embassy denied CIA involvement and affiliation regarding Morgan and his abduction.<sup>153</sup> The State Department instructed Beirut and other Middle East embassies to limit comments on Morgan to the press.<sup>154</sup> There is an abundance of declassified sources on Morgan's abduction. However, they cannot confirm nor debunk the many rumors surrounding Morgan.

#### Renewed Fighting

The cease-fire of late June lasted until the end of August. Jumblatt and the National Movement issued a reform program on August 22, calling for a less sectarian democracy. Gemayel and the Phalangists were strongly opposed to any such reform. They feared that if they lost their upper hand in the Lebanese political system, they would lose the ability to ensure their security. Gemayel demanded security before reforms could be discussed. However, the National Movement did not want to give up their military upper hand for Gemayel's word that reforms would be discussed. Fighting broke out between Christian and Muslim militias, spreading to northern and eastern Lebanon. The PLO stayed out of the fighting that flared up in the late summer of 1975. However, as the violence escalated,

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<sup>148</sup> Sayigh. *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*. 1997: 344, 365-6; Waage. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. 2012: 228

<sup>149</sup> Memcon, Ford, Kissinger, Scowcroft, July 7 1975, Box 13. GFD-NSA-MC

<sup>150</sup> Cable, STATE 157851, Secstate to Beirut *et al.*, July 3 1975, NARA-AAD

<sup>151</sup> Cables: BEIRUT 8476, July 4 1975; BEIRUT 8486, July 5 1975; BEIRUT 8583, July 8 1975; BEIRUT 8598, July 8 1975; BEIRUT 8712, July 9; all Beirut to Secstate, NARA-AAD

<sup>152</sup> Cables: BEIRUT 8476, July 4 1975; BEIRUT 8486, July 5 1975; BEIRUT 8583, July 8 1975; BEIRUT 8598, July 8 1975; BEIRUT 8712, July 9; all Beirut to Secstate, NARA-AAD

<sup>153</sup> Cables: STATE 156597, Secstate to Beirut *et al.*, July 2 1975; BEIRUT 8598, Beirut to Secstate *et al.*, July 8 1975; both NARA-AAD

<sup>154</sup> The instruction went out to embassies in Amman, Ankara, Algiers, Beirut, Cairo, Damascus, Jidda, Rabat and Tunis. Cable, STATE 159498, Secstate to Amman *et al.*, July 7 1975, NARA-AAD

especially towards the beginning of 1976, the PLO was gradually drawn back into the fray. In September, Karami wanted to dispatch the army. He wanted the army to separate the warring factions. Karami was stopped by the National Movement's de facto veto over his government. The National Movement saw army involvement as favoring the Christian demand for security first. Jumblatt would not budge.<sup>155</sup>

The fighting escalated in September. The parliament building in Beirut was sacked, rendering the cabinet largely ineffective. Lebanon's big brother Syria then took the reins again: Foreign Minister Khaddam brought the Lebanese factions to the negotiation table, forming the National Dialogue Committee on September 24. The 20 members of the National Dialogue Committee represented the major Lebanese factions. The Palestinians were not involved. Syria had previously been the only authority that could enforce cooperation. A cease-fire was declared on October 2, but broken by the Phalangists on October 7. Syrian Foreign Minister Khaddam was unable to strong-arm an immediate cease-fire, as he had in the beginning of July.<sup>156</sup>

### Sinai II

In the meantime, Kissinger had produced a second Egyptian-Israeli agreement. The Sinai II agreement was eventually signed on September 4 1975, more than 19 months after its predecessor. It was to be Kissinger's third and last Arab-Israeli agreement.<sup>157</sup> The Sinai II agreement involved Israel pulling back some 30-60 kilometers in the Sinai Peninsula. Washington poured out money to both Israel and Egypt to facilitate the agreement.<sup>158</sup> The US also promised Israel to not engage in official talks with the PLO until the PLO acknowledged Israel's right to exist.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Cleveland and Bunton. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. 2009: 385; Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 48; Khazen. *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 309-13; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*. 2007: 189-90

<sup>156</sup> Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 48-9; Khazen. *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 311, 315-17; O'Ballance. *Civil War in Lebanon, 1975-92*. 1998: 20-21

<sup>157</sup> Dawisha. "Egypt" 1997: 40; Hanhimäki. *The Flawed Architect*. 2004: 324-32; Quandt. *Peace Process*. 2005: 141-3, 148-54, 166-71; Rogan. *The Arabs*. 2011: 468, 487; Shlaim, Avi. *The Iron Wall. Israel and the Arab World*. 2000: 322, 329, 334-40; Spiegel. *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict*. 1985: 305-12; Waage. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. 2012: 398-400; Yapp. *The Near East since the First World War*. 1996: 423; Yaqub. "The Weight of Conquest" 2008: 239, 241-2

<sup>158</sup> About \$750 million Egypt and twice the amount, \$1.5 billion, to Israel. Cleveland and Bunton. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. 2009: 377

<sup>159</sup> Christison. *Perceptions of Palestine*. 1999: 143-4; Cleveland and Bunton. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. 2009: 377; Dawisha. "Egypt" 1997: 40-1; Quandt. *Peace Process*. 2005: 168-170; Shlaim. *The Iron Wall*. 2000: 337-340; Waage. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. 2012: 399; Yapp. *The Near East since the First World War*. 1996: 423; Yaqub. "The Weight of Conquest" 2008: 244

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To Egyptian President Anwar Sadat Sinai II meant entering into a state of non-belligerency with Israel control, regaining control of the Sinai Peninsula oil fields and massive sharp increase in economic aid from the US. The US aid allowed Sadat to reopen the Suez Canal.<sup>160</sup>

To Henry Kissinger, the Sinai II agreement was a victory in the globalist struggle against the Soviet Union, Egypt's traditional backer since the 1950s. It also relieved the pressure on Israel. The agreement gave the Ford administration a foreign policy success, after spring shuttle fiasco. Kissinger did not want to embark upon a new shuttle until after the 1976 US Presidential Election. During the election year US officials sought to garner support from the pro-Israeli population, not to be in a negotiation that might strain the Israeli-American relationship.<sup>161</sup>

To Syria, Sinai II meant estrangement from Egypt. To Assad, Sadat had left him alone as Israel's last neighboring enemy. It also meant that Syria's hope of regaining any of the Golan Heights was put on hold. Israel had occupied the Golan in the 1967 War. Regaining the Golan was of great importance to Assad. He had first tried to win Golan back by force, in the 1973 War. Assad had, in keeping with Kissinger's policy, learned that only the US could help him with Israel. But with the signing of Sinai II, Damascus' door to Washington was shut. The Arab world at large was critical of the Sinai II agreement. Assad wanted to capitalize on this: He sought to accumulate power to rival Sadat as the Arab strongman. Assad had fixed his eyes upon dominating Jordan, Lebanon and the Palestinian resistance. To Lebanon, the Sinai II agreement meant increased Syrian involvement. For the next year Assad sought to dominate Lebanon with increasingly forceful methods, to the increasing frustration of Arafat. This led to increasing Palestinian-Syrian estrangement throughout the 1975-1976 part of the civil war. As all of Kissinger's Arab-Israeli deals, Sinai II meant the marginalization of the Palestinians.<sup>162</sup>

#### Rumored Interventions

By the end of September, President Frangieh and his political allies were exploring the possibility of having a foreign power intervene in Lebanon. An envoy of President Frangieh

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<sup>160</sup> Christison. *Perceptions of Palestine*. 1999: 143-4; Cleveland and Bunton. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. 2009: 377; Dawisha. "Egypt" 1997: 40-1; Waage. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. 2012: 399; Yapp. *The Near East since the First World War*. 1996: 423

<sup>161</sup> Dallek. *Nixon and Kissinger*. 2007: 619; Dawisha. "Egypt" 1997: 40-1; Quandt. *Peace Process*. 2005: 170-2; Seale, Patrick. "Syria" in: Sayigh and Shlaim (eds.). *The Cold War and the Middle East*. 1997: 66-70; Shlaim. *The Iron Wall*. 2000: 341, 347

<sup>162</sup> Khazen. *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 221, 315, 323, 357; Quandt. *Peace Process*. 2005: 170-3; Seale. "Syria" 1997: 66-70; Shlaim. *The Iron Wall*. 2000: 340-2, 347



approached the US Embassy on September 22, asking about a US military intervention. The envoy was the Greek Orthodox cabinet minister Ghassan Tuani. The Eisenhower administration had intervened in the 1958 Lebanese crisis, and the Maronites were hoping the US would once again save the Maronites. Godley rejected the idea, and was backed up by the State Department. Godley replied that he hoped the Arab countries could solve Lebanon's civil war.<sup>163</sup> While Syria was not mentioned specifically, its unequalled position in Lebanon meant that it would likely be a large factor in any "Arab" solution.<sup>164</sup>

In the last half of September, the governments in Amman, Beirut and Damascus reported rumors of an Israeli intervention. All three decried such a move.<sup>165</sup> With a US intervention off the table, the Lebanese Christians were inclined toward a Syrian intervention. Lebanese Foreign Minister Takla visited Washington on September 30. He warned Kissinger that Syrian military intervention might at some point be the solution for the weak Lebanese leadership.<sup>166</sup> Takla was aware of Syria's ambitions to dominate Lebanon, but thought Damascus could help Lebanon in the short run.<sup>167</sup> Takla, himself a Greek Orthodox, was afraid that Israel would intervene in Lebanon, under the pretext of "protecting the Christians of Lebanon".<sup>168</sup> Kissinger and Takla agreed that an Israeli intervention would destabilize both Lebanon and the Middle East. The US had already told Israel to stay out of Lebanon, Kissinger said. However, Kissinger warned against a Syrian intervention. The US could only restrain Israel if Syria stayed out, he warned Takla.<sup>169</sup>

Ford, Kissinger and Scowcroft discussed Syrian intervention in Lebanon briefly on October 9: Kissinger was certain a Syrian invasion would provoke an Israeli counter-invasion. The increasingly violent Lebanese civil war was in danger of turning into a regional conflict, but the trio was at a loss for policy. Kissinger concluded the brief discussion on Lebanon: "On

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<sup>163</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 11800, Beirut to Secstate, September 22 1975, NARA-AAD; Cable, STATE 22736, Secstate to Beirut, September 24, 1975, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>164</sup> Godley in: Cable, BEIRUT 11800, Beirut to Secstate, September 22 1975, NARA-AAD

<sup>165</sup> Cables: AMMAN 6488, Amman to Secstate, September 26 1975, Box 22, GF-NSA-PC-MESA; STATE 238271, Secstate to Beirut, October 7 1975, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA; *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 26, Memcon, September 30, 1975, Doc. 263. Takla, Ghoora, Kabbani *et al.*

<sup>166</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 26, Memcon, September 30, 1975, Doc. 263. Takla, Ghoora, Kabbani *et al.*

<sup>167</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 26, Memcon, September 30, 1975, Doc. 263. Takla, Ghoora, Kabbani *et al.*; Waage. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. 2012: 271

<sup>168</sup> Takla in: *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 26, Memcon, September 30, 1975, Doc. 263. Takla, Ghoora, Kabbani *et al.*

<sup>169</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 26, Memcon, September 30, 1975, Doc. 263. Takla, Ghoora, Kabbani *et al.*

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Lebanon, we have nothing to propose.”<sup>170</sup> This statement sums up US policy, or lack thereof, on Lebanon so far in 1975.<sup>171</sup>

#### **Developing a US Policy Toward Lebanon**

So far, the Ford administration had mostly ignored the Lebanese Civil War. The US Embassy in Beirut had ignored both Christian and Palestinian approaches. Washington had repeatedly supported this position. In 1975 Lebanon was of minimal importance to the US. Lebanon was not a major supplier of oil and there was no threat of increased Soviet influence. There was international trade in Beirut, but its importance had waned with Lebanon’s economic recession in the 1960s and 1970s. Neither was Lebanon, or even the PLO, a serious threat to Israel’s security.<sup>172</sup>

In October Washington’s interest in Lebanon increased, and the US began developing a more involved policy. Both Lebanese and regional factors facilitated the change in US attitude: Internally, the fighting had escalated beyond the violence of the spring. The violence paralyzed the Lebanese government. The Syrian leadership, who had largely ended the fighting of the spring, was unable to establish a lasting cease-fire. Moreover, the violence posed a threat to US citizens in Lebanon. There were also regional factors: The signing of the Sinai II agreement had freed the US to look at other factors in the Middle East. Rumors of both Israeli and Syrian interventions propelled Lebanon to the forefront of the White House’s attention. The US reasoned that outside military interference would jeopardize Kissinger’s diplomatic framework, particularly Sinai II. The US’ reasoning was that a Syrian intervention would cause an Israeli intervention and vice versa. If Israel intervened, it would occupy southern Lebanon and wage war on the PLO. If the Syrian Army stood by as Israel wiped out the PLO, Washington reckoned Assad would have to come to the PLO or lose his domestic and Arab standing. Washington concluded that foreign intervention was likely to cause an Israeli-Syrian war, which would complicate a new Israeli-Syrian agreement in the future. Additionally, Washington thought Moscow would be compelled to get more involved, to save the Soviet equipped Syrian Army from defeat at the hands of the IDF. The US would then have to support Israel. Moreover, the US thought an Israeli-Syrian war was likely to turn into an Arab-Israeli war. Sadat in Egypt would come domestic and regional pressure to revoke

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<sup>170</sup> Memcon, Ford, Kissinger and Scowcroft, October 9 1975, Box 15, GFD-NSA-MC

<sup>171</sup> Memcon, Ford, Kissinger and Scowcroft, October 9 1975, Box 15, GFD-NSA-MC

<sup>172</sup> For Lebanon’s waning economy, see chapter 2. Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon, 1967-1976*. 2000: 395-7

Sinai II in objection to the Israeli intervention. In short, the Lebanese Civil War was of no interest to the US, but was “a dangerous sideshow” that might ruin Kissinger’s Middle East policy.<sup>173</sup>

The fighting in the fall of 1975 became bloodier than it had been during the spring. Lebanon’s civic and political life became submerged in the war. The parliament could not assemble regularly, disabling the legislative branch of Lebanon. The members of the government were increasingly becoming parties in the conflict: The antipathy between Prime Minister Karami on one side, and Interior Minister Chamoun and President Frangieh on the other, was rendering the executive branch of Lebanon ineffective. The increased violence was posing a danger to US citizens. An evacuation plan was being kept on hold, pending further instructions. The Lebanese Army had been a pacifying force between the factions in the spring, but in the fall of 1975 the army was gradually becoming an actor on the Christian side of the civil war. The polarization of the army was a result of the power struggle between Maronite Interior Minister Chamoun and Sunni Prime Minister Rashid Karami.<sup>174</sup>

On October 10 Ambassador Godley recommended increasing the US effort in Lebanon.<sup>175</sup> Godley postulated a situation where the US would be drawn into the civil war: Increased Palestinian involvement would cause Israel to enter the conflict, pulling the US in with it. Alternatively, the US could get more involved before the civil war turned into a regional one. Godley feared that the Christians assumed the US would back them up no matter what, even if he continually rebuffed Christian leaders that inquired about US involvement. Godley thought the best approach was western diplomacy and pressure on the Christians, coordinated with Syrian pressure on the National Movement and the PLO. The internal actors in Lebanon were unable to calm things down. Even Syria was unable to strong-arm an agreement. Godley argued that the regional power struggle following Sinai II was distracting Syria from containing the Lebanese conflict.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Quote “a dangerous sideshow in: Gerges, Fawaz A. “Lebanon” 1997: 94. References: *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 26, Memcon, October 10, 1975, Doc. 264. Kissinger, Sisco, Saunders *et al.*; Memo, “WSAG on Lebanon, Portugal and Italy, Monday, October 13, 1975” Granger to Kissinger, October 11, 1975, Box 20, GF-NSC-USIF; Issues memo, “What Should the U.S. do About Lebanon?,” October 11, 1975, Box 20, GF-NSC-USIF; Draft CIA paper “The Lebanon Crisis,” October 11, 1975, Box 20, GF-NSC-USIF; *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 26, Memcon, October 13, 1975, Doc. 265. Kissinger, Ingersoll, Atherton *et al.*

<sup>174</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 12637, Beirut to Secstate, October 10 1975, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>175</sup> Cable, STATE 241300, Secstate to Beirut,

Cable, BEIRUT 12637, Beirut to Secstate, October 10 1975, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>176</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 12637, Beirut to Secstate, October 10 1975, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

### Chapter 3 – The Civil War Begins

The White House summoned a group of key policymakers in a *Washington Special Actions Group* (WSAG) meeting, to discuss Lebanon on October 10 and 13. Kissinger's principal concern was preventing a situation where civil war endangered the Sinai II agreement or American influence in the Middle East. The WSAG was a group comprised of members from several departments, gathered to develop a US response to sudden events and crises. Kissinger headed the October WSAG meetings on Lebanon, with representatives from the Departments of State and Defense, the NSC, the CIA and the topmost military command. President Ford was not present.<sup>177</sup>

The group discussed Lebanon with reference to the recurring rumors of and requests for intervention. The problem, the groups agreed, was that a foreign intervention in Lebanon would disrupt the US diplomatic efforts with Israel's neighbors, especially the recent Egyptian-Israeli agreement. A Syrian intervention was not presented as a problem in itself. The WSAG agreed that Syrian intervention would certainly trigger an Israeli counter-intervention. Even if Syria was to enter under the pretext of helping the Christians, Kissinger was sure that Israel would intervene militarily. In case of a dual intervention, the policymakers thought Lebanon would become a battleground for an Israeli-Syrian war. Joseph Sisco, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs and a key player in Kissinger's diplomacy, thought Sinai II *might* survive an Israeli-Syrian war in Lebanon. However, the WSAG thought an Israeli-Syrian war in Lebanon was likely to draw in other Arab states in the region and turn into a new Arab-Israeli war. The group concluded that a dual intervention was the worst possible outcome in Lebanon.<sup>178</sup>

The WSAG raised two situations that would provoke outside intervention: Firstly, a radical Lebanon dominated by Jumblatt and Arafat. Secondly, a Lebanon so submerged in chaos that either Syria or Israel would intervene to stabilize Lebanon. Israel would intervene to prevent Lebanon from turning into a state that sanctioned or aided guerrilla attacks on Israel. Syria wanted to dominate Lebanon to rival Egypt as one of the great Arab power in the Levant. Syrian President Hafez al-Assad could not dominate Lebanon if it was in constant conflict

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<sup>177</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 26, Memcon, October 10, 1975, Doc. 264. Kissinger, Sisco, Saunders *et al.*; *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 26, Memcon, October 13, 1975, Doc. 265. Kissinger, Ingersoll, Atherton *et al.*; Hanhimäki. *The Flawed Architect*. 2004: 24

<sup>178</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 26, Memcon, October 10, 1975, Doc. 264. Kissinger, Sisco, Saunders *et al.*; *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 26, Memcon, October 13, 1975, Doc. 265. Kissinger, Ingersoll, Atherton *et al.*

with Israel. Israel was militarily superior to Syria. Assad would rather intervene and take control of Lebanon than see Israel doing the same.<sup>179</sup>

The State Department summarized that the US should work to prevent the Lebanese conflict from turning into a Middle East war. In particular, this meant to keep Israel and Syria from an intervention that might antagonize the other. The Lebanese conflict itself was not a primary concern. The State Department summary did not make a distinction between Israeli and Syrian intervention. Syrian intervention was only deemed a major concern because it was taken for granted that Israel would follow.<sup>180</sup>

The WSAG went on to discuss how intervention might be avoided. The CIA and the State Department supplied extensive working papers. The papers saw Syria as the only power able to stabilize Lebanon. The main US goal was identified as avoiding a regional war involving Israel, with emphasis on the survival of Sinai II. The papers recommended that the US allow the Syrian political effort, but dissuade a military intervention. In addition the US should work to limit the spiraling violence. The increasing intensity of the war polarized the Lebanese, impeded the Syrian effort and might provoke both Israeli and Syrian. Escalation could be limited by involving outside powers: Different Arab states, including Saudi Arabia and Libya, had some influence with various leftist and Palestinian factions. France and the Vatican also had some authority over the Maronites. Washington decided to approach these Arab and European powers, hoping to keep the civil war from escalating.<sup>181</sup>

The WSAG started discussing how the situation might be solved. US or joint Arab military intervention was dismissed without discussion. The group started looking at how the civil war might be calmed down, hoping this would remove Israeli and Syrian incentives to intervene. CIA director William Colby started to discuss what could be done regarding Lebanon's internal problems: He said the Muslims must be awarded more prominent position in the

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<sup>179</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 26, Memcon, October 10, 1975, Doc. 264. Kissinger, Sisco, Saunders *et al.*

<sup>180</sup> Briefing memo, Atherton to Deputy Secretary, October 13, 1975 WSAG Lebanon meeting, Box 20, GF-NSC-USIF

<sup>181</sup> CIA paper: Paper, DCI briefing, October 10, 1975, WSAG Lebanon meeting, Box 25, GF-NSC-USIF; State paper: Memo, Issues memo, "What Should the U.S. do About Lebanon?," October 13, 1975 WSAG Lebanon meeting, Box 20, GF-NSC-USIF

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Lebanese society.<sup>182</sup> Kissinger did not want to discuss such *regionalist* details of Lebanon's problems. He promptly put his realist globalism back on the agenda.<sup>183</sup>

“I want to define our own interests. I have no particular interest in Lebanon's internal affairs if they do not involve outside countries. I don't want us involved in their internal affairs. Our concern is to prevent outside interference.”<sup>184</sup>

Colby raised Lebanon's internal problems again, later, suggesting that the US work to bring about a dialogue. Kissinger reiterated his objection to direct US involvement. “I don't want us to get in.”<sup>185</sup>

The WSAG agreed that the US should not get involved in Lebanon, militarily or politically. The US should rather try to influence the situation indirectly, letting an Arab state assume the leading role. Deputy Secretary of Defense William Clements wanted to place Saudi Arabia at the center of the US effort. Kissinger, however, thought the new Saudi leadership was too weak to handle the Lebanese situation.<sup>186</sup> King Faisal of Saudi Arabia had been assassinated in March and been replaced by the inexperienced Khalid.<sup>187</sup> Kissinger and the rest of the WSAG agreed that Syria had to be placed at the core of the US' approach to Lebanon.<sup>188</sup>

The policymakers agreed that Washington should not interfere with Damascus' effort, as long as Syria did not annex Lebanon, or the Israeli or Lebanese government objected. Kissinger wanted to tell Damascus that “we are holding the Israelis back but not in every contingency.”<sup>189</sup> As long as Syria did not intervene militarily, the US could keep Israel out of Lebanon. Alfred Atherton mentioned that even if an Israeli counter-intervention could not be avoided, it might be delayed. Kissinger decided the US needed to find out how much Syrian involvement Israel could tolerate before intervening. The group decided that the US should keep a low profile in the conflict. Kissinger decided to keep Egypt, Israel, Saudi Arabia and

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<sup>182</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 26, Memcon, October 10, 1975, Doc. 264. Kissinger, Sisco, Saunders *et al.*

<sup>183</sup> For regionalism and globalism, see chapter one. *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 26, Memcon, October 10, 1975, Doc. 264. Kissinger, Sisco, Saunders *et al.*

<sup>184</sup> Kissinger in: *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 26, Memcon, October 10, 1975, Doc. 264. Kissinger, Sisco, Saunders *et al.*

<sup>185</sup> Kissinger in: *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 26, Memcon, October 10, 1975, Doc. 264. Kissinger, Sisco, Saunders *et al.*

<sup>186</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 26, Memcon, October 10, 1975, Doc. 264. Kissinger, Sisco, Saunders *et al.*; *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 26, Memcon, October 13, 1975, Doc. 265. Kissinger, Ingersoll, Atherton *et al.*

<sup>187</sup> Cleveland and Bunton. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. 2009: 459

<sup>188</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 26, Memcon, October 10, 1975, Doc. 264. Kissinger, Sisco, Saunders *et al.*; *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 26, Memcon, October 13, 1975, Doc. 265. Kissinger, Ingersoll, Atherton *et al.*

<sup>189</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 26, Memcon, October 13, 1975, Doc. 265. Kissinger, Ingersoll, Atherton *et al.*

Syria informed of the US involvement. He wanted to ask for advice and avoid the impression that the US was colluding with any of the other parties.<sup>190</sup>

To support Damascus' effort in Lebanon, Washington would work to get Lebanese actors to support Syria. Colby wanted to strengthen the "moderates" in Lebanon, meaning Karami and Chamoun, and weaken the "extremists", the National Movement, the PLO and the Phalange.<sup>191</sup> Sisco and Kissinger agreed on conferring with Lebanese foreign minister Philippe Takla. However, Kissinger did not want to contact any other actors before conferring with Saudi Arabia and Syria. Washington decided to appeal to the Phalangists and the PLO to cool down conflict. The US would contact the Phalangists directly, through the embassy in Beirut. Washington would ask Saudi Arabia to restrain the PLO, as Saudi Arabia was an important benefactor of the PLO.<sup>192</sup>

Ford and Kissinger talked about the Lebanese Civil War on October 16. The meeting was more reminiscent of a briefing than a policy discussion. Ford asked if the US could send troops to Lebanon, as Eisenhower did in 1958. Kissinger replied that Egypt would object, jeopardizing the implementation of Sinai II. Ford agreed that the US had "to keep anyone from intervening."<sup>193</sup>

In summary, the US policy toward Lebanon developed by mid-October was keeping Lebanon calm. The overarching policy goal was to avoid a regional war. Such a war might endanger the implementation of Sinai II. The general outline of the US strategy sketched at the WSAG meetings was to calm the actors. Syria was to be approached directly. PLO was to be pacified through Saudi Arabia. The strategy to calm down the Phalangists remained uncertain. Atherton wanted to correct the Phalange misperception that the US would come to their aid as they had done in 1958. Kissinger was afraid this rejection would cause the Phalangists to lose hope completely, awarding the National Movement and PLO a swift victory. The WSAG wanted to apply the "keep cool" strategy to Israel as well.<sup>194</sup> In Kissinger's opinion the US

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<sup>190</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 26, Memcon, October 10, 1975, Doc. 264. Kissinger, Sisco, Saunders *et al.*; *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 26, Memcon, October 13, 1975, Doc. 265. Kissinger, Ingersoll, Atherton *et al.*

<sup>191</sup> Phrases "extremists" and "moderates" used in: *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 26, Memcon, October 13, 1975, Doc. 265. Kissinger, Ingersoll, Atherton *et al.*

<sup>192</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 26, Memcon, October 10, 1975, Doc. 264. Kissinger, Sisco, Saunders *et al.* *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 26, Memcon, October 13, 1975, Doc. 265. Kissinger, Ingersoll, Atherton *et al.*

<sup>193</sup> Memcon, Ford, Kissinger and Scowcroft, October 16, 1975, Box 16, GFD-NSA-MC

<sup>194</sup> The term "cool" for calming down the situation was used by both General George S. Brown of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) and CIA Director William Colby. *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 26, Memcon, October 13, 1975, Doc. 265. Kissinger, Ingersoll, Atherton *et al.*

### Chapter 3 – The Civil War Begins

did not have much leverage on Israel. Kissinger wanted to ask Israel precisely how far Syria could go before Israel would intervene.<sup>195</sup>

#### Implementing US Policy

To carry out the decisions of the WSAG meetings, Washington contacted the embassies in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria and Israel.

The US Ambassador in Jidda talked to several Saudi leaders. The WSAG wanted Saudi leaders to use their influence with the factions in Lebanon, hoping the increasingly bloody civil war could be calmed down. The Saudis agreed with the US' approach and said they were already talking to Arafat and Jumblatt, as well as Frangieh. However, the Saudis were pessimistic. The Saudi leaders said the actors in Lebanon could be reasoned with, but they had little control of their own troops. Saudi Arabia concluded that there was little they could do to affect the Lebanese Civil War, and offered no advice to the US Ambassador.<sup>196</sup>

Word from Cairo was much the same. US Ambassador to Cairo Hermann Eilts spoke with Egyptian Foreign Minister Ismail Fahmy. Fahmy said Egypt too was preaching moderation to the factions in Lebanon. Like the Saudis, Fahmy had little advice to offer the US, other than to restrain Syria. Fahmy thought Syria was "actively helping to fan the blaze" in Lebanon.<sup>197</sup> This was contrary to the US understanding of Syria's role. President Anwar Sadat of Egypt and Assad of Syria had been at loggerheads since the signing of the Sinai II agreement. Sadat had actively tried to sabotage the Assad's standing in the Arab world ever since. Sadat did not want Assad to emerge as the Arab leader who had solved the crisis in Lebanon. Fahmy urged the US to do anything to limit Syria's aggravation of situation.<sup>198</sup>

Godley, The US Ambassador in Beirut, was afraid that the enmity between Assad in Syria and Sadat in Egypt would inflame the violence in Lebanon. Godley saw Assad as the only force able to calm the Lebanese situation. Godley hoped Eilts could convince Sadat to tone

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<sup>195</sup> *FRUS, 1969-76, Vol. 26: October 10, 1975, "264. Minutes of Washington Special Actions Groups Meeting"; FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. 26, Memcon, October 13, 1975, Doc. 265. Kissinger, Ingersoll, Atherton et al.*

<sup>196</sup> Cable, JIDDA 6847, Jidda to Beirut *et al.*, October 11, 1975, NARA-AAD

<sup>197</sup> Cable, CAIRO 10240, Cairo to Secstate *et al.*, October 14, 1975, Box 6, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>198</sup> Cable, CAIRO 10240, Cairo to Secstate *et al.*, October 14, 1975, Box 6, GF-NSA-PC-MESA; Cable, CAIRO 10804, Cairo to Secstate *et al.*, October 28, 1975, Box 6, GF-NSA-PC-MESA



down his criticism of Assad's role in Lebanon. This would greatly increase the chance of a more stable Lebanon, in Godley's opinion.<sup>199</sup>

Following Godley's query, Eilts told Washington that the US should avoid giving specific counsel as to how Egypt should handle Lebanon. The Egyptian government was highly suspicious of Syria's intentions in Lebanon. After the signing of Sinai II, Assad had criticized Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and his government.<sup>200</sup> Sadat and Fahmy visited the White House in late October 1975. Sadat and Lebanon was briefly discussed. The Egyptian leaders did not openly criticize Assad, but thought someone else should take over the mediation process. Sadat suggested the Arab League. The Egyptian president begged his American colleague to keep Israel from intervening in Lebanon.<sup>201</sup>

Kissinger was positive to the Syrian effort in Lebanon. Kissinger told Assad, via Ambassador Murphy in Damascus, that the US was working to keep Israel from intervening in Lebanon. However, he warned Assad, the US could not restrain Israel if Syria intervened. Kissinger asked Assad to share his future plans on Lebanon.<sup>202</sup> Assad was reluctant to show the US any concrete plans. Ambassador Murphy told Kissinger that Assad was openly suspicious of the US. According to Murphy, Assad thought the US was using the Lebanese Civil War to divert attention from Sinai II. Assad inquisitorially asked why Kissinger had mentioned the Israeli intervention. Murphy thought Assad was suspecting an Israeli-US conspiracy on Lebanon. Murphy assured Assad that there was no collusion. When asked for advice, Syrian Foreign Minister Abdul Halim Khaddam told the US to preach moderation and reconciliation to the factions in Lebanon. Throughout 1975 Arab and US policymakers talked about preaching moderation and reconciliation, without affecting the Lebanese situation much. Only Syria had been able to force the Lebanese factions to cooperate. However, the current Syrian effort, the National Dialogue Committee, had so far been unable to calm down the Lebanese situation.<sup>203</sup>

Ambassador Malcolm Toon talked to Israeli Foreign Minister Yigal Allon October 14, after being instructed by Kissinger.<sup>204</sup> Toon reminded Israel to stay out of Lebanon. Allon promised to practice restraint, but said that Israel would consider Syrian intervention a direct

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<sup>199</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 13090, Beirut to Secstate *et al.*, October 22, 1975, NARA-AAD; Cable, BEIRUT 13285, Beirut to Secstate *et al.*, October 25, 1975, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>200</sup> Cable, CAIRO 10804, Cairo to Secstate *et al.*, October 28, 1975, Box 6, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>201</sup> Memcon, Ford, Sadat, Kissinger, Fahmy, October 27, 1975, Box 16, GFD-NSA-MC

<sup>202</sup> Cable, STATE 243490, Secstate to Damascus, October 14, 1975, NARA-AAD

<sup>203</sup> Cable, TOSEC 160002, Secstate to Secretary aircraft, October 17, 1975, Box 17, GF-NSA-THAK

<sup>204</sup> Cable, STATE 243279, Secstate to Tel Aviv *et al.*, October 11, 1976, NARA-AAD

### Chapter 3 – The Civil War Begins

threat to Israel's security.<sup>205</sup> However, Allon noted that Syria seemed to be following Israel's public statements closely, adjusting their actions so as to minimize the chance of a confrontation with Israel.<sup>206</sup>

Kissinger instructed ambassador Toon to probe Allon on how Israel would react to a potential Syrian intervention. Washington wanted to find out if there was some kind of intervention Israel would tolerate.<sup>207</sup> Allon replied that Israel's reaction to a Syrian intervention would depend on the size, intention and location of a Syrian intervention. Allon would not give an estimate to what Israel could tolerate, but said Israel would confer with the US before intervening.<sup>208</sup>

Washington paid the Lebanese Civil War little heed the first six months. Lebanon's problems were overshadowed by Kissinger's diplomacy. As Washington saw the Lebanese Civil War as an internal affair, it was of little importance to the globalist thinking that dominated US foreign policy. However, after the Sinai II agreement was signed, the US picked up rumors of foreign intervention. The possible implications intervention might have on the US influence in the region suddenly made Lebanon more important. Specifically, Washington was worried that intervention would lead to an Arab-Israeli confrontation in the Middle East, ruining Kissinger's diplomatic effort.

By October 1976, the US had come to view Syria as the most capable power in Lebanon. Damascus had showed its ability to put pressure on the Lebanese, factions, including President Frangieh. The US credited Syria with establishing the Karami government, establishing the cease-fire that lasted through the summer and assisting in the release of Colonel Morgan. However, the Syrian effort was becoming ineffective and Lebanon was suffering as a result: Damascus was unable to enforce a political settlement through the National Dialogue Committee. Damascus was equally unable to stop the fighting. Several cease-fires were announced, but they were all broken within days. The violence spiraled, as the Lebanese politicians were unable to control their militias. The PLO had refrained from large-scale involvement in the fighting since the spring, but Arafat was unable to enforce non-involvement and the PLO was gradually drawn back into the civil war.

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<sup>205</sup> Cable, TEL AVIV 6562, Tel Aviv to Secstate *et al.*, October 16, 1975, Box 18, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>206</sup> Cable, TEL AVIV 6750, Tel Aviv to Beirut, October 24, 1975, Box 19, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>207</sup> Cable, STATE 248387, Secstate to Tel Aviv, October 18, 1975, Box 5, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>208</sup> Cable, TEL AVIV 6750, Tel Aviv to Beirut, October 24, 1975, Box 19, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

## Chapter 4: Syria's Changing Alignment

“We just cannot seem to influence the situation. I don't think we have the capacity.”<sup>209</sup>

After a summer of relative calm, the Lebanese Civil War had reignited in the end of August and escalated during September. The civil war took a turn for the worse in late October 1975. Leftist and Maronite forces clashed in a violent offensive to gain control over the Beirut hotel district on October 24. The “Battle of the Hotels” was the final blow to Beirut's hotel industry, which had so far remained somewhat functional.<sup>210</sup> The hotels were captured for their strategic value: The towering buildings were excellent vantage points and militia bases, from which the occupants could sniper and shell their enemies. When Muslim forces seemed to be winning the battles, Interior Minister and Maronite Camille Chamoun sent 2000 army soldiers into the area, to act as a buffer between the fighters. The deployment of the army brought the fighting to an end and saved the Christian militias trapped between Muslim towers from being defeated. Fighting spread throughout Lebanon and Beirut was being submerged in a state of total war. The death tolls rose and international businesses left Lebanon, leaving vast numbers of people without employment and income.<sup>211</sup>

For the first six months of the civil war, the US had tried its best to avoid involvement. In September Kissinger had completed his last Egyptian-Israeli shuttle, resulting in the Sinai II agreement. The US had become more involved in October, when Washington began to suspect that Israel or Syria would intervene in Lebanon, resulting in regional war and ruining the US diplomatic framework in the Middle East.<sup>212</sup>

The US had encouraged all Arab states to preach moderation to all the factions in Lebanon, but the state of war had not abated. On the contrary, it had taken a turn for the worse with the

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<sup>209</sup> Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Joseph Sisco discussing the Lebanese civil war in: *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Vol. 26, Memcon, October 28, 1975, Doc. 266, Kissinger, Ingersoll, Sisco *et al.*

<sup>210</sup> Phrase in: O'Ballance. *Civil War in Lebanon, 1975-92*, 1998: 27

<sup>211</sup> Khazen. *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 317; O'Ballance. *Civil War in Lebanon, 1975-92*, 1998: 27-9, 35, 37; Rogan. *The Arabs*. 2011: 482; Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle and the Search for State*. 1997: 370-2; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*. 2007: 192; Waage. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. 2012: 228

<sup>212</sup> See Chapter 3

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Battle of the Hotels. Kissinger and his State Department staff discussed the increased violence on October 28. The problem, according to Assistant Secretary Alfred Atherton, was that the supply of weapons was seemingly infinite.<sup>213</sup> Syria was supplying the leftists, and Atherton reckoned Israel was arming the Christian groups. Kissinger and Under Secretary Joseph Sisco concluded that there was little chance of a swift end to the civil war, as neither side seemed to be running short on weapons or manpower.<sup>214</sup> In Sisco’s opinion, Lebanon could only be stabilized if the sectarian distribution of power was redressed. Kissinger brushed him aside, reminding him “there isn’t anything we can do.”<sup>215</sup> Sisco concluded: “We just cannot seem to influence the situation.”<sup>216</sup>

The foreign power most involved in Lebanon during the Civil War was Syria. President Hafez al-Assad wanted to rival Egypt’s Anwar Sadat as the Arab strongman in the Levant. Assad saw Lebanon, as well as Jordan and the Palestinian resistance movement, as within his sphere of interest. Following the Egyptian-Israeli Sinai II agreement of September, Syria had amplified its effort in Lebanon. To fortify his power over Lebanon and demonstrate his resolve, Assad needed to stabilize Lebanon. The latest and largest Syrian effort to end the civil war was the National Dialogue Committee, initiated in late September. In the Dialogue Committee, Syria tried to bring about a political settlement between the Lebanese factions.<sup>217</sup>

### The Collapse of the National Dialogue Committee

The Dialogue Committee was presided over by Chamoun and Karami. Both the leftist-Muslim *Lebanese National Movement* and the rightist-Christian Phalangists were represented, while the PLO announced its support from the sidelines. Syria led the mediation effort, spearheaded by Foreign Minister Abdul Halim Khaddam. National Movement’s call for reform of the sectarian political system was at the heart of the discussions. Gemayel insisted that reform was a discussion for parliament. Gemayel threatened to leave the Dialogue Committee if it adopted any reforms on the political representation.<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> Atherton’s full title: Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs

<sup>214</sup> Sisco’s full title: Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs

<sup>215</sup> *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Vol. 26, Memcon, October 28, 1975, Doc. 266, Kissinger, Ingersoll, Sisco *et al.*

<sup>216</sup> *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Vol. 26, Memcon, October 28, 1975, Doc. 266, Kissinger, Ingersoll, Sisco *et al.*

<sup>217</sup> See chapter three. Cleveland and Bunton. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. 2009: 405; Waage. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. 2012: 271; Yapp. *The Near East since the First World War*. 1996: 264

<sup>218</sup> Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 316; Traboulsi. *A History A History of Modern Lebanon*. 2007: 190

## Chapter 4 – Syria’s Changing Alignment

By early November, the Dialogue Committee had still not succeeded in limiting the violence. France and the Vatican both sent emissaries to Lebanon within the first half of the month, but made no impact. They both talked to Christians and Muslims, and tried to exert influence where they could, without luck.<sup>219</sup>

Kamal Jumblatt, Druze chief and leader of the leftist *Lebanese National Movement*, wanted to reform the political system, abolishing sectarian prerogatives in Lebanon. Most of the Dialogue Committee approved of somewhat reducing the political sectarianism, including Maronite Raymond Eddé, leader of the *Lebanese National Bloc*. The troika of Maronite leaders blocked the Dialogue Committee’s attempts at political reform: Phalangist leader Pierre Gemayel, along with his allies Interior Minister Chamoun and President Frangieh.<sup>220</sup>

The Dialogue Committee was doomed from the get go. Chamoun only attended the first sessions. Chamoun was one of the principal actors on the Christian side of the conflict and the Interior Minister in Karami’s cabinet. With him gone, the Committee had little chance of producing results that would materialize. The principal matter of discussion was the sectarian political system, so when Gemayel boycotted these discussions, the Dialogue Committee was terminal. There was no basis for a consensual approach in Lebanon. The Maronite and Muslim blocs were too far apart to find grounds for compromise. This was especially true for the Gemayel and the Phalangists, and Jumblatt and the National Movement. Additionally, no Lebanese authority could implement any changes that would end the civil war. In the nine sessions and two months that made up the Dialogue, each party reiterated its already well-publicized views. The Dialogue Committee grew into a rising screaming contest, only drowned out by the increasing cacophony of the violence outside. On November 24, the unsuccessful Dialogue Committee held its last session.<sup>221</sup>

On November 1, as the Committee was failing, the US Ambassador to Lebanon sent Washington his policy recommendations. The recommendations of the Ambassador, George McMurtrie Godley, focused on Syria, Karami and the Maronites. Godley urged Ford or

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<sup>219</sup> Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 49; Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 320

<sup>220</sup> Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 49; Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 311-2, 315-6; Traboulsi. *A History A History of Modern Lebanon*. 2007: 190-1

<sup>221</sup> Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 49; Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 311-12, 315-16; O’Ballance. *Civil War in Lebanon, 1975-92, 1998*: 35; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*. 2007: 191

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Kissinger to issue unambiguous support for Prime Minister Karami’s attempt at arranging a lasting cease-fire. The Ambassador hoped such a statement would calm down the Phalangists and their allies.<sup>222</sup> Kissinger sent a statement supporting Karami, to be issued from the Beirut Embassy. Washington thought it unlikely that the statement would have any impact.<sup>223</sup> Godley also thought the US should promote France as mediator, as the French had historical and strong ties to the Maronites.<sup>224</sup> Washington was supportive of a French initiative. The US Embassy in Paris started inquiries.<sup>225</sup> France’s involvement began immediately, and would increase in the first half of 1976.<sup>226</sup>

Ambassador Godley underlined the importance of keeping the Syrian diplomatic effort going. As long as Damascus’ political efforts did not fail, Godley wrote, Assad had no reason to increase his military effort. The Embassy received reports that Syrian military, disguised as Saiqa militia, were fighting along National Movement and PLO troops in Zahlé, a Christian town in the Shia dominated Beqaa Valley.<sup>227</sup> Assad had introduced Saiqa forces into Lebanon since June 1975.<sup>228</sup> Godley thought the increased presence of Syrian fighters was likely to infuriate the Maronite leaders, further thwarting Assad’s diplomatic effort. This would give Damascus’ an increased incentive to use military force.<sup>229</sup>

Washington thought increased Syrian military involvement would provoke Israel to intervene in southern Lebanon, possibly causing an Arab-Israeli war.<sup>230</sup> Washington did not issue any public support for Assad and Khaddam’s effort in Lebanon. The US would not have wanted to be identified with Syria, to avoid provoking Egypt or, more importantly, Israel. Ford and Kissinger did not follow up on Assad’s Lebanese effort until 1976, when Washington once again grew afraid of an Israeli intervention.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 13625, Beirut to Secstate et al., November 1, 1975, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA; Cable, BEIRUT 13650, Beirut to Secstate, November 2, 1975, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>223</sup> Cable, STATE 261600, Secstate to Damascus, November 6, 1975, NARA-AAD

<sup>224</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 13625, Beirut to Secstate et al., November 1, 1975, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA; Cable, BEIRUT 13650, Beirut to Secstate, November 2, 1975, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>225</sup> Cable, STATE 260946, Secstate to Paris *et al.*, November 4, 1975, NARA-AAD

<sup>226</sup> Shown later in this chapter, as well as in chapter five

<sup>227</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 13625, Beirut to Secstate et al., November 1, 1975, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA; Cable, BEIRUT 13650, Beirut to Secstate, November 2, 1975, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA; Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 57

<sup>228</sup> Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 323; O’Ballance. *Civil War in Lebanon, 1975-92*, 1998: 10, 27-30; Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle and the Search for State*. 1997: 371

<sup>229</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 13625, Beirut to Secstate et al., November 1, 1975, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>230</sup> *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Vol. 26, Memcon, October 10, 1975, Doc. 264, Kissinger, Sisco, Saunders *et al.*; *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Vol. 26, Memcon, October 13, 1975, Doc. 265, Kissinger, Ingersoll, Atherton *et al.*

<sup>231</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 13625, Beirut to Secstate et al., November 1, 1975, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

### The Frangieh-Karami Accord

Between themselves, the Maronite trio of Chamoun, Frangieh and Gemayel controlled the army, the government and the largest Christian militias. Arafat, and Jumblatt blocked the army from direct participation in the fighting and the government was increasingly impotent.<sup>232</sup> The army enabled the illegal deliveries of arms to the Maronites. Karami thought the president was sabotaging him. In protest and frustration, Karami isolated himself in the government building. By the start of November the Frangieh-Karami partnership was bordering on enmity.<sup>233</sup>

A motley collection of powers tried to resolve the Frangieh-Karami conflict: French, Palestinian, Papal and Syrian mediators contributed to thawing the ice-front between Frangieh and Karami.<sup>234</sup> In keeping with Kissinger’s words to his staff on October 28, the US stayed out of any mediation.<sup>235</sup> The Frangieh-Karami Accord came about on November 14. The two agreed to work more closely and discuss the political system.<sup>236</sup> As a nod to the National Movement, Karami hinted that the representation of Christian and Muslim representatives might be changed from 6:5 to an equal distribution.<sup>237</sup> Jumblatt rejected this idea on principle. Jumblatt and The National Movement’s goal was to abolish the confessional system (*deconfessionalism*), not to amend it.<sup>238</sup> Some Muslims, including the National Movement, thought a 1:1 distribution of legislative representatives was a lesser injustice than 6:5. But being the majority, they still saw equal distribution as overrepresentation of the Christians.<sup>239</sup>

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Syria’s mediation was unable to lead the Dialogue Committee to compromise, but Khaddam’s effort was not fruitless. The two months of meetings allowed Syrian Foreign Minister Khaddam to alternately pressure and support the Muslim bloc, especially Jumblatt and the

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<sup>232</sup> Traboulsi. *A History A History of Modern Lebanon*. 2007: 189-90

<sup>233</sup> Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 49; Traboulsi. *A History A History of Modern Lebanon*. 2007: 191-2

<sup>234</sup> Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 49

<sup>235</sup> *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Vol. 26, Memcon, October 28, 1975, Doc. 266, Kissinger, Ingersoll, Sisco *et al.*

<sup>236</sup> Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 50; O’Ballance. *Civil War in Lebanon, 1975-92*, 1998: 34

<sup>237</sup> O’Ballance. *Civil War in Lebanon, 1975-92*, 1998: 34

<sup>238</sup> Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 50; Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 309-13

<sup>239</sup> O’Ballance. *Civil War in Lebanon, 1975-92*, 1998: 34

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National Movement. Damascus was exploring their power over the different Muslim factions in Lebanon.<sup>240</sup>

As the Dialogue Committee stalled and later failed, Assad began looking for a different approach in Lebanon. His association with Arafat and Jumblatt did not help in fortifying Syria’s power over Lebanon, so Assad started making overtures to Maronite leaders. Assad first approached Gemayel, who was invited to Damascus on December 6. Assad and Gemayel found they could cooperate: Gemayel agreed to support political reform in exchange for Assad controlling the Palestinian guerrillas.<sup>241</sup>

Syria was traditionally the supporter of radicals and Palestinians. However, Syria’s interests took precedence over Assad’s allies. Syria’s, or rather Assad’s, overarching interest was his regional standing. In this light, Assad came to see Yasser Arafat as his main contender for influence in Lebanon. Though formally staying out of internal matters, the PLO had strong influence on both Shia and Sunni Muslim camps. Additionally, the PLO constituted the foremost military force on the leftist-Muslim flank of Lebanese politics.<sup>242</sup>

The PLO leadership had suspected a change in Syria’s position in October and tried to preempt it. In late October secret talks were held between Christian leaders and PLO representatives. The two groups agreed to cease hostilities and start talks to reach a political solution.<sup>243</sup> Arafat and Fatah were growing skeptical of Syria’s involvement in Lebanon. Fatah-leaders thought Maronite-Syrian rapprochement would strengthen Assad’s power over Lebanon, including the Palestinian groups located there.<sup>244</sup> The Christian-Palestinian talks might have been Arafat’s attempt at forestalling Christian-Syrian conciliation.<sup>245</sup> The agreement was never realized and had no practical impact on the civil war. Jumblatt opposed the agreement and the Palestinians did not follow up the talks. Even if the Palestinians had pursued the negotiations, Christian representatives lacked the support of the three key Maronite figures: Frangieh and his Chamoun and Gemayel.<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 316-17, 323

<sup>241</sup> Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 50; Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 323

<sup>242</sup> Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 323; O’Ballance. *Civil War in Lebanon, 1975-92*, 1998: 10, 27-30; Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle and the Search for State*. 1997: 371

<sup>243</sup> Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 318-19

<sup>244</sup> Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle and the Search for State*. 1997: 371

<sup>245</sup> Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 319

<sup>246</sup> Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 319



### **Black Saturday**

As Gemayel was visiting Assad in Damascus, four Phalangists were found murdered at dawn on Saturday December 6. The victims were bodyguards of Gemayel’s son, Bachir. Bent on revenge, Bachir and his militiamen checked identity cards along roadblocks in Beirut. Muslims, militia members and civilians alike, were abducted or killed on the spot. The Maronite fighters killed at least 70 people, possibly hundreds. An even greater number was abducted.<sup>247</sup>

Bent on retribution, Muslim fighters abducted 150 Christians on Sunday 7. Numerous abductees were killed right away. National Movement and Palestinian militias launched an attack on Phalangist forces the following Monday, reigniting the Battle of the Hotels. Even more roadblocks materialized in Beirut, further fragmenting the war torn capital. The spiral of revenge lasted for the remainder of the year. Militias under rejectionist or Syrian control plundered the Beirut banking district. Official buildings throughout the country were occupied by whichever militia was in power. Lebanon lost its last resemblance of normality.<sup>248</sup>

Washington took a gloomy view on Lebanon by the end of 1975. The US perceived the Phalangists and the National Movement to be too far apart to find any basis for compromise or negotiations. Violence kept worsening and nothing seemed to indicate a change for the better. A peaceful solution was nowhere in sight.<sup>249</sup>

As 1975 was coming to an end, the civil war was worse than ever, and further than ever from reconciliation. The weak Lebanese central authority had all but collapsed. The country had descended into anarchy, different areas were under the control of different militias. The Christian-conservative and Muslim-leftist blocs were miles apart from any agreement. The same situation was mirrored within the blocs: No two groups could agree on a wide array of issues other than who to fight. No leader had complete control over their own militia, even less so over their allies. None of the actors had any control of the direction of the war.<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> Rogan. *The Arabs*. 2011: 482; Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle and the Search for State*. 1997: 371-2

<sup>248</sup> O’Ballance. *Civil War in Lebanon, 1975-92*, 1998: 36-7; Rogan. *The Arabs*. 2011: 482; Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle and the Search for State*. 1997: 371-2

<sup>249</sup> Memo, Dubs to Sisco, December 18, 1975, Box 24, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>250</sup> Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 320

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### Partition: A Christian Lebanon

In late December 1975, Maronite militias began evicting Muslims from areas under Christian control. In the first half of January 1976 Maronite leaders started hinting at partitioning Lebanon, creating a separate Christian state. Damascus retaliated by threatening to annex Lebanon if it was partitioned. The army, mainly controlled by Interior Minister Chamoun, stood by, as Lebanon seemed to be splitting into two separate units: One Christian and one Muslim.<sup>251</sup>

In early January 1976, Ambassador Godley described Lebanon as calm, but further from a political settlement than ever before. A cease-fire had been announced which let everyday life return to the Lebanese capital. A meeting of Maronite leaders on December 31, 1975, had rallied around the 6:5 representation of Christians to Muslims in the Lebanese Parliament. This was a rejection of the most essential of the Muslim grievances, demolishing any room for dialogue and compromise. With increased polarization and no solution in sight, fighting was bound to flare up again soon, reported Godley.<sup>252</sup>

Within two weeks of the New Year fighting broke out again. Maronite militias began “cleansing” Christian areas, expelling Palestinians from areas under Maronite control.<sup>253</sup> On January 12, the Phalangist and Tigers militias, controlled by Gemayel and Chamoun respectively, started by attacking the Palestinian refugee camp in Dbayeh. The Christian coastal town Dbayeh lay within the Maronite heartland Mount Lebanon. The expelled Palestinians were actually Maronite Christians. At the same time Maronite militias laid siege to Karantina and Tel al-Zaatar refugee camps. The areas comprised Shia slums, Palestinian refugees and Palestinian guerrilla groups. Karantina and Tel al-Zaatar were located in eastern, Christian-controlled Beirut, connected to the Christian heartlands northeast of the capital. The National Movement and PLO responded by attacking Christian towns. The Christian areas around Damour were laid under siege by National Movement and PLO forces. The Christian

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<sup>251</sup> Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 51; Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle and the Search for State*. 1997: 371-2; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*. 2007: 192

<sup>252</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 20, Beirut to Secstate et al., January 2 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>253</sup> Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*. 2007: 192

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coastal town Damour lies between Beirut and Sidon, in traditional Druze heartland, Chouf. Interior Minister Chamoun sent the Lebanese military to defend Damour.<sup>254</sup>

The US had stuck by its policy of non-involvement since October, but the Lebanese Civil War once again attracted US attention in January. The common factor between the increased attention in October 1975 and January 1976 was the perceived threat to US diplomacy in the Middle East: Specifically, a situation that might cause Israel to intervene in Lebanon. The current fighting and expulsions in the Maronite heartlands led the State Department to believe that Christian militias were securing Christian core areas. Kissinger’s staff interpreted the Christian fighting as a move towards de facto partition of Lebanon. Syrian Foreign Minister Abdul Halim Khaddam said Syria would annex Lebanon in the event of serious moves toward partition. Israeli Defense Minister Shimon Peres stated that Israel might answer militarily if Syria intervened. Egypt answered, saying that Egypt would mobilize if Israel sent troops to Lebanon. The US was opposed to both partition and outside intervention. Both were now judged to be increasingly likely, potentially resulting in an Arab-Israeli war.<sup>255</sup>

Washington followed developed or continued four strategies in Lebanon: Firstly, to limit or hinder a Syrian military intervention, while assessing what would provoke an Israeli intervention. Secondly, the US would attempt to keep the civil war from escalating further. Washington established contact with several Lebanese actors and appealed to Arab and European states to use their influence to calm down the Lebanese. Thirdly, the US would work to limit the flow of arms to Lebanon and lastly, to keep the Soviet Union out of Lebanon.<sup>256</sup>

### Preventing Intervention

Hoping to prevent an overt Syrian intervention, Washington reminded Damascus that the US would not be able to stop an Israeli counter-intervention, if Syria intervened first.<sup>257</sup> Kissinger also tried to pressure Syria through Jordan. King Hussein bin Talal of Jordan was going to

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<sup>254</sup> Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 51; Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon, 1967-1976*. 2000: 325, 327; O’Ballance. *Civil War in Lebanon, 1975-92*, 1998: 42-3; Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle and the Search for State*. 1997: 375-6; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*. 2007: 192

<sup>255</sup> Cable, “Forestalling changes in the Lebanese situation”, Secretary to Beirut et al., January 12, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>256</sup> Cable, “Forestalling changes in the Lebanese situation”, Secretary to Beirut et al., January 12, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA; Memo, Ellsworth to Secretary of Defense, January 16, 1976, Box 24, GF-NSA-PC-MESA; Memo, Oakley to Scowcroft, January 16, 1976, Box 24, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>257</sup> Cable, “Forestalling changes in the Lebanese situation”, Secretary to Beirut et al., January 12, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

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Damascus to meet Assad, and asked for US opinions. Kissinger and Hussein both wanted Assad to practice restraint.<sup>258</sup> King Hussein had better relations with the Maronites, Israel and the US than most Arab states and was visibly worried about a regional conflict. Though opposed to Syrian intervention, Hussein suggested a Jordanian-Syrian peacekeeping force. A mixed Arab force was eventually realized, but not until late October 1976.<sup>259</sup>

Kissinger received word on January 19 that the number of Syrian controlled fighters in Lebanon was swelling. The number of Syrian troops now in Lebanon was thought to pose a fatal threat the Christians. The Secretary asked the CIA to check the information. The CIA reported that 1000 PLA and Saiqa fighters had entered Lebanon in mid-January 1976. This marked an increase of the size of Assad’s forces in Lebanon by a third. CIA informed Kissinger that if Assad’s 4000 fighters and the PLO launched a joint, all-out attack, the Maronites would be overrun. However, Arafat had not committed all his fighters yet and Assad and Arafat’s fighters had not joined forces, the CIA informed. Kissinger also received word from Syrian Foreign Minister Khaddam that Damascus might send in more fighters, even Syrian regulars disguised as Palestinian fighters. The NSC regarded Assad’s troop movements as the preliminary phase of a Syrian intervention. Kissinger apparently shared this information with Simcha Dinitz, Israel’s ambassador to the US: Kissinger would let Syria know the US knew of their movements, he promised Dinitz. Israeli intelligence also reported that Damascus had sent additional PLA fighters into Lebanon.<sup>260</sup>

Damascus told Washington that Frangieh had requested a Syrian intervention.<sup>261</sup> The State Department acknowledged that the US might not be able to hinder a Syrian intervention. If Syria intervened, Alfred Atherton told Kissinger, the US needed to make the best of it.<sup>262</sup> Atherton reasoned that the US should nevertheless continue its efforts to dissuade Assad from an intervention. An eight-page document followed the memo, but its contents are classified.<sup>263</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> Cable, STATE 14057, Secstate to Secretary, January 20, 1976, Box 28, GF-NSA-KT; Cable, SECTO 1276, Secretary to Amman et al., January 21, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>259</sup> Cable, AMMAN 318, Amman to Moscow et al., January 21, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>260</sup> Memo, Walters to Scowcroft, January 19, 1976, Box 3, GF-NSA-KS; Memo, Scowcroft to Walters, January 19, 1976, Box 3, GF-NSA-KS

<sup>261</sup> Cable, DAMASCUS 1722, Damascus to Secstate, March 23, 1976, Box 32, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>262</sup> Atherton’s full title: Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs

<sup>263</sup> "Possible Syrian Intervention in Lebanon" Memo, Atherton to Secretary, January 23, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

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Simultaneously Kissinger continued to remind Israel that an Israeli intervention in Lebanon would be a disaster to Israeli and American interest.<sup>264</sup>

Harold Saunders, Assistant Secretary of State for Intelligence and Research, was sure that the Christians’ demise was looming. The Christians were not. Saunders supplied Kissinger with a memo on the subject on January 20. The memo was based on research from intelligence branches of the NSC, CIA and the State and Defense departments.<sup>265</sup>

Israel shared the impression that the increased number of PLA troops now in Lebanon was enough to crush the Christians. Kissinger told Israeli Foreign Minister Yigal Allon that this was not true, though US intelligence agreed with Israel. There are several possible reasons for this contradiction. Kissinger might not have received Saunders’ intelligence before instructing Tel Aviv. It is also possible that he rejected it. Thirdly, Kissinger wanted to keep Israel from physically coming to the Christians’ aid. The US told Israel not to make any drastic moves in Lebanon without consulting Washington first.<sup>266</sup>

Kissinger wanted to convey the importance of not deploying more Syrian troops of any kind. The Secretary instructed ambassador Richard Murphy was to approach the Syrian Army’s Chief of Staff, Hikmat al-Shihabi.<sup>267</sup> The US reminded Shihabi that Israel was bound to counter-intervene, if Syria continued to send in Syrian troops.<sup>268</sup>

### US Mediation

The US Embassy in Lebanon was instructed to contact the principal Christian and Muslim leaders in Lebanon, both in Government and outside, but not President Frangieh.<sup>269</sup> Washington wanted to take a more strident position with the Maronites, insisting that the US was opposed to a partition of Lebanon. The US wanted the Christians to take initiative for cease-fire, insisting that political reform was the only way to stabilize Lebanon in the long run. The US claimed to be willing to get discuss specific political settlements with the

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<sup>264</sup> Cable, “Forestalling changes in the Lebanese situation”, Secretary to Beirut et al., January 12, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>265</sup> Cable, "Background on Lebanon for Meetings in Brussels", Saunders to Secretary January 20, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>266</sup> Cable, STATE 14190, Secstate to Tel Aviv, January 20, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>267</sup> Cable, STATE 14281, Secstate to Damascus, January 21, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>268</sup> Cable, SECTO 1276, Secretary to Amman et al., January 21, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA; Cable, STATE 14281, Secstate to Damascus, January 21, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>269</sup> Cable, “Forestalling changes in the Lebanese situation”, Secretary to Beirut et al., January 12, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

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Christians. The Embassy in Beirut was not to tell the Muslims that the US was taking a more strident position with the Christians. Washington was afraid that the Muslims would press the Christians harder, militarily or politically, if they believed the Christians did not have the US’ support.<sup>270</sup>

Lebanese Prime Minister Karami threatened to resign in objection to what Karami perceived as the Lebanese Army becoming a part of the Christian side of the conflict, as seen in Damour. Washington thought increased army involvement on the Christian side and increased Palestinian involvement on the other side was amplifying the sectarian and geographical split of Lebanon. The amplified Palestinian effort was deemed to bring Israel closer to intervening. The mounting tension left any hope of political settlement even less realistic than previously.<sup>271</sup> The prime minister was always a Sunni. Washington perceived Karami as the only Sunni who was capable of handling the situation; and assured him of the US’ support. Washington feared that Karami’s removal would only increase sectarian polarization.<sup>272</sup> Ambassador Godley had returned to the US on January 16, diagnosed with cancer, and was temporarily replaced by the Embassy’s second in command, charge George Lambrakis.<sup>273</sup> Lambrakis reported that Karami’s resignation did not seem to be wholly sincere. Frangieh and Karami were negotiating over the latter remaining in his post.<sup>274</sup> Frangieh allegedly wanted Karami to stay.<sup>275</sup> Just like Washington, Damascus preferred Karami to any other candidates, and was reportedly pressuring him to remain in office.<sup>276</sup> Within a week, Syria had convinced Karami to retract his resignation.<sup>277</sup>

US Ambassador to Syria, Richard W. Murphy, was instructed to contact the Syrian government. Washington urged Damascus to use any influence on PLO and other Palestinian forces to refrain from all out war against the Christian forces. Murphy encouraged Damascus

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<sup>270</sup> Cable, “Forestalling changes in the Lebanese situation”, Secretary to Beirut et al., January 12, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>271</sup> Cable, STATE 13817, Secstate to Paris, January 20, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA; Unnamed document, labeled "1" in folder "Lebanon (2)", unknown author and recipient, January 20, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>272</sup> Cable, “Forestalling changes in the Lebanese situation”, Secretary to Beirut et al., January 12, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA; Cable, Secstate to Beirut et al., January 19, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>273</sup> Memos "Medical Evacuation of Ambassador Godley from Beirut" Oakley to Scowcroft, January 16, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>274</sup> Cable, STATE 13833, Secstate to Secretary et al., January 20, 1976, Box 28, GF-NSA-KT; Cable, STATE 13906, Secstate to Secretary, January 20, 1976, Box 28, GF-NSA-KT

<sup>275</sup> Unnamed document, unknown author, labeled "1" in folder "Lebanon (2)" in Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>276</sup> Cable, STATE 14057, Secstate to Secretary, January 20, 1976, Box 28, GF-NSA-KT

<sup>277</sup> O’Ballance. *Civil War in Lebanon, 1975-92*, 1998: 44

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to renew its mediation effort, assuring the Syrians of the US active support.<sup>278</sup> Indeed, the US had supported the Syrian mediation effort since at least early October.<sup>279</sup> Murphy was instructed not to tell the Syrians that the US was approaching European governments. The US correctly identified that Lebanon was a matter of prestige and influence for Assad.<sup>280</sup>

Washington asked France, Great Britain and the Vatican to appeal to the Maronites to cease hostilities and lift the blockade on Tel al-Zaatar and seek a political solution. The US told the Europeans that the Christian’s partitioning of Lebanon would end in in another Arab-Israeli war.<sup>281</sup> The US also asked Israel to encourage the Christians to seek an agreement to end the civil war. The US wanted Israelis to tell the Lebanese Christians to be flexible in their demands, and that Israel and the US agreed on the matter.<sup>282</sup>

Despite his assurances to Assad, Kissinger was growing skeptical of Syria’s influence. Washington was losing faith in the Syrians’ ability to secure a political solution and their cease-fires did not last. More than this, Kissinger dreaded increased Palestinian and Syrian control over Lebanon: He hypothesized a confrontation state that would threaten Israel. The US did not want to take center stage, but did not want Syria to dominate Lebanon. The issue was not with Syria’s approach: Contacting the US Embassy in Paris, Kissinger recommended France take on a central role, using Damascus’ effort as a template.<sup>283</sup>

The US Ambassador to Paris reported that French Foreign Minister Jean Sauvagnargues had considered involving the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). This initiative had been abandoned for now, after the Lebanese government discouraged UNSC involvement. Sauvagnargues had reported that Assad and Frangieh had reopened negotiations. Frangieh appeared to be more open to Syrian proposals than before.<sup>284</sup> Within days, Sauvagnargues

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<sup>278</sup> Cable, “Forestalling changes in the Lebanese situation”, Secretary to Beirut et al., January 12, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>279</sup> See chapter two and specifically: *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 26, Memcon, October 10, 1975, Doc. 264. Kissinger, Sisco, Saunders *et al.*; *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 26, Memcon, October 13, 1975, Doc. 265. Kissinger, Ingersoll, Atherton *et al.*; *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Vol. 26, Memcon, October 28, 1975, Doc. 266, Kissinger, Ingersoll, Sisco *et al.*

<sup>280</sup> Cable, “Forestalling changes in the Lebanese situation”, Secretary to Beirut et al., January 12, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>281</sup> Cable, “Forestalling changes in the Lebanese situation”, Secretary to Beirut et al., January 12, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>282</sup> Cable, “Forestalling changes in the Lebanese situation”, Secretary to Beirut et al., January 12, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>283</sup> Cable, STATE 13818, Secstate to Paris et al., January 20, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>284</sup> Cable, PARIS 1870, Paris to Secstate, January 20, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

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announced an “exploratory initiative”.<sup>285</sup> His press briefing was carefully worded, avoiding any details or particulars. The two main points, however, were in keeping with US policy: Firstly, Sauvagnargues called for cooperation, from Lebanese as well as international actors. Secondly, the short announcement made repeated references to preserving Lebanon’s political and geographical integrity.<sup>286</sup> To the US, French officials specified that the initiative would only be instigated if Syria’s latest mediation effort failed. Paris also specified that France was prepared to take a leading role, but not prepared to go it alone. This would mean an increased effort from the US. On the one hand Kissinger wanted an alternative to Assad, but on the other, it had been a continuous priority to keep US involvement at a minimum.<sup>287</sup>

Though the US was growing distrustful of Syria’s power over Lebanon, the State Department did not propose major changes in Washington’s approach to Damascus. Washington’s instructions for Ambassador Richard Murphy in Damascus were familiar: Encourage the Syrian mediation effort and attempts at securing cease-fires, while reminding Damascus not to intervene.<sup>288</sup> Alfred Atherton of the State Department recommended the same approach towards Egypt: encouraging Egypt to preach moderation where they had influence.<sup>289</sup> Kissinger asked Egyptian Foreign Minister Ismail Fahmy for his opinions, reminding Fahmy that the Sinai II agreement was at stake.<sup>290</sup> Fahmy answered that Egypt and the US largely agreed. Egypt supported the idea of making France a mediator, as it would limit Syria’s influence. Fahmy was eager to continue coordinating with the US on Lebanon. The Egyptian-Syrian relationship had taken a severe blow with the signing of Sinai II. Fahmy did not dwell on the poor relations, but stated that cooperation between Cairo and Damascus was unlikely to produce anything. Sadat had also sent an unspecified number of Fatah fighters to Lebanon, to counter the enlarged number of guerrilla troops under Assad’s control.<sup>291</sup>

Hussein of Jordan was also asked to use his influence with Lebanese factions to lessen the fighting and promote compromise.<sup>292</sup> The US had used the same approach since October: asking any country with influence over the Lebanese factions to stop fighting and seek a

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<sup>285</sup> Cable, PARIS 1928, Paris to Secstate et al., January 21, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>286</sup> Cable, PARIS 1928, Paris to Secstate et al., January 21, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA; Cable, PARIS 1979, Paris to Secstate, January 21, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>287</sup> Cable, PARIS 1979, Paris to Secstate, January 21, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>288</sup> Cable, STATE 13823, Secstate to Secretary, January 20, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>289</sup> Cable, STATE 13821, Secstate to Secretary, January 20, 1976, Box 28, GF-NSA-KT

<sup>290</sup> Cable, STATE 14282, Secstate to Cairo, January 21, 1976, Box 5, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>291</sup> Cable, CAIRO 814, Cairo to Secstate, January 21, 1976, Box 9, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>292</sup> Cable, SECTO 1276, Secretary to Amman et al., January 21, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA; Cable, STATE 14281, Secstate to Damascus, January 21, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA



pragmatic solution. This appeal, in one form or another, had repeatedly been issued from Washington since October, though it had so far failed to influence the Lebanese Civil War.

### **Limiting the Flow of Arms**

The US wanted to restrict the “virtually unlimited flow of arms” to the various Lebanese militias.<sup>293</sup> The idea had been launched in early December 1975, but was not followed up at the time.<sup>294</sup> Kissinger, with his globalist approach, would have ignored the idea until the Lebanese Civil War was threatening US policy. According to the State Department, weapons to the Muslim groups passed mainly through Syria, while Christian groups bought weapons commercially from Western Europe.<sup>295</sup> Washington asked Damascus to limit the flow of weapons to the Muslim groups, but Syria refused. While arms flowed incessantly to the Christians, Syria would not curb the Muslims’ continued supply of weapons. The State Department would contact the US’ “Western European allies” and asked various embassies to approach their host governments.<sup>296</sup> Washington doubted whether the initiative would yield any results.<sup>297</sup>

Atherton and the State Department were pessimistic about possibility of mediation, as the Christians were too confident. Only military setback or decreased flow of arms would bring the Christians to negotiate, according to Atherton. He also reckoned that Israel would be willing to accept limited Syrian intervention, as long as Assad stayed out of southern Lebanon. Atherton underlined the importance of stabilizing the Lebanese Civil War, reasoning that it was likely to turn into regional war if not checked.<sup>298</sup>

### **Soviet Involvement**

Second Deputy Secretary of Defense Robert F. Ellsworth ordered an estimation of possible Soviet reactions to the Lebanese crisis. The Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) provided the estimate. The DIA deemed increased Soviet dedication very probable. Kremlin was thought to increase its military presence in the Mediterranean and increase alert on Soviet bases.

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<sup>293</sup> Cable, STATE 6146, Secstate to Paris et al., January 10, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>294</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 15087, Beirut to Secstate et al., December 10, 1975, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>295</sup> The Christian groups were said to have bought weapons, directly or indirectly, from Belgium, Germany, France and Italy. Cable, STATE 6146, Secstate to Paris et al., January 10, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>296</sup> Embassies that received the cable were Paris, London, Bonn, Rome, Brussels, Beirut, Damascus, Cairo, Amman and the US NATO Mission. Cable, STATE 6146, Secstate to Paris et al., January 10, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>297</sup> Cable, STATE 6146, Secstate to Paris et al., January 10, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>298</sup> Cable, STATE 15280, Secstate to Secretary, January 21, 1976, Box 28, GF-NSA-KT

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Moscow would probably also encourage its partners to impose an oil embargo on the US and refuse the US use of air bases. The DIA was 95% certain Kremlin would increase distribution of military equipment to Syria. The likely scenarios were consistent with previous assessments. Only an oil embargo would be considered serious. The DIA thought it extremely unlikely that Soviet would dispatch troops to the Levantine countries. Only if the IDF threatened Damascus, there was a real possibility of Soviet troops to Syria.<sup>299</sup>

Robert Oakley passed the calculation on to Brent Scowcroft. Oakley recommended waiting for assessments from CIA and possibly the State Department. The DIA-paper did not elaborate on the possibility of Israeli or Syrian intervention. Oakley thought intervention unlikely in January 1976. However, the chance of intervention was bound to increase with continued stagnation in Lebanon.<sup>300</sup>

On January 22 Karantina fell. Phalangists entered, killing and expelling civilians. National Movement and PLO troops retaliated by entering Damour and the cluster of nearby Christian towns. Civilians were massacred in Damour as well, and numerous rapes were reported.<sup>301</sup> Oakley claimed the conflict around Karantina and Tel al-Zaatar had aggravated the Lebanese conflict. The isolation of the camps had provoked the PLO’s first full and overt military conflict with the Phalangists. In addition, the Phalangists’s initial success had increased the number of troops from Syria. There was no indication that fighting would subside. This made the US’ vocal encouragement of moderation and outside non-involvement even less audible. To Oakley, there was less chance of ending violence and reaching compromise than ever.<sup>302</sup>

### Maronite-Syrian Rapprochement and the January Cease-Fire

On January 21 Khaddam and Shihabi and other Syrian officials arrived in Beirut, to coerce the factions into a cease-fire. Frangieh, Chamoun and Gemayel had conferred amongst themselves. The three Maronite leaders were now prepared to reach an agreement with Damascus, according to Lambrakis. He thought this warranted some optimism regarding a

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<sup>299</sup> Memo, Ellsworth to Secretary of Defense, January 16, 1976, Box 24, GF-NSA-PC-MESA; Memo, Oakley to Scowcroft, January 16, 1976, Box 24, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>300</sup> Memo, Ellsworth to Secretary of Defense, January 16, 1976, Box 24, GF-NSA-PC-MESA; Memo, Oakley to Scowcroft, January 16, 1976, Box 24, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>301</sup> Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 51; Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon, 1967-1976*. 2000: 325, 327; O’Ballance. *Civil War in Lebanon, 1975-92*, 1998: 43; Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle and the Search for State*. 1997: 375-6; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*. 2007: 192-3

<sup>302</sup> Memo, "Your meeting with Raymond Edde, [...]" Oakley to Scowcroft, January 19, 1976, Box 24, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

political solution in Lebanon. Lambrakis understood Damascus to represent the Lebanese Muslims in the Maronite-Syrian dialogue. On January 23 Syria managed to arrange a new cease-fire. Assad deployed Syrian-controlled PLA troops to maintain the cease-fire. The troops were dispatched along the Green Line, the demarcation-line separating the leftist-Palestinian dominated West Beirut from the Christian dominated East Beirut.<sup>303</sup>

Damascus and the Maronite leadership had been growing closer since the failure of the Dialogue Committee. Assad had approached Frangieh in late December 1975, suggesting that the two might develop a political solution. Following the January 23 cease-fire, Frangieh announced that a comprehensive political solution was to be arranged. Frangieh and Karami visited Assad in Damascus, where the three drafted a political solution for Lebanon.<sup>304</sup>

### **The Constitutional Document**

Frangieh and Karami returned to Damascus on February 7, to put the finishing touches on a joint reform program under Syrian auspices. The talks resulted in the *Constitutional Document*, presented on February 14. The Document replaced Christian dominance with an equal representation of Christians and Muslims in Parliament. The presidency, premiership, and position of House Speaker remained reserved for the Maronites, Sunnis and Shias respectively, but the president’s powers were curtailed in favor of the prime minister.<sup>305</sup>

The Constitutional Document made Syria’s shifting alignment evident. Through the document, Assad ingratiated himself with the Christians and traditional Sunni leaders, while distancing himself from the Lebanese-Palestinian opposition. Jumblatt and Arafat became isolated, as the other groups accepted the Document. The Constitutional Document revoked what the Christians could do without and gave the moderate Muslims enough to appease them. Assad did not seek to remedy the Lebanese system; he sought to find a compromise that would be palpable to most Lebanese leaders, in order to make the Lebanese leadership

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<sup>303</sup> Cable, STATE 14994, Secstate to Secretary, January 21, 1976, Box 28, GF-NS-KT; Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 52; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*. 2007: 193

<sup>304</sup> Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 52-53; Khazen. *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 327-8; Sayigh and Shlaim. *The Cold War and the Middle East*. 1997: 193

<sup>305</sup> For a more detailed account of the Constitutional Document, see: Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 52-53; Khazen. *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 327-9; Sayigh and Shlaim. *The Cold War and the Middle East*. 1997: 377;

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associates of Damascus. In order to implement the Constitutional Document, Syria needed to enforce a lasting cease-fire, a *Pax Syriana*.<sup>306</sup>

To the Christians, the Constitutional Document meant two things: Firstly, Assad promised to control the Palestinian guerrillas, based on the 1969 Cairo Agreement, in keeping with the Assad-Gemayel agreement of early December 1975.<sup>307</sup> Secondly, the Maronites conserved much of their power compared to deconfessionalism, which would have left the Christian in a minority. As the Christian forces were militarily inferior to the National Movement and the PLO, it made more sense for the Christians to concede some powers under Syrian auspices than to lose them all in a war with Jumblatt.<sup>308</sup>

Sunni and Shia leaders reluctantly accepted the Constitutional Document. With improved representation and a stronger prime minister, the Sunni establishment saw the Document as a foundation to build on. The Document was less palatable to the Shias. Having grown more than any other group since the 1932 census, the Shias were more grossly underrepresented than the Sunnis. Shia leaders accepted the Constitutional Document as a meager starting point. Neither Shia nor Sunni leaders sympathized with Jumblatt’s fervent deconfessionalism.<sup>309</sup>

Jumblatt and the National Movement rejected the Constitutional Document on principle: They fought for deconfessionalism, abolishing sectarian distribution of power and representation. The Document proposed a more equitable distribution of power between the sects, but it was still sectarian. The deconfessionalism of the posts of President, Prime Minister and speaker of the House was an ultimatum for Jumblatt, as it denied his long-standing ambition to become president. Having the military upper hand made Jumblatt disinclined to accept a lowball proposal.<sup>310</sup>

Jumblatt’s inflexibility cost him tactically. Damascus-National Movement relations had faltered since late 1975, while Christian-Syrian relations improved. When Jumblatt dismissed

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<sup>306</sup> Khazen. *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 327, 329, 331

<sup>307</sup> On the Cairo Agreement, see Chapter 2. Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 50; Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 323

<sup>308</sup> Khazen. *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 329, 331

<sup>309</sup> Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 53; Khazen. *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 329-31; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*. 2007: 193, 271

<sup>310</sup> Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 53; Khazen. *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 329-31; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*. 2007: 193, 271

the Constitutional Document, his popularity within the Lebanese and Syrian leadership reached a new low. For most of the civil war, the National Movement had received cautious support from Lebanese Muslims, who wanted a reformed political system. Jumblatt lost much of their support when he rejected an opportunity to end fighting and reform Lebanon. Jumblatt hoped to circumvent both Syria and the Constitutional Document and approached the Phalangists. Gemayel thought Syria a more valuable ally than the National Movement, and rejected the Jumblatt’s overture.<sup>311</sup>

Washington had perceived the escalating chaos as increasing the chance of Israeli and Syrian intervention, as well as Soviet involvement. Washington had started to lose faith in Damascus’ ability to control Lebanon, and had launched its own third party initiatives to mediate and limit the flow of arms to Lebanon. Everything changed once Syria had arranged the cease-fire and started the political dialogue. Washington’s interest in Lebanon disappeared until the middle of March. The US noted that Assad’s standing in the Arab world had been strengthened by his success in Lebanon, to the great annoyance of Sadat and Egypt. However, Assad’s standing would be ruined if his efforts were destroyed by war.<sup>312</sup>

### **The Arafat-Assad Breakup**

Assad’s attempts at enforcing *Pax Syriana* received a blow when the Lebanese Army fell apart in the spring of 1976. It began in earnest on January 21, when Sunni officer Ahmed Khatib forsook the Lebanese Army and founded the *Arab Army of Lebanon* (AAL). The AAL grew rapidly, recruiting hundreds of Lebanese Army soldiers within weeks.<sup>313</sup> To match the AAL, Chamoun and Gemayel formed the *Lebanese Front*, a coalition of the Tigers and the Phalangists militias.<sup>314</sup>

Fatah aided the Khatib insurgency in attempt to forestall Syria’s increasing involvement and rapprochement with the Maronites. Syria had promised the Maronites to control the Palestinians in Lebanon. Fatah insisted that the Palestinian movement was not dictated by an

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<sup>311</sup> Khazen. *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 331-2

<sup>312</sup> Cable, TOHAK 45, February 24, 1976, Box 30, GF-NSA-KT

<sup>313</sup> Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*, 1979: 15, 51; Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*, 1967-1976. 2000: 327, 332-3; O’Ballance. *Civil War in Lebanon, 1975-92*, 1998: 44-5; Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle and the Search for State*. 1997: 379

<sup>314</sup> Originally named the Front for Liberty and Man. Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*, 1967-1976. 2000: 327

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Arab state, but remained independent.<sup>315</sup> To sabotage *Pax Syriana*, Fatah escalated the AAL insurgency. On March 9, the AAL and Fatah started to seize army posts in a “Battle of the Barracks,” particularly in southern Lebanon.<sup>316</sup> As the Lebanese Army was falling apart, Christian and Muslim militias fought over the Lebanese Army’s abandoned equipment and weapons. Thereby, Fatah gained access to heavy weaponry, including anti-tanks and -aircraft, and artillery.<sup>317</sup> Assad replied by attacking two pro-PLO newspapers that criticized Damascus, almost killing Arafat’s close associate Shafiq al-Hout. In the last half of February, Saiqa leader Zuheir Mohsen launched a propaganda campaign against Arafat. Mohsen called for changing PLO, hinting that Saiqa should assume Fatah’s dominant role.<sup>318</sup>

The Arafat-Assad relationship took another beating on March 11, when Abdel Aziz al-Ahdab, aided and encouraged by Fatah, staged the so-called “TV Coup”.<sup>319</sup> Ahdab took control of a Beirut TV station and called for the resignation of Frangieh and Prime Minister Karami on live TV. Ahdab was a Sunni Lieutenant General and commander of the Beirut army district. Ahdab and many other Lebanese Army officers were frustrated with the government’s inability or unwillingness to control the army. In these Sunni officers view, the Lebanese Army had become an ally of the Maronite militias, rather than an instrument of the state. The claim was exaggerated: Interior Minister Camille Chamoun was rarely able to use the Lebanese Army to Maronite gains, as he had done in Damour.<sup>320</sup> Ahdab and his Sunni officer allies hoped to reunite and revitalize the army, but rather hastened its deterioration. The AAL seized the remaining army locations between west Beirut and southern Lebanon on March 12. In reply Christian Colonel Antoine Barakat and his Zgharta barrack broke with the Lebanese Army, proclaiming support for Frangieh on March 13. Additional splits followed. The Lebanese Army got fragmented and powerless, as soldiers and officers deserted or joined the numerous armed factions.<sup>321</sup>

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<sup>315</sup> Khazen. *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 328-9; Sayigh and Shlaim. *The Cold War and the Middle East*. 1997: 377-8

<sup>316</sup> Reference to term “Battle of the Barracks,” Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 54

<sup>317</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 2160, Beirut to Secstate et al., March 10, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA; Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 54; Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 327, 332-3; Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 378-80

<sup>318</sup> Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 328-9, 334-5; Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 378-9, 381

<sup>319</sup> Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 380

<sup>320</sup> Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 54; Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 333; Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 380; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*. 2007: 193

<sup>321</sup> Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 54; Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 327, 332-3; Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 380-1

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Perceiving PLO’s involvement in the TV coup, Damascus retaliated by closing the PLO academy in Syria. The Lebanese Civil War was increasingly becoming a power struggle between Arafat and Assad. Assad did not want the PLO to jeopardize his plans for Lebanon or attract an Israeli intervention.<sup>322</sup>

The rift between Arafat and Assad widened as Arafat approached President Sadat of Egypt.<sup>323</sup> Meanwhile, Egypt continued to denounce Syria. Foreign Minister Khaddam even suggested the US should supply the Maronites with weapons, if Israel intervened.<sup>324</sup> Egypt had dispatched PLA forces stationed in Egypt, the “Ain Jallut Brigade,” to fight alongside Arafat’s forces in Lebanon.<sup>325</sup> The brigade numbered somewhere short of 1000 fighters. The US advised Egypt not to let the Ain Jallut Brigade join in the fighting.<sup>326</sup>

The US Embassy in Beirut feared Israeli repercussions to the Battle of the Barracks. Lambrakis did not think Syria could stop the Army from disintegrating.<sup>327</sup> Deputy Secretary of State Robert Ingersoll instructed the Damascus Embassy to remind Damascus that it was in Syria’s interest to avoid unrest near the Israeli border.<sup>328</sup>

US interest in Lebanon had lessened significantly since the announcement of the cease-fire. Ingersoll wanted Syria’s assessment of the AAL. The State Department also wanted to know whether Syria could control the insurgents. Ingersoll thought the AAL’s proximity to the Israeli border might impede Syria’s ability to control the army rebels without provoking Israel. Syria too worried the AAL’s activity in southern Lebanon increased the chance of an Israeli intervention. The concern was wrongly founded: The AAL secretly coordinated with Israel regarding southern Lebanon, to avoid provoking Israel. The US did not venture further into whether the AAL would cause Israel to intervene. There may be two reasons for this. Firstly, the US might have understood that Israel did not perceive the AAL as a threat.

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<sup>322</sup> Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 328-9, 334-5; Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 378-9, 381

<sup>323</sup> Khazen. *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 328-9; Sayigh and Shlaim. *The Cold War and the Middle East*. 1997: 377-8

<sup>324</sup> Cable, CAIRO 992, Cairo to Secstate, January 26, 1976, Box 9, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>325</sup> Cable, CAIRO 992, Cairo to Secstate, January 26, 1976, Box 9, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>326</sup> Paper, "For the files", unknown author and recipient, January 24, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA; Unnamed documents labeled "2a" January, 27, 1976, in folder "Lebanon (3)" Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA; Cable, labeled "2c", January, 24, 1976, in folder "Lebanon (3)" Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA; Cable, labeled "2c", January, 24, 1976, in folder "Lebanon (3)" Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>327</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 2160, Beirut to Secstate *et al.*, March 10, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>328</sup> Cable, STATE 61178, Secstate to Damascus *et al.*, March 13, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

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Secondly, the following day Washington learned that Syria was planning a military intervention into Lebanon, which would have overshadowed the AAL.<sup>329</sup>

### Removing President Frangieh

The Fatah sponsored TV coup of Ahdab did not lead directly to Frangieh’s resignation. Frangieh refused to resign unless the Parliament demanded it. A two-thirds majority was needed. On March 17, Kamel el Assad, the Speaker of the House, a Shia, delivered a petition to Frangieh. The petition demanded Frangieh’s resignation, with the necessary 66 out of 99 legislators signatures. Frangieh promptly changed his mind and insisted on finishing his term, supported by Chamoun and Gemayel.<sup>330</sup>

Karami and a collection of Muslim statesmen visited Assad in Damascus. They wanted the Syrian President to persuade his Lebanese colleague to resign.<sup>331</sup> Arafat too, visited Damascus. Both Arafat and National Movement leader Kamal Jumblatt called for the resignation of Frangieh.<sup>332</sup>

Washington picked up word of the dissatisfaction with Frangieh already in November 1975, when Maronite army officers sought US views on throwing Frangieh and Karami, installing a military government and issuing new elections. Ambassador Godley replied that the US firmly supported Karami. He also said that toppling Frangieh would “open a Pandora’s box.”<sup>333</sup>

The US discussed Frangieh’s removal again in March 1976. Atherton told Kissinger that fighting between Christian and opposition forces in the Presidential palace might “bring down Frangie[h].”<sup>334</sup> Kissinger replied: “Why not let Frangie[h] go that way?” Atherton protested that this would make a political solution even more unattainable. The US wanted Frangieh

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<sup>329</sup> Cable, STATE 61178, Secstate to Damascus *et al.*, March 13, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA; Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 334-5. For Syria’s plans intervene, see Chapter 6 and Cable, DAMASCUS 1446, Damascus to Secstate, March 14, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA.

<sup>330</sup> Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 340; Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 381; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 2007: 192-3

<sup>331</sup> Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 2007: 194

<sup>332</sup> Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 340

<sup>333</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 14158, Beirut to Secstate, November 13, 1975, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>334</sup> Atherton FRUS, 1969–1976, Volume 26, March 15, 1976, Doc. 267. Kissinger, Atherton, Saunders *et al.*



gone, as did the AAL, National Movement, PLO and Syria. However, the US opted out of having Frangieh removed in a coup, as it would further destabilize Lebanon.<sup>335</sup>

By the middle of March, even Assad and Damascus had lost faith in Frangieh. But abruptly dethroning Assad’s newfound ally would make the country even more volatile and obstruct the implementation of the Constitutional Document. Assad and Frangieh negotiated a settlement: The Lebanese presidential election would be held in May rather than September and Frangieh agreed to resign once the question of his successor was settled.<sup>336</sup> The candidates were Maronites Raymond Eddé and Elias Sarkis.<sup>337</sup> Eddé was the candidate favored by Arafat, Jumblatt and Egypt.<sup>338</sup> The US reasoned that Egypt supported Eddé simply to oppose Syria.<sup>339</sup> Elias Sarkis was the candidate favored by the Lebanese Christians, Sunni Prime Minister Karami, as well as Damascus and Washington.<sup>340</sup>

The TV coup and the subsequent AAL expansion in southern Lebanon created friction within the Fatah leadership. The AAL expansion in southern Lebanon that followed the TV coup had been instigated by central Fatah member Khalil al-Wazir, also known as Abu Jihad. Arafat told Wazir that the rapid expansion would attract Israeli intervention in southern Lebanon. Secondly, it undermined the AAL’s legitimacy.<sup>341</sup>

In the same way that Syria used Saiqa and PLA to hide direct Syrian involvement, Fatah used the AAL to camouflage Palestinian action. As the AAL was made up of Lebanese Army members and equipment, the AAL had more legitimacy than Fatah. Jumblatt and the National Movement had little influence on the AAL.<sup>342</sup>

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<sup>335</sup> FRUS, 1969–1976, Volume 26, March 15, 1976, Doc. 267. Kissinger, Atherton, Saunders *et al.*

<sup>336</sup> The election was rescheduled several times, but eventually held on May 8, 1976. Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 54-5; Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 340; Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 381; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 2007: 193

<sup>337</sup> The election was rescheduled several times, but eventually held on May 8, 1976. Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 54-6; Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 340; Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 381; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 2007: 193

<sup>338</sup> Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 56; Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 340-1, 344; Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 387

<sup>339</sup> Cable, TOSEC 110063, Secstate to Secretary, April 24, 1976, Box 15, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>340</sup> Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 56; Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 340-1; Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 387; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 2007: 198

<sup>341</sup> Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 380

<sup>342</sup> Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 334-5

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The Constitutional Document’s chance of survival deteriorated with the fractionalization of the Lebanese Army. The ensuing chaos made political progress impossible. The Christian forces controlled roughly 20 per cent of Lebanon, concentrated in Mount Lebanon. The Muslim-Palestinian forces surrounded the Maronite heartland, at Tripoli in the north, western Beirut in the south and the Beqaa Valley in the east. Assad was afraid that the Maronites would declare the partition of Lebanon and that the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) would send troops to reinforce the Christian state.<sup>343</sup>

Damascus made several attempts at controlling the insurgents the AAL, or to reenter the insurgents into the Lebanese Army. After the splits in the middle of March, the breakup of the Lebanese Army was irreversible and the Constitutional Document was temporarily disabled. In the end of March Syrian Foreign Minister Abdul Halim Khaddam had warned Arafat and Jumblatt that Syria would come to view AAL as an enemy if it did not get in line. Damascus’ efforts to enforce the Constitutional Document through Pax Syriana were in vain.<sup>344</sup>

In March 1976 Lebanon was fragmented, with Christian, Muslim and Palestinian forces fighting over the pieces. The central authority had become increasingly ineffective since the fall of 1975 and with the breakup of the army the government lost its principal instrument of control. The only hope for the staggering government was to rely on Syria. During the winter of 1975-1976 Syria had all but severed its ties to Arafat and Jumblatt. Assad had calculated that the best way to control Lebanon was to ally himself with the traditional rulers of Lebanon rather than to replace them.

The US had seen Syria as the only capable power in Lebanon since October 1975. Kissinger’s faith in Assad was waning in the end of January as the violence escalated and the threat of an Israeli intervention seemed to be increasing. Washington attempted to mediate and stop the flow of arms through third parties, though it had little faith in the approach. However, once Syria had arranged the cease-fire on January 23, Washington’s regained its confidence in Damascus. As Syria regained some control over Lebanon Washington’s perceived threat of an Israeli intervention lessened, as did the US interest in Lebanon. Lebanon would resurface as a

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<sup>343</sup> Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 335; Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 380; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 2007: 194

<sup>344</sup> Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 54; Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 335; Yapp. *The Near East since the First World War: A history to 1995*. 1996: 270

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major concern to the US in the middle of March, when the threat of foreign intervention became more pressing than before.



## Chapter 5: The US and the Syrian Intervention

“Now if I could design the solution, I would go to A[s]sad and say “if you could move in quickly, and if you could give us an iron clad guarantee that you will get out again quickly and that you will not go south of the [Litani] river, we will keep the Israelis out.”<sup>345</sup>

The spring of 1976 was the most dramatic part of the Lebanese Civil War so far. The army disintegrated in the course of the spring, through a series of rebellions. Its members and equipment was split between the two principal factions of the civil war: The leftist-Palestinian camp and the conservative-Christian camp. The leftist-Palestinian camp was primarily made up of Lebanese National Movement and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). The National Movement was made up of leftist and Muslim parties and militias, led by the Druze strongman Kamal Jumblatt. The PLO comprised several Palestinian movements and guerrillas. It was led by Yasser Arafat, who also led Fatah, the principal party in the PLO. The conservative-Christian camp was primarily made up of Christian Maronites. The principal Maronite figures were Interior Minister and former president Camille Chamoun, President Suleiman Frangieh, and Phalangist leader Pierre Gemayel. During the spring months the National Movement-PLO alliance took control of most of Lebanon and were about to win the Civil War. The Christian’s reacted by seeking to partition Lebanon, creating a Christian mini-state.<sup>346</sup>

Following the signing of the Sinai II agreement, Syrian President Hafez al-Assad was afraid of being outmaneuvered by Egyptian President Anwar Sadat as the principal Arab power in the Middle East. Assad sought to dominate Lebanon and was traditionally eager to appear as the champion of leftists, radicals and the Palestinian struggle. By mid-1976, he sought to dominate the PLO, rather than support it. Assad needed a stable Lebanon to dominate;

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<sup>345</sup> Kissinger discussing Syrian intervention, in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume 26 March 24, Doc 271, Kissinger, Scowcroft, Sisco, *et al.*

<sup>346</sup> Cable, “Forestalling changes in the Lebanese situation”, Secretary to Beirut *et al.*, January 12, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA; Cable, BEIRUT 2160, Beirut to Secstate *et al.*, March 10, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA; Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*, 1979: 15, 51, 54; Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon, 1967-1976*. 2000: 327, 332-3; O’Ballance. *Civil War in Lebanon, 1975-92*, 1998: 44-5; Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle and the Search for State*. 1997: 371-2, 378-81; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*. 2007: 192-3; Yapp. *The Near East since the First World War*. 1996: 277

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therefore he needed the Lebanese state to survive. A Lebanon dominated by Palestinians and radicals would attract unwanted attention and potentially war from Israel, which would ruin Assad's plans. Damascus therefore sought to find a political solution to the Lebanese problems, where Syria could shape the development according to Syrian interests.<sup>347</sup>

Within mid-March, Syria started to work for a military intervention in Lebanon rather than a political solution. The problem was Israel. How could Syria intervene without provoking an Israeli counter-intervention? From the middle of March, Damascus sent signals to Washington of a forthcoming Syrian intervention. Within weeks US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger decided that a Syrian intervention would be the easiest solution for Washington, if only Israel would stay out. Only two weeks after Syria's first warnings, Kissinger learned that Israel would allow a Syrian intervention within certain limitations. These limitations have since been known as the Israeli red lines. From mid-March, the US worked to realize a Syrian intervention that would not cause an Israeli counter-intervention.<sup>348</sup>

### Syrian Intervention in the Making

To answer Deputy Secretary Ingersoll's concerns, Richard Murphy, US Ambassador to Syria, received Syrian Army Chief Hikmat Shihabi on March 14. Shihabi told Murphy that only the introduction of a Syrian Army "peace-keeping" force could restore order in Lebanon.<sup>349</sup> Shihabi even went as far as to state that there was nothing wrong with Syria annexing Lebanon, as the Lebanese had practically torn their country in two. Murphy urged restraint, suggesting that Syria could use covert forces. The ambassador reminded the Army chief that

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<sup>347</sup> Cleveland and Bunton. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. 2009: 385; Hirst. *Beware of small states*. 2010: 108, 112-14, 121; Khazen. *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 297, 315-16, 323, 357; Quandt. *Peace Process*. 2005: 170-3; Shlaim. *The Iron Wall*. 2000: 340-2, 363; Waage. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. 2012: 271

<sup>348</sup> Cable, DAMASCUS 1446, Damascus to Secstate, March 14, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA; Cable, STATE 62096, Secstate to Tel Aviv *et al.*, March 15, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA; *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Vol. 26, Memcon, March 15, 1976, Doc. 267, Kissinger, Atherton, Saunders *et al.*; Cable, STATE 63758, Secstate to Tel Aviv *et al.*, March 16, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA; Cable, DAMASCUS 1611, Damascus to Secstate, March 18, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA; Cable, DAMASCUS 1722, Damascus to Secstate, March 23, 1976, Box 32, GF-NSA-PC-MESA; Cable, STATE 70196, Secstate to Damascus *et al.*, March 23, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA; *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Vol. 26, Memcon, March 23, 1976, Doc. 268, Kissinger, Scowcroft, Hyland, *et al.*; *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Vol. 26, Memcon, March 24, 1976, Doc. 270, Kissinger, Ingersoll, Clements, *et al.*; *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 26 March 24, Doc. 271, Kissinger, Scowcroft, Sisco, *et al.*; *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. 26, March 24, Doc. 271, Kissinger, Scowcroft, Sisco, *et al.*; *FRUS*, 1969-76, Vol. 26, Memcon, April 7, 1976, Doc. 283, Ford, Rockefeller, Kissinger *et al.*; *FRUS*, 1969-76, Vol. 26, Memcon, April 7, 1976, Doc. 284, Rockefeller, Kissinger, Rumsfeld *et al.*; Cable, without title or ID, starts with "I. We appreciate your suggestion [...]", Dinitz to State, March 24, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA; Kissinger. *Years of Renewal*. 1999: 1039, 1043-4; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 2007: 195; Shlaim. *The Iron Wall*. 2000: 343-4

<sup>349</sup> Cable, DAMASCUS 1446, Damascus to Secstate, March 14, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

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Israel would react to Syrian intervention, not to mention annexation. Shihabi reiterated that introducing Syrian forces was the only solution to the Lebanese Civil War.<sup>350</sup>

Kissinger saw Shihabi's statement as a warning of a Syrian intervention, but wanted to be sure.<sup>351</sup> Ambassador Murphy asked Syrian President Assad about the intervention on March 15. Assad gave no indication of planning an intervention. Assad stated repeatedly that Syria had not yet reached a decision about Lebanon. Assad might already have made plans to send Syrian Army Forces to Lebanon, but might have wanted to test the US waters. While he did not repeat Shihabi's warnings, Assad underlined his many concerns: replacing president Frangieh, the TV coup and the army insurgency. However, Assad presented no solutions to all the problems in Lebanon.<sup>352</sup>

In Washington, Kissinger discussed the situation with Assistant Secretaries of State Alfred Atherton and Harold Saunders on March 15, both prominent members of the *Washington Special Actions Group* meetings and State Department meetings on Lebanon.<sup>353</sup> Kissinger asked if the US had any leverage with the Lebanese factions, but Atherton replied that the Lebanese could only be influenced through Syria. This worried Kissinger: "There is no way – no way – in which the Israelis will sit still while the Syrians send in their troops. I am sure of that."<sup>354</sup> Kissinger did not think the US could restrain Israel if Syria intervened.<sup>355</sup> Atherton, on the other hand, thought Israel might tolerate limited Syrian action, as Israel's Foreign Minister Yigal Allon had indicated already in October 1975.<sup>356</sup>

Kissinger instructed US Ambassador Malcolm Toon to approach Allon. Without making direct references to intervention, Washington wanted to learn Israel's concerns and intentions regarding Lebanon.<sup>357</sup> Simcha Dinitz, Israeli Ambassador to the US, told Kissinger that

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<sup>350</sup> Cable, DAMASCUS 1446, Damascus to Secstate, March 14, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA; Kissinger. *Years of Renewal*, 1999: 1039, 1043-4; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 2007: 195

<sup>351</sup> Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 1999: 1039, 1043-4

<sup>352</sup> Cable, DAMASCUS 1483, Damascus to Secstate, March 15, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>353</sup> Atherton's full title: Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs. Saunders' full title:

<sup>354</sup> Kissinger in: FRUS, 1969–1976, Volume 26, March 15, 1976, Doc. 267. Kissinger, Atherton, Saunders *et al.*

<sup>355</sup> *Foreign relations of the United States (FRUS)*, 1969–1976, Volume 26, March 15, 1976, Doc. 267. Kissinger, Atherton, Saunders *et al.*

<sup>356</sup> An unidentified paper lends itself to Atherton's perception. The paper suggested that Israel's had lately refrained from publically denouncing foreign intervention in Lebanon. The document is not dated, but attached to a document dated March 18. Unidentified Intelligence Memo, "Syrian Intervention in Lebanon", attached to: Memo, "Possible WSAG Meeting", Oakley to Scowcroft, March 18, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA; *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Volume 26, March 15, 1976, Doc. 267. Kissinger, Atherton, Saunders *et al.*; Atherton referred to: Cable, TEL AVIV 6750, Tel Aviv to Secstate, October 24, 1975, Box 19, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>357</sup> Cable, STATE 62096, Secstate to Tel Aviv *et al.*, March 15, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

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Syrian forces had already entered Lebanon.<sup>358</sup> Atherton told Dinitz that the US had no such information.<sup>359</sup> Both Toon and Atherton warned Israel not to intervene in Lebanon without conferring with the US.<sup>360</sup>

Ingersoll and Kissinger instructed Murphy to talk to Assad and try to find out if Syria would intervene. Murphy was also told to preach restraint and remind him of the possibility of war with Israel.<sup>361</sup> Assad told Murphy that Lebanon was an internal Arab dispute that Israel should stay out of. Moreover, Assad said that Frangieh had already asked Damascus for an intervention. Assad called it Syria's right and duty to intervene. However, Murphy did not get the impression that there was an immediate plan, nor did Assad give a date. The Syrian President insisted that it would be a peacekeeping intervention and expected the US to keep Israel out.<sup>362</sup>

### The Civil War Heats Up

Maronite militias reignited the fighting in northern Lebanon on March 16. Christian towns with National Movement leanings were laid under siege, as were Palestinian camps in Eastern Beirut.<sup>363</sup> The National Movement and PLO successively launched an attack in eastern Beirut and the Mount Lebanon, the Maronite Heartland northeast of Beirut. The purpose was to put political pressure on the Maronites and to relieve the Palestinian camps.<sup>364</sup>

Arafat and Jumblatt expanded the Mountain offensive to Beirut's hotel district on March 21. The offensives were militarily successful. As the leftist and Palestinian militias advanced into Mount Lebanon, Maronites started fleeing to Cyprus. However, Jumblatt and Arafat had differing objectives in the Mountain offensive. The PLO's foremost objective was to secure the Palestinian camps in northeast Beirut, while Jumblatt's primary objective was to escalate

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<sup>358</sup> *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Volume 26, March 15, 1976, Doc. 267. Kissinger, Atherton, Saunders *et al.*

<sup>359</sup> Cable, STATE 63758, Secstate to Tel Aviv *et al.*, March 16, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>360</sup> Cable, STATE 62096, Secstate to Tel Aviv *et al.*, March 15, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA; Cable, STATE 63758, Secstate to Tel Aviv *et al.*, March 16, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>361</sup> Cable, STATE 62097, Secstate to Damascus *et al.*, March 15, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>362</sup> Cable, DAMASCUS 1611, Damascus to Secstate, March 18, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA; Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 1999: 1039, 1043-4; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 2007: 195

<sup>363</sup> Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 381

<sup>364</sup> Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 55; Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 339



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the civil war, in order to impose political change. In January, the Palestinian camp in Karantina, in northeast Beirut, had been razed, its inhabitants killed or evicted.<sup>365</sup>

Assad was not yet in an all out war with Arafat. When Maronite militias laid siege to the Palestinian camps in Beirut, Saiqa troops were ordered to fight alongside Leftist-Palestinian forces. Saiqa forces joined the leftist and Palestinian in shelling the presidential palace, displacing Frangieh. In addition Saiqa stepped aside when the AAL and Fatah drove Maronite militias out of northern villages.<sup>366</sup>

The AAL, National Movement and PLO's offensives in March were effective, but spawned disagreement within the leftist coalition, within the PLO and within Fatah. On the one side was Arafat. He wanted the offensive to relieve the camps under siege. He wanted to avoid escalation that might cause Syria to take direct action against the PLO and its allies. On the other side were several people and groups: Within Fatah Wazir and the pro-Soviet Fatah members disagreed with Arafat. Within the PLO Arafat was opposed by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PLFP) and other rejectionists groups. Lastly, Jumblatt and the National Movement did not agree with Arafat. Arafat wanted to use the offensives and their military superiority for political means, his opponents for military means. The Jumblatt-Wazir camp wanted military victory.<sup>367</sup>

Israeli ambassador Dinitz had told Kissinger of regular Syrian troops in Lebanon as early as January, but Kissinger thought it unlikely.<sup>368</sup> Additionally, Atherton told Dinitz that the US could not find evidence of Syrian regulars in Lebanon.<sup>369</sup> On March 22, however, the State Department told Israel that at least 2000 Syrian Army troops were in Lebanon, disguised as PLA or Saiqa.<sup>370</sup>

On March 23 Syrian Foreign Minister Khaddam raised the question of Syrian intervention with Robert Pelletreau of the US Embassy in Damascus. Khaddam said Frangieh had officially requested a Syrian peacekeeping intervention. Pelletreau protested, at which

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<sup>365</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-76, Vol. 26, Memcon, April 27, 1976, Doc 287. Ford, Brown, Scowcroft; Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 55; Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 339

<sup>366</sup> Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 382

<sup>367</sup> Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 382-3

<sup>368</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Volume 26, March 15, 1976, Doc. 267. Kissinger, Atherton, Saunders *et al.*

<sup>369</sup> Cable, STATE 63758, Secstate to Tel Aviv *et al.*, March 16, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>370</sup> Cable, STATE 69202, Secstate to Tel Aviv *et al.*, March 22, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

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Khaddam asked if the US had any other suggestions. Pelletreau said he would consult Washington and Khaddam agreed to delay Syrian intervention until Washington replied. Khaddam would not give any details about the size of the intervention, but said it would be of short duration.<sup>371</sup> George Lambrakis at the Beirut Embassy replied that if Israel would allow Syria to intervene, it would be the most convenient solution for the US.<sup>372</sup> Washington instructed Pelletreau to investigate how many troops and for how long Syria planned to stay in Lebanon. The US did not suggest alternatives to intervention, but kept warning the Syrians of the danger of provoking Israel and angering the US.<sup>373</sup> Simultaneously, Kissinger sent a message to Hussein of Jordan, hoping the King might restrain Assad.<sup>374</sup>

While trying to delay Syria, NSC advisor Brent Scowcroft and Under Secretary of State Joseph Sisco asked Dinitz for Israel's opinion on Khaddam's message.<sup>375</sup> Dinitz said that Israeli Foreign Minister Allon held off an Israeli reaction for the moment, but was following the developments closely.<sup>376</sup>

Kissinger discussed Syrian intervention with Scowcroft, Sisco and other NSC and State officials, late March 23. Syrian intervention was seen as a real possibility, but not an immediate one. The participants realized that a Syrian intervention would support the Christians and were keen on the idea. However, the US could not get Israel to accept a Syrian intervention. Kissinger and the others explored the idea of letting Israel *and* Syria intervene, without explicitly giving them the green light. Israel and Syria would, respectively, squash the PLO in the south and save the Christians in the north.<sup>377</sup> In conclusion, they decided to try to keep Israel, and thereby Syria, out of Lebanon. Kissinger wanted to buy time: the US would approach Syria on details about the intervention, while trying to ascertain Israel's reaction.<sup>378</sup>

Kissinger and Scowcroft briefed President Gerald Ford and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld on Lebanon on March 24. Scowcroft thought the PLO would win the Civil War, unless someone intervened. Kissinger thought a short-term Syrian intervention was the best-

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<sup>371</sup> Cable, DAMASCUS 1722, Damascus to Secstate, March 23, 1976, Box 32, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>372</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 2527, Beirut to Secstate, March 23, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>373</sup> Cable, STATE 70196, Secstate to Damascus *et al.*, March 23, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>374</sup> Cable, STATE 71008, Secstate to Amman, March 23, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>375</sup> Sisco's full title: Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs

<sup>376</sup> LDX "Possible Syrian Intervention in Lebanon", Oakley to Sisco, March 23, 1976, Box 23, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>377</sup> *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Volume 26, March 23, 1976, Doc. 268, Kissinger, Scowcroft, Hyland, *et al.*

<sup>378</sup> *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Volume 26, March 23, 1976, Doc. 268, Kissinger, Scowcroft, Hyland, *et al.*

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case scenario. He said Syria would crush the PLO, comparing it to the 1970 Black September War in Jordan.<sup>379</sup>

To minimize the risk of Israeli intervention, the Syrian intervention had to be short in duration and limited in size. Kissinger was afraid that the Syrians would never withdraw from Lebanon. The US looked into having an Arab or UN force replace the Syrian Army over time, to solve the problem of long term Syrian occupation.<sup>380</sup> Ideally, Kissinger wanted to strike a deal with Assad: If Assad would stay north of the Litani-river and get out quickly, Kissinger would restrain Israel.<sup>381</sup>

The US principal problem with a Syrian intervention was an Israeli counter-intervention. Kissinger thought it unlikely that Israel would sit by while Syria entered Lebanon. The Secretary did not think the US would have the leverage to restrain Israel. In the event of an Israeli counter-intervention, Kissinger thought Syria would have to attack Israel. The Palestinian-Syrian clashes in Lebanon were threatening Assad's domestic position, according to Murphy. Assad proclaimed he was acting to protect his fellow Arabs. If the non-Arab Israel started fighting Arabs (Palestinians) in southern Lebanon, Assad would have to protect the Palestinians, reasoned Kissinger. If Assad was seen as abandoning the Arab cause, Sadat would exploit the situation to diminish Syria's Arab position. In Kissinger's opinion, "[t]he end result would be exactly what we have worked all these years to avoid: it would create Arab unity. Worse yet, it could lead to a war."<sup>382</sup> Israeli intervention was out of the question: It would draw in "all the other Arab states".<sup>383</sup> Lebanon might turn into a large-scale Arab-Israeli war in Lebanon. Kissinger thought a new war in the Middle East would increase Soviet involvement. The previous Arab-Israeli war, the October 1973 War, had triggered an Arab oil boycott on the US and its European allies. American policymakers were anxious to avoid another oil crisis.<sup>384</sup>

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<sup>379</sup> Memcon, Ford, Kissinger, Rumsfeld, *et al.*, March 24, 1976, Box 18, GFD-NSA-MC; For the 1970 War in Jordan, see chapter two.

<sup>380</sup> FRUS, 1969–1976, Volume 26, March 24, 1976, Doc 270, Kissinger, Ingersoll, Clements, *et al.*

<sup>381</sup> FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume 26 March 24, Doc 271, Kissinger, Scowcroft, Sisco, *et al.*

<sup>382</sup> Kissinger in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume 26 March 24, Doc 271, Kissinger, Scowcroft, Sisco, *et al.*

<sup>383</sup> Kissinger in: FRUS, 1969–1976, Volume 26, March 24, 1976, Doc 270, Kissinger, Ingersoll, Clements, *et al.*

<sup>384</sup> FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume 26 March 24, Doc 271, Kissinger, Scowcroft, Sisco, *et al.*; FRUS, 1969-76, Vol. 26, Memcon, April 7, 1976, Doc 283, Ford, Rockefeller, Kissinger *et al.*; FRUS, 1969-76, Vol. 26, Memcon, April 7, 1976, Doc 284, Rockefeller, Kissinger, Rumsfeld *et al.*

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### Israel's Red Lines

On March 24, Kissinger was informed that Israel could accept a Syrian intervention, within certain limitations. These limits have since been referred to as Israel's red lines. Kissinger was informed that the geographic red line ran 10 km south of the Beirut-Damascus Highway. The Highway runs from south to east, from Beirut to Damascus. The other aspect of the red line was the size and armament of the Syrian force. If Syria crossed the red lines, Israel would counter-intervene in southern Lebanon.<sup>385</sup>

Having received the Israeli red lines, the Secretary of State continued to discuss how to prevent an Israeli counter-intervention. Kissinger thought heavy pressure would be needed in order to restrain Israel: President Ford would have to threaten Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin with halting military aid, impose sanctions and criticize Israel in the UN, if the US was to restrain an Israeli counter-intervention.<sup>386</sup>

Kissinger thought Egypt and Israel both wanted a National Movement-PLO victory or a partitioned Lebanon. It would weaken Assad's influence and standing in the Arab world, to Sadat's benefit. Israel would find it easier to rally American and international public support if the PLO controlled one of Israel's neighboring countries.<sup>387</sup>

### A Dead End in the UN

Kissinger did not want the UN or the international society involved. Involving the UN would mean involving Moscow. However, Kissinger wanted to keep the illusion of an international effort, as he had done between the October 1973 War and the Egyptian-Israeli negotiations in 1974: After the 1973 war, the US had involved the UN and the Soviet Union in a conference at Geneva. Kissinger made sure the conference was a flop. This allowed Kissinger to engage his step-by-step diplomacy, after having seemingly exhausted the UN effort.<sup>388</sup> Regarding the Lebanese Civil War, it was Egypt who first suggested involving the United Nations Security

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<sup>385</sup> Cable, no title or ID, starts with "I. We appreciate your suggestion [...]", Dinitz to State, March 24, 1976, Box 13, GF-NSC-SF-MESA; Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 1999: 1045; Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 385; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 2007: 195

<sup>386</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Volume 26 March 24, Doc 271, Kissinger, Scowcroft, Sisco, *et al.*

<sup>387</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Volume 26 March 24, Doc 271, Kissinger, Scowcroft, Sisco, *et al.*; *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Volume 26, March 26, 1976, Doc. 274, Kissinger, Sisco, Atherton *et al.*; *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Volume 26, March 28, 1976, Doc. 277, Kissinger, Sisco, Eagleburger *et al.*

<sup>388</sup> See chapter three. Dawisha. "Egypt" 1997: 40; Hanhimäki. *The Flawed Architect*, 2004: 320-2, 324-5, 329; Quandt. *Peace Process*. 2005: 138-41; Rogan. *The Arabs*. 2011: 467-8, 487; Shlaim. *The Iron Wall*. 2000: 321-2; Spiegel. *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict*. 1986: 283-305; Waage. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. 2012: 396-8; Yapp. *The Near East since the First World War: A history to 1995*. 1996: 423; Yaqub. "The Weight of Conquest" 2008: 237

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Council (UNSC) to the US. Kissinger let France discuss the matter of Lebanon in the UNSC, while making sure the US did not get involved.<sup>389</sup>

### What About Egypt?

If Syria allowed Israel to take southern Lebanon, Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat would proclaim himself the champion of the PLO and use the opportunity to attack Assad's standing in the Arab world. The meeting could not work around this point. In conclusion, they decided to try to keep Israel, and thereby Syria, out of Lebanon. Kissinger wanted to buy time: the US would approach Syria on details about the intervention, while trying to ascertain Israel's reaction.<sup>390</sup>

After learning that Israel could accept a limited Syrian intervention, Kissinger was less worried about Egypt. If Israel would keep out of Lebanon, Kissinger considered Sadat's displeasure tolerable.<sup>391</sup> On March 28 Cairo told Washington that there would be no Egyptian reaction to a Syrian intervention. Kissinger wanted to keep this secret from Israel. He did not want Israel to get overconfident that the Sinai II agreement would survive.<sup>392</sup>

### Facilitating a Syrian Intervention

Before the end of March, Kissinger started working to facilitate a Syrian intervention into Lebanon without causing an Israeli counter-intervention. On March 26 Kissinger warned Assad not to intervene south of the Beirut-Damascus highway. Kissinger did not tell Assad that he had received this information from Israel, but presented the Beirut-Damascus line as his own interpretation of what Israel would tolerate.<sup>393</sup>

Kissinger wanted to know how what kind of forces and how many Syria was planning to dispatch and where. Simultaneously, Kissinger was trying to learn the details of what kind of intervention Israel would accept. However, Israel was reluctant to expand upon the red

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<sup>389</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Volume 26, March 25, 1976, Doc. 273, Secretary, Sisco, Atherton *et al.*; *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Volume 26, March 26, 1976, Doc. 274, Kissinger, Sisco, Atherton *et al.*; *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Volume 26, March 28, 1976, Doc. 277, Kissinger, Sisco, Eagleburger *et al.*

<sup>390</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Volume 26, March 23, 1976, Doc. 268, Kissinger, Scowcroft, Hyland, *et al.*

<sup>391</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Volume 26 March 24, Doc 271, Kissinger, Scowcroft, Sisco, *et al.*

<sup>392</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Volume 26, March 28, 1976, Doc. 277, Kissinger, Sisco, Eagleburger *et al.*

<sup>393</sup> Cable, STATE 74076, Secstate to Damascus *et al.*, March 26, 1976, Box 31, GF-NSA-PC-MESA; *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Volume 26, March 26, 1976, Doc. 274, Kissinger, Sisco, Atherton *et al.*;

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lines.<sup>394</sup> The US was also cautious regarding the red lines. Neither Israel nor the US wanted anyone to discover that they authorized a Syrian intervention.<sup>395</sup>

The Assad-Jumblatt relationship had moved from cooperation to enmity between late 1975 and spring 1976. By the spring of 1976 the two had incompatible objectives: Assad's needed a peaceful Lebanon that he could dominate, to expand his influence in the Middle East. Therefore it was essential to Assad that the Lebanese State was preserved. If the Lebanese state requested Syria's aid, Syria could move in to Lebanon without technically invading or annexing. Therefore, Assad's short-term goal was a cease-fire. Jumblatt's long-term goal was to abolish the sectarian system and introduce socialist reforms. As the Arafat-Jumblatt alliance was military superior to the Maronites, Jumblatt's short-term goal was to escalate the civil war and topple the Lebanese system.<sup>396</sup>

Arafat was still hoping to heal the breach between Assad and Jumblatt. The two met in Damascus on March 27, at Arafat's request. The meeting lasted for nine hours, but the two were irreconcilable. Jumblatt had come to Damascus to ask for more weapons. Assad wanted Jumblatt to lay down his weapons and refused to increase the National Movement's arsenal. The meeting was the final nail in the coffin for the waning Damascus-National Movement relationship.<sup>397</sup>

Assad replied to Kissinger's implied red lines on March 27, after the failed meeting with Jumblatt. Assad gave his answer through King Hussein of Jordan, who Kissinger trusted to make precise assessments of Assad.<sup>398</sup> An allegedly downhearted Assad said that the Christians were barely holding on and that Syria had to intervene within hours. Assad said he would stay out of southern Lebanon and asked the US to keep Israel out. A similar message

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<sup>394</sup> Cable, STATE 74076, Secstate to Damascus et al., March 26, 1976, Box 31, GF-NSA-PC-MESA; *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Volume 26, March 26, 1976, Doc. 274, Kissinger, Sisco, Atherton *et al.*; *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Volume 26 March 24-28, Documents 271-277. Specifically: *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Volume 26, March 28, 1976, Doc. 277, Kissinger, Sisco, Eagleburger *et al.*

<sup>395</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Volume 26, March 28, 1976, Doc. 277, Kissinger, Sisco, Eagleburger *et al.*

<sup>396</sup> Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 55; Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 340-1; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 2007: 194

<sup>397</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 2582, Beirut to Secstate et al., March 25, 1976, Box 14, GF-NSC-SF-MESA; Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 55; Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 342-3; Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 382; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 2007: 194; Yapp. *The Near East since the First World War*. 1996: 271

<sup>398</sup> For Kissinger on Hussein, see: *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Volume 26, March 26, 1976, Doc. 274, Kissinger, Sisco, Atherton *et al.* For Assad's reply, see: Cable, AMMAN 1633, Amman to Secstate, March 27, 1976, Box 14, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

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arrived through France.<sup>399</sup> Whether Assad's warning was a test or he had changed his mind is unclear. However, there was no intervention on March 27.

Within the end of March, Washington received details on Syria's planned intervention. It is reasonable to assume that the US passed the information on to Israel. Assad was vague, but the information he gave indicated that Syria would respect Israel's wishes: Syrian troops would not be dispatched anywhere near Israel's border. Assad did not want to give a committal answer regarding the size and duration of the intervention, but said the intervention would be "only enough to do the job and only in Lebanon long enough to get the job done".<sup>400</sup>

On March 28 Arafat paid a visit to Damascus, the day after Assad's nine-hour quarrel with Jumblatt. Arafat and Assad agreed to work for a cease-fire, in order to hold a presidential election. Arafat consented to Assad sending a small peacekeeping force in Lebanon. The force was scheduled to arrive on April 10.<sup>401</sup>

On March 28 Dinitz told Kissinger that Israel could not allow a Syrian intervention. Moreover, Israel could not understand why the US wanted them to agree to such an intervention. Israel did not trust Assad, regardless of his ambition to subdue the PLO and save the Christians, opposed to the Kremlin's wishes. Dinitz said Assad would eventually revert to his own ways, bring the PLO back in to the fold and strengthen the Soviet Union's position in the Middle East. Israel supplied the Christians with weapons and thought the Israeli assistance would keep the stalemate going.<sup>402</sup> The Israeli arms deliveries were carried out with the US' blessing to make sure the Christian's were not overrun.<sup>403</sup> Kissinger told Dinitz that he would work to keep both Syria and Israel out of Lebanon, even if there was a Syrian intervention.<sup>404</sup> Kissinger believed Israel was wrong about the Christians' survival, but right about Syria in the long run.<sup>405</sup>

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<sup>399</sup> Cable, AMMAN 1633, Amman to Secstate, March 27, 1976, Box 14, GF-NSC-SF-MESA; *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Volume 26, March 27, 1976, Doc. 275, Kissinger, Atherton, Day *et al.*

<sup>400</sup> Assad as dictated by Jordanian Prime Minister Zaid al-Rifai in: Cable, AMMAN 1636, Amman to Secstate, March 28, 1976, Box 14, GF-NSC-SF-MESA; see also: Cable, DAMASCUS 1808, Damascus to Secstate, March 25, 1976, Box 14, GF-NSC-SF-MESA; Cable, DAMASCUS 1865, Damascus to Secstate, March 27, 1976, Box 14, GF-NSC-SF-MESA; Cable, AMMAN 1637, Amman to Secstate, March 28, 1976, Box 14, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>401</sup> Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 383, 385

<sup>402</sup> *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Volume 26, March 29, 1976, Doc. 278, Kissinger, Sisco, Atherton, *et al.*

<sup>403</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-76, Vol. 26, Memcon, April 3, 1976, Doc 282. Kissinger, Atherton and Day; *FRUS*, 1969-76, Vol. 26, Memcon, April 7, 1976, Doc 284. Rockefeller, Kissinger, Rumsfeld *et al.*

<sup>404</sup> *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Volume 26, March 29, 1976, Doc. 278, Kissinger, Sisco, Atherton, *et al.*

<sup>405</sup> Memcon, Ford, Kissinger, Scowcroft, March 30, 1976, Box 18, GFD-NSA-MC

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Kissinger would have preferred a stalemate in Lebanon, but believed that the Christians would not be able to hold on indefinitely. They would either be crushed or would create a Christian mini-state within Mount Lebanon.<sup>406</sup> Short of a political solution, Kissinger saw merit in a Syrian intervention in Lebanon. However, it had to be short-term and Israel had to be kept out.<sup>407</sup>

Kissinger hoped American success in Lebanon might help the Ford administration's step-by-step diplomacy.<sup>408</sup> However, the Ford Administration had no ambitions about furthering the shuttle diplomacy before after the election in the fall of 1976. Electoral considerations started appearing in meetings on Lebanon in late March 1976. However, Ford lost the election and was replaced by Jimmy Carter in 1977. Sinai II was to be Kissinger's last Arab-Israeli agreement.<sup>409</sup>

By early April, Kissinger thought a Syrian intervention was inevitable, regardless of what the US did.<sup>410</sup> To avoid suspicions of a Damascus-Washington conspiracy, Kissinger decided that the best approach would be to support Assad's mediation in Lebanon on the one hand and on the other hand tell him not to intervene, at least not overtly.<sup>411</sup> If a cease-fire could be realized, Kissinger presumed Syria could bring in more forces without provoking Israel.<sup>412</sup> Should the cease-fire approach fail, Kissinger wanted to work for a short-term Syrian intervention and keeping Israel out.<sup>413</sup>

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<sup>406</sup> *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Volume 26, March 29, 1976, Doc. 278, Kissinger, Sisco, Atherton, *et al.*

<sup>407</sup> Kissinger's preference for a Syrian solution is found throughout *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Volume 26, March 24–27 1976, Doc. 271–276. For a specific reference, see: *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Volume 26 March 24, Doc 271, Kissinger, Scowcroft, Sisco, *et al.*

<sup>408</sup> Memcon, Ford, Kissinger, Scowcroft, March 30, 1976, Box 18, GFD-NSA-MC; Memcon, Ford, Hussein, Kissinger *et al.*, March 31, 1976, Box 18, GFD-NSA-MC: 3-7

<sup>409</sup> Memcon, Ford, Hussein, Kissinger *et al.*, March 31, 1976, Box 18, GFD-NSA-MC: 3-7

<sup>410</sup> *FRUS*, 1969–76, Vol. 26, Memcon, April 2, 1976, Doc 281, Kissinger, Sisco, Atherton *et al.*

<sup>411</sup> Memcon, Ford, Kissinger, Scowcroft, March 30, 1976, Box 18, GFD-NSA-MC; *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Volume 26, March 29, 1976, Doc. 278, Kissinger, Sisco, Atherton, *et al.*; *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Volume 26, March 31, 1976, Doc. 280, Kissinger, Sisco, Scowcroft, *et al.*

<sup>412</sup> Memcon, Ford, Kissinger, Scowcroft, March 30, 1976, Box 18, GFD-NSA-MC; *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Volume 26, March 31, 1976, Doc. 280, Kissinger, Sisco, Scowcroft, *et al.*

<sup>413</sup> Memcon, Ford, Kissinger, Rumsfeld *et al.*, March 31, 1976, Box 18, GFD-NSA-MC; *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Volume 26, March 31, 1976, Doc. 280, Kissinger, Sisco, Scowcroft, *et al.*



### The US Initiative

Washington decided to talk to the Lebanese factions. Firstly, Kissinger had little faith in what the US could accomplish by talking to the Lebanese factions.<sup>414</sup> On March 28, Kissinger instructed George Lambrakis and Robert Waring at the Beirut embassy to approach Interior Minister Chamoun, National Movement leader Jumblatt and Prime Minister Karami. Chamoun could not expect a US intervention, and Jumblatt could not expect UN or international involvement. Kissinger wanted to encourage the factions to compromise, urging Jumblatt to refrain from violence and Chamoun to avoid partition.<sup>415</sup> The State Department did not want to preach as much restraint and compromise to Chamoun as to Jumblatt.<sup>416</sup> The Syrian approach was to be presented as the best alternative, but it must not appear to be sponsored by the US.<sup>417</sup>

Karami declared his complete agreement with Washington's approach. He told Lambrakis that a long-term peacekeeping force was needed and that Assad was the man for the job.<sup>418</sup> Chamoun was less agreeable. While supporting Damascus' effort, he would rather have Washington in charge. Chamoun was frustrated that the US could not repeat its 1958 intervention.<sup>419</sup> Chamoun approached Lambrakis on March 31. Chamoun said he was facing thousands of fighters of various Arab nationalities and needed ammunition from the US. Lambrakis told Washington that the Chamoun was trying to scare and make the US intervene. Lambrakis neither answered nor rejected the request.<sup>420</sup>

Lambrakis and Waring perceived Jumblatt as inflexible, bent on achieving long-term goals through military victory.<sup>421</sup> Jumblatt told Waring that he would be prepared to negotiate after a few days of military advancement. Jumblatt disliked Syria's approach, but was prepared to comply with Arafat's request for a cease-fire. Jumblatt was not overly interested in the US' opinion, but was glad to hear that the US opposed foreign intervention. Waring thought

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<sup>414</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Volume 26 March 24, Doc 271, Kissinger, Scowcroft, Sisco, *et al.*; *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Volume 26, March 28, 1976, Doc. 277, Kissinger, Sisco, Eagleburger *et al.*

<sup>415</sup> Cable, STATE 74955, Secstate to Beirut *et al.*, March 28, 1976, Box 14, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>416</sup> Cable, STATE 75117, Secstate to Beirut, March 29, 1976, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>417</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Volume 26 March 24, Doc 271, Kissinger, Scowcroft, Sisco, *et al.*; Cable, STATE 74955, Secstate to Beirut *et al.*, March 28, 1976, Box 14, GF-NSC-SF-MESA; *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Volume 26, March 28, 1976, Doc. 277, Kissinger, Sisco, Eagleburger *et al.*

<sup>418</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 2703, Beirut to Secstate, March 29, 1976, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>419</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 2724, Beirut to Secstate, March 29, 1976, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>420</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 813, Beirut to Secstate, March 31, 1976, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>421</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 2692, Beirut to Secstate, March 29, 1976, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

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Jumblatt misunderstood this point and took it to be US opposition of Damascus' effort.<sup>422</sup> A few days later, Washington got word from Assad. Following the US' talk with Jumblatt, Assad said the Syrian threat of intervention had lost its effect on Jumblatt.<sup>423</sup>

Kissinger asked Malcolm Toon at the US Embassy in Tel Aviv to estimate Israel's reaction to a Syrian intervention.<sup>424</sup> Toon thought Israel had come to believe that a Syrian intervention would be to keep the factions apart. Previously, Israel believed that Syria would intervene to annex Lebanon, prepare for war with Israel or to crush the Christians. Toon thought Israel did not actually care about the size and weaponry of a Syrian intervention. To prevent an Israeli countermove, Toon advised Kissinger to give Israel as many details as possible regarding the time, place, time-span, motive and composition of a Syrian intervention. According to Toon, Israel was afraid that an Israeli intervention in southern Lebanon would heat up the Arab-Israeli conflict. Toon thought it would be easier for Israel to tacitly allow a Syrian intervention if the Israelis were confident of Washington's assessments and Damascus' aims.<sup>425</sup> Kissinger warned the Israeli government not to discuss reactions to Syrian intervention with the press.<sup>426</sup>

There were two problems with the US talking to the Lebanese: Firstly, Kissinger had little faith in what the US could accomplish by talking. Secondly, Kissinger and the State Department lacked confidence in Lambrakis.<sup>427</sup> Lambrakis was seen as able, but had "a tendency to take off a bit."<sup>428</sup> The State Department repeatedly reminded Lambrakis to stick more closely to his instructions.<sup>429</sup> To avoid any blunders from Lambrakis, Kissinger and Ford decided to send a diplomat to Lebanon to assess the Lebanese situation more closely. Washington was particularly interested in learning whether the Christians were close to demise or not.<sup>430</sup> On March 31, Kissinger and President Gerald Ford sent Lewis Dean Brown

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<sup>422</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 2739, Beirut to Secstate, March 30, 1976, Box 14, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>423</sup> Cable, STATE 78230, Secstate to Beirut, April 1, 1976, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>424</sup> The cable with the request is withdrawn, but is referred to as "STATE 76565" in Toon's reply: Cable, TEL AVIV 2301, Tel Aviv to Secstate, March 31, 1976, Box 14, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>425</sup> Cable, TEL AVIV 2301, Tel Aviv to Secstate, March 31, 1976, Box 14, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>426</sup> Cable, STATE 80366, Secstate to Tel Aviv, April 3, 1976, Box 17, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>427</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Volume 26 March 24, Doc 271, Kissinger, Scowcroft, Sisco, *et al.*

<sup>428</sup> Deputy Under Secretary of State for Management Lawrence Eagleburger in: *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Volume 26, March 29, 1976, Doc. 278, Kissinger, Sisco, Atherton, *et al.*

<sup>429</sup> Cable, STATE 74965, Secstate to Beirut, March 29, 1976, Box 14, GF-NSC-SF-MESA ; Cable, STATE 75159, Secstate to Beirut, March 30, 1976, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA; Cable, STATE; 75935, Secstate to Beirut, March 30, 1976, Box 14, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>430</sup> Memcon, Ford, Kissinger, Scowcroft, March 30, 1976, Box 18, GFD-NSA-MC

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to Beirut, as US Special Envoy to Lebanon and interim ambassador.<sup>431</sup> Brown was officially instructed to avert Syrian intervention though Kissinger had decided that Syrian intervention was the only solution in Lebanon. In reality, his intra-Lebanese mini-shuttle primarily focused on bringing about the presidential election, avoiding international involvement and making way for a Syrian intervention.<sup>432</sup>

Brown was US Ambassador to Jordan during Black September, the 1970-71 war between King Hussein of Jordan and the PLO. After the war the PLO had been expelled from Jordan and moved its headquarters to Beirut.<sup>433</sup>

On March 30, 1976, Kissinger instructed Brown to warn Jumblatt that the US would make sure the National Movement lost the Civil War unless Jumblatt cooperated.<sup>434</sup> Brown wrote back to Washington on April 1. Despite the dominance of the Muslim-Palestinian forces, Brown did not think the Lebanese Christians were in danger of being overrun.<sup>435</sup> In a secret message to Kissinger, Brown thought it advisable to let three or four Syrian army brigades enter Lebanon.<sup>436</sup>

### The April Cease-Fire

A cease-fire was implemented on April 2. Fatah and Arafat had worked with Saiqa for suspension of hostilities since his March 28 meeting with Assad. Fatah and Saiqa had been fighting each other and cooperating throughout 1976. Assad used Saiqa to discipline the PLO leadership: When Arafat and Assad agreed, Saiqa cooperated with other PLO forces. Whenever the two were opposed, Saiqa criticized or sabotaged the PLO, particularly Arafat and Fatah. Arafat thought a cease-fire was necessary to prevent Syria from intervening. The Fatah leader had a hard time bringing about a cease-fire or even controlling Fatah's forces. Under direction of Wazir, Fatah fighters continued to fight and win alongside AAL, National

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<sup>431</sup> Cable, STATE 76270, Secstate to Beirut, March 30, 1976, Box 14, GF-NSC-SF-MESA; Cable, STATE 76332, Secstate to Beirut *et al.*, March 30, 1976, Box 14, GF-NSC-SF-MESA; Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 384, 389

<sup>432</sup> Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 55; Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 340-1; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 2007: 196

<sup>433</sup> See Chapter 2. For Brown's official State Department career, see <http://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/people/brown-lewis-dean>, visited September 4, 2014. Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 341

<sup>434</sup> Memcon, Ford, Kissinger, Scowcroft, March 30, 1976, Box 18, GFD-NSA-MC

<sup>435</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 2866, Beirut to Secstate, April 1, 1976, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA; Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 385; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 2007: 196

<sup>436</sup> The is not available in the sources for this thesis. The message, seemingly a cable, is dated April 1, 1976, Brown to Secretary with the id BEIRUT 2868 in: Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 385, 779 (note 77)

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Movement and PLO troops. Most of the Fatah leadership thought the Soviet Union would restrain a Syrian intervention, to avoid reheating the Cold War. But they overestimated Moscow's willingness and their power over Damascus. Due to the enmity with Syria, Fatah was increasingly leaning towards Egypt. This made Assad even more determined to gain control over Lebanon and the PLO. PLO agreed to a cease-fire on April 2, following a Syrian threat. Syria covertly started arresting and disarming PLO members, and detained hundreds over the following months.<sup>437</sup>

Assad told Kissinger that the new Lebanese President would be too weak. With no force to back up the government, the presidential election would be in vain. Assad said a political solution would not be enough to stabilize Lebanon; it was dependent on the backing of a Syrian intervention. The Syrian troops in Lebanon were too few to enforce order, said Assad, and the Lebanese Army could not be rebuilt.<sup>438</sup> Kissinger wanted to cautiously support Assad without making Syria too confident, and replied that Assad must avoid military intervention, while applauding him for arranging the cease-fire.<sup>439</sup>

Kissinger and his immediate staff reasoned that Jumblatt would break the cease-fire within weeks, provoking a Syrian intervention. Kissinger's reasoning resembled Assad's the previous day:<sup>440</sup> Kissinger saw the lack of a central authority as the principal threat to stability in Lebanon. Even a new president would lack the authority to deal with the civil war.<sup>441</sup>

On April 3, Kissinger reckoned that Chamoun was actively working to create a separate Christian state. Brown was instructed to dissuade Chamoun from partition, without making Chamoun lose hope. Kissinger wanted the Christians to have the will and strength to survive, but not so much that they would not negotiate.<sup>442</sup>

The Maronites had come to accept Syrian intervention as the best solution. The Maronite trio of Chamoun, Frangieh and Gemayel told Brown that Syria was the only power able to enforce

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<sup>437</sup> Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 342-4; Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 383-4

<sup>438</sup> Cable, DAMASCUS 1985, Damascus to Secstate, April 1, 1976, Box 32, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>439</sup> FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XXVI, March 29, 1976, Doc. 278, Kissinger, Sisco, Atherton, et al.; Cable, STATE 80365, Secstate to Damascus et al., April 3, 1976, Box 31, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>440</sup> Cable, DAMASCUS 1985, Damascus to Secstate, April 1, 1976, Box 32, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>441</sup> FRUS, 1969-76, Vol. 26, Memcon, April 2, 1976, Doc 281, Kissinger, Sisco, Atherton *et al.*;

<sup>442</sup> FRUS, 1969-76, Vol. 26, Memcon, April 3, 1976, Doc 282, Kissinger, Atherton and Day; Cable, STATE 81375, Secstate to Beirut, April 5, 1976, Box 14, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

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a cease-fire. They appealed to the US to stop hindering Syria.<sup>443</sup> Privately, Chamoun would prefer a US intervention.<sup>444</sup> Chamoun's associate Charles Malik, former diplomat to the UN, had approached the US Embassy in Beirut in late March. Malik described the Christians as barely surviving the Muslim-Palestinian offensive in the Christian heartland.<sup>445</sup> Chamoun expressed what Brown called an "alarmist description aimed at producing some kind of U.S. action."<sup>446</sup> Brown did not think the Maronites' situation was as desperate as described, at least not for a few weeks.<sup>447</sup> Brown told Chamoun that US intervention was impossible; US public opinion would oppose military involvement overseas so soon after the end of the Vietnam War.<sup>448</sup>

Gemayel and the Phalangists initially wanted Israel to come to their rescue, but by April they were reconciled with Syria intervening.<sup>449</sup> Israeli-Maronite meetings had taken place as early as September 1975. Rabin agreed to supply Gemayel with arms, but would not intervene.<sup>450</sup> Chamoun also established direct contact with Israel. Kissinger and Brown had indirectly inspired Chamoun to contact the Israelis: The Americans had encouraged the Maronites to be strong, so they would have leverage in negotiations. Ambassador Murphy was to keep Assad informed that the US were "letting some Israeli arms in" to the Maronites.<sup>451</sup> Murphy was also to reassure Assad that the arms were just for protection, not escalation.<sup>452</sup> Kissinger allowed the Israeli arms supply as "it helps maintain the balance."<sup>453</sup>

After Brown's first meetings with the Maronite leaders, Washington gathered that the Maronites were still working to partition Lebanon, as they had done since January. Brown reminded Maronite leaders that the US opposed partition.<sup>454</sup>

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<sup>443</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 2867, Beirut to Secstate, April 1, 1976, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>444</sup> Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 386; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 2007: 195-6

<sup>445</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 2666, Beirut to Secstate, March 27, 1976, Box 14, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>446</sup> Brown in: Cable, BEIRUT 2867, Beirut to Secstate, April 1, 1976, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>447</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 2866, Beirut to Secstate, April 1, 1976, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>448</sup> Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 386; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 2007: 195-6

<sup>449</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 2866, Beirut to Secstate, April 1, 1976, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA; Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 386; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 2007: 195-6

<sup>450</sup> Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 386; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 2007: 195-6

<sup>451</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-76, Vol. 26, Memcon, April 3, 1976, Doc 282. Kissinger, Atherton and Day

<sup>452</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-76, Vol. 26, Memcon, April 3, 1976, Doc 282. Kissinger, Atherton and Day; Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 386; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 2007: 195-6

<sup>453</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-76, Vol. 26, Memcon, April 7, 1976, Doc 284, Rockefeller, Kissinger, Rumsfeld *et al.*

<sup>454</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-76, Vol. 26, Memcon, April 3, 1976, Doc 282. Kissinger, Atherton and Day

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Brown thought the cease-fire was frail, and the essential effort was to keep it going.<sup>455</sup> The Maronite leaders had presented Syria as the only force able to contain the violence in Lebanon. Brown was skeptical of Syria's ability to carry out an intervention effectively. Regardless, he thought it untimely to intervene while the cease-fire held.<sup>456</sup>

To remedy Jumblatt's impressions of the US initiative, Brown told the Druze chief that the US had no actual power to stop or deter Assad from intervening. Central authority had to be reestablished before Lebanon could progress, Brown told Jumblatt. Jumblatt did not agree, to Brown's dismay.<sup>457</sup> National Movement representatives told Brown they would extend the cease-fire following the appointment of a new president. Jumblatt seemed to think it unlikely that Frangieh would resign as promised.<sup>458</sup>

### Enforcing the Cease-Fire – Arafat or Assad?

Washington did not want to give Damascus the impression that the red lines dialogue gave Syria free reign in Lebanon. While conducting the Israeli-Syrian mediation, Kissinger started looking at alternatives to Damascus.<sup>459</sup> The first of the two alternatives surfaced in early April, when Brown suggested a security force comprised of Lebanese and Palestinian militias, a joint security force.<sup>460</sup> The second alternative was to allow a French intervention, to counterbalance the Syrian intervention. The French option did not surface until May, and is discussed later.<sup>461</sup>

Brown suggested the joint security option on April 4. He thought the cease-fire was frail and had to be backed up by force. He had no hope of reuniting the Lebanese military or even assembling an everyday police force. The Maronites would not be able to assume this role, even if they were supplied with additional weapons and ammunition. The AAL-National Movement-PLO forces were far superior and had seemingly inexhaustible supplies.<sup>462</sup>

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<sup>455</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 2905, Beirut to Secstate, April 2, 1976, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA ; Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 383-4

<sup>456</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 2905, Beirut to Secstate, April 2, 1976, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA ; Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 383-4

<sup>457</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 2906, Beirut to Secstate, April 2, 1976, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>458</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 2930, Beirut to Secstate, April 4, 1976, Box 14, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>459</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-76, Vol. 26, Memcon, March 29, 1976, Doc. 278, Kissinger, Sisco, Atherton, *et al.*

<sup>460</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 2936, Beirut to Secstate, April 4, 1976, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA; Cable, BEIRUT 2940, Beirut to Secstate, April 4, 1976, Box 14, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>461</sup> Memcon, Ford, Kissinger, Rumsfeld, *et al.*, May 18, 1976, Box 19, GFD-NSA-MC; Memcon, Ford, Giscard d'Estaing, Kissinger, *et al.*, May 18, 1976, Box 19, GFD-NSA-MC

<sup>462</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 2936, Beirut to Secstate, April 4, 1976, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA; Cable, BEIRUT 2940, Beirut to Secstate, April 4, 1976, Box 14, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

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Presidential candidate Elias Sarkis told Brown that security would have to rely on either Arafat or Assad. Arafat's involvement would mean a joint security option: leftist-Palestinian and pro-Syrian forces cooperating with Phalange forces. Sarkis preferred the Syrian option.<sup>463</sup>

The Emissary presented the joint security option and the Syrian option to Kissinger.<sup>464</sup> Brown did not immediately like the idea of relying on the PLO, but reported that there was contact between Gemayel and Arafat and that anything was possible.<sup>465</sup> The joint security option would require US involvement, in Brown's opinion.<sup>466</sup> Jumblatt later told Brown that Arafat had suggested a similar joint security option, but Jumblatt had refused. Brown thought it was important to involve Jumblatt in the political process. The Envoy thought this would keep the Druze chief less volatile.<sup>467</sup> Brown also recommended involving Arafat, who he saw as a central actor in Lebanon.<sup>468</sup>

Kissinger wanted to explore the joint security option and Syrian intervention with the Maronite leaders. Kissinger wanted to discuss the joint security option with Damascus as well.<sup>469</sup> Sisco told Brown that an overture to Arafat would have to be strictly limited to discussing a security force. The US would not approach Arafat without consulting with Damascus.<sup>470</sup>

On April 4, Kissinger asked Sadat and Egyptian Foreign Minister Ismail Fahmy to use what influence the Egyptians had over Arafat and Jumblatt to make them uphold the cease-fire and seek compromise. Knowing that Sadat was opposed to Assad increasing his regional power, Kissinger told them that this approach was necessary to prevent Syrian intervention.<sup>471</sup> Sadat avoided this point in his replies.<sup>472</sup>

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<sup>463</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 2941, Beirut to Secstate, April 4, 1976, Box 14, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>464</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 2936, Beirut to Secstate, April 4, 1976, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>465</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 2940, Beirut to Secstate, April 4, 1976, Box 14, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>466</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 2936, Beirut to Secstate, April 4, 1976, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>467</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 3119, Beirut to Secstate, April 8, 1976, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>468</sup> Waller, Thomas, "Det libanesiske problemet. Det amerikanske diplomatiet under Den libanesiske borgerkrigen 1975-76", Master Thesis, University of Oslo, Spring 2011: 75. Waller refers to a Cable with ID "BEIRUT 2942" dated April 4, 1976. The document is withdrawn from the Gerald Ford Archives and the NARA-AAD

<sup>469</sup> Cable, STATE 81280, Secstate to Beirut et al., April 5, 1976, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA; Cable, STATE 81282, Secstate to Damascus, April 5, 1976, Box 14, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>470</sup> Cable, STATE 81299, Secstate to Damascus et al., April 5, 1976, Box 14, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>471</sup> Cable, STATE 81260, Secstate to Cairo *et al.*, April 4, 1976, Box 14, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>472</sup> Cable, CAIRO 4833, Cairo to Secstate, April 12, 1976, Box 9, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

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Kissinger also asked Sadat, Fahmy and Vice President Hosni Mubarak their advice on a joint security force.<sup>473</sup> Sadat replied that enemies like the Phalange and PLO were unlikely to cooperate successfully over time.<sup>474</sup> Kissinger wrote back on April 11, suggesting a symbolic Arab force made up of “neutral” Arab countries, though he did not specify which countries.<sup>475</sup> Sadat avoided replying to this as well. Ambassador to Egypt Hermann Eilts reasoned that Sadat was suspecting Israel-Syria-US conspiracy in Lebanon. Eilts thought Sadat would avoid any subject that might somehow strengthen the Syrian effort.<sup>476</sup>

Within the first days of April, the Syrian Navy blocked the ports of Sidon, Tripoli and Tyre, cutting off the National Movement and PLO’s source of supplies. On April 5, Saiqa cut Beirut’s electricity and fuel supply. Three days later Saiqa forces shelled Shatila, a Palestinian refugee camp in southwest Beirut, later to be made famous for the massacre in 1982. The Parliament was finally able to assemble on April 10, 1976. The legislators amended the constitution to allow an earlier presidential election. Clinging to his job, Frangieh did not give his necessary consent to the constitutional amendment before April 24.<sup>477</sup> Frangieh agreed to sign after US pressure.<sup>478</sup> US Emissary Brown believed Frangieh had delayed out of fear of prosecution.<sup>479</sup>

Kissinger warned Ford on April 7, that the US might have to talk directly to the PLO.<sup>480</sup> The US had secretly promised Israel not to recognize or negotiate with the PLO in September 1975, as part of the Sinai II agreement.<sup>481</sup> However, Kissinger thought the US could talk to the PLO without violating the promise, if the talks were limited to the Lebanese Civil War.<sup>482</sup>

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<sup>473</sup> Cable, STATE 81421, April 5, 1976, Box 6, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>474</sup> Cable, CAIRO 4781, April 10, 1976, NARA-AAD

<sup>475</sup> Cable, STATE 87614, April 11, 1976, Box 6, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>476</sup> Cable, CAIRO 4833, Cairo to Secstate, April 12, 1976, Box 9, GF-NSA-PC-MESA; Cable, CAIRO 5053, Cairo to Secstate, April 15, 1976, Box 9, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>477</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-76, Vol. 26, Memcon, April 27, 1976, Doc 287. Ford, Brown, Scowcroft; Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 55-6; Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 384, 385

<sup>478</sup> Cable, STATE 97586, Secstate to Beirut et al., April 22, 1976, Box 14, GF-NSC-SF-MESA; Cable, BEIRUT 3656, Beirut to Secstate, April 23, 1976, Box 14, GF-NSC-SF-MESA; Cable, TOSEC 110063, Secstate to Secretary, April 24, 1976, Box 15, GF-NSC-SF-MESA; Cable, STATE 100420, Secstate to Amman et al., April 25, 1976, Box 15, GF-NSC-SF-MESA;

<sup>479</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-76, Vol. 26, Memcon, April 27, 1976, Doc 287. Ford, Brown, Scowcroft; Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 55-6; Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 384, 385

<sup>480</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-76, Vol. 26, Memcon, April 7, 1976, Doc 284, Rockefeller, Kissinger, Rumsfeld et al.

<sup>481</sup> Christison. *Perceptions of Palestine*. 1999: 146, 155-6; Karsh, “Israel” 1997: 181; Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 1999: 456; Neff, Donald, *Fallen Pillars. U.S. Policy towards Palestine and Israel since 1945*, 2002: 115; Quandt. *Peace Process*. 2005: 169; Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle and the Search for State*. 1997: 321; Yaqub. “The Weight of Conquest” 2008: 244

<sup>482</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-76, Vol. 26, Memcon, April 7, 1976, Doc 284, Rockefeller, Kissinger, Rumsfeld et al.



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The joint security option came to naught, for three reasons. Firstly, Kissinger thought Assad was a better option than Arafat, as Syria and the US had common short-term goals. Damascus and Washington both wanted to restore order to a unified Lebanon, while subduing the Muslim-Palestinian militias. Additionally, Assad told Washington that he would oppose a joint security force. Secondly, Kissinger wanted to avoid giving Arafat an important role in Lebanon. Thirdly, the joint force would be difficult to organize. The Maronite and leftist-Palestinian forces were too polarized to cooperate without someone making a major effort. The US was not prepared to make such an effort in Lebanon.<sup>483</sup> On April 13, 1976, Kissinger told Brown to shelve the idea of a joint Lebanese-Palestinian force.<sup>484</sup>

Kissinger was not worried about a Syrian intervention in itself, but an Israeli one. To the Ford Administration, an Israeli intervention would sabotage the Kissinger's plans for future bilateral Arab-Israeli agreements by opening a Pandora's box of potential problems, including oil embargo on the US and its allies, as well as increased Soviet involvement in the Middle East. If Israel entered southern Lebanon, Kissinger thought Sadat would jump on the opportunity to criticize Assad for abandoning the Palestinians and the Arab cause. Syria, in turn, might be forced in to armed conflict with Israel. Kissinger thought Moscow would not remain on the sidelines, if faced with the prospect of the Israeli Defense Forces defeating the Soviet-equipped Syrian Armed Forces. Increased Soviet involvement was Kissinger's biggest concern.<sup>485</sup>

Within April 7 the US had moved several US Navy ships, including assault ships, to within some 20 hours of the Lebanese coast. The naval presence was a show of force to deter Soviet intervention. Moscow accused Washington of interfering in Lebanon, but the US replied that the ships were standing by to evacuate US citizens. This was true, though the evacuation did not begin until June 20. Kissinger hoped the deterrence would pressure the Kremlin to lean on Jumblatt and pro-Soviet Palestinians to maintain the cease-fire.<sup>486</sup>

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<sup>483</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-76, Vol. 26, Memcon, April 7, 1976, Doc 284, Rockefeller, Kissinger, Rumsfeld *et al.*; Cable, STATE 87620, Secstate to Damascus *et al.*, April 11, 1976, Box 14, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>484</sup> Cable, STATE 88186, Secstate to Beirut *et al.*, April 13, 1976, Box 14, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>485</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-76, Vol. 26, Memcon, April 7, 1976, Doc 284, Rockefeller, Kissinger, Rumsfeld *et al.*

<sup>486</sup> Memcon, Ford, Kissinger, Rumsfeld *et al.*, March 31, 1976, Box 18, GFD-NSA-MC; Cable, STATE 81258, Secstate to Damascus *et al.*, April 4, 1976, Box 14, GF-NSC-SF-MESA; Cable, STATE 81259, Secstate to Tel Aviv *et al.*, April 4, 1976, Box 17, GF-NSA-PC-MESA; Cable, STATE 81260, Secstate to Cairo *et al.*, April 4, 1976, Box 14, GF-NSC-SF-MESA; *FRUS*, 1969-76, Vol. 26, Memcon, April 7, 1976, Doc 283. Ford, Rockefeller, Kissinger *et al.*; *FRUS*, 1969-76, Vol. 26, Memcon, April 7, 1976, Doc 284, Rockefeller, Kissinger, Rumsfeld *et al.*; Cable, STATE 86109, Secstate to Moscow *et al.*, April 9, 1976, Box 14, GF-NSC-SF-MESA;

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On the morning of April 7, Kissinger briefed the Bipartisan Congressional Leadership about the threat of an Israeli counter-intervention.<sup>487</sup> He did not mention the first indication of Israeli red lines, received nearly two weeks before. In the following NSC meeting Kissinger was less worried about an Israeli intervention. Ford and Kissinger had gained confidence that Israel might be restrained. Kissinger told the NSC that he wanted to keep the Israeli threat as a bargaining card to deter Assad.<sup>488</sup> In light of what Kissinger told the Bipartisan Congressional Leadership, it would appear that he wanted to use this bargaining card in domestic politics as well.

Kissinger told Ford that there was no immediate threat of Syrian intervention either. Kissinger believed both the Soviet Union and Syria were eager to avoid an Israeli-Syrian confrontation. The current cease-fire had allowed Israel to resupply the Maronites with weapons, so Kissinger thought the Maronites were far from impending destruction.<sup>489</sup>

### Lebanese Arms Request

Lebanese Army chief General Hanna Said contacted the US Defense Department on April 7. Said, now an ally of the Lebanese Front, requested shells, rifles and rocket launchers for millions of dollars. The US rejected the proposal, stating that requests for arms would have to be done by the Lebanese government to the US State Department. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld brought the proposal to Kissinger, who answered “[I]et the Israelis do it. They are already arming the Christians.”<sup>490</sup> In January the US had tried to limit Lebanese factions access to arms, but with a Syrian intervention underway to impose order and counterbalance the leftist-Palestinian ascendancy, Kissinger had no qualms about Israel arming the Maronites. Israel promptly sent arms to Maronite forces.<sup>491</sup>

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Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 1999: 1042; Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 342; O’Ballance. *Civil War in Lebanon, 1975-92*, 1998: 48

<sup>487</sup> The Bipartisan Congressional Leadership is made up of the Democratic and Republican leaders in the Senate and the House of Representatives. *FRUS*, 1969-76, Vol. 26, Memcon, April 7, 1976, Doc 283, Ford, Rockefeller, Kissinger *et al.*

<sup>488</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-76, Vol. 26, Memcon, April 7, 1976, Doc 284, Rockefeller, Kissinger, Rumsfeld *et al.*

<sup>489</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-76, Vol. 26, Memcon, April 7, 1976, Doc 284, Rockefeller, Kissinger, Rumsfeld *et al.*

<sup>490</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-76, Vol. 26, Memcon, April 7, 1976, Doc 284, Rockefeller, Kissinger, Rumsfeld *et al.*

<sup>491</sup> For the US limiting arms to Lebanon, see chapter 4. *FRUS*, 1969-76, Vol. 26, Memcon, April 7, 1976, Doc 284, Rockefeller, Kissinger, Rumsfeld *et al.*; Cable, STATE 94160, Secstate to Beirut, April 17, 1976, Box 14, GF-NSC-SF-MESA; Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 314, 341

### A Cautious Intervention

Kissinger's red lines dialogue was successful. Syria started a small-scale intervention in early April, without an Israeli counter-intervention. On April 9, additional Saiqa troops arrived in Lebanon, while Syrian soldiers took control of the border crossing along the highway running between Beirut and Damascus. On April 10 Syrian Army soldiers and armored vehicles appeared in the Beqaa Valley, within some 10 km of the Syrian border. Syrian Army soldiers and officers were already in Lebanon, but in PLA or Saiqa guise. April 10 was the first deployment of official Syrian forces into Lebanon, marking the start of the Syrian intervention. Jordan declared its support for Syria. Jumblatt accused Hussein and Assad of conspiring to control the Palestinian movements and the West Bank. Rabin did not see the deployment as a violation of the red lines and made no public protest.<sup>492</sup>

In an April 12 speech, Assad said that Syria was obliged to resort to force in Lebanon. Assad blamed the National Movement and PLO and issued a general threat: Syria would do whatever it deemed necessary in Lebanon and would not be hindered by anyone. Saiqa claimed that 17 000 troops in Lebanon were loyal to Damascus, almost matching the size of the Lebanese Army before it dissolved. Syria illustrated its determination and power by arresting National Movement and PLO members where possible.<sup>493</sup>

Israel's tacit consent to Syria Army deployment in Lebanon worried Kissinger. He feared that Assad would take Rabin's silence as a green light and escalate the intervention. Ambassador Murphy told Assad to refrain from further deployments.<sup>494</sup>

When the Syrian troops appeared, Arafat and Jumblatt suspected US involvement. Jumblatt confronted the US Envoy, who could not give Jumblatt a satisfactory explanation. Brown promised to investigate.<sup>495</sup> Fatah suspected that Israel, Jordan, the Maronites and the US had silently agreed to give Syria the reins in Lebanon. With one hand, Fatah retreated a large proportion of the Fatah forces in the Beqaa Valley and renewed a proclaimed alliance to Syria. With the other hand, Fatah summoned additional PLA troops from Egypt. During March and April, the connection between Arafat and Sadat in Cairo had been strengthened.

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<sup>492</sup> Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 56; Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 385, 388; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 2007: 197

<sup>493</sup> Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 385; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 2007: 197; Yapp. *The Near East since the First World War*. 1996: 270

<sup>494</sup> Cable, STATE 88187, Secstate to Damascus et al., April 13, 1976, Box 14, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>495</sup> Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 386-7; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 2007: 197

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As Arafat's relationship with Assad had deteriorated, he needed to ally himself with another Arab leader. Sadat wanted to humiliate Assad. Sadat expressed his dedication to Arafat by publically reprimanding Assad and Hussein, accusing them of trying to dominate and weaken the PLO.<sup>496</sup>

On April 12, Ford asked Kissinger about Lebanon, to which the Secretary replied: "We may walk through that mine field okay."<sup>497</sup> Both the Soviet Union and Egypt were trying to confine the National Movement and Israel had not reacted to Syria's deployment. Dinitz had told Kissinger that Syria's current military presence was acceptable, though reaching the maximum of what Israel could accept.<sup>498</sup> Kissinger assured the US Congress on April 14 that the intervention was not a threat to Israel.<sup>499</sup>

Kissinger was satisfied with the way the Lebanon was working out and might even serve Israeli and American interests. He reckoned that the Lebanese Civil War would in time increase Syria's power over the PLO, at the expense of Arafat and Fatah.<sup>500</sup> Kissinger implied that Syria might avoid provoking Israel, as Assad was "scared to death of the Israelis."<sup>501</sup> The Secretary was optimistic about furthering the Israeli-Syrian bilateral process, once the Ford administration was reelected. Despite his optimism, Kissinger was still worried that Assad would escalate the intervention to the point where Israel could no longer ignore it. The sources do not indicate that the red lines dialogue was continued after Syria's small-scale intervention, and Washington continued to preach restraint to Damascus.<sup>502</sup>

Frangieh wanted to suggest to Assad that an international force might accompany the Syrian Army, but Frangieh wanted US approval first.<sup>503</sup> Kissinger did not want to endorse any plan before Assad agreed to it. Brown gave a noncommittal answer to Frangieh. Kissinger told Brown that the US might endorse an international force to mask a Syrian intervention.<sup>504</sup>

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<sup>496</sup> Khazen. *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 344; Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 385-6, 388

<sup>497</sup> Kissinger in: Memcon, Ford, Kissinger, Scowcroft, April 12, 1976, Box 19, GFD-NSA-MC

<sup>498</sup> Memcon, Ford, Kissinger, Scowcroft, April 12, 1976, Box 19, GFD-NSA-MC

<sup>499</sup> Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 385

<sup>500</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-76, Vol. 26, Memcon, April 13, 1976, Doc 285. Ford, Kissinger, Rumsfeld *et al.* *FRUS*, 1969-76, Vol. 26, Memcon, April 22, 1976, Doc 286. Kissinger, Atherton, Rumsfeld *et al.*

<sup>501</sup> Kissinger in: *FRUS*, 1969-76, Vol. 26, Memcon, April 13, 1976, Doc 285. Ford, Kissinger, Rumsfeld *et al.*

<sup>502</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-76, Vol. 26, Memcon, April 13, 1976, Doc 285. Ford, Kissinger, Rumsfeld *et al.*

<sup>503</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 3291, Beirut to Secstate, April 13, 1976, Box 14, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>504</sup> Cable, STATE 91022, Secstate to Beirut *et al.*, April 13, 1976, Box 14, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

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Unidentified press reports from mid-April had picked up Rabin saying “there is a ‘red line’ in Lebanon that Syria cannot cross”.<sup>505</sup> Similar remarks from Kissinger caused the Washington Post to print a story about Kissinger and Rabin’s joint warning to Assad. Kissinger told Assad that there was no relation between the statements. Kissinger did not want Assad to know that the limitations Kissinger suggested to a Syrian intervention came from Israel.<sup>506</sup>

### The Damascus Accord

After demonstrating Syria’s power and determination by deploying the Syrian regular army, Assad invited Arafat to Damascus. The April 16 meeting produced the Damascus Accord: Arafat would endorse the Constitutional Document and its reforms, rather than support Jumblatt’s fight to topple and reform the state. Arafat was also to refrain from appeals to the international community. Assad wanted to shape the developments with as little international involvement as possible. Assad would thereafter withdraw the Syrian forces that had entered on April 10. Both would work for a cease-fire and to resolve the conflict, restore the Lebanese government and allow the presidential election to take place. The Damascus Accord proved to be weak, facing resistance both from the left and the right. The National Movement and rejectionist Palestinian groups opposed the Accord, as did the Lebanese Front.<sup>507</sup>

The Lebanese Front sought to jeopardize the Damascus Accord through political and military escalation, as well as internationalization. Political escalation came with the creation of a civil system within the areas under Christian control, a continuation of the Christian de facto partition of Lebanon. Military escalation involved opening new offensives. The death tolls reached unprecedented levels, with more than a hundred people killed each day. By escalating the conflict, the Maronites made it harder for Arafat and Assad to cooperate and refrain from fighting each other. The Maronites’ second threat to the Damascus Accord was the internationalization of the conflict. On April 22, the Lebanese Front called for US or other powers to mediate in Lebanon. A week later, the Front called for an international deterrent force. The Maronites’ attempts at internationalization made Assad impatient. He wanted to control the Lebanese Civil War for its own means, which would be sabotaged by international involvement.<sup>508</sup>

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<sup>505</sup> Cable, STATE 91585, Secstate to Damascus, April 16, 1976, Box 14, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>506</sup> Cable, STATE 91585, Secstate to Damascus, April 16, 1976, Box 14, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>507</sup> Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 56; Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 386-7; Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 343-4

<sup>508</sup> Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 56; Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 386

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Kissinger believed Egypt was suspecting a secret trade-off between Damascus and Washington, that the US would restrain Israel and let Syria intervene in Lebanon. In exchange Assad would crush the PLO and renew the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF).<sup>509</sup> UNDOF controlled a buffer zone between Israel and Syria on the Golan Heights. UNDOF was established after Kissinger's Israeli-Syrian disengagement agreement of May 31, 1974, following the October 1973 War.<sup>510</sup> Washington told both Egypt and Israel that the US had not authorized a Syrian intervention. Kissinger also told Egypt that there had been no Syrian-US discussion of the upcoming UNDOF renewal with Assad.<sup>511</sup>

Israel announced its red lines publically on April 21. The geographical red line had at some point been moved south, from the Beirut-Damascus Highway to the Litani River. The Litani runs from outside Baalbek in the Beqaa valley and enters the Mediterranean just north of the town Tyre.<sup>512</sup>

In an April 22 WSAG meeting, Scowcroft said he thought Israel had no wish of actually entering southern Lebanon. Kissinger reckoned that Israeli troops in Lebanon would increase the pressure on Israel to withdraw from occupied areas.<sup>513</sup>

On April 22, Kissinger and his WSAG colleagues discussed Israeli and Soviet intervention as a possibility. The WSAG discussed whether the US might move troops into Lebanon: Either as a buffer between Israeli and Syrian forces, or to deter Soviet involvement. Kissinger requested that the Department of Defense look into involving US troops in Lebanon, should Israel or the Soviet Union intervene. Plans to evacuate US citizens had already been made. If Lebanon turned into a regional war, Kissinger wanted to “pour forces into the Mediterranean

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<sup>509</sup> Cable; CAIRO 5206, Cairo to Secstate, April 18, 1976, NARA-AAD; Cable, STATE 94215, Secstate to Cairo, April 19, 1976, Box 6, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>510</sup> Dallek. *Nixon and Kissinger*. 2007: 582; Gilbert, Martin. *The Routledge Atlas of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*. 2008: 96; Hanhimäki. *The Flawed Architect*. 2004: 330; Shlaim. *The Iron Wall*. 2000: 322

<sup>511</sup> Cable, DAMSCUS 1303, Damascus to Secstate, March 5, 1976, Box 23, GF-NSC-SF-MESA; Cable, STATE 94215, Secstate to Cairo, April 19, 1976, Box 6, GF-NSA-PC-MESA; Cable, STATE 95617, Secstate to Cairo, April 20, 1976, Box 14, GF-NSC-SF-MESA; Cable, STATE 97591, Secstate to Tel Aviv et al., April 22, 1976, Box 17, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>512</sup> Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 2007: 197

<sup>513</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-76, Vol. 26, Memcon, April 22, 1976, Doc 286. WSAG Meeting, Kissinger, Atherton, Rumsfeld et al.

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to dissuade the Soviets.”<sup>514</sup> Kissinger was afraid Lebanon might turn into a quagmire. He also thought dispatching US troops might strengthen Assad’s resolve to intervene.<sup>515</sup>

Kissinger contacted Amman, Cairo and Damascus on April 25, to tell them that Frangieh had signed the constitutional amendment that would allow a presidential election. Brown had talked to Chamoun, Frangieh and Jumblatt. Jumblatt was prepared to meet Gemayel and discuss a political compromise. Chamoun agreed to postpone his plans for partition. Frangieh reiterated his promise to resign after the election, but only if he thought “the security conditions then prevailing were adequate.”<sup>516</sup>

Upon learning that the presidential election was moving forward, Egyptian Foreign Minister Ismail Fahmy told the US that Sarkis was not a good candidate, because he was associated with Syria. Fahmy also hinted that Egypt should take a greater part in Lebanon’s security, to balance out the Syrians.<sup>517</sup>

Jumblatt wanted to sabotage the Damascus Accord by conducting a *de facto* partition to mirror the one of the Maronites. Rejectionist Palestinian groups publically accused Syria of cooperating with the US. Within the leftist-Palestinian groups there were calls to react to the Maronites’ escalation with increased military force. Arafat vetoed these efforts to sabotage the Damascus Accord.<sup>518</sup>

Damascus told the US Ambassador Murphy that Jumblatt’s attempt at *de facto* partition was a willful defiance of Syria. After discussing Lebanon for a while, Murphy was told that Assad wanted to discuss the future of the region with the Americans. Assad had previously raised the subject repeatedly after announcing the Constitutional Document in February. White House and State Department sources can hardly illuminate president Assad’s thinking, but it is reasonable that he wanted the US to reward his Lebanese effort with a new Israeli-Syrian agreement. However, the sources give no indications that Kissinger was considering a new

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<sup>514</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-76, Vol. 26, Memcon, April 7, 1976, Doc 284, Rockefeller, Kissinger, Rumsfeld *et al.*

<sup>515</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-76, Vol. 26, Memcon, April 22, 1976, Doc 286. WSAG Meeting, Kissinger, Atherton, Rumsfeld *et al.*

<sup>516</sup> Cable, STATE 100420, Secstate to Amman *et al.*, April 25, 1976, Box 15, GF-NSC-SF-MESA; Cable, STATE 100421, Secstate to Cairo *et al.*, April 25, 1976, Box 15, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>517</sup> Cable, CAIRO 5645, Cairo to Secstate, April 27, 1976, Box 9, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>518</sup> Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 386-7

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Israeli-Syrian agreement at the time. The Ford administration had put off all Middle East diplomacy until after the election, which Ford lost to Jimmy Carter.<sup>519</sup>

### Presidential Election

On April 27, Special Emissary Brown had briefed Ford and Scowcroft on the Lebanese Presidential election. The Emissary preferred Sarkis to Eddé, but would not give his support publically. This, he said, would be the “kiss of death”, meaning that US support would be to Sarkis’ disadvantage.<sup>520</sup> Brown assured Ford and Scowcroft that votes would be bought and sold in the election.<sup>521</sup>

With the presidential election on track, Brown’s biggest concern was security. According to Brown, “[t]here are countless groups roaming around looting and killing – they have to be put against the wall and shot.”<sup>522</sup> Brown was pessimistic about Lebanon in the long term. According to him, there was little hope for change when every leading politician was a basically a chieftain with a personal militia.<sup>523</sup> In Brown’s words, Lebanese leaders were not politicians, but “war-lords in tailored suits”, unable to restrain their own militias.<sup>524</sup> Brown’s most brutal description was awarded Jumblatt, when Ford said the National Movement leader was not a Muslim: “He is an offshot called Druze. He is crazy.”<sup>525</sup>

Brown returned to Beirut, with instructions to advise a political solution and to prolong the cease-fire. He was also instructed to refrain from expressing personal or US views for the time being. Kissinger was curious to know how the election might be realized and the current chances of Syrian intervention.<sup>526</sup>

Despite occasional clashes, Jumblatt renewed the cease-fire. If the clashes turned into lasting hostilities, Brown thought they would jeopardize the election. Brown told Washington that this would increase the chances of Syrian intervention.<sup>527</sup> Sisco promptly reached out to Saudi Arabia, who had good relations with the National Movement, the PLO and Syria. Washington

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<sup>519</sup> Cable, DAMASCUS 929, Damascus to Secstate, February 20, 1976, Box 32, GF-NSA-PC-MESA; Cable, DAMASCUS 2578, Damascus to Secstate, April 27, 1976, Box 15, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>520</sup> Brown in: *FRUS*, 1969-76, Vol. 26, Memcon, April 27, 1976, Doc 287. Ford, Brown, Scowcroft

<sup>521</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-76, Vol. 26, Memcon, April 27, 1976, Doc 287. Ford, Brown, Scowcroft

<sup>522</sup> Brown in: *FRUS*, 1969-76, Vol. 26, Memcon, April 27, 1976, Doc 287. Ford, Brown, Scowcroft

<sup>523</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-76, Vol. 26, Memcon, April 27, 1976, Doc 287. Ford, Brown, Scowcroft

<sup>524</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 2905, Beirut to Secstate, April 2, 1976, Box 25, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>525</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-76, Vol. XXVI, April 27, 1976, Doc 287. Ford, Brown, Scowcroft

<sup>526</sup> Cable, SECTO 11286, Secstate to Beirut *et al.*, May 2, 1976, Box 15, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>527</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 3911, Beirut to Secstate, May 3, 1976, Box 26, GF-NSA-PC-MESA



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asked the Saudi government to get Assad and Jumblatt reconciled.<sup>528</sup> Kissinger insisted that this be kept secret from Egypt. Sadat would be displeased to know that the US was working to end a rivalry that was beneficial to Sadat.<sup>529</sup>

On May 4, Syria told the US that the presidential election was scheduled for May 8. Damascus was losing faith in a political solution and the Syrian leadership reminded Murphy to discuss the future Middle East peace process with Assad.<sup>530</sup> The State Department did not instruct Murphy to discuss the process with the Syrians until May 14.<sup>531</sup>

As the election approached, the State Department gathered that Assad was highly suspicious of Washington. Syria allegedly thought the US had allowed an “inadequate” Syrian intervention while egging the Maronites to fight, in order to humiliate Assad.<sup>532</sup>

Sisco had met with Eddé on December 19, 1975, while Eddé was touring Europe and the US to win support for his presidency. The US State Department had described Eddé as a moderate candidate for the presidency. Eddé was described as critical of both Palestinian and Israeli ambitions in Lebanon.<sup>533</sup>

Eddé thought the involvement of the Palestinians and Syria, as well as Iraq and Libya, barricaded an agreement between the Lebanese. Eddé envisioned a joint American-Israeli intervention to throw out the Syrian controlled troops, followed by a UN peacekeeping force. Eddé accused both Israel and Syria “and other countries” of wanting Lebanon destroyed.<sup>534</sup> Sisco rejected Eddé’s claim. Eddé accused the US and USSR of conspiring to divide the entire Middle East between them as spheres of influence. After the meeting with Sisco, Eddé toned down his public conspiracy theories involving the US, but continued to attack Israel. The Eddé-Sisco meeting did nothing to strengthen his appeal to American policymakers. The State Department described Eddé’s ideas as “unrealistic” and called the whole meeting “most

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<sup>528</sup> Cable, STATE 107447, Secstate to Jidda et al., May 4, 1976, Box 29, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>529</sup> Cable, SECTO 11298, Secretary to Secstate, May 4, 1976, NARA-AAD

<sup>530</sup> Cable, DAMASCUS 2753, Damascus to Secstate, May 4, 1976, Box 32, GF-NSA-PC-MESA;

<sup>531</sup> Cable, STATE 119076, Secstate to Damascus *et al.*, May 14, 1976, Box 31, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>532</sup> Cable, STATE 109575, Secstate to Secretary, May 6, 1976, Box 35, GF-NSA-KT

<sup>533</sup> "Update to March 1974 Biographic Report" December 17, 1975, Box 24, GF-NSA-PC-MESA; Memo, Dubs to Sisco, December 18, 1975, Box 24, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>534</sup> Cable, STATE 300219, Secstate to Beirut, December 20, 1975, Box 24, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

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unfruitful.”<sup>535</sup> The US was looking for a Lebanese solution, while Eddé’s wanted an international solution.<sup>536</sup>

Hoping to sabotage the Arafat-Assad Accord, the Lebanese Front launched a new offensive on May 7.<sup>537</sup> The presidential election was held on Saturday May 8. Saiqa and pro-Syrian PLA troops provided security for the election.<sup>538</sup>

Eddé and his supporters, including Jumblatt and some 20 other parliament members, boycotted the election. Eddé said a free election could not be guaranteed. Saudi Arabia and the CIA spent large sums of money buying votes.<sup>539</sup> The National Movement and the PLO also boycotted the election and Arafat and Jumblatt agreed to sabotage with shelling and roadblocks. However, Arafat assumed that Sarkis would win and did not want to provoke Assad by sabotaging the election. To avoid betraying the National Movement, the PLO took part in shelling the election and manning roadblocks. However, the PLO’s shelling was kept at a minimum to avoid provoking Damascus. Arafat’s attempt to appease both Assad and Jumblatt did not work out. The Arafat-Jumblatt relationship survived, but in just over three weeks Assad would go to war against Arafat.<sup>540</sup>

Jumblatt and the National Movement were becoming increasingly isolated. Jumblatt’s inflexible rejection of the Constitutional Document and insistence to keep fighting had estranged him from the Sunni leadership, including Prime Minister Karami. Moreover, it had further estranged Jumblatt and Assad; lastly in their March 27 meeting. The two would never meet again. Within months they were fighting each other and within a year Jumblatt would be assassinated. The PLO’s reluctant shelling of the election marked the makings of a third split, the one between Jumblatt and Arafat.<sup>541</sup>

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<sup>535</sup> Cable, STATE 300219, Secstate to Beirut, December 20, 1975, Box 24, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>536</sup> "Update to March 1974 Biographic Report" December 17, 1975, Box 24, GF-NSA-PC-MESA; Memo, Dubs to Sisco, December 18, 1975, Box 24, GF-NSA-PC-MESA; Cable, STATE 300219, Secstate to Beirut, December 20, 1975, Box 24, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>537</sup> Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 386

<sup>538</sup> Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 344; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 2007: 198

<sup>539</sup> Votes were assumedly bought for the Sarkis, as Eddé did not receive a single vote. Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 56; Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 344-5; Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 387; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 2007: 198

<sup>540</sup> Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 56; Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 344-5; Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 387; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 2007: 198

<sup>541</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 2582, Beirut to Secstate et al., March 25, 1976, Box 14, GF-NSC-SF-MESA; Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 55; Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 331, 342-3,

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After the election, Kissinger wrote to Cairo. He assured Sadat and Fahmy that the US had been impartial. Kissinger went on to say that Egypt and the US had common interest in supporting Sarkis, as an independent government was the best guarantee against Syrian dominance over Lebanon.<sup>542</sup>

Meanwhile, the Arafat-Assad relationship was deteriorating, despite the Damascus Accord. Arafat tried to accommodate Damascus and publically support Syria. However, Arafat realized that his relationship with Assad was hanging on by a thread. To make up the waning relationship with Assad, Arafat tried to align himself with Sadat and Cairo. Assad perceived the rapprochement between Arafat and Sadat, hastening the Arafat-Assad breakup. Damascus bared its teeth by deploying Syrian troops around the airport southwest of Beirut and PLA troops around the PLO headquarters.<sup>543</sup>

The Saudi government was eager to get involved in Lebanon, according to the US Embassy in Jidda. Ambassador William Porter reported that Saudi Arabia already had a “well-developed line of action”, involving Arab and Lebanese contacts.<sup>544</sup> The Saudi government requested US information to better assess the situation.<sup>545</sup> Atherton asked Brown’s opinion on Saudi intentions.<sup>546</sup> Brown saw no conflict between Saudi mediation and US interest. However, Brown stated the “Syrians have been almost fanatically jealous” of anyone trying to share in Assad’s Lebanese efforts.<sup>547</sup> Kissinger started sharing information with the Saudis on the day of the election, insisting that there be no trace of the US in the Saudi effort.<sup>548</sup> Simultaneously, Kissinger told Assad that Lebanon’s future was “primarily a task for the Lebanese and their friends in the Arab world”, indicating that the Washington would not stand in the way of Damascus.<sup>549</sup>

The Lebanese election was followed by military and political escalation. Lebanon moved ever closer to partition, as the National Movement started developing a civil administration to

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344-5; Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 382; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 2007: 194; Yapp. *The Near East since the First World War*. 1996: 271

<sup>542</sup> Cable, STATE 112802, Secstate to Cairo *et al.*, May 8, 1976, Box 15, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>543</sup> Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 388

<sup>544</sup> Cable, JIDDA 2339, Jidda to Secstate, May 5, 1976, Box 15, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>545</sup> Cable, JIDDA 2339, Jidda to Secstate, May 5, 1976, Box 15, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>546</sup> Cable, STATE 109998, Secstate to Beirut *et al.*, May 6, 1976, Box 15, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>547</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 4102, Beirut to Secstate, May 8, 1976, Box 26, GF-NSA-PC-MESA

<sup>548</sup> Cable, STATE 112803, Secstate to Damascus, May 8, 1976, Box 15, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>549</sup> Cable, STATE 112808, Secstate to Damascus, May 8, 1976, Box 15, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

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match the Christian state that was emerging in central Lebanon. The Lebanese Front had launched a three-day offensive on the eve of the election, which was echoed by the National Movement on May 11. A collection of National Movement fighters and Palestinian rejectionists clashed with Saiqa and PLA forces between May 7 and 13. Saiqa leader Mohsen publically called for Syrian intervention, while blaming the Arafat and Jumblatt for the violence.<sup>550</sup>

Meloy was instructed to maintain the contacts Brown had established and to congratulate Sarkis.<sup>551</sup> Brown had been instructed to approach Arafat on May 10, but this instruction was not passed on to Meloy.<sup>552</sup> The rest of the instructions mentioned in Ford's talking points are insubstantial.<sup>553</sup> Ford, Kissinger and Scowcroft met Meloy on May 10, just before the Ambassador's departure. The meeting only lasted nine minutes and little more than pleasantries were exchanged.<sup>554</sup>

By the middle of May, both Israel and the US seemed openly comfortable with Syria's role and possible intervention. King Hussein of Jordan had advocated Syrian intervention to both Israeli and US officials, who reassured the king. Rabin publically applauded Syria for having "killed more terrorists in the past week than Israel has the past two years."<sup>555</sup> On May 12 the Lebanese newspaper An-Nahar quoted US Envoy Brown as saying that the question of a Syrian intervention in Lebanon was up to president elect Sarkis.<sup>556</sup>

Frangieh had an understanding with Syria to resign once a successor was elected. However, on May 14 Frangieh announced that he had changed his mind. Just as he changed his mind after the petition on March 17, Frangieh now intended to remain in position until the end of his term on September 22.<sup>557</sup> Ambassador Eilts said Sarkis' much needed support would not come from Egypt. Sadat saw Sarkis as a Syrian ally and would not acknowledge him until he dropped his "Syrian tilt".<sup>558</sup>

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<sup>550</sup> Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 388-9

<sup>551</sup> Memo, Background and talking points "Meeting with Francis E. Meloy, Jr. US Ambassador to Lebanon" Scowcroft to President, May 10, 1976, Box , GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>552</sup> Memcon, Ford, Kissinger, Scowcroft, May 10, 1976, Box 19, GFD-NSA-MC

<sup>553</sup> Memo, Background and talking points "Meeting with Francis E. Meloy, Jr. US Ambassador to Lebanon" Scowcroft to President, May 10, 1976, Box , GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>554</sup> Memcon, Ford, Meloy, Kissinger et al., May 10, 1976, Box 19, GFD-NSA-MC

<sup>555</sup> Quoted in Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 389

<sup>556</sup> Sayigh, *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 389

<sup>557</sup> Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 56; Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 389

<sup>558</sup> Cable, STATE 131078, Secstate to Secretary, May 27, 1976, Box 36, GF-NSA-KT

### The French Option

Kissinger tried to find alternative approaches that would limit Syria's sovereignty over Lebanon. The option of a joint Lebanese-Palestinian security force arose in early April, but had been discarded. The second alternative that surfaced was a French Intervention. On May 10 Kissinger was informed that France was considering sending forces to Lebanon. Ford and Kissinger thought a French intervention could counterbalance the Syrian intervention.<sup>559</sup> On May 18 French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing told Ford and Kissinger that France would only dispatch forces at the request of President elect Sarkis. Meanwhile, Kissinger had discarded the idea. Israel opposed the idea of a French intervention, claiming it would be a façade to hide a large-scale Syrian intervention.<sup>560</sup> Kissinger told Giscard of Israel's misgivings and added that a large French force would entice Assad to match its size. Giscard and French Foreign Minister Jean Sauvagnargues promised to keep the US informed before deploying French forces. Kissinger did not want to cross Israel. When he learned about Israel's misgivings regarding a French intervention, the idea was off the table. With the joint security and the French option both out of the question the US had only one alternative left: Syria.<sup>561</sup>

The French initiative did not appeal to President-elect Sarkis either. On May 24, Sarkis' foreign advisor Fouad Boutros told Ambassador Meloy that French troops were unnecessary; Lebanon needed a Syrian intervention. Meanwhile, the violence spiraled on. Frangieh and Chamoun used the violence to legitimize Frangieh's remaining in power. Meloy and the State Department thought Sarkis delayed inauguration made it more probable that Sarkis would have to rely on the Syrian Army.<sup>562</sup>

Assad wanted to control Lebanon himself, to meet his own ends. The French proposal strengthened Assad's resolve to take control of Lebanon. He had to act fast to maintain control over the small country.<sup>563</sup>

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<sup>559</sup> Memcon, Ford, Kissinger, Scowcroft, May 10, 1976, Box 19, GFD-NSA-MC; Memcon, Ford, Meloy, Kissinger *et al.*, May 10, 1976, Box 19, GFD-NSA-MC

<sup>560</sup> Memcon, Ford, Kissinger, Rumsfeld, et al., May 18, 1976, Box 19, GFD-NSA-MC; Memcon, Ford, Giscard d'Estaing, Kissinger, et al., May 18, 1976, Box 19, GFD-NSA-MC

<sup>561</sup> Memcon, Ford, Giscard d'Estaing, Kissinger, et al., May 18, 1976, Box 19, GFD-NSA-MC

<sup>562</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 4536, Beirut to Secstate, May 24, 1976, NARA-AAD; Cable, STATE 131014, Secstate to Secretary *et al.*, May 27, 1976, Box 36, GF-NSA-KT

<sup>563</sup> Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 390

## Chapter 5 – The US and the Syrian Intervention

### Syrian Intervention

The violence of the election weekend did not subside, but resurged in the last half of May. In a May 17 meeting in Damascus, Assad told Arafat and Libyan Prime Minister Abdessalam Jalloud that the Syrian intervention would be increased. By this time, Arafat had realized that his alliance with Assad was broken, and consequently perceived the intervention as a direct threat to Palestinian activity in Lebanon. The meeting drove another nail in to the coffin of the Arafat-Assad relationship. Jalloud had come to Lebanon to soften Assad's attitude toward the PLO, but it was futile.<sup>564</sup>

Arafat hoped that a Maronite-Palestinian agreement would forestall the increased Syrian intervention. Arafat and Jumblatt tried to reach an agreement with Sarkis before Assad could launch a major Syrian intervention. Simultaneously, Arafat worked for a joint involvement of Arab states, hoping to break Assad's solitary domination of Lebanon. On May 19, Fatah's intelligence chief, Salah Khalaf, announced the PLO's intention to increase its military effort. Khalaf publically called for the Soviet Union to act. The number of clashes increased, and the violence escalated. Saiqa's public criticism of the Fatah also reemerged, proclaiming Syria as the champion of Palestinian resistance. Saiqa's reprimands only united Fatah and the rest of the PLO in their opposition to Syrian dominance.<sup>565</sup>

Meloy got increasingly annoyed with Chamoun. The Ambassador described Chamoun as "mafia-like," using his control over the port in Jounieh, a Maronite coastal town in Mount Lebanon, to increase his personal wealth. In Meloy's opinion, Chamoun had no regard for the consequences of his actions.<sup>566</sup> As an illustration of Chamoun's volatility, Meloy noted: "at one time last fall, Chamoun's forces held the record for the number of cease-fires broken, despite Chamoun's role as Minister for Internal Security."<sup>567</sup> Meloy thought Washington should ask Chamoun's "friends" Iran and Jordan talk to Chamoun, in order to calm him down.<sup>568</sup>

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<sup>564</sup> O'Ballance. *Civil War in Lebanon, 1975-92*, 1998: 52; Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. 2000: 345; Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 389;

<sup>565</sup> Sayigh. *The Armed Struggle*. 1997: 387, 389-90

<sup>566</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 4536, Beirut to Secstate, May 24, 1976, NARA-AAD; Cable, STATE 131024, Secstate to Secretary *et al.*, May 27, 1976, Box 36, GF-NSA-KT

<sup>567</sup> Cable, STATE 131024, Secstate to Secretary *et al.*, May 27, 1976, Box 36, GF-NSA-KT

<sup>568</sup> Cable, STATE 131024, Secstate to Secretary *et al.*, May 27, 1976, Box 36, GF-NSA-KT

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On May 27, Saunders told Kissinger that Gemayel's son Amine Gemayel wanted to abolish the sectarian system and cooperate with Jumblatt. Saunders optimistically noted that the younger generation of Christians might be more pragmatic than their elders. Like Sarkis, the younger Maronites seemed to understand that Jumblatt could not be excluded from Lebanon's future.<sup>569</sup> Amine's younger brother Bashir, the instigator of the 1975 Black Saturday massacre and future President-Elect of Lebanon and, also held talks with PLO officials.<sup>570</sup> Bashir Gemayel had a conversation with Jumblatt on June 2. The two found common ground in their opposition to Assad. Bashir conceded to Jumblatt's demands for political and social reforms. Jumblatt had by then dropped his demand for desecularization of the Lebanese state and said the Maronites' could keep the presidency. Saunders' optimism was poorly founded: Amine and Bashir were respected within the Phalangist militia, but had no leverage over Phalangist politics. The Phalangists' political leadership was not interested in dealing with Arafat or Jumblatt, and Amine and Bashir's overtures came to nothing.<sup>571</sup>

In the end of May 1976 international and regional interest in Lebanon was spiking. Dinitz did not think Syrian intervention would be increased in the near future, he told Kissinger on May 19.<sup>572</sup> If Israel did indeed believe this, it was a poor assessment of the mood in Damascus. Assad was in a hurry to preempt international or Arab involvement. Syria launched a large-scale intervention in Lebanon on May 31 and June 1, introducing hundreds of tanks and 8000 Syrian soldiers, reaching 15 000 within days. The intervention turned into a war between Christian and Syrian forces on one side, and leftist and Palestinian forces on the other. The first phase of the Civil War ended in October-November 1976, when a *Pax Syriana* was enforced. This was not so much a peace as an absence of war; enforced and defined by Syria.<sup>573</sup>

As late as May 30, Ambassador Meloy described a "trend toward dialogue".<sup>574</sup> On June 2, Kissinger told Sadat and Fahmy that despite rumors in the American press, Damascus' large-

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<sup>569</sup> Cable, STATE 131014, Secstate to Secretary et al., May 27, 1976, Box 36, GF-NSA-KT

<sup>570</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 4536, Beirut to Secstate, May 24, 1976, NARA-AAD

<sup>571</sup> The Armed Struggle. 1997: 392; Traboulsi. A History of Modern Lebanon, 2007: 200

<sup>572</sup> Cable, STATE 122784, Secstate to Tel Aviv, May 19, 1976, Box 7, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>573</sup> Khazen, The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon. 2000: 345-6; Sayigh. The Armed Struggle. 1997: 390; Traboulsi. A History of Modern Lebanon, 2007: 199

<sup>574</sup> Cable, BEIRUT 4714, Beirut to Secstate, May 30, 1976, Box 15, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

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scale intervention did not have Washington's approval.<sup>575</sup> Fahmy did not accuse the US of any approval, but blamed Washington for not working harder to restrain Syria.<sup>576</sup>

Several factors brought about Syria's change, from supporter of radicals and Palestinian guerrillas. Firstly, Assad wanted to avoid a military confrontation with Israel. Israel might have been drawn in if Lebanon became a confrontation state governed by Jumblatt under the auspices of Arafat. Israeli might also be drawn in just to stop the chaotic civil war. Secondly, Assad would have wanted to avoid the spread of insurgencies and violence to Syria. Lastly, Sinai II, the Egyptian-Israeli agreement signed September 1975 under the auspices of Kissinger. Assad wanted to avoid being outmaneuvered by Sadat in the Arab World. As a counterbalance to Sinai II, Assad opted to develop closer ties with King Hussein of Jordan and increase Damascus' control over Lebanon. These objectives were not compatible with an alliance with Arafat, so Assad opted to control the PLO rather than to forge an alliance. The spring months of 1976 strengthened Damascus' ties to Israel, Jordan, the Lebanese leadership and the US. Arafat, on the other hand, had been driven into the arms of Sadat. In a way, Syria never changed: Assad's goal was always to secure power for himself and Syria. He only assumed the mask of ideology to further these aims.<sup>577</sup>

Washington regarded Assad as a Soviet ally, champion of leftists and Palestinians, and a critic of Israel. However, in the end of May 1976, Assad intervened in Lebanon to save the conservative Maronites from the leftist-Palestinian coalition – without Israel and the US objecting.<sup>578</sup> Kissinger saw himself as the architect of the changes in Lebanon. The Maronites were armed by Israel and protected by Syria. The bond between Damascus and Moscow was weakened, and the PLO was at war with one of their principal backers. Israel stayed out of Lebanon, preventing an Arab-Israeli war.<sup>579</sup>

The only concern the Ford administration ever showed regarding a Syrian intervention was that Israel would enter southern Lebanon, resulting in an Arab-Israeli war and a setback for Kissinger's Middle East policy. Having removed the joint security option and the French

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<sup>575</sup> Cable, STATE 135820, Secstate to Cairo, June 3, 1976, Box 15, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>576</sup> Cable, ALEXANDRIA 343, Alexandria to Secstate, June 3, 1976, Box 15, GF-NSC-SF-MESA

<sup>577</sup> Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 57; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 2007: 198; Waage. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*, 2013: 229-30; Yapp. *The Near East since the First World War*. 1996: 270

<sup>578</sup> Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*. 1979: 57; Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 2007: 198; Waage; Yapp. *The Near East since the First World War*. 1996: 270

<sup>579</sup> Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 1999: 1042



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option, however, Washington's path of least resistance went through Damascus. Both the Israel and the US stood by and allowed Syria to intervene. Israel knew that Syria had troops in Lebanon as early as January 1976, without reacting. Syria was most attentive to Israel when operating in Lebanon, as Israel noticed. Assad carefully probed Israel's tolerance of a Syrian intervention through the US when Shihabi and later Assad warned that Syria had to intervene. The Syrian leadership would have realized that word of a Syrian intervention would reach Israel. And within weeks, Washington sent Damascus Israel's red lines, though Kissinger tried to give the impression that the red lines were just American guesswork. Syria probed Israel's tolerance again in April, when Assad began sending regular Syrian soldiers into Lebanon. Israel did not react to the small-scale intervention. In this way Assad was able to intervene without Israel counter-intervening, facilitated by the US. The red lines seem to pertain to the small-scale intervention of April, not the major intervention that began on May 31. The sources consulted do not reveal a similar red lines dialogue prior to the large-scale intervention. However, by the end of May Syria had mapped out Israel and the US' tolerance regarding Lebanon. Assad's calculations were right: Israel and the US both tolerated the intervention.

The US quickly realized that a Syrian intervention was the best solution to the Lebanese Civil War. The US and other powers had tried to exert pressure on the warring factions to lay down their arms and negotiate, but the civil war kept deteriorating. Someone had to get more actively involved and take control over Lebanon. To Kissinger, the easiest solution was to let Assad take control, having learned that the Rabin government would not intervene. The US wanted to keep its involvement at a minimum. The Eisenhower administration had intervened in 1958, but the Ford administration never considered a military intervention in 1976. Lebanon of 1958 was a major US interest, as it was seen as central to the Cold War in the Middle East. Lebanon in the mid-1970s was just a sideshow to Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy. The US had fairly recently pulled out of the Vietnam War and Ford had replaced Nixon following the Watergate scandal. The Ford administration did not have the political currency for a large US effort in Lebanon. The US Initiative, sending Envoy Brown to Lebanon, was also kept at a minimal level. Washington had no ambitions about bringing about a political settlement between the factions. Brown was simply there to facilitate what Syria was already doing: arranging a presidential election and paving the way for Syria's intervention. Both the Damascus and Washington wanted Syria to take control of Lebanon before international or

## **Chapter 5 – The US and the Syrian Intervention**

Arab actors became involved: Assad to secure his dominance over Lebanon, Kissinger to keep the balance in the Middle East in check.

## **Chapter 6:**

### **Conclusion**

“It is so complex that it defies logic.”<sup>580</sup>

The US approach to the 1975-1976 Lebanese Civil War was dominated by Israel. With little interest in Lebanon, Washington ignored the civil war until Israel seemed to become a part of it. From his globalist perspective, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger had no interest in solving Lebanon's intricate problems. The US policy was to keep the Lebanese Civil War from becoming a regional conflict. To prevent a regional conflict, Washington tried to keep the civil war from escalating and to keep Israel from intervening. To keep the civil war from escalating, Washington developed policies to stabilize the conflict. These proved ineffective, but they remained basically unchanged from the fall of 1975 until the end of May 1976. Washington's attempt to prevent an Israeli intervention was mainly done indirectly, by trying to avoid a situation where Israel would want to intervene. Directly, Washington did little but plead with Israel not to intervene. Kissinger thought the US had little sway over Israel and wanted to avoid an Israeli-American conflict. The alternative left to the US was to make sure Syria played by Israel's rules.

#### **US Policy Toward the Lebanese Civil War**

For the first six months of the civil war the US had no policy, as Lebanon was of little interest to the US. With the threat of foreign intervention and regional involvement, Washington was compelled to develop policies. Kissinger worried that Syria would intervene, Israel would counter-intervene and the situation would create Arab unity or an Arab-Israeli war, which would ruin or set back his step-by-step diplomacy. In October the US started to preach moderation through third parties, hoping this would stabilize Lebanon and minimize the threat of foreign intervention. Washington cooperated with countries that had influence with the actors in the civil war, advising them to lay down their arms and seek a political solution. By the end of October the State Department realized that this approach was ineffective, but developed no alternative. From his globalist perspective Kissinger did not want to get more involved in a conflict that was in itself of no interest to the US. Washington found that the

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<sup>580</sup> Ford on the situation in Lebanon in: *FRUS*, 1969-76, Vol. 26, Memcon, April 7, 1976, Doc 284, Rockefeller, Kissinger, Rumsfeld et al.

## Chapter 6 – Conclusion

best approach to the Lebanese Civil War was to let Syria control it, as long as Syria's efforts were limited to mediation.

Washington was prompted to reevaluate its policies in January 1976. Kissinger was losing confidence in Syria, as Damascus seemed unable to stabilize Lebanon. Maronite militias were practically beginning to partition Lebanon, after which Syria threatened to annex the small country. The threat of an Israeli counter-intervention rose again, along with the fear that prolonged fighting might draw in the Soviet Union. The added threat of Soviet involvement, though thought unlikely, increased Lebanon's importance from a globalist perspective. However, the US main incentive for elaborating its policies remained the threat of Israeli intervention.

The US tried to halt intervention and make up for Syria's lack of influence by adopting a more involved, three-part policy. Firstly, Washington increased its effort in advising the factions in Lebanon to moderate. The US engaged the Lebanese directly this time, while asking influential countries to do the same. Secondly, the US tried to limit the seemingly inexhaustible supply of weapons. Washington approached European countries selling arms to the Maronites and Syria, who supplied the National Front and the PLO. Thirdly, Washington tried to keep Damascus from intervening. The US took a pessimistic view of Lebanon and doubted whether its policies would be effective. When Syria arranged a new cease-fire Lebanon was stable in the eyes of the US, as it lessened the threat of Israeli involvement. As a result, the US interest and effort in Lebanon was brought back down to a lull.

The biggest rise in US interest in Lebanon came in the middle of March, when Damascus warned Washington of a planned Syrian intervention. Within the end of the month, the US began facilitating the Syrian intervention within the confines of what Israel could accept, the Israeli red lines. Facilitating the Syrian intervention was the first US policy to yield results. Syria started a small-scale military intervention in the first half of April, with Israel's acquiescence.

After the limited intervention Washington sought to limit Damascus' power in Lebanon. The US was afraid that Syria would take Israel and the US' acceptance of the small-scale intervention as a green light to increase the intervention. Kissinger repeatedly reminded Assad of the dangers of a large-scale intervention in Lebanon. Simultaneously, the US began

looking at approaches that might lessen Syria's hold over Lebanon, such as a mixed security force, made up of Lebanese and Palestinian factions and a French intervention. Both were discarded. The joint security force was discarded for three reasons. Firstly, Washington had more common interests with Damascus than with the PLO. Secondly, Kissinger did not want to increase Arafat's importance and standing in Lebanon. Thirdly, organizing such a force would take a more active effort than the US was prepared to make. The French intervention was discarded when Kissinger learned that Israel opposed a French intervention. After discarding the joint force and the French intervention, the US was left with Syria. The US supported the Syrian political effort, hoping this would minimize the chance of a Syrian intervention.

In May the US helped Syria carry out the Lebanese presidential election, culminating in the election of Elias Sarkis. After the election Emissary Lewis Dean Brown was replaced by Ambassador Francis Meloy. Judging by the available sources, the US' effort in Lebanon lessened with Brown's departure from Beirut. The small scale Syrian intervention in the first half of April was preceded by an active US diplomacy, where the US passed information on Israeli red lines and Syrian plans to and from the Israeli and Syrian governments. As far as the sources reveal, there is no similar diplomacy preceding the large-scale intervention that began on May 31.

### **Washington's Minimal Involvement**

The reasons for Washington's late and minimal involvement in Lebanon may be divided into two groups: Firstly, the US had little interest in Lebanon and secondly, felt a need to practice restraint. Additionally, Washington's minimal involvement can be divided into domestic and foreign considerations.

The US lacked foreign interest in Lebanon in the mid 1970s. There was no longer a strong Arabism in the Middle East, as when Eisenhower intervened in 1958. Egyptian President Anwar Sadat had sought to align himself with the US, unlike his predecessor Gamal Abdel Nasser. The US perceived the Arabism in 1950s Lebanon within the Cold War struggle and therefore invoked the Eisenhower Doctrine. However, in the mid 1970s Washington realized that Moscow had little influence over Lebanon.

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There was neither any great amount of trade nor business linking Lebanon to the US. Kissinger lamented that international businesses were driven from Beirut, but it did not entice Washington to hinder this development. Lebanon had been an important western-aligned economy in the 1950s, but the economy had waned since the 1960s. Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford's primary economic interest in the Middle East was a supply of inexpensive Arab oil. The countries behind the 1973-1974 Oil Embargo far overshadowed Lebanon's economic importance.

Foreign interest also restrained the US. Kissinger was anxious not to create Arab unity or a situation that would lead to an Arab-Israeli war. It was important that Lebanon remained an Arab affair, where both Israel and the US stayed out.

Washington was also restrained by domestic considerations. The population was weary of US intervention in foreign countries, having just left the Vietnam War behind them. Ford was preparing for the 1976 Presidential Election and could not afford a major effort in a country of little importance.

There was little domestic interest in Lebanon, as it did not in itself affect the US supply of oil or Israel's security. Only a perceived threat against Israel would evoke Lebanon's importance in the eyes of the American population. Palestinian guerrilla attacks across the Israeli-Lebanese border had troubled Israel throughout the 1970s. However, it was the hint of a Syrian intervention that was perceived as a threat to Israel's security, not the Palestinian guerrilla activity. When Syria launched its intervention in April, however, Israel's security was not threatened, as the red lines were respected.

The Lebanese Civil War posed no direct threat to US foreign interest. Only when the threat of Israeli intervention and Arab-Israeli war arose to endanger Kissinger's step-by-step diplomacy did Washington involve itself in Lebanon. Each time the threat seemed to lessen, the US interest disappeared. In the end, the US had no interest in solving the Lebanese Civil War, only to contain it. As long as the civil war was contained it did not threaten Israel or the American diplomacy.

Washington was also restrained by its inability to influence Lebanon. Kissinger and Joseph Sisco discussed the US' impotence in Lebanon in late October 1975. Even in January, when

the US thought there was a real threat of intervention and knew that its policies were likely to be ineffective, Washington refrained from getting more involved. On the one hand, this underlines the US perceived need for non-involvement and lack of confidence in Washington's abilities. On the other hand, this period did not last for more than about three weeks before Syria secured a cease-fire and Washington's concern lessened. The only thing that ever made the US really pay attention was the threat of Israeli intervention, as it was thought to complicate the US' step-by-step diplomacy. Kissinger's diplomacy was to show the Arab states that the road to progress in the Middle East went through Washington, not Moscow. This globalist approach engulfed the US entire approach to the 1975-1976 Civil War in Lebanon.

In the end, the Ford administration could reach a desired solution to the 1975-1976 civil war with minimal US involvement. Assad intervened, defeating Jumblatt and Arafat. Israel was pleased: the PLO suffered a defeat, Israel's Lebanese allies were saved and Syria did not move south of the Litani river. Syria was pleased as well: Assad had shown Arafat and Jumblatt that Damascus was the master of Lebanon, not the radicals or Palestinians. Assad had had strengthened his hold over Lebanon and his regional standing. Egypt was displeased, but not enough to jeopardize its relationship with Israel and the US. Strengthening Assad to Sadat's chagrin made sense from Kissinger's perspective: It contributed to inter-Arab rivalry rather than unity against Israel and the US.

### **Preventing an Israeli Counter-Intervention**

The point lending itself to the US preventing an Israeli counter-intervention is the red lines dialogue. Israel, through the US, told Damascus what would be an acceptable intervention. The US also directly preached restraint to Israel, insisting that Israel did not move without consulting the US. This, however, seems less decisive. Kissinger knew that the US had little influence over Israel, if Israel considered its security threatened.

There are also several points suggesting that the US' participation was less decisive. Firstly, Washington noted that Israel probably wanted to avoid a counter-intervention anyway. Additionally, Assad was eager to control Lebanon and might have intervened anyway. Secondly, while there would be no Israeli-Syrian dialogue without the US, there was already an Israeli-Syrian monologue. As Allon told Washington in October 1975, Syria paid attention to Israel's public statements, to avoid provoking Israel. Thirdly, the red lines dialogue present

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in the sources pertains to the first, small-scale Syrian intervention, not the decisive intervention that began on the eve of June 1. It is possible that there was a comparable or even more decisive dialogue prior to the large-scale intervention and that these documents are classified. This seems improbable, as numerous cables and meetings refer to the dialogue. There is not a comparable amount of sources relating to a Syrian intervention in late May. On the contrary, the US seems markedly less interested in Lebanon following the presidential election. Lastly, there is no green light in these sources, no point on which Israel and the US tells Syria to go ahead with an agreed upon intervention. However, it is probable that such concrete evidence of collaboration would be classified, if it exists.

It seems Assad's large-scale intervention was a gamble, but with a calculated risk. Syria had tested Israel's limits for more than six months by the time Damascus initiated the large-scale intervention. Even if Rabin was eager to avoid a counter-intervention, the US' contribution would have made it easier. It is hard to say whether the US participation in the red lines dialogue was decisive to Israel not intervening. What is certain is that Washington made it easier for Damascus to calculate its intervention. The US most decisive contribution to preventing an Israeli counter-intervention then, was to help Syria avoid stepping on Israel's toes, rather than restraining Israel.

### **The US and the Lebanese Civil War**

The US approached the Lebanese Civil War with caution. The initial approach was to more or less ignore Lebanon, a wait-and-see approach. Washington's involvement only truly rose above this approach when an Israeli intervention seemed probable. It is unreasonable to assume that the US did not suspect a Syrian intervention in May: Syria's previous threats to intervene were preceded by a period when Syria could not stabilize Lebanon. The US still reminded Syria not to intervene, but not with the intensity or conviction of late March. It seems probable then, that Washington was more comfortable with a Syrian intervention in May than the US had been in the middle of March. By the time of the large-scale Syrian intervention the US was confident that Israel would not enter southern Lebanon, at least more so than in March. Washington had no interests in Lebanon except to keep it from threatening Israel and the US' standing in the Middle East. With Israeli intervention prevented, Lebanon was of no importance to Ford and Kissinger.





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