

THE LEBANESE-SYRIAN RELATIONS BETWEEN 1989-2005: THE CHANGES
AND CONTINUITIES

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ABSTRACT

THE LEBANESE-SYRIAN RELATIONS BETWEEN 1989-2005: THE CHANGES AND CONTINIUTIES

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The objective of this thesis is to analyze the bilateral relations between Lebanon and Syria between the years 1989-2005. In the defined time period, the Lebanese-Syrian relations were characterized by the establishment and fall of the Syrian domination over Lebanon. This study focuses on this transformation in their relations and mainly questions how the Lebanese-Syrian relations were transformed, how it affected and in turn were affected by the broader regional setting.

Accordingly, the thesis is consistent of four main parts. In each historically divided time period, the major determinants of the direction of their relations and the changes and continuities in regard to these determinants are investigated. In the first part, the study focuses on the historical evolution of their relations with due attention to the dispatchment of Lebanon from Greater Syria and post-independence period. In the second part, their relations are analyzed in the era of Lebanese civil war which also signifies the beginning of active and effective Syrian involvement in Lebanese affairs. The third part encompasses the period of unquestioned Syrian domination over Lebanon in the post-civil war period up until the year 2000. In the fourth part, the changes in the direction of their relations studied in relate to the role of changing international and regional environment in affecting their relations.

Keywords: Lebanon, Syria, Syrian Domination, Cedar Revolution

ÖZ

1989-2005 YILLARI ARASI LÜBNAN-SURİYE İLİŞKİLERİ: DEĞİŞİM VE SÜREKLİLİK

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Bu tezin amacı, Lübnan ve Suriye'nin ikili ilişkilerini 1989-2005 yılları arasında incelemektir. Belirlenen dönemde, Lübnan-Suriye ilişkileri Lübnan üzerinde Suriye hakimiyetinin kurulması ve yıkılması olarak nitelendirilebilir. Bu çalışma, ikili ilişkilerdeki bu dönüşüme odaklanmakta ve temel olarak Lübnan-Suriye ilişkilerinin nasıl dönüştüğünü, daha geniş bölgesel ortamı nasıl etkilediğini ve bu ortamdan nasıl etkilendiğini sorgulamaktadır.

Tez dört ana bölümden oluşmaktadır. Tarihsel olarak ayrılmış her bir bölümde, ikili ilişkilerin gidişatını belirleyen ana unsurlar ve bu unsurlar göz önünde bulundurularak ilişkilerdeki değişim ve süreklilik araştırılmıştır. İlk bölümde çalışma ilişkilerin tarihsel arkaplanına, özellikle de Lübnan'ın Büyük Suriye'den koparılmasına ve bağımsızlık sonrası döneme odaklanmaktadır. İkinci bölümde, ilişkiler Lübnan sivil savaşı döneminde Suriye'nin aktif ve etkili müdahale politikalarının başlangıcı bağlamında incelenmektedir. Üçüncü bölüm sivil savaş sonrası dönemden 2000 yılına dek süren tartışmasız Suriye hakimiyeti dönemini kapsamaktadır. Dördüncü bölümde ilişkilerin gidişatındaki değişimler bölgesel ve uluslararası ortamdaki değişimlerle ilişkilendirilerek incelenmektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Lübnan, Suriye, Suriye Hakimiyeti, Sedir Devrimi

To My Sister

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The bilateral relationship between Lebanon and Syria is one of the most complicated and deep-rooted relationships in the Middle East. It is complicated in regard to the heavy articulation of their relation to the regional politics and the interference of several external actors to the direction of their relations. But it is at the same time deep-rooted and inextricable since Lebanon and Syria shared the same history, geography, and culture for a long time. Lebanon is a small country with four million population but holds an important place beyond its size in the regional politics. In the last quarter of twentieth and early twenty-first century, the country became the major playground for regional and international actors. In this sense, Harris defines Lebanon as ‘the cockpit of the Middle East’.¹ The significance of Lebanon in the region was the result of the country’s own assets and weaknesses. Its laissez faire economy and relatively democratic political structure depending on sectarian participation makes Lebanon an exceptional case in the region. Until the outbreak of the devastating civil war in 1975, it was defined as the Paris or Switzerland of the Middle East referring to the peace and welfare in the country. Nevertheless, these exceptional features turned out to be the major curse of the Lebanese. The division of Lebanese society along sectarian affiliations and the political system depending on sectarian participation made the power struggle and competition among the Lebanese communities inevitable while the competing communities’ search for foreign backing opened the country to foreign intervention.

In this complex environment, the Syrian involvement in Lebanese affairs has a crucial place. Syria can be considered as the most influential external actor in Lebanon thanks to its historical and cultural ties besides geographical proximity. Lebanon and Syria constituted the parts of the same entities for most of the time in history, the last

¹ William Harris, ‘Reflections on Lebanon’, in *Lebanon: Liberation, Conflict, and Crisis*, ed. by Barry Rubin, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 10

ones being the Ottoman Empire and the French rule during the mandate period. Since the dispatchment of Lebanon from Greater Syria in 1920, Syria has a desire to have the full control over its western neighbor according to its ideological, economic, political, and security interests. The Syrian will to have an effective control over Lebanon turned into a consistent active foreign policy with the consolidation of political power under Hafez Asad in 1970. From 1970s onwards, Lebanon became an important part of Syrian foreign and domestic policies. The Syrian ambitions of becoming a regional power and the urges of regime stability reflected themselves in its Lebanese policy. Besides the Pan Arabist rhetoric Baath Party calling for unity of the Arab nation, Asad's pragmatist and realist foreign policy goals also made control over Lebanon vital for Syrian stakes. In this regard, as Salloukh argues, 'Lebanon has served both as a tool to advance Syrian regional policy and an advance buffer against threats to regime stability.'²

During the Lebanese civil war of 1975-1989, Syria struggled for acquiring a determinant role in Lebanon and by the end of it the Syrian hegemony over Lebanon was legitimized by the Taif Agreement. The post-civil war period in Lebanese history began in 1989 with both hopes and disappointments. It was a time of hope for turning the clock back to peace and stability in the country. The Lebanese masses who had enough of bloody fighting were looking for a quite in the country with the beginning of new era in the country. However, there were also some pessimists focusing on the other side of the coin and raised doubts about the new structure in the country meaning the establishment and institutionalization of Syrian hegemony. Indeed, the same agreement which hoped to bring peace in the country also called for Syrian protection of this peace, which in practice turned into the Syrian control over nearly every aspect of life in Lebanon.

Taking into account the importance of Lebanon in regional politics and the Syrian involvement in Lebanese affairs as a reflection of its bid for regional predominance, the Lebanese-Syrian relations emerges as an essential part of Middle Eastern politics. This thesis aims to study the bilateral relationship between Lebanon and Syria from the establishment of Syrian hegemony at the end of the civil war in 1989

² Bassel F. Salloukh, 'Demystifying Syrian Foreign Policy under Bashar al-Asad', in *Demystifying Syria*, ed. by Fred Lawson (London: Saqi, 2009), p.159

until the withdrawal of Syrian troops in 2005. The problematic of the thesis is that the main patterns of their relations were shaped by consistent Syrian desire for keeping Lebanon under its control on the one hand and the continuous vulnerability of Lebanese state to this kind of intervention on the other hand. But the major turning points in their relations were affected heavily by the changes in regional and international environments. Since both the Syrian policy towards Lebanon and the power struggle among Lebanese communities were inseparable from the broader regional developments, the major turning points in Lebanese-Syrian relationship should be related with the changes in external environment while studying their relations. The time period of 1989-2005 has been deliberately chosen since it covers both the establishment and decay of Syrian hegemony and the reconsolidation of state in Lebanon. By this way it becomes possible to reveal the determinants leading to the transformation of the Syrian role in Lebanon and to question if there is a correspondence between the changing external environment and the direction of Lebanese-Syrian relations.

The Syrian regime established its hegemony over Lebanon at the beginning of 1990s when the international arena witnessed an important change by the end of Cold War structure. The reflection of this change in Middle East facilitated the international acceptance of Syrian hegemony over Lebanon as a US reward for Syrian rapprochement. Throughout the 1990s, Lebanon turned into the backyard of Syria, which was both easing the Syrian regime's difficulties in domestic politics and enhancing its hand in regional competition. In establishing its hegemony, the Syrian regime had to deal with the major sectarian Lebanese communities of Sunnis, Maronites and Shias since the confessional political system continued in the post-civil war era as well. There was no common ground among these communities in their standings against the establishment of Syrian hegemony. The Maronites for instance had resentments against the Syrian domination in contrast to Shia contentment. The lack of social solidarity among Lebanese groups was the result of predicaments of Lebanese political structure. In this conjuncture, the Asad regime sustained the functioning of its hegemony through the policy of punishing its foes and rewarding its clientele. The agency of Syrian troops and intelligence sector served to intimidate the opposition while the political rewards were helpful in creating reliable Lebanese allies.

The direction of the Lebanese-Syrian relations began to be changed by the year 2000. The favorable atmosphere for Syrian involvement in Lebanon started to shade away on international, regional, and local environments. In this regard, the end of peace process between Syria and Israel, the subsequent unilateral withdrawal of Israel from Lebanon, and the death of Hafez Asad turned the attention to Syrian the presence among Maronite and Druze communities of Lebanon. They started to openly call for a Syrian withdrawal and Lebanese independence. Subsequently, the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the declaration of US 'war on terrorism' put high pressure on American-Syrian relations especially after the US invasion of Iraq. In the new environment, the previous international compromise on the Syrian patronage of Lebanon eradicated.

The Presidential term of Bashar Asad did not witness a change in Syria's Lebanese policy and can be characterized by insistence on keeping the Syrian hegemony over Lebanon. Although Syrian approach remained unchanged, the international pressure on Syrian regime and Lebanese resentment against the Syrian presence in the country rose in return. The assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri in February 2005 and the suspicions of Syrian involvement in his killing resulted in the incorporation of Sunni community to the anti-Syrian movement which was vital to force Syrian withdrawal. 'It was often said that the Syrians could only enter Lebanon with the support of the Christians and would only leave if they lost support of the Muslims.'³ From that time onward, the Sunnis, Maronites and Druzes formed 14 March coalition as an opposition front against Syrian presence in the country. In opposition to them, the 8 March coalition led by Shias continued their close relationship with Asad regime.

The Syrian troops withdrew from Lebanon on 26 April 2005 by ending the 29 year of occupation of Lebanese state. The withdrawal was the success of 'the Cedar Revolution' led by the Lebanese oppositional front against Syria. It was an important turning point for both the bilateral relationship between Syria and Lebanon and the Middle Eastern politics. However, the main determinants of their relations which were the Syrian stakes and lack of solidarity among Lebanese groups were not affected by the withdrawal. Moreover, the historical analysis of the relations indicates that the deep-

³ Nicholas Blanford, *Killing Mr Lebanon: The Assassination of Rafik Hariri and Its Impact on the Middle East*, (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006), p.81

rooted and complicated relations had several dimensions beyond the presence of Syrian troops in Lebanon. The analysis of developments leading to Syrian withdrawal is beneficial to have an inclusive understanding of the effects of withdrawal as well.

Thus, this thesis aims to evaluate how the Lebanese-Syrian relations transformed, how they affected and were affected by regional politics from the end of the Lebanese civil war in 1989 until the withdrawal of Syrian troops in 2005. The attempt of the study is to reveal the changes and continuities in the direction of bilateral relations in reference to the broader regional setting. Albert Hourani defines the central theme for the Middle East as the complicated interaction between local movements, regional forces and world powers.⁴ Lebanon and its relations with Syria are convenient cases to see this complicated interaction. Hence, the local, regional, and international determinants of the transformation of Lebanese-Syrian relations are to be investigated. In this regard, the following questions will be answered throughout the study. How did the Syrian policy toward Lebanon in search of control over the country evolve during the period and whether it succeeded or not? How did it reflect itself in Lebanese internal and external politics? Did the Lebanese confessional political system play a determinant role in shaping the Lebanese-Syrian relations or is it possible to talk about a unified Lebanese standing vis a vis Syrian ambitions? Did regional politics and other external actors have a determining effect on the bilateral relations between Lebanon and Syria and what was the extent of it? What were the general characteristics of Syrian hegemony over Lebanon and how and in what direction did it change in the period? In the light of the discussions related to these questions, the study will evaluate how the transformation of relations led to the Syrian withdrawal and how did the withdrawal affect the local and regional politics?

To this end, this thesis is consisted of six chapters, the first and last one providing the introduction and conclusion. The second chapter will give a brief analysis of the history of the Lebanese-Syrian relations until the outbreak of Lebanese civil war in 1975. In this chapter, initially the historical and cultural links among Lebanon and Syria will be narrated by scrutinizing the impacts of the separation of Lebanon from

⁴ Albert Hourani, 'Visions of Lebanon' in *Toward a Viable Lebanon*, ed. by Halim Barakat (Washington: Center For Contemporary Arab Studies, 1988), p.4

Syria by the European powers in the mandate period after First World War. Then, the relations of independent Lebanon and Syria will be outlined by focusing on the different paths of state consolidation and the instability of Syrian regime that prevented it from pursuing an effective foreign policy toward Lebanon. Lately, the developments that lead to the Lebanese civil war which coincided with the consolidation of regime in Syria will be analyzed.

The third chapter will focus on the era of the Lebanese civil war. The importance of the civil war in creating a favorable atmosphere for Syrian involvement in Lebanese affairs will be examined. The phasing of the sequent of events throughout the Lebanese civil war will take Syrian role as the main determinant. The relations among Lebanese warring parties and Syria will be investigated to have a better understanding of the emergence of Syrian role as the protector of stability in the country at the end of the war. The reconfiguration of the power share among Lebanese groups and Syrian involvement in the process will be stressed. The internationalization of the civil war and the de facto Syrian domination over Lebanon at the end of the era will be given emphasis since it created the basis of the establishment of Syrian hegemony in the post-war era.

After the required understanding of the historical evolution of the Lebanese-Syrian relations has been provided in the previous parts, the fourth chapter will focus on the establishment of Syrian hegemony over Lebanon between the years 1989 and 2000. In this period, the structure of the relations was established in line with the Syrian stakes in Lebanon. The international and regional environment that favored Syria at the time and the general characteristics of the Syrian hegemony will be analyzed first in order to have comprehensive understanding of the bilateral relationship in economic, security-related and political domains. The relations among Lebanese communities and Syrian regime will be scrutinized to comprehend the complex nature of Lebanese politics which facilitated the Syrian involvement in Lebanese affairs.

The fifth chapter will concentrate on the developments which led to the shrink of Syrian hegemony in the period of 2000-2005. The changing international and regional environment will be outlined in the first part of the chapter. The changes and continuities in the economic, security, and political relations will be emphasized by paying due attention to their contribution to the rise of an indigenous anti-Syrian movement in

Lebanon. The limitations imposed by Asad regime on Lebanese economic reconstruction program and Syrian gains from Lebanese economy; the continuing military resistance of Hizballah against Israel; and the Syrian bid for full control of Lebanese politics will be analyzed in detail as the major causes of friction between anti-Syrian movement and Asad regime. Lastly, the effect of Syrian withdrawal for the future of relations will be questioned.

CHAPTER 2

THE LEBANESE SYRIAN RELATIONS IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Lebanon and Syria have always been related to each other by historical geographical, economic, political and cultural ties. Throughout the history, they constituted cohesive parts of the same entity most of the time. The existence of Lebanon and Syria as separate political units only realized when mandatory European powers defined their borders in the twentieth century. Therefore, it would be impossible to analyze the history of one without referring to the other.

This chapter aims to analyze the historical ties between Lebanon and Syria in order to have a better understanding of their future relationship. In the first part, the rule of the Ottoman Empire and the mandate period will be examined with a special emphasis to the creation of separate Lebanese and Syrian states and the impact of separation on the perceptions of the local agents. In the second part, the post-independence relations will be narrated. It was mainly shaped by the Syrian rejection of Lebanese state as a separate entity dispatched from Syria. However, the internal weaknesses prevented it from conducting an effective foreign policy. The different processes of state-consolidation in each will be scrutinized while the post-independence relations studied. The third and the last part of the chapter will be devoted to the developments leading to the Lebanese civil war which would open a new phase in the Lebanese-Syrian relations.

2.1 The Pre-Independence Period

To begin with, the term ‘Syria’ had a wider geographical meaning in the history. It was used to refer to the whole area stretching from the Taurus Mountains in the north

to the Sinai Peninsula in the south, from the Mediterranean Sea on the west to the Syrian Desert on the east.⁵ The area broadly included the contemporary states of Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Israel and the Palestinian territories. After the division of lands, the meaning of Syria narrowed to the contemporary Syrian state and the terms of historical, geographical or greater Syria started to be used to refer to the historical frontiers of it. In Arabic, geographical Syria is called as bilad-al Sham – the country of the north-, meaning the northern parts of Arabian Peninsula.⁶

The geographical Syria was mostly inhabited by Arab population. However, there were also many ethnic and religious divisions among the society. The Turcoman, Armenians and Kurds constituted ethnic minorities while several Christian, Jewish and Muslim sects constituted religious ones. Indeed, the Ottoman millet system itself was defining the society along religious lines. At this point, the geography of the historical Syria became an important determinant for the social composition. The mountains in the area, especially the Mount Lebanon, for so long provided refuge for minorities. The heterogeneous structure of the geographical Syria continued after the modern boundaries drawn by European forces. Lebanese society is may be the most heterogeneous one in the region. There are 18 recognized sects in the country which is making the political and social life complicated and opening the country to foreign influence.

The period of transition from greater to narrower Syria was a crucial historical turning point in Lebanese-Syrian relations. At this point, it is important to note that the future of relations had much to owe to the detachment of Lebanon from greater Syria. Before going into detailed analysis of the division of geographical Syria, a brief historical analysis of Ottoman rule in the area will be examined to have comprehensive understanding of the effects of division.

⁵ Albert H. Hourani, *Syria and Lebanon: A Political Essay*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1946), p.4

⁶ William Harris, *The Levant: A Fractured Mosaic*, (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2003), p.2

2.1.1 The Ottoman rule in the Levant

The Levant⁷ has been subjected to the rule of larger empires in the past two millennia. It was exposed to different imperial dominations from the arrival of Roman rule in 63 B.C until the collapse of Ottoman Empire in World War I. The cycle of the subjection started and ended with the overlordship from the distant capitals of Rome and Istanbul. In between, it was governed from within or from its Middle Eastern neighbors. The main exception to the imperial domination was the Ummayyad Caliphate which was established after a century of Islamic conquest in 661. It commanded a domain stretching from the Atlantic to Central Asia from its base in Damascus until the establishment of Abbasids in 750.⁸

The Ottoman Empire conquered geographical Syria in 1516 and its rule lasted until the First World War. Throughout the period, the Ottomans ruled the region according to millet system that facilitated the continuity of the local composition of people. According to that system, non-Muslim communities defined as millets and they were free to administer their own affairs as long as they recognize the sovereignty of Ottoman rulers. Millets were organized by personal membership of religious community, regardless of where the people concerned lived.⁹ As a result, the separate identities of people that were formed according to their religious loyalties remained intact.

The geographical Syria was composed of different religious communities of Muslims, Christians and Jews. The majority of the population was Muslim which were divided as Sunni and Shia Muslims. The Sunni Muslims were considered themselves as the real believers and perceived the Shias as heterodox sects. The disagreement among Sunni and Shia sects stemmed from the issue of succession after the Prophet Muhammed's death when Shias insisted for the restriction of Imamate to Prophet's family. Later on, Shias also divided within themselves as Ismailis, Twelver Shias (also known as Imamis), Druzes and Nusayris. The Sunnis were the most advantageous

⁷ It is an Italian word originating from the medieval Italian city-states and referred to the Eastern Mediterranean. After the First World War, it has a more narrow meaning contracted to geographical Syria, William Harris, *The Levant: A Fractured Mosaic*, (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2003), p.2

⁸ Harris, *The Levant: A Fractured Mosaic*, p.27

⁹ Theodor Hanf, *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon*, (London: The Centre for Lebanese Studies, 1993), p.53

community of Syria under the Ottoman rule while the Shias can be considered as the most disadvantageous one since they were neither accepted as Muslims nor as millet by their Sunni rulers.¹⁰ The Christian population of Syria divided according to different sectarian lines as well. The five important groups among them were: the Greek Orthodox, the Assyrians, the Roman Catholics, the Maronites, and the Protestants emerged as a result of missionary activities during the nineteenth century.¹¹

In analyzing the minorities of Syria, a major division can be made between the compact and scattered minorities. The compact minorities differed from the scattered ones by constituting the majority of population in a specific region.¹² The concentration of them in a specific region resulted in the relative autonomy of them from the Sultanate in Istanbul. The Druzes, Nusayris and Maronites were major examples of the compact minorities. The Druze sect converted from Shias in the early eleventh century by their belief in the divinity of Fatimid Caliph al-Hakim. They dominated the southern parts of Mount Lebanon while some of them also migrated to Jebel Druze in eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Nusayris, the dissidents of Imamis, were dominant in Latakia.¹³ The Maronite Christians settled in northern parts of Mount Lebanon and engaged in intense relations with their southern Druze neighbors. There are disputes over the doctrinal origins of Maronite sect but it is important to know that they recognized the supremacy of the Roman Papacy in the early twelfth century.¹⁴ After their official union with Rome at the beginning of the fifteenth century they managed to have special relationship with Western European powers.¹⁵

Ottomans preferred to rely on local notables in the governance of the region. The local notables were given the tasks of collecting the taxes and sustaining the social order in their domains in return for a relatively weak domination by the distant capital of Istanbul. As a result, the role of the local rulers extended.¹⁶ In this system, the Mount Lebanon had a problematic relation with Ottoman rulers due to its distance from

¹⁰ Kemal Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions: The History of Lebanon Reconsidered*, (London: University of California Press, 1988), p.11-12

¹¹ The division of churches on theological grounds can be found in more detail in Albert Hourani, *Syria and Lebanon: A Political Essay*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1946), p.123-125

¹² Hourani, *Syria and Lebanon: A Political Essay*, p. 137

¹³ Harris, *The Levant: A Fractured Mosaic*, p.16

¹⁴ Hanf, *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon*, p.51

¹⁵ Salibi, p.107

¹⁶ Hourani, *Syria and Lebanon: A Political Essay*, p.24

Istanbul, geographical hardship to govern, and the dominance of compact minorities of Maronites and Druzes. The Druze Maan family governed the Mountain from mid sixteenth to mid seventeenth century. After their fall, the Shihab family's governance began and their conversion from Sunni Islam to Maronite Christianity signaled the forthcoming problems.¹⁷ The Shihabi rule continued throughout the eighteenth century and witnessed important changes in the region.

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries witnessed important developments in the region. In the period, the central authority of Ottoman Empire started to decline. It led the rise in the autonomy of local leaders and the increase in European influence in Ottoman territories. The military and economic pressures of European forces could not be resisted by the Ottoman Empire; hence the infiltration of European powers changed the balances within the region.¹⁸ The process had important repercussions for geographical Syria.

First of all, the European influence increased over the geographical Syria. They tried to manipulate local minorities in order to infiltrate the region. The French had already established links with the Maronites and other Catholic Christians, Russians claimed to speak on the behalf of Greek Orthodox Christians, and Great Britain attempted to have relations with the Druze community.¹⁹

Secondly, Ottomans initiated a reform program as a response to the decline of the empire. The years between 1839 and 1876 were called as the Tanzimat period in the Ottoman history, during which a cadre of Ottoman bureaucrats attempted to reform the military, political, economic, civil and administrative systems of empire in order to halt the economic decline and reassert their military and political authority over its territories. The reforms attempted to create a comprehensive and equal Ottoman citizenship and to establish a modern centralized administration to replace the old system of decentralized governance.²⁰ The introduction of Tanzimat reforms and the parallel rise in the European influence over the region had important repercussion in the Mount Lebanon. The neighboring Maronite and Druze groups were living in the

¹⁷ Harris, *The Levant: A Fractured Mosaic*, p.106-110

¹⁸ William Cleveland, *Modern Ortadoğu Tarihi*, (İstanbul: Agora Kitaplığı, 2008), p.67

¹⁹ Hourani, *Syria and Lebanon: A Political Essay*, p.28

²⁰ *ibid.*, p.30

Mountain with a system of fragile tolerance. The changes brought by the Tanzimat reforms affected the traditional social organizations of the communities. The Maronites gained confidence by the promises of Tanzimat reforms on the equality among Muslim and non-Muslims. They increased their trade and profit-relations with Europeans and established new education institutions. The Druzes on the other hand, confronted the improvement of Maronites' commercial prospect with an anger and frustration.²¹ The early clashes between Maronites and Druzes forced Ottomans to change the administrative pattern in the mountain. The Mount Lebanon separated by two administrative units called as kaymakamates between Maronite one in the north and Druze one in the south in 1845. The solution did not bring peace to the Mountain either and in 1860 another cycle of clashes broke out. The Ottoman attempts to implement the direct governance, the British and French interventions on the behalf of their interests, and the dissatisfaction of peasants with their landlords resulted in the civil war in Mount Lebanon.²² The first clashes provoked among the Maronite peasants uprising against their landlords and turned into a communal conflict when they spread to Druze districts. The outnumbered Druzes defeated and massacred their disorganized Maronite opponents. The spread of disturbances to Damascus and the killings of many Christians there resulted in the intervention of European powers in the form of French army. The Europeans and Ottomans agreed on the new system of administration in 1861. Accordingly, the Mount Lebanon constituted a single Ottoman district, named as mutasarifiyya, given under the direct rule of a non-Lebanese Christian who was chosen by the Ottoman Sultan in consultation with European powers.²³ Moreover, the administrative council composed of 12 members - four Maronites, three Druzes, two Greek Orthodox, one Shia, and one Sunni Muslim – introduced for assisting the governance of the mutasarifiyya.²⁴ The idea behind the formation of administrative council depending on the proportional sectarian division was the first examination of contemporary confessional system of the Lebanese Republic.

²¹ Cleveland, p.103-104

²² Albet Hourani, *Arap Halkları Tarihi*, (İstanbul:İletişim Yayınevi, 1997), p.329

²³ Youssef M. Choueiri, 'Ottoman Reform and Lebanese Patriotism', in *Lebanon: A History of Conflict and Consensus* Nadim Shehadi (et.al.), (London: The Centre for Lebanese Studies, 1988), p.74

²⁴ For detailed information about the mutasarifiyya see Engin Akarlı, 'The Administrative Council of Mount Lebanon', in *Lebanon: A History of Conflict and Consensus*, Nadim Shehadi (et.al.), (London: The Centre for Lebanese Studies, 1988)

Thirdly, the Arab population of the geographical Syria began to transform in the light of a new ideology, namely Arab nationalism. The Arab nationalism, or Arabism, initially rose among the Westernized elites of Syria. They were generally Christians who were educated in Europe or in Western style schools. The absence of loyalty to the Islamic rulers of Empire among the Christian elite, the role of missionary schools like the Syrian Protestant College, and the intense relations of Christians with the European traders or political agents made the spread of Arab nationalism among them easier.²⁵ The inclusion of the Muslims to the movement had to wait for the Tanzimat reforms. The reforms tightened the Ottoman control over the region in the name of centralization attempts and restricted the room of maneuver for local communities. Subsequently, the policy of Turkification among Young Turks caught with frustrations by the Arabs.²⁶ Still, the trend among the Muslim Arabs was twofold until the First World War. The ones who were holding important governmental posts gave their support to continuation of Ottoman Empire while others gambled on Arabism. However, as Dawn inclines, the collapse of Ottoman Empire in the First World War left all Arab elite with no alternative to Arabism.²⁷

The Ottoman Empire entered the First World War on the side of Central Powers in November 1914. It is impossible to lay out all the political arrangements of war but for the sake of the analyze it is important to refer to the three war-time pledges of Entente Powers which were challenging each other. The first one was concluded between the British High Commissioner in Cairo Sir Henry MacMahon and Sharif Husein of Mecca. Through the famous letters exchanged between 1915 and 1916 they agreed on an Arab uprising directed against the Turkish forces in return for the establishment of an independent Arab state comprising today's Syria, Lebanon, Israel and Palestine by the end of the war.²⁸ Sharif Husain began his planned revolt in the Hijaz in June 1916 with a strong support from British military advisor Colonel T. E. Lawrence. The revolt was an important turning point for the future of the Arab

²⁵ Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions: The History of Lebanon Reconsidered*, p.44

²⁶ Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions: The History of Lebanon Reconsidered*, p.47

²⁷ C. Ernest Dawn, 'The Rise of Arabism in Syria', *the Middle East Journal*, 16:2, (Spring 1962), p.163-164

²⁸ Malcolm E. Yapp, *The Making of the Modern Near East: 1792-1923*, (New York: Longman, 1987), p.279

nationalism in Syria. As Dawn presents, the Arab Revolt made contribution to the advancement of Arab movement in Syria by the creation of an Arab army and a viable alliance with Britain.²⁹ The second one is the Sykes-Picot Agreement which was secretly signed on 3 January 1916 between Britain and France. According to the agreement, Lebanon and the coastal Syria were given under direct French control with a French influence over inner parts of Syria, while Britain agreed to have a direct control over southern Mesopotamia and indirect influence on the area between Gaza and Kirkuk. The Palestine was to be ruled by international governance.³⁰ The third pledge was given to Zionist establishment by the so-called Balfour Declaration, a semi-public letter to Baron Rothshield on 2 November 1917. It promised British support for ‘a Jewish national home’ in Palestine.³¹ The contradictory promises and arrangements for the same territories made the conflict among the several parties involved inevitable after the war.

2.1.2 The Mandate Period

World War I ended in 1918 with the victory of Entente Powers and subsequent dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. The future of the geographical Syria depended on the reconciliation of war-time pledges given to Sharif Hussein, France and the Zionists at the same time. The Arab forces under the commandship of Sharif Hussein’s son Faysal entered Damascus in October 1918 upon the so-called MacMahon-Sharif Husain Correspondence. He was declared as the King of the Greater Syria in the Second Arab Congress convened in March 1920. The importance of the Congress was the delegates’ stress on two main themes: the independence, and the unity of Syria.³² In the mean time, the mandate system defined in the San Remo Conference in April 1920. It authorized the European powers to rule the geographical Syria with an aim to prepare the local population to govern themselves. In accordance with the Sykes-Picot Agreement, the

²⁹ Dawn, ‘The Rise of Arabism in Syria’, p.152

³⁰ Cleveland, *Modern Ortadoğu Tarihi*, p.182

³¹ The Balfour Declaration, 2 November 1917, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Peace%20Process/Guide%20to%20the%20Peace%20Process/The%20Balfour%20Declaration>, accessed on 28.04.2011

³² Daniel Pipes, *Greater Syria: The History of an Ambition*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1990), p.27

southern parts were given under British governance while the northern parts were preserved for the French.

The British authorities divided the southern parts as Palestine and Transjordan. Palestine was designed for Jewish settlement promised in the Balfour Declaration and largely became the State of Israel in 1948. Transjordan was given under the rule of King Faisal's brother Abdallah and gained its independence in 1946.³³ The French authorities divided the northern parts into six polities: the states of Lebanon, Damascus, and Aleppo; the autonomous districts of Latakia (also known as Nusayri region), and Jabal Druze; and the region of Alexandretta. Due to the general resentment of Arab nationalists and the high costs of management, the Syrian federation established including the states of Damascus, Aleppo and the district of Latakia in 1922. In 1924, the States of Damascus and Aleppo were united but the district of Latakia was not annexed to it.

The Lebanese state came into existence with the French dispatch of Lebanon from geographical Syria in 1920. The borders of the newly established state defined by the compromise between French authorities and their historical allies of Maronites. Accordingly, the frontiers of *mutasarrifiyya* extended by the annexation of Tripoli, Beirut, Sidon, Tyre, Biqaa Valley, and Jebel Amil to Mount Lebanon. The separation of Lebanese state from Greater Syria and the extension of its frontiers had important repercussions for the Lebanese-Syrian relations on two fold. First, it caused resentment and anger in Syria against its western neighbor. Second, the friction aroused among Muslim and Christian communities of Lebanon.

The Lebanese-Syrian relations were characterized by the political, cultural, and economic confrontation in the mandate period. Politically, the independence and unification demands of Syrian Arab nationalists in an area lying between Mediterranean in the west, Syrian Desert in the east, Cilicia in the north and Sinai desert in the south confronted by the Maronite dream of establishing Greater Lebanon as a refuge for Christians in the Muslim dominated environment. Culturally, the Arab nationalists' consciousness were inspired by the Ummayyad period centered in Damascus while the Maronites referred to the Phoenician past rather than the Arab one of the Levant as a

³³ Pipes, *Greater Syria: The History of an Ambition*, p.28

source of historical inspiration.³⁴ Economically, the expansion of Lebanese borders created anxious among Arab nationalists since it meant a dependent Syria on Lebanon. The loss of Lebanese ports cut off the access of Damascus to the Mediterranean Sea while Beirut replaced the role of Damascus as the prominent political, economic and cultural centre.

The Christian and Muslim friction within the Lebanese state was the direct result of the extension of the borders of *mutasarrıyya*. In the Mount Lebanon, the Christian domination of the population was obvious. However, since the newly annexed areas were mainly populated by Muslims, the Christians lost their absolute domination within the borders of Greater Lebanon. In the mean time, the Muslim population supported Syrian Arab nationalists struggle for unity and independence. In this regard, Zisser defined the French decision to expand Lebanese borders as illogical. He argues that some French officials later admitted that the expansion of Christian domain to Muslim areas both caused tensions within Lebanon and also damaged the French relations with Arab nationalists.³⁵ In these circumstances the confrontation was inevitable among the two movements which can be categorized as the Syrian Arab nationalism and Lebanese particularism.

The Druze Revolt of 1925 can be illustrative to understand the thorny relations between Arab nationalists and Lebanese particularists. The revolt initially started among the Druze community living in the autonomous district of Jabal Druze and then it transformed into a national struggle against foreign domination. It continued for two years until the French authorities crushed rebellions harshly in 1927.³⁶ It was an important event for the Lebanese-Syrian relations for two related aspects. Firstly, Muslim dominated areas like Beqa Valley and Tripoli supported the Syrian Arab nationalist cause. Secondly, the French forces used Lebanon as a base for deployment of their forces before attacking Syrian Arab nationalists while some Maronites and

³⁴ Meir Zamir, *Lebanon's Quest: The Road to Statehood 1926-1939*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1997), p.1

³⁵ Eyal Zisser, *Lebanon: The Challenge of Independence*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000), p.6

³⁶ Phillip S.Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945*, (London: I.B Tauris, 1987), p.159

Armenians voluntarily took part in French forces.³⁷ In both ways, the hatred between Lebanese separatists and Syrian Arab nationalist strengthened.

In this conjuncture, The French took some steps to ease the Syrian Arab nationalists. Initially, the Lebanese Constitution of 1926 declared as a step forward to independence of mandated territories. The Lebanese Constitution of 1926 defined the basic principles of the newly created state. Accordingly, the Lebanese state defined as a Republic and the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies formed. Charles Dabbas, a Greek Orthodox, appointed as the first President of the state. The Lebanese constitutional system depended mainly on the peaceful coexistence of sectarian communities. Micheal Chiha, a Maronite businessman in Beirut, was the man behind the scene in drafting the constitution. He argued that the best way to achieve the peaceful coexistence is to reach a compromise among Lebanese groups through the policy of 'give and take'. It meant that as long as the citizens would be loyal to separate and greater Lebanon, the remaining disagreements could be resolved by 'give and take' in time. Therefore, the equitable representation of the various sects was referred in the constitution but the proportions were not fixed.³⁸ However, later on it became clear that Chiha's proposal was not working properly. The corruption and patronage commonly referred to explain the Lebanese political system rather than give and take among competing groups. The prominent political figures, Emile Edde and Beshara Khuri, both Maronite Christians used patronage in their bid for presidency.³⁹ Finally in 1937, the High Commissioner and Edde agreed on the fixed representation of every sect in the government and the strict confessionalism came into force. The 1932 census was taken as a determinant to allocate the ratios of representation. In a system that depends on the population percentages of sects, the census became the most important part of the politics. Rania Maktabi reveals the politicization of the 1932 census to present the Christians as the majority of Lebanese population.

³⁷ Zamir, *Lebanon's Quest: The Road to Statehood 1926-1939*, p.10

³⁸ Charles Winslow, *Lebanon: War and Politics in a Fragmented Society*, (London: Routledge, 1996), p.66

³⁹ For more details about rivalry and domestic politics see, Meir Zamir, 'The Struggle for the Presidency' in Meir Zamir, *Lebanon's Quest: The Road to Statehood 1926-1939*, (London, I.B. Tauris, 1997)

On the one hand, undesirable residents were either excluded from enlisting in personal registries, or they were categorized as foreigners. These steps excluded thousands of residents from acquiring citizenship. On the other hand, desirable emigrants were given the opportunity to register in the census, enabling them to gain Lebanese citizenship.⁴⁰

To make the assessment more accurate, the undesirable elements who were excluded were Muslims while the majority of the emigrants included were Christians. According to the results, 17 sects registered and Christians constituted the majority with 52% of all population.

Following the arrangements in Lebanon, the elections for constituent assembly in Syria held in 1928. In the elections, the National Bloc of nationalists could secure only 22 seats in a 70-member assembly yet they were very influential in the decision-taking process. The draft constitution defined Syria (including Lebanon), Transjordan and Palestine as one indivisible country, gave Syrian government the right to organize national army, and empowered the president to conclude treaties, receive ambassadors, grant amnesty and declare martial law. Since those clauses could not be accepted by French side, High Commissioner Ponsot dissolved the Syrian parliament in February 1929.⁴¹

In 1930s, the Lebanese and Syrian politics were dominated by the attempts to terminate mandate and achieve independence. The negotiations for treaties between mandated territories and French officials began. The Franco-Syrian treaty calling for peace, friendship and alliance between France and Syria in March 1936. It was based on the Anglo-Iraqi treaty and determined to commence after the Syria was accepted to League of Nations and agreed to last for 25 years. The Jabal Druze, Latakia, the district of Alexandretta were incorporated to Syria but retained a limited administrative and financial autonomy. France would continue to have military conventions in the state but the scopes of it was limited.⁴² The future of the annexed territories to Mount Lebanon was not mentioned in the agreement. The Syrian nationalists prioritized independence in the first manner and chose not to provoke the Maronites by attempting to reunite the

⁴⁰ Rania Maktabi, 'The Lebanese Census of 1932 Revisited: Who Are The Lebanese?', *the British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.26, No.2, (November 1999), p.233

⁴¹ Zamir, *Lebanon's Quest: The Road to Statehood 1926-1939*, p.25

⁴² Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945*, p.467-468

annexed territories. Before Franco-Syrian treaty concluded, the Lebanese Muslims convened the Conference of the Coast in January 1936 to demonstrate their own approaches. Its declared statements indicate that the large proportion of Lebanese Muslims demanded immediate return of annexed territories to Syria. A small group led by Riyad al-Solh argued against the majority that the pressures for unity with Syria would hasten Maronites and made them more dependent on French rule. Hence, the independence should be sustained first and unity would eventually follow it. The Solh formula gained popularity after the Franco-Syrian treaty concluded without any reference to the realignment of disputed areas.⁴³ The transformation of attitude was the result of feeling of betrayal among Lebanese Muslims. The rapprochement between Lebanese Muslims and Christians in 1930s worked for the sake of the well functioning of the Lebanese system until 1960's. In this period Muslim side acknowledged the political and economic benefits of recognizing Greater Lebanon while the Christians recognized the impossibility of the survival of Greater Lebanon as a Christian state under Maronite hegemony.⁴⁴ The Franco-Lebanese negotiations concluded in November 1936. It was similar to Syrian one with some exceptions especially on the issue of unlimited French military conventions to stay in Lebanon.⁴⁵ Although French side did not ratify the agreements, the negotiation process was important for the attempted reconciliation of Christian and Muslim constituents of Lebanon.

Prior to the conclusion of the treaties, the political organizations mushroomed in Lebanon. The Christians formed Lebanese Unity Party (LUP), The National Front (NF) and The Phalanges under Pierre Gemayel. The Muslims also established their own radical party, namely Najjada favoring full Arab nationalism. The Communist Party, on the other hand was pursuing a cross-sectarian policy and supported social change in both countries as a cure for all problems. In addition, the Syrian Nationalist Party founded in 1932, by a Lebanese Christian Antun Saada, but remained as a secret organization until 1935. The main doctrines of the party were; radical reform of society on secular lines, a fascist-style ideology and establishment of the Greater Syria. The members of it believed

⁴³ Raghid al-Solh, *Lebanon and Arabism: National Identity and State Formation*, (London: I.B Tauris, 2004), p.33

⁴⁴ Zisser, *Lebanon: The Challenge of Independence*, p.14-17

⁴⁵ Zamir, *Lebanon's Quest: The Road to Statehood 1926-1939*, p.212

in the distinct characteristics of Syrian nation, not the whole Arab nation, and supported the unity among divided units. In the following years the paramilitary forces of it initiated many efforts to unify the countries.

The hopes for independence were totally reversed by the setting of Second World War in Europe. Immediately after the outbreak of war in Europe, the High Commissioner declared the state of emergency and suspended the constitutions in Lebanon and Syria in 1939. The fall of France in 1940 to Germany followed by the establishment of dual government in France: the German Vichy regime and Charles de Gaulle's Free French government fighting against the former. The pro-Vichy General Dentz appointed as the new High Commissioner in the Levant. Since France was busy with the war in European continent, her ally Britain increased its influence in the Middle East. The rise of British influence in the French mandates was important since the British was favoring the independence of mandated territories. At last, in 1943 the pressures from Britain and Syrian nationalists forced France to resume the constitutional life in both countries. The already established trend among Lebanese Muslims and Syrian Arab nationalist that prioritized independence before unity culminated in the Lebanese-Syrian cooperation for independence of separate states in 1943. In Khoury's words 'never before had the two countries adopted such a cooperative spirit and compatible political aims'.⁴⁶ French hesitantly arrested Lebanese President Khuri, Prime Minister Solh, three ministers and one deputy on 11 November. In return, strikes and demonstrations quickly organized against French rule. The struggle spread to Damascus and at the end of the 1946 both countries cleaned from French troops.

2.2 The Lebanese-Syrian Relations after the Independence

The general characteristics of the Lebanese-Syrian relations after their independences affected by international, regional and local developments. In international arena, the world politics shaped according to the Cold War structure. The super power competition between the USSR and the US on ideological, political, economic and military domains shaped the politics in global arena. Middle East as a

⁴⁶ Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945*, p.614

region was not an exception for the super-power struggle. The regional developments determined by the international competition for hegemony over the area.

In this conjuncture, Lebanon and Syria entered into state-consolidation process. Lebanon emerged as the liberal economic center of the region. The intermediary role of it continued in bridging the Western sphere of trade with the Middle Eastern traders plus Beirut emerged as the financial center of the region. For nearly 30 years Lebanon presented as the role model for other Middle Eastern states both for its prosperous economy and for the existence of democratic institutions. Syria, on the other hand, followed the statist way of economic development while the political arena was heavily destabilized by coups and counter coups. The turmoil in internal scene prevented rulers to pursue an active foreign policy. Hence although Syrian leaders had irredentist political agenda on their minds, the relations between Lebanon and Syria had a dormant period until the 1970s.

2.2.1 The Politics of Independent Syria: Coups and Counter Coups

The post-independence politics in Syria can be characterized by instability until the rise of Hafez Asad to Presidency in 1970. The state-consolidation period was not smooth due to internal and external turmoil. Internally, there was friction among the ruling elite and society. In the immediate after the independence, the power was concentrated in the hands of rich landlords and wealthy merchants while the rest of the society composed of peasants and salaried middle class excluded from the state institutions.⁴⁷ Externally, the establishment of Israeli state and ongoing Palestinian-Israeli conflict created an unfavorable atmosphere in the region.

Shukri al-Quwatli from National Bloc elected as the first President in 1943. In 1948, the delicate structure within the Syrian regime was further shaken by the First Arab-Israeli War. The defeat in the war and the friction between civilian politicians and army officials triggered the first interventions of army to the politics. The subsequent coups of Colonel Husni al-Zaim, Colonel Sami al-Hinawi and Colonel Adib al-Shihakli

⁴⁷ Anouishirvan Ehteshami & Raymond Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran: Middle Powers in a Penetrated Regional System*, (London: Routledge, 1997), p.60-61

in 1949 further destabilized the domestic politics. Shishakli's governance was more stable compared to others and lasted until the free elections of 1954.⁴⁸

The Baath Party convened its first Congress in 1947 within this conjuncture. It demands a further elaboration since the Party dominated the future politics of Syria. Michel Aflaq and Salah al-Din Bitar, a Greek Orthodox and Sunni Muslim established the Baath Party with their ideologies cemented even before the independence when they were students in Paris in 1920s and 1930s. The Baath ideology defines the Arab nation as the sum of people who speaks Arabic. According to them the imperialist forces divided the Arab nation into several states. The cure for the predicament of Arab nation defined by the three main objectives of Party known as Trinity: the Arab unity, freedom and socialism. First of all, the unity of Arab nation necessitates the reunification of Arab states to reform the indivisible Arab nation. Having the indivisible Arab nation ideal in their minds, the terms 'regional' and 'national' had different connotations in Baath interpretation. The 'national' refers to whole Arab nation while the 'regional' identifies the several Arab regions divided by imperialists. Secondly, the objective of freedom calls for the national freedom from colonialism and imperialism. Thirdly, socialism aims national renaissance which could only be achieved by the overthrow of social injustice inherent in feudal society. In addition to Trinity, the secular items were also dominant in the party ideology with regards to the religious heterogeneity of the society.⁴⁹ The Baath Party rose as an important political power in 1954 elections.⁵⁰

The foreign policy of Syria in the post-independence era was shaped by the rivalries in the international and regional arenas. The US-USSR competition in the global politics and rivalry among Hashemite Iraq and Egypt on regional level created external constraints on Syria. The Iraqi-Egyptian rivalry for the leadership of Middle East forced Syria to make a choice between Hashemite plans of unity among Arab states and Egyptian-Saudi axis for preserving separate independences of several Arab states. The Syrian elite declared their adherence for Egyptian option each time the governmental change occurred. The competition between Iraq and Egypt reached its

⁴⁸ For more detailed information on politics between 1945-1958 see, Patrick Seale, *The Struggle for Syria: A Study of Post-War Arab Politics 1945-1958*, (London: I.B Tauris, 1965)

⁴⁹ Raymond Hinnebusch, *Syria: Revolution from Above*, (London: Routledge, 2001), p.30-31

⁵⁰ Patrick Seale, *The Struggle for Syria: A Study of Post-War Arab Politics 1945-1958*, (London: I.B Tauris, 1965), p.182-185

peak when General Abdel Nasser captured power in Egypt in 1952 by a coup. The Cold War structure further complicated the rivalry among both when Egypt and Iraq declared their competing stances on international competition. Nasser favored neutralism as a third alternative to

Cold War alignments shifting between USSR and the US. His main motivation was to play for the leadership of Arabs and tried to convince the other Arab states to follow Egyptian model. Iraq, on the other hand, allied with West to secure the supply of arms, especially against the threat of Israel. Syria, once more forced to make a choice between them. The Syrian decision became crucial when the US initiated Baghdad Pact in 1955 with an aim to contain USSR's influence in the region. It was designed as a defense pact between Turkey, Iraq and Britain. The Western powers tried to convince all Arab states to enter the camp while Nasser opposed the pact by favoring his famous policy of neutralism. 'Syria enjoyed what amounted to a casting vote on the Pact's future: had she applied for membership, other Arab states would have followed; in the event, her abstention and hostility froze the alliance, isolating its only Arab member, Iraq.'⁵¹ Syria's vital decision affected by the inherent suspicion of Iraqi domination over Syria, Baath popularity in domestic scene with an ideology against West, and USSR's rapprochement to Arab nationalists. In the final analysis Syria took side with Egypt in regional balance of power and denied to join the Baghdad Pact. Subsequently, the Suez Crisis erupted in 1956 further advanced the Syrian rapprochement with Egypt. Nasser's attempt to nationalize the Suez Canal turned out to be an international crisis when Israel, France and Britain in a joint act attacked Egypt. Syria once more sided with her Egyptian ally. Domestically, Baath Party approached to Nasser as a rescuer against the Communist Party's increasing power and alliance with USSR. In the end Egypt and Syria united under the name of United Arab Republic on 1 February 1958.⁵²

⁵¹ Seale, *The Struggle for Syria: A Study of Post-War Arab Politics 1945-1958*, p.213

⁵² For Syrian foreign policy between 1945-1958 see, Patrick Seale, *The Struggle for Syria: A Study of Post-War Arab Politics 1945-1958*, (London, I.B Tauris, 1965)

2.2.2 The Rise of Hafez Asad to Presidency

The United Arab Republic was supposed to be the nucleus of the Arab unity but it could only survive for three years. The resentments on the Syrian side increased through the period due to Nasser's domination over all aspects of administration. In the end, UAR dissolved in 1961. The dissolution created a new round of competition in the Syrian domestic political life while it decreased the hopes and calls for Arab unity on the ideological ground.

The Military Committee which was a secret organization established by the Syrian military officers in 1959 against the UAR led the first coup after dissolution on 8 March 1963. They shared the governmental authority with Baath Party thus the date was called as the Baath Revolution in Syrian history. The rise of Baath Party to power changed the ruling class composition. The land reforms, nationalization projects and the creation of a huge public sector enabled the mobilization of workers and peasants, previously sidelined by the landlords. The party gained its legitimacy among citizens by its adherence to Arab nationalism.⁵³

After coming to power, the Baath Party experienced differentiations within itself. The first split realized among the traditional leaders of Party and the younger generation. The UAR period was influential in increasing the resentment among younger generation towards the traditional leaders. Initially, the traditional leaders like Michel Aflaq and Salah al-Din Bitar agreed on Nasser's terms for dissolution of all Syrian parties to form a mass party modeled on the Egyptian Union. When it became obvious that Nasser himself would dominate the politics in Syria, the Baath leaders received a blow to their prestige.⁵⁴ After the dissolution, the loss of hopes for Arab unity further alienated younger ones from traditional elites. As a response to failures of the Party, new power circles within the party establishment developed a stance prioritizing socialism over unity and focusing on Syrian region, rather than the whole Arab nation.⁵⁵ In 1966, the supporters of new trend, also called as the regionalists, ousted traditionalists like Aflaq and Bitar with a bloody coup and consolidated their power in Syria.

⁵³ Ehteshami & Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran: Middle Powers in a Penetrated Regional System*, p.61

⁵⁴ John F. Devlin, 'The Baath Party: Rise and Metamorphosis', *The American Historical Review*, Vol.96 No.5, (December 1991), p. 1400

⁵⁵ John Galvani, 'Syria and the Baath Party', *MERIP Reports*, No.25, (February 1974), p.8

The second split within the Party was the result of the defeat in Arab-Israeli War of 1967. The defeat against Israel and the territorial losses increased the tensions within all Arab countries. Syria lost Golan Heights which is strategically very important for defensive measures against Israel. Salah Jadid and Hafez Asad, prominent names of the Baath after the 1966 coup, had different interpretations of the defeat and responsive prescriptions for the future. Jadid faction favored socialist transformation for development and opposed any political or military coalition with the Arab states identified as reactionary, rightist or pro-Western. They preferred the dependence on Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc. On the other hand, Asad faction was giving priority to armed struggle against Israel and did not oppose any cooperation with all other Arab states including Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt although they were not defined as progressive in Baath terms. The split in the Baath factions shaped around the rivalry between Asad's nationalist approach and Jadid's regionalist approach for the struggle against Israel.⁵⁶

The rivalry among two prominent leaders reached its peak in 1970 when Jordan decided to expel Palestinian leadership from the country.⁵⁷ In the National Congress of Baath Jadid and Asad proposed different paths of policies to follow. Jadid favored intervention on the behalf of Palestinians while Asad opposed the idea arguing that unilateral act of Syria would be politically and militarily dangerous taking into account the Israeli threat. The Congress agreed on intervention and called for the relief of Asad from Defence Ministry. In return, Assad seized Presidential office through a bloodless coup on 13 November 1970. As Galvani argues 'It was in essence a struggle within military faction.'⁵⁸

The Presidency of Hafez Asad was important on several respects. The main success of his rule was the consolidation of power in one hand and the stabilization of internal politics. As a result, Syrian regime became capable of pursuing a credible foreign policy. The consolidation of power in President Asad's hand owed much to the political, economic, social and ideological components of the regime formed under his

⁵⁶ Nikolas Van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria: Politics and Society under Asad and the Ba'th Party*, (London, I.B. Tauris, 1996), p.63

⁵⁷ The Palestinian presence in Jordan posed a threat to Jordanian King Abdallah. They could be considered as a state within a state and affected social balances in Jordanian state.

⁵⁸ Galvani, p.10

Presidency. At this point it would be instructive to analyze the structure of Syrian regime to have a comprehensive understanding of its reflection in the foreign policy of state.

The political structure identified by Hinnebusch as ‘Populist Authoritarianism.’ The mobilization of popular sectors in the system sustained through the party and corporatist institutions while the presidential power concentrated by the three pillars of regime: the army, party and bureaucracy. In order to secure the survival of regime, ‘the mukhabarat state’ emerged in which multiple intelligence and security apparatus checked the people, army, and each other.⁵⁹ The intelligence services were given under the control of the trusted elements of the regime, namely Asad’s circle of friends and relatives. In this sense, the rise of Alawi sect was a natural result of the mukhabarat state. Historically, the rise of minority groups in military establishment dates back to the mandate period when French officials favored them in the army as a result of their divide and rule policy. Mainly after the 1963 coup, the composition of army favored Alawis since the leadership of new trend in Baath was among them. Asad in his presidency again turned to Alawis as main supporters of his regime. His rule in Syria continuously criticized for being rigidly sectarian or depending on tribal and family ties. Van Dam clearly explains the situation in Syria as follows

On the one hand, power was essential if the necessary drastic social changes entailing the suppression of sectarian, regional and tribal loyalties, were to be effected; on the other hand, maintenance of that power entailed dependence on those same loyalties thus hindering their suppression.⁶⁰

The social base of the regime enlarged after Asad’s Presidency as well. The ruling class composition had already changed on the behalf of worker and peasant classes by the Baath Revolution of 1963. The regime under Asad further widened the social base of the regime via the enlargement of public sector absorbing state-dependent salaried middle class, and the economic liberalization in subsequent years creating a state-dependent bourgeoisie.⁶¹ The losers of the new regime were mainly the urban Sunni majority, whom also excluded in the intelligence services as mentioned above. In response they turned against the regime by using religion as a vehicle for their aims. The

⁵⁹ Raymond Hinnebusch, ‘Modern Syrian Politics’, *History Compass*, 6/1, (2008) p.269

⁶⁰ Van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria: Politics and Society under Asad and the Ba’th Party*, p.74

⁶¹ Ehteshami & Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran: Middle Powers in a Penetrated Regional System*, p. 61

dilemma of Baath ideology to eject the differences among Arab people including sectarian, tribal and regional ones and the practice that depends on sectarian and tribal relations remained as a Syrian way of politics.⁶²

The foreign policy of Syria transformed into an active, pragmatic and rational one with the rise of Hafez Asad to power. Traditionally, the irredentist claims, security concerns and the Syria-centric Arabism were the major foreign policy determinants. However, until Asad era, the domestic instability prevented leaders to pursue an active or consistent foreign policy. After stabilizing domestic arena Asad started to deal with foreign policy issue with a pragmatist and rationalist approach. His main success was his ability to balance the revisionism of Syria with the vulnerability of state and the limited power it had. In this regard, Asad defined realistic and limited goals while trying to upgrade Syrian capabilities for pursuing these goals. The tools he used as a means to realize his attempts had a huge range differing from limited war to alliance formation or negotiations. By this way, he acquired a tactical flexibility.⁶³ The domestic stability of Syrian state and the parallel success in pursuing an active foreign policy had vital importance for Lebanese-Syrian relations. Lebanon became the main target of Syrian irredentism in the forthcoming years.

2.2.3 The Lebanese Politics after Independence: the National Pact Understanding

Lebanon gained its independence within the extended borders on 22 November 1943. However, as Winslow argues ‘It was easier to oppose the French than to establish Lebanon.’⁶⁴ The initial task of the newly independent state was the establishment of a functional political system which could be suitable for the complex nature of Lebanese society. Two important arrangements shaped the Lebanese political structure: a written constitution and an unwritten alliance called as the National Pact.

The written constitution was the continuation of constitution drafted under French mandate in 1926. In the political structure, the president had a superior position

⁶² Van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria: Politics and Society under Asad and the Ba’th Party*, p.136-145

⁶³ Ehteshami & Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran: Middle Powers in a Penetrated Regional System*, p.66-68

⁶⁴ Winslow, *Lebanon: War and Politics in a Fragmented Society*, p.78

over the prime minister and parliament. He supposed to act as the final voice of the bargains and competitions between other components of political structure. The prime minister ranked as the secondary place, appointed by the president and headed the government. The speaker of the parliament, having the third powerful rank in the system was the weakest part of the Troika – president, prime minister, and the speaker of parliament. The parliament was composed of elected parliamentarians and had the power to elect the president. Hence, the Lebanese public only had the capability to elect the people who would elect president. The membership of the parliament was traditionally composed of the prominent families, who also called as zuama. Since the position of zuama was hereditary, their seats in the assembly generally passed from father to son. The prominent examples were Khuris, Shamouns, Shihabs, Franjehs, and Gemayels for the Maronites; Solhs, Karamis and Yafis for the Sunnis; Joumblatts, Yazbaks, and Arslans for the Druzes; and Asads and Hamadahs for the Shias. Some theorists tended to see the role of zuama in political system as transitional and labeled the Lebanese political system as consociational democracy. In this respect, it is believed that the zuama's role would diminish in time while the country would transit into a developed democracy. On the other hand, the inherent urge of the zuama to maximize their interests within the system and president's arbitrary and manipulative power over them resulted in the corruption of system on several occasions. Hence a more pessimistic stance was hold by some authors like Winslow who defined the system as electoral feudalism.⁶⁵

The unwritten accord, The National Pact of 1943, was the declaration of political deal between Christian and Muslim Lebanese leaders already reached in 1930s. It defined Lebanon as a separate country from Syria while called the Lebanese government to cooperate with other Arab states. In this respect, Muslims renounced the unionist claims with Syria and Christians renounced the calls for protection from the Western powers. Hanf defines the accord as 'Lebanon would be neither Eastern nor Western, but an independent country in its own rights'.⁶⁶ According to the pact, the representation of six major sects defined in top governmental posts appropriately among the Maronites,

⁶⁵ Winslow, *Lebanon: War and Politics in a Fragmented Society*, p.86-87

⁶⁶ Hanf, *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon*, p.72

Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, Sunnis, Shias and Druzes. The posts of Troika allocated among certain sects respective to their positions within the system as well. Accordingly, the president would be a Maronite while Sunnis and Shias secured the prime ministry and office of the speaker of the parliament respectively.

The political structure and the sectarian representation prevented the establishment of political parties based on ideologies beyond the community affiliation. The Phalanges, opposing vehemently the idea of union with Syria; Raymond Edde's National Bloc and Camille Shamoun's National Liberal Party, championing a Lebanese nationalism against Arab nationalism appealed to Maronites; Najjada linking the Arabism and Islam appealed to Sunni Muslims; and the Progressive Socialist Party of Kemal Joumblatt, founded in 1949 had electoral support from Druzes although it favored secularized and independent Lebanon. The only exceptions to sectarian divisions of political parties were the Communist Party of Lebanon, The Syrian Social National Party and the Baath Party.

The first president of independent Lebanese Republic was Beshara Khuri. His first term in office lasted for six years from 1943 to 1949. He wanted to continue his post in 1949 but the Lebanese constitution restricted the re-election of president after six years term terminated. Khuri's campaign for re-election by necessary amendments in the constitution created resentments against the corruption of the Lebanese political system. Camille Shamoun, Kemal Joumblatt, Raymond Edde, the Phalanges, the Najjada and the Syrian Socialist National Party formed the Socialist Front against Khuri. The assassination of Prime Minister Riyad al-Solh in 1951 and subsequent general strike in 1952 further increased the tensions. As a result, Khuri resigned and Camille Shamoun became the second President of Lebanon in September 1952.⁶⁷

2.2.4 The Lebanese Civil War of 1958

President Shamoun was known to be a loyalist to Western powers and ideologies in the Cold War rivalry. More precisely he had good relations with the US and Britain. His presidency coincided with the tense atmosphere in the region shaped by the Nasser's

⁶⁷ Winslow, *Lebanon: War and Politics in a Fragmented Society*, p.101

rise in Egypt, Western camp's urge to contain USSR's influence and establish domination within the region through the Baghdad Pact. President Shamoun's allegiance to Western camp revealed throughout the Suez Crisis when he did not cut off relations with Britain and France unlike the other Arab states. In response, the opposition to President demanded a united policy with its Arab neighbors depending on the National Pact which was calling for a foreign policy orientation in accordance with Arab character of the Lebanese state. The Sunni ministers resigned and brought down the government.

Indeed, the Cold War struggles were creating difficulty for Lebanon as a state composed of many sectarian divisions with different loyalties. Lebanon could not develop a well-defined policy or full loyalty to one of Western or Eastern camp since the half of the population identified themselves with Nasserism while others attached themselves to the Western camp. In this regard, the most important Cold War implementation for Lebanon was the Eisenhower Doctrine declared in 1957 by President Eisenhower of the US. It aimed the defense of liberal Arab regimes against Soviet influence. According to the Doctrine, if a state would be threatened by Soviet communism, the US would provide military help to resist it. President Shamoun, afraid of the opposition from Sunni Muslims who were potentially supported by Nasser or Syria accepted the Doctrine in March 1957. Lebanon was the only Arab state to accept the Doctrine.⁶⁸

The parliamentary elections of 1957 resulted in favor of the President Shamoun's supporters. The intention of Shamoun to be re-elected after six years term by maintaining the majority in parliament increased grievances of opposition.⁶⁹ The forces of opposition started their armed campaign in response to the murder of Nasib al-Matni, a Maronite journalist whose views were very critical of president, in May 1958. The fighting camps can be categorized as follow: the Phalanges, Syrian National Party and the militia of Shamoun backed President Shamoun while Salams, Karamis, Franjiesh, Joumblatts and Syrian armaments were in opposition.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ David Schenker, 'America and the Lebanon Issue', in *Lebanon: Liberation, Conflict and Crisis*, ed. by Barry Rubin, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), p.215

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, p.215

⁷⁰ Hanf, *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon*, p.117

President Shamoun called for help from the US using the Eisenhower Doctrine as a mean for an American intervention. Throughout the civil war, President Shamoun accused the UAR for supporting oppositional groups by both ideological agitation and military and financial aid. Although the US administration did not respond to Shamoun's call in the first instance, the overthrow of pro-Western Iraqi regime with a coup d'etat led by General Qassem increased the US panic for Soviet influence in the region and the US administration decided to intervene on the behalf of liberal Lebanese people.⁷¹ The US forces intervened on 15 July 1958 and the clashes halted immediately in Lebanon. The combatant groups agreed on General Fuad Shihab's Presidency with American mediation at the end of the civil war. He was elected as the third President of Lebanese Republic on 22 September 1958.⁷² The traditional Lebanese motto of 'no victor and no vanquished' was the case for the 1958 civil war. Maila explains the 'no victor and no vanquished rule as 'maintaining a balance-of sharing power-and pre-serving the rights of communities that view themselves as the bedrock on which the Lebanese state is constructed.'⁷³ In fact, the underlining problems within the Lebanese system concealed and the normalization of politics and daily life realized within few days.

2.2.5 Shihabism in Lebanon

The Presidency of Shihab was important for the stabilization and prosperity in the country sustained through huge reform project. The reform program, later referred as Shihabism, can be summarized as 'mild etatism, social welfare drive, security service influences within a civilian regime.'⁷⁴ President Shihab, himself coming from a military background depended on the army for implementing the reforms and the Deuxieme Bureau (the investigative police organization) established to oppress the zuama's opposition to reforms.⁷⁵ It can be said that, President Shihab's term was a rare exception for Lebanese history throughout which the army rose as an important power independent

⁷¹ Winslow, *Lebanon: War and Politics in a Fragmented Society*, p.118-119

⁷² Schenker, 'America and the Lebanon Issue', p.

⁷³ Joseph Maila, 'The Taif Accord: An Evaluation', in *Peace for Lebanon: From War to Reconstruction*, ed. by Deirdre Collings, (Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 1994), p.32

⁷⁴ William Harris, *Faces of Lebanon: Sects, Wars and Global Extensions*, (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1997), p.147

⁷⁵ Winslow, *Lebanon: War and Politics in a Fragmented Society*, p.133

from the communal affiliations. His reforms attempted the recovery of economic domain by lessening the gap between rich and poor; establishment of Central Bank; and extension of public services to rural areas. In foreign policy, President Shihab tried to re-orient the country to the Arab world in order to decrease the internal and external pressures. The Arab identity of Lebanon again underlined and the country tried to remain neutral in inter-Arab conflicts.⁷⁶

In August 1964, Charles Hilu elected as the next President of Lebanon. He can be counted as the second Shihabist President since he followed the reform program already introduced by President Shihab. However, the regional predicaments and domestic constraints of Lebanese system started to set the forthcoming deterioration of life in Lebanon.

2.3 The Regional Developments and the Road to Civil War in Lebanon

Lebanon tried to remain out of the Arab-Israeli conflict until 1960s. However, the complex nature of the conflict itself and the fragile nature of Lebanese society made it impossible for Lebanon to stay away from the conflict completely. The detrimental conditions began with the Six Days War in 1967. Firstly, the huge numbers of Palestinian refugees migrated to neighboring territories including south Lebanon. Secondly, the belief in Pan-Arabism declined as a result of Israeli victory and Palestinians started to rely on themselves. Winslow's explains the understanding as, 'Where Arab regimes had failed, Palestinian organizations might succeed.'⁷⁷ The Palestinian strategy depended on launching strikes against Israel from neighboring states: a strategy to which Lebanon was no exception. The Lebanese exception, on the other hand, was the pettiness of state to handle the crisis and fragility of society to face the Palestinian-Israeli clashes within their own borders. Initially, the Lebanese army tried to prevent the Palestinian strikes to Israel from Lebanese territory in order to halt the responsive Israeli retaliations. But it could not be successful. Later on, the pressures of Syrians, Palestinians and Lebanese Muslims resulted in the signing of Cairo Agreement in 1969 for determining the relationship between Palestinians and Lebanese

⁷⁶ Harris, *Faces of Lebanon: Sects, Wars and Global Extensions*, p.147

⁷⁷ Winslow, *Lebanon: War and Politics in a Fragmented Society*, p.156

state. Accordingly, Lebanon acknowledged the Palestinian Liberation Organization's supremacy in the refugee camps, and pledged itself to facilitate Palestinian access to the border with Israel in return for PLO's respect to Lebanese sovereignty.⁷⁸

The 1970 was an important period for the Lebanese position in Arab-Israeli context. The leadership of Syria, Egypt and Lebanon changed within the same year. The beginning of Asad era led to the emergence of an ambitious foreign policy of Syria, the death of Nasser and rise of Anwar Sadat to power in Egypt marked the first signs of change in Egyptian role for regional balances, and the election of Sulayman Franjeh as the President of Lebanon closed the Shihabist era of Lebanese history. Moreover the huge numbers of Palestinians and PLO headquarters expelled from Jordan moved to south Lebanon thanks to its geographical proximity to Palestinian lands and comfort already provided by Cairo Agreement.⁷⁹ The second attempt of the Lebanese army to clash the Palestinians ended up in Melkart Agreement signed on 17 May 1973. It once again underlined the clauses of the Cairo Agreement. As al-Khazen argues 'The Lebanese government 'controlled' the law and its interpretation, while the Palestinians controlled the land'.⁸⁰

The 1973 Arab-Israeli War further complicated the regional politics. The comparative successes of Arab regimes surprised both Israeli and US officials. The balance of power in the region changed by the post-war developments. First of all, in order to support the Arab cause, the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) decided to reduce oil production during the war. Abu Dhabi, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Algeria and Kuwait embargoed oil for the United States. The rise of oil prices, in return increased oil wealth of oil-producing states and the increasing support to front-line states served the interests of Syrian state. Secondly, the US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger started his famous step by step diplomacy in order to reach separate peace-agreements among Arab countries and the Israel after the war. The initial target of Kissinger was Egypt and the negotiations between Egypt, Israel, and US culminated in peace agreement in 1979. The main problem of the peace process was the by-pass of PLO in the talks that further alienated PLO and Syria. Thirdly, in 1974, the UN voted to

⁷⁸Harris, *Faces of Lebanon: Sects, Wars and Global Extensions*, Princeton, p.153

⁷⁹ Farid al-Khazen, *The Breakdown of State in Lebanon*, (London: I.B Tauris, 2000), p.192-193

⁸⁰ *ibid.*, p.210

include Palestinian question on its agenda and Arab states agreed that the PLO had the right to speak for the Palestinians at future Middle East peace talks.⁸¹ As a result of the post-war developments, Egypt eventually lost its role as the leader of Arab cause, the PLO emerged as the legal representative of Palestinian people, and Syria was distorted with the Egyptian disengagement from Arab camp against Israel. Lebanon, on the other hand, had an important strategic position as the host country of PLO although it did not enter the war.

⁸¹ Ritchie Owendale, *The Origins of the Arab Israeli Wars*, (Great Britain: Pearson Education, 2004), p.224-230

CHAPTER 3

THE LEBANESE CIVIL WAR AND THE SYRIAN INVOLVEMENT

Lebanon has been frequently defined as the liberal democratic and economic center of the Middle East for thirty years. The connotations adhered to Lebanese miracle were Switzerland of Middle East or Paris of East. The peaceful coexistence of different sectarian communities represented an exception and desirable hope for other heterogeneous societies of the region. ‘Throughout its history, Lebanon has represented a unique experiment in multicultural and multireligious interdependence. Christians and Muslims have coexisted for centuries within a tradition of *la ghalib wa la maghlub* (there is no conqueror and no vanquished).’⁸² The break out of civil war in 1975 came as a surprise to many specialists of Lebanon. The killings of thousands of people shattered the Lebanese miracle. Indeed, the Lebanonization got into the literature referring to ‘a process whose outcome is the total collapse of civic society into a Hobbesian state of nature.’⁸³

There were many local and external actors involved directly or indirectly to the civil war leading to the internationalization of conflict. ‘By the spring of 1984, there were no fewer than 186 warring factions- splinter groups with different backgrounds, ideologies, sponsors, grievances, visions, and justifications as to why they had resorted to armed struggle’⁸⁴ This complex nature of the civil war made it harder to examine. Thus, the different approaches on the reasons of civil war will be narrated in the first part of the chapter to have a better understanding about the conditions. Throughout the war, the local, regional and global actors tried to shape the outcomings in line with their

⁸² Hafeez Malik, ‘Lebanon as Experiment in Multicultural Interdependence’, in *Lebanon’s Second Republic: Prospects for the Twenty First Century*, ed. by Kail C. Ellis, (USA: University Press of Florida, 2002), p.14

⁸³ Hani A. Faris, ‘The Failure of Peacemaking in Lebanon 1975-1989’, in *Peace for Lebanon: From War to Reconstruction*, ed. by Deridre Collings (Colorado, Lynne Rienner, 1994), p.17

⁸⁴ Samir Khalaf, *Civil and Uncivil Violence in Lebanon: A History of the Internationalization of Communal Conflict*, (New York, Columbia University Press, 2002), p.240

own interests. The phases of civil war and the major winners and losers will be outlined in the second part of the chapter. The most important aspect of the civil war for the Lebanese-Syrian relations was the opportunity of Syria to have an upper hand in Lebanese politics. The Syrian army intervened in the initial years of wars and when the war ended, Asad regime finally succeeded to realize its attempts for having control over Lebanese affairs. The Taif regime which legitimized the Syrian domination over Lebanon will be examined in the last part of the chapter.

3.1 The Reasons and Actors of the War

3.1.1 The Internal and External Factors of War

There is a huge literature on the factors that led to the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war. Several authors tried to analyze the demise of Lebanon by giving emphasis on different conditions. Some of them underlined the inherent internal problems as the main cause of anger, while others blamed the external conditions for triggering the civil strife in the country. In the middle of them, some analysts argued that both internal and external factors complicated the life in Lebanon. In fact, it can be argued that the complex relations made it harder to differentiate between external and internal factors while both contributed to the events that caused the uncivil war.

The first category of authors pointed to the very structure of Lebanese system as the main factor behind the civil war. The consociational democracy⁸⁵, the confessionalism, the unevenness of economic development, the disparities in society and the rigidity of political structure that avoided change in the system can be counted as the main factors of civil war according to them.

Michael Hudson is the prominent political scientists who exceptionally pointed to the weaknesses of Lebanese system before the civil war broke out. He mainly defines the basic features of the Lebanese structure as follows;

⁸⁵ The Consociational democracy model was developed by Arend Lipjhart. It was essentially pointed to the cases in which small elites of different communities interact moderately, responsibly with one another to preserve mutual advantages and promote mass tranquility while they maintain the tightest possible influence over their 'flocks'. Micheal C. Hudson, 'The Lebanese Crisis: The Limits of Consociational Democracy', *the Journal of Palestinian Studies*, Vol.5 No.3/4, (Spring-Summer 1976), p.111

a pluralistic mosaic system; an authoritarian and hierarchical family structure; religious institutions that are politically influential; power dispersed in religious sects, regional groupings, economic pressure groups, and ideologically oriented political movements; foreign influence in politics; a distinct entrepreneurial habit that has produced both a small class of both 'merchant princes' and a large, stable, petty bourgeoisie; a cult of leadership, historically the result of feudalism, which has produced factions of notables each with a local clientele; and finally a territory that is about three-quarters the size of Connecticut, with five geographically well-defined regions, and a population about one-quarter the size of New York City's.⁸⁶

The complex and divided environment defined above tried to be balanced by National Pact but the main weakness of the system was its vulnerability in the case of any changes forces upon it. Hudson stated that 'The confessional system itself- as the embodiment of a consociational model- was the root of the problem.'⁸⁷

Halim Barakat put forward before the civil war broke out that; although many refer to Lebanon as a miracle, in fact the society lacks the important features for integration among different religious groups and if the conditions continue in the same manner, prospects of stability and national unity would be threatened at its very roots.⁸⁸ After the outbreak of civil war, he made a more detailed analysis on the factors. According to Barakat, the inherent problems of the Lebanese social and political structure were the absence of consensus among different communities; the pyramid class structure in which the larger segments of population were poor and only a few were ultrarich; the weak central government as a direct result of confessionalism; the political rigidity; and the social unrest and anomie.⁸⁹

The economic dimension of the internal problems is well documented by Salim Nasr. The economic structure of the country shaped around the intermediary role of Lebanon since the 19th century. Lebanon, also labeled as the 'merchant republic', gained share of profits from the circulation of goods and capital between Arab East and

⁸⁶ Michael C. Hudson, 'Democracy and Social Mobilization in Lebanese Politics', *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 1, No. 2, (January 1969), p.247-248

⁸⁷ Michael C. Hudson, 'The Lebanese Crisis: The Limits of Consociational Democracy', *the Journal of Palestinian Studies*, Vol.5 No.3/4, (Spring-Summer 1976), p.114

⁸⁸ Halim Barakat, 'Social and Political Integration in Lebanon: A Case of Social Mosaic', *The Middle East Journal*, 27:3, (Summer 1973), p.302

⁸⁹ Halim Barakat, 'The Social Context', in *Lebanon in Crisis, Participants and Issues*, ed. by P.Edward Haley, Lewis W. Snider (eds.), (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1979), p.6-16

capitalist West. The development of oil economy in 20th century further enhanced the Lebanese trade and finance since the surplus money within the hands of oil producing Arab countries increased enormously. Hence, Beirut emerged as the economic center of the region with its merchant class and huge banking system. However, the external-oriented structure of economy had its own weaknesses as well. The hegemony of financial and commercial sectors led to the neglect of agriculture and industry. The decomposition of rural population living in peripheral areas resulted in their migration to Beirut since 1960s. The industrial sector was incapable of absorbing the huge numbers of new comers and in the end, the rural poors transformed into urban poors. Since the majority of agrarian population was Muslims, the resentment among agrarian people had a sectarian outlook. In conclusion, Nasr argues that the unevenness of economic growth reached to a point that the intermediary and regional headquarter role of Beirut produced a small minority of rich at the expense of the rest of Lebanese society.⁹⁰

The second category of authors appreciated the Lebanese structure and blamed the external factors for the demise of it. One of the prominent names in this category was Iliya Harik. Interestingly Barakat and Harik conducted a survey together in 1972 and reached opposing conclusions in interpreting Lebanese social, democratic and economic structure. Harik simply claims that Lebanese civil war had a regional nature. According to him,

Why Lebanon, rather than another country, exploded is a question that should be answered by looking into the effects of the regional conflict on Lebanon and the way the regional conflict penetrated its social and political structures. For it should be remembered that fighting in Lebanon was not among Lebanese only. The combatants in fact have been Lebanese, Palestinians, Syrians and Israelis.⁹¹

First of all, Harik contested the political rigidity assumption of Lebanese system to understand the causes of civil war. In contrast, he emphasized the ability of system to adopt social and political changes. He referred to the rising role of prime minister comparing to the role of presidency; the increasing Muslim power registered in the

⁹⁰ Salim Nasr, 'Backdrop to Civil War: The Crisis of Lebanese Capitalism', *MERIP Reports*, No.73, (December 1978), p.3-12

⁹¹ Iliya Harik, 'The Economic and Social Factors in the Lebanese Crisis', in *Arab Society: Social Science Perspective*, ed. by Saad Eddin Ibrahim, Nicholas S. Hopkins (eds.) (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1985), p.412-413

parliament; the adjustment of state bureaucracy to the growth of Muslim political power. Moreover, the national survey conducted in 1972 indicates that the gap between attitudes of Muslims and Christians on national identification narrowed and a single Arab Lebanese identity more widely felt by both sides. Secondly, he opposes the economic based analysis. According to him, Lebanon enjoyed impressive economic growth, financial conditions, a low inflation and unemployment rate, good services in terms of electricity, telecommunications, water and roads, a high consumption level of food and manufactured goods, a small number of poor families and advanced educational services. He argues that since the main division among the Lebanese camps in civil war was sectarian, class analysis of conflict is inadequate to explain it. Only for the Shias, Harik admits that they constitute the deprived population but the differences were not excessively high to prove a conflict.⁹²

Salim al-Lawzi, the editor of al-Hawadith, also blamed the Palestinian factor and the mismanagement of the crisis by Lebanese authorities for the 1975 civil war. According to him, the legitimacy of Palestinian resistance resulted in the weakening of state's armed forces thus the state could not impose law and order in the country. The Cairo Agreement gave the traditional Maronite leadership the idea of strengthening the paramilitary parties in order to combat the Palestinian resistance groups in the absence of a state authority against them. Al-Lawzi blamed President Franjeh for his reactionary policies in handling the crisis. He argues that the President did not pursue a well-defined policy against the Palestinian organizations.⁹³

The traditional leadership of Maronite Christians in Lebanon generally situated in the second category of interpretation. They argue that the Lebanese people were successful in keeping the cooperation among different communities and lived together. Hence, the problem for them was not the changing conjuncture among the local communities but the distortion caused by Palestinian resistance. In Pierre Gemayel's words 'There was a war not between us and the Lebanese, but between us and the Palestinians, who tried to conquer Lebanon and occupy it. They wanted to dissolve

⁹² Harik, 'The Economic and Social Factors in the Lebanese Crisis', p.413-421

⁹³ 'The Struggle for Lebanon', *the Journal of Paelistine Studies*, Vol.5 No. 3/4 , (Spring-Summer 1976), p.211

Lebanon in the Arab world.⁹⁴ Gemayel's stance did not wholly accepted by whole Maronite community but still it is important to understand the rhetoric of traditional leadership.

The third category of authors argued that both internal and external factors played a role in the Lebanese conflict. In fact, the distinction between the external and internal reasons blurred for several times.

The increasing external challenges met with an already fragile internal environment by 1970s in Lebanon. The main external challenges were the movement of PLO headquarters to Lebanon, the development of an ambitious foreign policy in Syria, and the pacification of Egypt in Arab cause against Israel as a result of Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy.

The existence of Palestinian resistance on Lebanese soil had combined with the internal weaknesses of Lebanese society on several dimensions. Although other Arab states also hosted Palestinian refugees, the unique case of Lebanon was the absence of an authoritarian system to restrict the activities of them.⁹⁵ In this sense, the move of PLO to Lebanon had important repercussions for domestic Lebanese problems. First of all, the Lebanese fixed proportional system was heavily dependent on the distribution of the population. The fertility rates of the Muslims were higher than the Christians and this was already creating a problem. The huge numbers of Palestinians further increased the Muslim population. In 1970, the Palestinians numbered 400.000 while Lebanese population was 3 million.⁹⁶ In order to deal with the demographic problem, Lebanese state did not conduct a consensus since 1932 and Palestinians tried to be kept out of the system. Secondly, the different visions of Lebanon reflected itself on the attitudes of Muslims and Christians in dealing with the Palestinian issue. The Sunni Muslims saw Palestinians as their Arab brethren and supported their cause against Israel. The Maronites, on the other hand, saw the presence of Palestinian armed resistance in Lebanon as a sovereignty problem for the Lebanese state.⁹⁷ Israel responded Palestinian

⁹⁴ Robert Fisk, *Pity the Nation*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p.73

⁹⁵ Kail C. Ellis, 'The Regional Struggle for Lebanon', in *Lebanon's Second Republic: Prospects for the Twenty-first Century*, ed. by Kail C. Ellis (USA: University Press of Florida, 2002), p.28

⁹⁶ Ovendale, *The Origins of the Arab Israeli Wars*, p.233

⁹⁷ Rashid Khalidi, 'The Palestinians and Lebanon', in *Toward a Viable Lebanon*, ed. by Halim Barakat (Washington: Center For Contemporary Arab Studies, 1988), p.134-135

military operations by heavy retaliations and further anticipated Maronite discomfort with Palestinians. In the absence of a state authority to deal with the issue, Maronites began to form their own militias. The declared aim of these militias was to fight with Palestinian armed forces and prevent their attacks to Israel. The hot debate among the Lebanese people on the issue of Palestinian refugees manifested itself on the walls of Muslim and Christian quarters. The walls in the Christian quarters were filled with sayings ‘No to Resistance’, ‘No to Syria’, ‘No to Arabism’ and ‘No to Coward Strangers’ while the reversed ones like ‘Yes to Resistance’ and ‘Yes to Arabism’ appeared on Muslim quarters.⁹⁸ Thirdly, the PLO model of emancipation inspired the discontent people within the existing system. In this regard, the existence of Palestinians led the radicalization of discontent among the Lebanese left composed excessively by Muslims.⁹⁹ Maqsood writing in *Shu’un Filastiniyya* argued that the coalition between the Lebanese left and Palestinian struggle became inevitable as their destiny was interlinked.¹⁰⁰ Fourthly, presence of PLO in the south Lebanon made the area as the main target of Israeli retaliations. The decline in agricultural development and Israeli bombings forces the Shia population of south to migrate to the capital in order to seek shelter. However, huge flux of emigrants could not be absorbed in Beirut either. In the end, the radicalization of Shia population got under way.¹⁰¹

The second external challenge was the stabilization of Syrian regime and subsequent formation of an active Syrian foreign policy. Unsurprisingly, Lebanon was the main area of influence. The traditional irredentist claims of Syria over Lebanon and the PLO establishment in the country made Lebanon an important asset for its position in the Arab-Israeli conflict.¹⁰²

The third regional development that affected Lebanon was the pacification of Egyptian role in Arab-Israeli conflict. After the June War in 1973, the US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger tried to isolate leading Arab resistance states from their support to Palestinian cause against Israel with his famous shuttle diplomacy. Egypt responded

⁹⁸ Barakat, ‘The Social Context’, p.18

⁹⁹ Khalaf, *Civil and Uncivil Violence in Lebanon: A History of the Internationalization of Communal Conflict*, p.221

¹⁰⁰ ‘The Struggle for Lebanon’, p.207

¹⁰¹ Itamar Rabinovich, *The War for Lebanon*, (London: Cornell University Press, 1985), p.42

¹⁰² *ibid.*, p.36-37

positively to Kissenger's attempts while Syria opposed vehemently to reaching peace with Zionist enemy. When PLO realized that the Palestinians were bypassed in the process, it tried to increase their hand in Lebanon.¹⁰³

In conclusion, the domestic weaknesses of Lebanon and the external pressures were both played a role in Lebanese civil war. The inherent weakness of the Lebanese structure stemmed from the confessional system of the country. The proportional system of representation was not flexible to adopt itself to the changing dynamics of country. The economic and social problems among lower stratas of society and their anger towards the upper classes had a sectarian outlook since the class and sect divisions befitted in the country. In this fragile atmosphere, the volatile external environment put further pressure on Lebanese state. Although Lebanon tried to keep itself away from Arab-Israeli conflict, the geographical proximity, the move of PLO to Lebanon, and Syrian position as a front state against Israel made it impossible for Lebanese not to be affected by Arab-Israeli struggle.

The continuation of the civil war for nearly fifteen years was also catastrophic for Lebanon. The economic greed, external interventions, and the religious fractionalization served for the prolongation of conflict. The war economy served the interests of different militias through looting, confiscation of private property, imposing taxes, cultivation and trading drugs, trading in contraband, outright thievery, bank robberies and fraudulent banking practices. The external interventions of regional and international states by their supports to Lebanese militias and the military intervention of Syria and Israel also opened the way for prolongation of crisis.¹⁰⁴

3.1.2 The Coalitions of Warring Parties

The categorization of the fighting camp in the Lebanese civil war was itself a problematic issue. However, in order to make the analysis simpler it can be said that there were two major camps in the civil war. In general, the terms 'Muslim leftists' and 'Christian rightists' used to label the two broader camps in order to both indicate their

¹⁰³ Ellis, 'The Regional Struggle for Lebanon', p.31

¹⁰⁴ Samir Makdisi & Richard Sadaka, 'The Lebanese Civil War 1975-1990', *AUB Institute of Financial Lecture and Working Paper Series*, No.3, 2003, p.32-34

sectarian identities and ideologies. However, since all the militias within one camp cannot be defined as Muslim or Christian; or leftists or rightist, the preferred categorization should be the supporters of 'the status quo' and the 'revisionist camp'.

The status quo coalition as indicated from its title believed in the well functioning of existing system and tried to keep it as it were. According to them, the civil war triggered not because of the illnesses of Lebanese structure but due to the Palestinian presence and its external relations. The coalition was composed of several parties, organizations and militias. The backbone of them was traditional Maronite political parties of Pierre Gemayel's Phalanges, and Camille Shamoun's National Liberal's Party. The Christian conservative parties consolidated under the banner of Lebanese Front in September 1976 and Camille Shamoun elected as the president of the Front. The joint command of the Front unified the militias comprised of the Phalangists, the Tigers of the Shamouns, al-Tanzim and the Guardians of Cedars under the name of Lebanese Forces. The Phalangists were the most influential militia of the Lebanese Forces and during the civil war they finalized the integration of militias under Phalangist domination.¹⁰⁵ They sought to have Israeli support in their fight against revisionist forces.

The coalition of revisionist forces was more heterogeneous and large compared to the supporters of status quo. The basic aim of them was to change the balance of power within the Lebanese system against the Maronite dominance. The more radical units demanded the abolition of confessionalism and secularism. The revisionists formed the Lebanese National Movement (LNM) under the leadership of Kemal Joumblatt as a front to coordinate their efforts in 1972. The major groups participated to the LNM were the Progressive Socialist Party of Joumblatt, the Lebanese Communist Party, the SSNP, the Populist Nasserite Organization, the Murabitun – the main Sunni militia-, the Lebanon's Arab Army which split from the Lebanese Armed Forces in 1976. The Palestinian support to the revisionist forces was crucial throughout the civil war as well. Yasir Arafat's Fatah was the largest and most influential faction of the Palestinian forces while there were also pro-Syrian forces like al-Saiqa and the rejectionist Front including

¹⁰⁵ For a detailed information of the militias, see Tony Badran, 'Lebanon's Militia Wars', in *Lebanon: Liberation, Conflict and Crisis*, ed. by Barry Rubin, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p.37-41

the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine.¹⁰⁶ The Shia establishment, on the other hand, was defending the southern Lebanon against Israel and opposing the social injustice in Lebanon. Imam Musa Sadr's Movement of the Disinherited, its militia Amal and later on, the Hizballah were the main centers of Shia establishment. The revisionist although initially crushed by Syrians, for the most part sought help from Asad regime during the civil war.

3.2 The Phases of Lebanese Civil War and the Syrian Intervention

The date '13 April 1975' is generally accepted as the beginning of the bloody civil war. On that day, Pierre Gemayel, the head of the Phalange, was attending to a consecration of a new church in Ayn al-Rummanah, at the southeast Beirut. The members of the militia were guarding the church when the unknown men began shooting the entrance of the church from a car. Four people, including three Phalangists killed there. The Palestinian commandos were the strongest culprits of the killings. Later that day, a bus carrying Palestinians to the camp of Tel al-Za'tar stopped by Phalange gunmen and all of the Palestinians in the bus killed.¹⁰⁷ The killings triggered other ones and the clashes resulted in 300 deaths in the following three days.¹⁰⁸

Kemal Joumblatt, the head of the Progressive Socialist Party and the leader of the Lebanese National Movement declared boycott to any government including Phalangist representatives. Prime Minister Rashid al-Solh resigned on 15 May 1975 by declaring the Phalangists responsible for the outbreak of clashes and called for the reforms to give Muslims a greater share of political and military power.¹⁰⁹ Rashid Karami appointed as the new prime minister in the same month. Although he tried to reach a compromise, his attempts did not bore fruit. By June 1975, the sporadic skirmishes turned out to be a full-fledged civil war and the broader coalitions of pro- and anti-status quo supporters crystallized.

¹⁰⁶ For a detailed information of the militias, see Tony Badran, 'Lebanon's Militia Wars', in *Lebanon: Liberation, Conflict and Crisis*, ed. by Barry Rubin, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 41-46

¹⁰⁷ Winslow, *Lebanon: War and Politics in a Fragmented Society*, p.182

¹⁰⁸ Harris, *Faces of Lebanon: Sects, Wars and Global Extensions*, p.160

¹⁰⁹ Winslow, *Lebanon: War and Politics in a Fragmented Society*, p.183

The civil war continued for nearly fifteen years with a number of stops and starts. The issue internationalized due to its potential to turn out to be a super power conflict and the different stakes of other regional and international states in the conflict. The complication of the issue made it harder to lay out all the incidents of the civil war. However, for the sake of the analysis of the post-civil war era, it is important to emphasize the important turnouts for the Lebanese-Syrian relationship. Thus, the periodization of the phases would take the Syrian aspect as the main denominator.

Before going into details, it would be instructive to outline the major stakes of Syria in Lebanon. Since the first separation of 'Greater Lebanon' from Syria in 1920, Syria had an irredentist claim over its Lebanese brethren. President Asad explained the Syrian approach to Lebanese-Syrian relations with his understanding of 'Sha'b wahid fi baladayn- one people in two countries.'¹¹⁰ Other than the irredentist ideals, The Syrian regime had political, economic and security concerns in its relations with Lebanon. The major political concerns were about the free political environment in Lebanon. The Lebanese regime was granting asylum to political exiles including Syrian ones and the comparatively free press in Beirut created an environment suitable for publishing criticisms against the Syrian regime. The economic stakes considered the faith of nearly half million Syrian workers in Lebanon when the Lebanese civil war broke out. The security considerations of Syria stemmed from its conflict with Israel. In this regard, the Lebanese territory was important both for the defensive and offensive aspects of Syrian policy. Lebanon can be an asset to allocate Israeli attention to Lebanese border other than the Syrian one while at the same time it can be used as a front against Israel.¹¹¹ A different approach to Syria's Lebanese policy scrutinizes the survival of minority regime in Syria as the main determinant. Deeb for instance, argues that Asad regime needed an ideological ground to legitimize the minority rule in Syria. The struggle against Israel used as a mean to stay in power for Asad and his Alawite supporters. In this context, Syria wanted to dominate Lebanon to draw on it for a low-intensity conflict with Israel via Lebanese territory. In short, Deeb argues that 'Syria has deliberately kept Lebanon in

¹¹⁰ Ellis, 'The Regional Struggle for Lebanon', p.26

¹¹¹ Itamar Rabinovich, 'The Limits of Military Power: Syria's Role', in *Lebanon in Crisis: Participants and Issues*, P.Edward Haley, Lewis W. Snider (eds.), (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1979), p.56-57

an artificial domestic conflict and at war with Israel for over a quarter of a century, for the interests of its own regime.¹¹² Deeb can be criticized for ignoring other dimensions of conflict in Lebanon and reducing the Syrian approach only to the urge of minority regime but his approach was important to reveal the inextricable Syrian-Israeli-Lebanese triangular relationship during the civil war.

3.2.1 The Civil War and the Syrian Intervention

The civil war created new circumstances for the Syrian ambitions over Lebanon. First of all, the fragility of Lebanon coincided with the stabilization of internal politics in Syria after the rise of Hafez Asad to presidency. The Asad regime was playing for the pan-Arab leadership and tried to fulfill the leadership vacuum emerged in the region after the Egyptian disengagement policy toward Israel.¹¹³ Lebanon, Jordan and the Palestinians were the main targets of Syrian regime to impose its dominance and the turmoil in Lebanon was seen as an opportunity for Syria. Secondly, the civil war increased Syrian anxieties about Lebanon. According to Weinberger, 'Elites in one state may intervene in an unstable neighbor because of apprehension over potential imitative unrest at home, known as the fear of contagion.'¹¹⁴ In this regard, the sectarian outlook of the Lebanese civil war had potential to reflect itself in Syria as well due to the heterogeneity of Syrian society. The Sunni majority of Syrian society could imitate their counterparts in Lebanon and resist Alawi-dominated regime. As a result, Syria tried to have a control over Lebanese affairs. A policy depended on the stalemate among fighting camps and the preservation of Lebanese state in existing structure developed by Asad regime.

In December 1975 Lebanon was virtually partitioned by militias. The revisionist camp controlled the southern and eastern part of country and western part of capital while the pro-status quo camp held the north of country and western part of the

¹¹² Marius Deeb, *Syria's Terrorist War on Lebanon and Peace Process*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p.3

¹¹³ Michael Kerr, 'A Positive Aspect to the Tragedy of Lebanon: the Convergence of US, Syrian and Israeli Interests at the Outset of Lebanon's Civil War', *Israeli Affairs*, 15:4, (2009), p.356

¹¹⁴ Naomi Joy Weinberger, *Syrian Intervention in Lebanon*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p.5

capital.¹¹⁵ The PLO involved into the fighting on the revisionist side when the Phalangists increased their attacks against Palestinian camps. At this point, Syria was determined to intervene on behalf of her traditional allies of revisionist camp but not preferred to risk a direct military engagement.¹¹⁶ The indirect intervention began by the stationing of pro-Syrian Palestinian Liberation Army and the al-Saiqa units to Lebanon in January 1976. The major aim of the forces was to impose a compromise political solution on both camps. They were successful in assuring the declare of the Constitutional Document by President Franjieh on 14 February 1976. The reforms in the Document favored the decrease of Maronite president's power vis-à-vis the Sunni prime minister, and the equality of Christian and Muslim membership of parliament. The relation between Lebanese state and Palestinian people defined in accordance with Cairo and Melkart Agreements.¹¹⁷

The first rejection to the Syrian compromise came from the Druze leader Kemal Jumblatt. He opposed the program due to its insufficiency. He evaluated the Syrian attempt by arguing that; 'Our Syrian friends wanted to solve the Lebanese problem in their way, from above, artificially, with no genuine development of the constitutional law of a democratic parliamentary regime.'¹¹⁸ Jumblatt's solution was not limited to lip-servicing reforms. Instead, he demanded a total change of the political structure. He summarized his will for Lebanon in an interview as follows;

The establishment of any secular, civic, democratic state with a progressive representational system through which basic Lebanese sectors like the commercial sector, the labor sector, etc. would express their views in a special council, the separation between ministerial and parliamentary functions as well as the creation of a constitutional court would change the course of Lebanese history. It would be a revolution on the pattern of the 1789 revolution but in a Lebanese fashion.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ Kerr, 'A Positive Aspect to the Tragedy of Lebanon: the Convergence of US, Syrian and Israeli Interests at the Outset of Lebanon's Civil War', p.357

¹¹⁶ Weinberger, p.16

¹¹⁷ Rabinovich, *The War for Lebanon*, p.50

¹¹⁸ Kamal Jumblatt, *I Speak for Lebanon*, (London: Zed Press, 1982), p.74

¹¹⁹ Walid Shuqair & Kamal Jumblatt, 'Kamal Jumblatt: Lebanon's Future', *MERIP Reports*, No. 56, (April 1977), p. 19

Following the Joumblatt's opposition to compromise, the Lebanese Arab Army, a split from the Lebanese Army, under the commandship of Lieutenant Ahmed al-Khatib declared a military coup primarily directed against President Franjeh on 11 March 1976. The revisionist forces rallied for the coup and demanded an immediate resignation of the President.¹²⁰ At this point Syria decided to take more radical measures.

The Syrian forces were ready to clash the LNM-PLO alliance which was capable of defeating the coalition of status-quo supporters. In Syrian vantage point, the clear-cut victory of revisionists and the establishment of a radical state which the PLO had overwhelming influence could complicate the regional politics in the Syrian near environment. In this case, the Syrian support to the supposed radical state would provoke a confrontation with Israel. Alternatively, the defeat of the status quo camp would lead to the American or Israeli intervention and could result in the crush of Syrian allies in Lebanon.¹²¹ The only obstacle to the Syrian military intervention in Lebanon was the potential Israeli response to Asad's act. However, the convergence of the US-Israeli-Syrian interests at least for the short-term benefits eased the way to Syrian intervention. Kissinger believed that the limited Syrian intervention which would not provoke an Israeli response could be beneficial to crush the PLO. The US mediation between Syria and Israel gave fruit and an unwritten red-line arrangement established. According to it, Syrian forces would not advance south of the Beirut-Damascus axis, the total number of Syrian military personnel should not exceed the size of brigade (approximately 3000 men), and Syria should not employ heavy weaponry in Lebanon.¹²²

The direct intervention of Syria against the LNM-PLO alliance legitimized by an invitation from Lebanese President and the regular forces of Syrian army entered Bija valley in April 1976. The major aim of Asad regime was to crush the insurgents and force them to accept the Constitutional Reform. Initially, the election of Elias Sarkis, a Syrian clientele, as the next President of Lebanon sustained by the presence of Syrian forces. He was to take office on 23 September 1976. The summer of 1976 witnessed a stalemate between revisionist camp and Syria. In order to break the stalemate, Asad decided to

¹²⁰Rabinovich, *The War for Lebanon*, p.52

¹²¹Rabinovich, 'The Limits of Military Power: Syria's Role', p.59

¹²²Kerr, 'A Positive Aspect to the Tragedy of Lebanon: the Convergence of US, Syrian and Israeli Interests at the Outset of Lebanon's Civil War', p.361-362

make a major blow to LNM-PLO alliance in September. The offensive lasted for a few days and Syria took the control in the country.¹²³ The Syrian occupation of Lebanon, which was lasted for 29 years, was a turning point in the history of Lebanese-Syrian relations.

Syrian offensive against the Palestinians and revisionist in Lebanon engendered accusations of Asad regime both within the Syrian society and around the Arab world. The pro-Palestinian and anti-Syrian course of thought at the time can be read from the MERIP report published immediately after the major blow of Syrian forces in September. According to the report, the Syrian invasion of Lebanon was a result of the convergence of American, Israeli and Lebanese rightist interests which aimed to halt Lebanese leftist efforts and Palestinian resistance. Syria for her part, tried to establish a stable and compliant regime in Lebanon for coming into terms with Israel. Otherwise, the victory of Palestinian-progressive alliance and the establishment of a leftist regime in Lebanon would left the Baath regime behind and became the nucleus for rejectionist front. The report also blamed Syria for the Maronite's offensive against Palestinian camp of Tel al-Zaatar. When Syrian army intervened on the behalf of Maronites, the latter became able to attack the Tel Zaatar. The report argues that Syrians made no attempt to halt the attack, on the contrary helped the direct rightist attack against Palestinians.¹²⁴

Asad responded the accusations by a speech explaining the reasons of intervention. It was unusual for Syrian regime to address the public in order to justify its decisions. Thus, the speech was itself important to show the significance of accusations. In his speech, Asad emphasized the right of Syria to have a say in Palestinian politics as strong as the PLO due to Syrian efforts made in the name of Palestinian cause until that time. He accused Palestinians for being too much involved in Lebanese politics. He simply put out that 'I cannot imagine what the connection is between the fighting of Palestinians in the highest mountains of Lebanon and the liberation of Palestine...The Palestinian fighting in Jabal Lubnan is definitely not fighting for Palestine.'¹²⁵ Furthermore, Asad argued that the Lebanese National Movement was trapped into a plot

¹²³ Harris, *Faces of Lebanon: Sects, Wars and Global Extensions*, p.165-166

¹²⁴ 'Why Syria Invaded Lebanon', *MERIP Report*, No.51, (October 1976), p.3-6

¹²⁵ Hafez al-Asad, Radio Damascus by Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 20 July 1976, in Rabinovich, *The War for Lebanon*, p.221

to divide Lebanon. The partition of Lebanon was a Zionist project which aimed to blame the Arab nationalism and Islam for preventing the peaceful cohabitation. In his own words, ‘When the Arabs in Lebanon fail to live together in one state, despite long years they have lived together, it would be the practical and material proof they want to prove the idea of Arab nationalism is invalid.’¹²⁶

After the Syrian invasion, the Arab initiative tried to solve the Lebanese crisis. Syria, Lebanon, the PLO, and Egypt invited to the Riyadh Summit by Kuwait and Saudi Arabia in October 1976. In the Summit the participants agreed on the establishment of Arab Deterrent Force (ADF) to be stationed in Lebanon under the nominal authority of Lebanese President. It would be composed of 30.000 troops, 25.000 of them to be Syrian, and financed by oil producing states. In order to bring calm in Lebanon the Summit called for the implementation of the Cairo Agreement; the return of all armed forces to their pre-1975 locations and the control of the ADF for all heavy weapons in the country.¹²⁷ Following the Summit, the first of the several cease-fires of Lebanese civil war declared on 21 October 1976. The resolution was a success for Syrian regime. It legitimized its intervention by the consent of regional powers and had a financial support for her troops in Lebanon. The only constraint on the Syrian regime was the red-line agreement with Israel that determined the Litani River as the outmost frontier of Syrian presence in the south.

3.2.2 The Civil War and the Israeli Interventions

The first phase of the Lebanese conflict closed by the establishment of Syrian dominance in the country. The ADF entered Aley and suburbs of Beirut on 14 November, West Beirut on 15 November, and Tripoli and Sidon on 31 November 1976 without any resistance.¹²⁸ The normalization of politics tried to be sustained by the formation of a technocrat cabinet headed by Salim al-Hoss. The infamous assassination of the anti-Syrian leader Kemal Joumblatt on 17 March 1977 was the most important signal of the

¹²⁶ Hafez al-Asad, Radio Damascus by Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 20 July 1976, in Rabinovich, *The War for Lebanon*, p.208

¹²⁷ Rabinovich, *The War for Lebanon*, p.56

¹²⁸ Reuven Avi-Ran, *The Syrian Involvement in Lebanon Since 1975*, (USA: Westview Press, 1991), p.71

Syrian will to control opposition in Lebanon although the guilt of Damascus was not proven. The Pax-Syriana established in the north of the country while the red-line agreement with Israel freed south from direct Syrian control. Hence, the northern and southern parts of the country followed different paths while the stability could not be sustained in both since the deep-rooted factors of the conflict were not addressed or resolved in the Riyadh Summit.

The coalitions dissolved and reformed in the light of new developments after the cease-fire. On the regional level, the politics reshaped by the election of Likud government in Israel in 1977 and the improving of Egyptian-Israeli relations symbolized by President Sadat's speech at Knesset in 1978. The Likud government concentrated on Syrian and Lebanese borders with the disappearance of Egyptian threat. As a response, Syria tried to reach strategic parity with Israel in the absence of Egyptian support to struggle against Israel in the region. Asad focused on enhancing Syrian military set up and demanded financial contributions from the oil producing states.¹²⁹ In this conjuncture, the PLO's strategic importance for Asad regime revitalized and Syrian-PLO alliance re-established. The Lebanese Front-Syrian alliance on the other hand, dissolved by the new set up in the region. The major motivation of the Lebanese Front's alliance with Syria was the Palestinian threat to the Lebanese sovereignty. When Syria turned out to be the threat itself against sovereignty, Lebanese Front turned against the Syrian presence in the country. In order to get rid of the Syrians and Palestinians, the Lebanese Front approached to Israel as a new partner.¹³⁰

The situation in the southern Lebanon shaped by the several Israeli-Palestinian skirmishes. The local population, composed largely of Shias and a Christian minority, was the main victim of those cross-fires. The tendency among southern Lebanese population was to blame the PLO for the predicament of south Lebanon. Among them, Major Saad Haddad, Greek Orthodox Lebanese, formed the South Lebanese Army with Israeli support to fight against PLO in the region. In this conjuncture, the Palestinian raid to Israel on 14 March 1978 triggered a heavy retaliation. A Palestinian commando hijack of a bus near Haifa resulted in the killings of 37 passengers while 76 more wounded. In

¹²⁹ Deeb, *Syria's Terrorist War on Lebanon and Peace Process*, p.35

¹³⁰ Hanf, *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon*, p.231-233 , Avi-Ran, *The Syrian Involvement in Lebanon Since 1975*, p.83-84

response, Israel commenced 'Operation Litani' on 17 March. Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) occupied the whole southern Lebanon up to the Litani River with the intention of driving Palestinian armed forces out of the area. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 425 called for the withdrawal of Israel and the deployment of United Nations Interim Force for Southern Lebanon (UNIFIL) immediately. Israel accepted the resolution and gradually withdrew its forces. However, a 10 kilometers strip along the border preserved for the Major Haddad's troops in the last minute.¹³¹ The major outcome of the Israeli occupation was its contribution to the political awakening of Shia population which was commenced in 1950s and 1960s as an outcry to the neglect of the south. The Movement of the Deprived, was found by Musa al-Sadr in the early 1970s to find a solution to the Shia misery in Lebanon. The Israeli invasion in 1978, the enigmatic disappearance of Musa al-Sadr during his trip in Libya in the same year, and the inspiration of Iranian Islamic Revolution in 1979 contributed to the resurgence of the movement in late 1970s. Their militia, AMAL, turned into a political reform movement and its leadership passed to Nebih Berri in 1980.

In the north, the Lebanese Front was fighting against the Syrian troops. Within the Lebanese Front, the Phalanges consolidated the power by purging the Franjieh and Shamoun families. Under the Phalanges' domination, the Lebanese Front published a manifesto called as 'the Lebanon We Want to Build' in 1980. In the manifesto, they rejected the permanent settlement of Palestinians in Lebanon; demanded the end of Syrian occupation; and called for the replacement of National Pact by the formulas of federation or confederation. In light of their declared aims, the Lebanese Front concentrated their fight against Syrians and their revisionist allies. For instance, they attempted to have the control of the city of Zahle which had a strategic position for militia fighting but controlled by Syrians since 1976. The clashes among the Lebanese Forces and the Syrian troops continued throughout 1980 and 1981. The Lebanese Front called for an Israeli help when Syria used air power to shell the city which was against the red-line agreement between Israel and Syria. As a response, Israeli jets shot down two Syrian helicopters in April 1981. The Syrian response was more provocative: it stationed SAM-2

¹³¹ Owendale, *The Origins of the Arab Israeli Wars*, p.235-238, Hanf, *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon*, p.226-230

and SAM-6 ground to air missiles in the Bekaa. At this point, the crisis gained an importance for the super power conflict since the clienteles of rival camps came close to war. Philip Habib sent by US as the head of special convoy to solve the missile crisis, while the Soviets declared that the defense treaty with Syria does not cover the Lebanese territory. In the end, the super-power conflict prevented and a cease-fire reached in the Zahle crisis.¹³²

The Israeli invasion of Lebanon realized within this conjuncture since the Israeli anxiety for the presence of Syria and the PLO in Lebanon increased. The Likud government in power was eager to solve the security problem of Israel. Ariel Sharon, the new defense minister, was the most influential figure alongside with the Prime Minister Manechem Begin. Sharon's grand plan was prepared to change the whole course of regional politics. The major aims of Israel were; to destroy the military infrastructure of the PLO in Lebanon, to establish a new political order under Maronite hegemony which would sign a peace treaty with Israel, and to eject the Syrian army from Lebanon or weaken them as much as possible to make the implementation of plan possible. Moreover, the crush of the PLO in Lebanon would eventually lead to the migration of Palestinians to Jordan and establishment of a Palestinian state within Jordanian frontiers. After all, Israel would be able to annex the West Bank and Gaza easily.¹³³ The US attitude toward a possible Israeli operation to Lebanon was important and the letter sent to Begin by the US Secretary of State Alexander Haig. Shlaim indicated that 'it certainly did not give Israel the green-light to invade Lebanon, neither did it project an unambiguously red light.'¹³⁴ Nevertheless, the pretext for an Israeli operation founded in the attempted assassination of Israeli ambassador in London on 3 June 1982. Israel retaliated by bombing the PLO targets although Abu Nidal, a rival organization to PLO and its leader Yaser Arafat, was responsible for the assassination. Rabinovich defines the circumstances of inevitability put forward by Israel as a Greek tragedy.¹³⁵ In response, the PLO shelled northern Galilee and on 6 June 'the Operation Peace for Galilee' commenced by the entrance of IDF into Lebanese territory. The IDF fought against

¹³² Hanf, *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon*, p.236-251

¹³³ Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000), p.396

¹³⁴ *ibid.*, p.403

¹³⁵ Rabinovich, *The War for Lebanon*, p.134

Syrian forces in the Beqaa Valley until the US brokered cease-fire reached on 11 June. During the fight, Israeli Air Force destroyed Syrian SAM-6 missiles deployed in Beqaa. Then they reached the outskirts of Beirut on 12 June. In Beirut, Israel did not risk the casualties in a street-to-street fight and preferred to apply the combination of military pressure and psychological warfare to intimidate PLO and force it to leave Beirut. The siege of Beirut lasted for 9 weeks. The Israeli strategy included air attacks, using naval guns, leaflets and loudspeakers. During the siege, 18,000 died and 30,000 wounded.¹³⁶ The US Secretary of State George Shultz appointed Philip Habib as the head of the special envoy to Lebanon in order to mediate between the sides. In the end, Arafat agreed to leave Lebanon and the PLO started its evacuation from Lebanon on 21 August. Nearly 15,000 Palestinians left the city while the Multinational Force composed mainly of Americans, French and Italians monitored the implementation of the agreement.¹³⁷ Bashir Gemayel, head of Phalanged and ally of Israel, elected as President on 23 August.

The Israeli plan was seemed to be keeping on track at that time. However, the Israeli side underestimated the Syrian hand and the complex web of relations in Lebanese state. Indeed, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon reaffirmed the Syrian belief that Lebanon was its first line of defense. In this regard, it should not be allowed to isolate itself from the Arab struggle against Israel.¹³⁸ Hence, the Syrian policy toward Lebanon shaped around following lines: the central government had to accept Syrian ascendancy or be brought down; American, Israeli or European influences should be eliminated; Israel should not enjoy any advantage from 1982 war.¹³⁹ The reverse of the Israeli achievements began with the assassination of Bashir Gemayel on 14 September 1982. He was killed by a member of SSNP and although not proven Syria was accused of being behind the act.¹⁴⁰ The Phalanges, furious by the death of their admired leader, entered the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatilla on 16 September under Elie Khobeika's command and under the watchful eyes of IDF while the latter send

¹³⁶ Owendale, *The Origins of the Arab Israeli Wars*, p.244

¹³⁷ Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict 1881-2001*, (New York: Vintage Books, 2001), p. 538

¹³⁸ Ellis, 'The Regional Struggle for Lebanon', p.35

¹³⁹ Rabinovich, *The War for Lebanon*, p.188

¹⁴⁰ Avi-Ran, *The Syrian Involvement in Lebanon Since 1975*, p.150

illumination rounds into the sky in order to light the Phalangists' way.¹⁴¹ The Phalanges massacred the civilian population of the camps for the revenge of assassination.¹⁴² The Multinational Force, departed after the evacuation of PLO, returned to Lebanon in order to guard the security of remaining Palestinian civilians. Bashir's brother Amin Gemayel who has an US orientation rather than an Israeli one became the next Lebanese President.¹⁴³

President Gemayel tried to increase his base of support and distanced himself from both Israel and Syria. Instead, he opted for an American option in his foreign policy orientation. US pushed for an Israeli-Lebanese agreement to settle the Lebanese problem and the negotiation among them bore fruit on 17 May 1983 when Lebanese-Israeli Treaty signed. The agreement did not refer to a peace between Israel and Lebanon but called for termination of hostilities. As well, the opening of embassies was not a matter of concern while it only favored liaison offices which would be optional for each side. The security arrangements formulated in a way that both countries agreed to refrain from maintaining a terrorist infrastructure on its territory. The militias of Major Haddad would be incorporated into the Lebanese army. In response, Israel would withdraw all its forces within eight to twelve weeks after the agreement would come into force.¹⁴⁴ The implementation of the agreement was agreed to depend on the Syrian withdrawal simultaneously. However, soon after it became obvious that the sides agreed only on the paper. The US miscalculated the Syrian determination to stay in Lebanon, Israeli insistence for a peace agreement similar to Egyptian one, and the Lebanese domestic problems to implement the agreement. In this complex environment even the super power mediation could not resolve the issue.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ For a detailed narration of the massacres see Robert Fisk, *Pity the Nation*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992)

¹⁴² Israel estimated the number of dead to 700-800 while Palestinian Red Crescent put the number to 2000, Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000), p.416.

¹⁴³ The massacre led to an enormous national and international outcry and the Kahan commission report published on 7 February 1983 found out that IDF and Israel had indirect responsibility for the massacre committed by the Phalanges although no IDF soldier had participated. The Defense Minister Sharon's resignation recommended., Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict 1881-2001*, (New York: Vintage Books, 2001), p.548

¹⁴⁴ Avi-Ran, *The Syrian Involvement in Lebanon Since 1975*, p.158-159

¹⁴⁵ Efraim Inbar, 'Great Power Mediation: The USA and the May 1983 Israeli-Lebanese Agreement', *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol.28, No.1, (February 1991), p.82

The relations among several Lebanese groups and their external allies influenced from the Israeli invasion and the subsequent rise of Maronite power. First of all, the Israeli invasion created its own enemies: militant Shia resistance groups. In the beginning, the Shia population of south Lebanon, and Amal, favored Israeli invasion. They were resenting against devastation of their homeland as a result of the Palestinian presence and welcomed Israel as a savior. However, when it became obvious that the Israeli invasion would not end in short time, they turned against the Israeli forces. At this point the Israeli soldiers' disrespect for the local population and President Gemayel's neglect of Shia demands for political and economic gains was determinant. Hence, the radicalization of Shia politics became inevitable. In the meantime, Syria led a few hundred Revolutionary Guards of Khomeini's Iran into the Beqaa Valley. They were training the Islamist activists as fighters at camps. It can be said that the 1982 invasion was determinant for the establishment of Hizballah as an Islamist revolutionary organization. The revolutionary youth in the south founded the group in early 1980s and it transformed into a coherent organization in mid-1980s. Iran and Syria were both sponsoring the revolutionaries for different purposes: Iran was eager to export the Islamic revolution to coreligionists in Lebanon and have geographical proximity to the Arab-Israeli arena while Syria tried to maintain its alliance with Iran, strike indirectly to US and Israel, and keep its Lebanese allies in line.¹⁴⁶ The world view of Hizballah can be read from the open letter revealed on 1985 by the organization. The letter points to the Iranian Islamic Revolution as a source of inspiration and a proof of what can be done when faithful gather under the banner of Islam. The main enemy of Islam is the United States which gave its support to Israel in order to inflict suffering upon the Lebanese Muslims. The fractiousness in the Muslim world was a product of Western imperialism and the evil ulama that compromised with West. The Lebanese government, in this regard, was corrupt to its core. The solution to the Lebanese problem was self-help since the West did not and could not help Lebanese. The only answer is to fight in the name of Islam. The demanded regime for state is the rule of Islam which would both guarantee

¹⁴⁶ Augustus Richard Norton, *Hezbollah*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), p.34-35

justice and dignity for all and prevents any new imperialist attempt to infiltrate our country.¹⁴⁷

The other opponents of the 17 May Agreement were Walid Joublatt, Suleiman Franjeh and Rashid Karami. Syria set up the Front of National Salvation to bring the opposition together.¹⁴⁸ On the other hand, the Israeli-Phalange relations shattered after the Israeli unilateral withdrawal to the south of Awali River in September 1983 as well. During the Israeli invasion, the Lebanese Forces under commandship of Samir Geagea expanded to the Chouf Mountains which was the homeland of Druzes. When Israel unilaterally started its withdrawal from the area, the fighting erupted among two Lebanese factions. Syria openly supported the Druzes while Israel closed its eyes to Syrian support due to the pressures of its own Druze population. Against this setting, Druzes ousted Lebanese Forces out of the region while the Phalange-Israeli relations shattered after the events.¹⁴⁹

The tensions after the 1982 invasion escalated when a new variable added to the Lebanese quagmire. The Islamist upheaval in 1983 led to several terrorist attacks against foreign installations and Multinational Forces (MNF). On 18 April, in a suicide operation against American embassy, 63 Americans killed; on 23 October in an operation against American and French units in MNF, 241 Americans, 58 French men killed; and on 4 November in a suicide attack against Israeli military administration in Tyre, 28 Israelis killed. Moreover the kidnappings of the foreigners and hostage taking used as a means of fight against foreign forces.¹⁵⁰ The terrorist attacks resulted in the evacuation of the MNF from Lebanon in February 1984. President Gemayel, having lost the backing of US and Israeli forces, reached a compromise with Asad on the full cooperation of Lebanon with Syria in return for Syrian restraint of opposition. The abrogation of the 17 May Agreement by the Lebanese regime on 5 March signaled the end of Israeli gains in Lebanon. The National Unity government under Rashid Karami formed.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁷ *ibid.* p.35-40

¹⁴⁸ Avi-Ran, *The Syrian Involvement in Lebanon Since 1975*, p.160

¹⁴⁹ Hanf, *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon*, p.275-279

¹⁵⁰ Avi-Ran, *The Syrian Involvement in Lebanon Since 1975*, p.173-174

¹⁵¹ Harris, *Faces of Lebanon: Sects, Wars and Global Extensions*, p.187-189

3.2.3 The Continuous Warfare and the Restoration of Syrian Dominance

In the period after 1984, unlike the pre-1982 period, new rounds of clashes erupted mostly within the camps formed at the beginning of the civil war. Indeed, the divergence within the local allies of Syria ironically served for her interest since the weakening of them resulted in the increasing of Syrian role in the Lebanese affairs. The main strategy of the Syrian regime was to manipulate proxies in order to extend its hegemony over Lebanon. Syria intervened to keep the balance among several fighting groups and prevent any of them from becoming too powerful. W. Harris argues that the inactivity of Syria during the clashes increased the suspicion that Syria viewed hostilities as serving to its own interests.¹⁵²

The clashes erupted in Sidon, Beirut, Zahle and Tripoli in the north while the fight against Israeli invasion continued in the south. In Sidon, the second Israeli retreat in created chaos in January 1985. The units of Lebanese Forces who committed themselves to the rebellion declared by Samir Geagea against the Syrian domination started to clash with the Sunni establishment of the city. The result was catastrophic for Geagea's forces. Geagea expelled from the Forces and Elia Khobeika elected as the commander of it. In Beirut, the war of camps began between the Amal forces, heavily supported by Syria, and the Palestinians who were drifting back to the city. In May 1985 the Shiite siege of Palestinians camps began and the fight among two groups continued until the 1988. In the mean time the Amal was fighting against the Druze forces which were supported by anti-Shiite coalition composed of Kurds, Communists and Palestinians anxious about the massive flow of rural poor Shias to West Beirut after the February 1984 Shia takeover. The tension among them reached its peak in November 1985 and ended after both sides gave high numbers of casualties. In Zahle, the clashes erupted between Shia militias and the Lebanese Forces in August 1985 and continued until the deployment of Syrian forces to the city in September. In Tripoli, the Islamic fundamentalists escaped from Syria during Hama revolt fought against the coalition of Alawites, Communists, Baathists and SSNP and until the Syrian forces deployed as arbiter in October 1985.¹⁵³ It can be concluded from the several clashes that the ongoing clashes among Lebanese groups

¹⁵² William Harris, 'Syria in Lebanon', *MERIP Reports*, No.134, (July-August 1985), p.9

¹⁵³ Hanf, *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon*, p.298-306

served Syrian interest. In each case, the fighting ended up with the deployment of Syrian forces and the arbitrary role of Syria underlined.

When several militias weakened each other throughout the wars within and between camps Asad felt that it was the time for imposing Syrian option for an end to civil war. The Tripartite Agreement negotiated in September 1985 among Joumblatt, Berri and Khobeiqa in Damascus. It was signed on 28 December 1985 and covered the issues of constitutional change, Lebanese-Syrian relations, and reorganization of Lebanese Army. The constitutional change designed to create equality between Christian and non-Christian parity in representation and reduce the presidential power in favor of prime-minister and cabinet. A privileged relationship between Syria and Lebanon meant complete coordination of foreign policies; perpetuation of the Syrian military presence in Lebanon; establishment of the joint committees for integrated approach in education; and the prevention of media distortion of privileged relations. Although the three militia leaders signed the treaty, President Gemayel, Maronite Patriarch and the Lebanese army commander Micheal Aoun came together in their rejection. When Samir Geagea regained the leadership of Lebanese Forces and deposed Khobeiqa in January 1986, the Tripartite Agreement collapsed.¹⁵⁴ The already weakened state further got into crisis with the Prime Minister Karami's boycott of President Gemayel.

The clashes among Lebanese groups continued throughout 1986-1988. The West Beirut witnessed brutal fighting between Amal and Palestinians on the one hand; and fighting within the Shia community between Amal and Hizballah on the other. The fight among the Amal and Palestinians ended with the Syrian re-entrance to Beirut in 1987, saving her major ally Amal from a decisive defeat. Amal became more and more dependent on Syria and lifted siege of Palestinian camps in 1988.¹⁵⁵ The Amal-Hizballah struggle not only limited to West Beirut since both had their bases in south Lebanon as well. Both organization was resisting the Israeli invasion of south Lebanon, had good relations with Syria, and struggle for the enhancement of Shia role in Lebanese state. However, the two Shiite factions differed on their views for fight against Israeli invasion and future of Lebanon. While Hizballah declared war against Zionist establishment and

¹⁵⁴Harris, *Faces of Lebanon: Sects, Wars and Global Extensions*, p.200-201

¹⁵⁵Hanf, *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon*, p.312-315

embraced Palestinian cause, Amal had more moderate views and opposed the Palestinian presence in the country. Amal demanded a share of Lebanese system and supported secularism while Hizballah called for an Islamist regime modeled on the Iranian revolution. The Amal-Hizballah rivalry turned out to be a Shiite civil war in April 1988. In the course of fighting Syria faced with a dilemma: her major ally Amal was losing ground against Hizballah but open support it would mean a break with Iran. The solution found in deploying Syrian troops to Shiite suburbs to reach cease-fire in spring 1989. Once more, Syria benefited from ongoing clashes by deploying its troops and embracing the role of arbitrator.

In the Eastern part of the city, the General of Lebanese Army Michel Aoun started to take effect in politics in a Shihabist manner. He was an eager supporter of Lebanese unity, unlike the Lebanese Forces, and believed in the extension of legitimate state authority from East Beirut to whole Lebanon. The army's role was emphasized to spread state authority. He and his close circle saw themselves as the sole remaining official institution since they did not connected to any militia or foreign power. 'Michel Aoun is a manifestation of a populist, anti-establishment, anti-warlords movement within the Eastern Christian sector.'¹⁵⁶ The Lebanese Forces and the Phalanges on the other hand, continued their bid for separatist ideals while President Gemayel acted as a buffer between irreconcilable attitudes of the two.¹⁵⁷ The presidential term of Gemayel came to an end in 1988 and the elections turned out to be the last crisis in the Lebanese civil war.

Michel Aoun showed his hand for presidency while Syria and USA agreed on Mikhail Daher's election in the September 1988 presidential election. The Christians in general rejected the imposition of Syrian will on Lebanese politics and made it clear that they would boycott the elections. In opposition to Syria, the Lebanese Forces and the Phalange accepted Aoun's candidacy against Syria. Iraq and Arafat gave their support to Aoun as a result of their rivalry with Syria. The deadlock in crisis left Lebanon without a President when Gemayel's presidential term ended. However, the real crisis erupted when President Gemayel issued a decree which called for a temporary military

¹⁵⁶ Mansour Road & Joe Stork, 'Everone Misunderstood the Depth of the Movement Identifying with Aoun', *the Middle East Report*, No.162, (January-February 1990), p.11

¹⁵⁷ Harris, *Faces of Lebanon: Sects, Wars and Global Extensions*, p.224-226

administration headed by Aoun as prime minister in the last minute. Salim al-Hoss, the last prime minister of Gemayel's term and Aoun refused to recognize each other.¹⁵⁸ When Aoun initiated a plan for closing all illegal ports in the country which were the major source of revenue for all militias, the clashes broke out between the army under Aoun's control and Syria in March 1989. General Aoun quickly declared 'war of liberation' against Syria and the Lebanese Forces hesitantly sided in order not to lose their political base to Aoun.¹⁵⁹ The settlement of the issue had to wait for the Taif Agreement and US-Syrian rapprochement, both the products of the end of Cold War in international arena.

3.2.4 The End of Lebanese Civil War: Ta'if Accord

The multidimensional factors that led to the outbreak of the civil war in Lebanon again set the scene for its end. The domestic, regional and international actors all played their roles in closing the civil war chapter in Lebanese history.

The last crisis erupted by General Aoun took the the regional and international attention. Indeed, it was the tactic of General to escalate the crisis to the point that would involve international solution. However, ironically, his tactic enhanced Syrian hand as the only player that had a potential to solve the issue. The lack of trust between the Lebanese communities, the collapse of Lebanese authorities throughout the civil war, and the bloody militia fighting in all over the country contributed to the Syrian role as the only alternative for solution.¹⁶⁰

The brief summary of events that eventually led to the acceptance of Taif Agreement, also known as the Charter of National Reconciliation, to end the civil war was as follows. General Aoun's declared war of liberation provoked an Arab Summit in May 1989 in Casablanca. In the summit, the Higher Committee composed of Saudi Arabia, Algeria and Morocco was formed to negotiate a solution but a deadlock arose in the talks due to the Committee's report blaming Syria in July 1989. The renewed

¹⁵⁸ Augustus Richard Norton, 'Lebanon After Ta'if: Is the Civil War Over?', *the Middle East Journal*, 45:3, (Summer 1991), p. 460

¹⁵⁹ Road & Stork, p.11

¹⁶⁰ Eyal Zisser, *Asad's Legacy: Syria in Transition*, (London: C.Hurst & Company, 2001), p.136-138

attempts bore fruit on 30 September 1989 when surviving members of the Lebanese parliament of 1972 met in Taif, in Saudi Arabia, to discuss Taif Agreement drafted by the Higher Committee to end the civil war and to reform the Lebanese state.¹⁶¹ The Taif Agreement, which indicated the end of civil war and beginning of the Second Republic of Lebanon, had four parts dealing with the issues of domestic reforms, spread of the sovereignty of the Lebanese state over all Lebanese territories, liberation of Lebanon from the Israeli occupation, and Lebanese-Syrian relations.¹⁶²

The Accord was similar to the previous Syrian solutions like the Constitutional Document of 1976 or the Tripartite Agreement of 1985. The domestic reforms stated the deconfessionalism as the ultimate goal but without a specified timetable. Hence, the rules of the games again defined within the limits of confessional compromise and intercommunal cooperation, the norms that dates back to the National Pact of 1943. The major changes occurred in the power sharing among different sects. First of all, the 6:5 ratio of Christian-Muslim parity in the parliament shifted to equal parity by increasing the seat number from 99 to 108. Secondly, the Maronite President's powers reduced while the powers of Sunni Prime Minister and Shia Speaker of Parliament increased although the reservation of posts to defined communities remained intact.¹⁶³ As M. Hudson argues 'It is easy to imagine that the Syrian government, the American government, and the Saudi government were minimalists, preferring to make tactical adjustments rather than risking a transformation that could threaten their respective Lebanese clients...One cannot repress the suspicion that Taif in 1989, like the National Pact of 1943, was merely paying lip-service to liberal reform.'¹⁶⁴ The Agreement called for a security plan including the strengthening of army and Forces of Internal Security in order to implement sovereignty in all country referred to the UNSC Resolution 425 to end the Israeli occupation of South Lebanon.

¹⁶¹Nasrallah, 'Syria After Ta'if: Lebanon and the Lebanese in Syrian Politics' in *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization Between Cold War and Cold Peace*, ed. by Eberhard Kienle, (London: British Academic Press, 1994), p.133

¹⁶² The full text of the Document can be found in David Sorenson, *Lebanon*, (USA: ABC Clío, 2009), p.172-182

¹⁶³ Augustus Richard Norton, 'Lebanon After Ta'if: Is The Civil War Over?', *the Middle East Journal*, Vol.45. No.3, (Summer 1991), p.461-464

¹⁶⁴ Michael C.Hudson, 'Trying Again: Power-Sharing in Post-Civil War Lebanon', *International Negotiation* 2, *Kluwer Law International*, (1997), p.114

The most important part of the accord was the definition of the Lebanese-Syrian relations. A special relationship between Lebanon and Syria defined and Syria was given a privileged position on fundamental issues. The presence of the Syrian troops in the country formalized by the agreement which called for their redeployment of them within two years after the formal ratification of Taif Accord, the holding of presidential elections, the formation of new cabinet, and the approval of political reforms. The preconditions for withdrawal used as a pretext by Syria for refusing the redeployment of its troops, mainly by claiming that the political reforms were not fulfilled.¹⁶⁵ In practice, Syria managed to legitimize its military presence and strategic hegemony in Lebanon. It was a success for Syrian regime which did not want to redeploy its forces but at the same time did not want to provoke Israeli retaliation by keeping them in Lebanon. The contradiction solved by the Taif Agreement.¹⁶⁶

The losers of Taif regime were the two important power centers in Lebanon, namely the Shias and the General Aoun's supporters in East Beirut. Indeed, the Shia community, after completing their politicization in 1960s and 1970s emerged as an important and active player in the Lebanese civil war. The percentage of Shia population rose enormously vis-a-vis the Christian and Sunni sectors. They were demanding the abolition of confessional quotas which barred them from gaining their actual weight in the politics which was not satisfied in Ta'if Agreement.¹⁶⁷ Hizballah, on the other hand, was pursuing the goal of establishing an Islamic regime in the country. The Ta'if solution was especially detrimental for Hizballah which lacked the capability against Amal when parliamentary politics mattered.¹⁶⁸ The supporters of Aoun remained to be the main opposition of Ta'if. In fact, as long as they continue to keep their superior position in East Beirut it was impossible to implement the Taif regime properly.

The Ta'if Agreement ratified by the parliament on 5 November 1989 and Rene Muawad elected as the first President of Second Republic in Lebanon although General Aoun continued to stand as a threat against the implementation of new regime.

¹⁶⁵ Hudson, 'Trying Again: Power-Sharing in Post-Civil War Lebanon,' p.113

¹⁶⁶ Nasrallah, 'Syria After Ta'if: Lebanon and the Lebanese in Syrian Politics', p.135

¹⁶⁷ Although the population census was not conducted since 1932, it was estimated that the Shia population more than doubled since 1956 while the other groups remained unchanged. David Sorenson, *Lebanon*, (USA: ABC Clío, 2009), p.50

¹⁶⁸ Zisser, *Asad's Legacy: Syria in Transition*, p. 140

Muawad's Presidency lasted for only seventeen days since he was killed by a car bomb. Ilyas Hrawi succeeded him as Lebanese President. President Hrawi appointed Salim al-Huss as prime minister as a next step for normalization of politics. General Aoun refused to recognize the new establishment in the regime while the Lebanese Forces under Samir Geagea smoothly broke off with Aoun and accepted the Taif Accord. The elimination of Aoun's forces and the full implementation of Ta'if had to wait for the end of Cold War structure in world affairs and subsequent rapprochement between Syria and the US.

CHAPTER 4

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SYRIAN HEGEMONY OVER LEBANON (1989-2000)

The post-Taif period in Lebanon witnessed the establishment of full Syrian control over Lebanon. The international and regional systems were all in favor of the establishment of Syrian hegemony over its western neighbor. In this regard, the end of Cold War and the rapprochement between Syria and the US, the sole super-power was influential. When Syria showed its good-will by joining to the US-led coalition against Iraq during the Gulf War, the American administration rewarded Syrian attempt with a green light to its dominance over Lebanon. The regional developments, namely the Madrid Peace Process, also served for Syrian bid for control in Lebanon.

The Lebanese-Syrian relations from the end of civil war to 2000, an important period of change in relations, will be examined in detail throughout the chapter. The first part will be devoted to the elimination of anti-Syrian groups in Lebanon and the general characteristics of Syrian domination. In the second part, the economic relations will be examined with a special emphasis to rise of Rafiq Hariri as a prominent Lebanese leader. The security oriented relations will be analyzed in the third part by focusing on the embedded relations between Israel, Syria and Lebanon in South Lebanon. The Syrian command of Lebanese domestic politics, the perceptions of Lebanese communities toward Syria will be investigated in the fourth chapter with special emphasis to Syrian role in gerrymandering Lebanese elections.

4.1 The End of Cold War Era and the Lebanese-Syrian Relations

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, which literally divided the rival camps of East and West, symbolized the end of Cold War structure and bipolarity in international arena. The long-lasting competition among the US and USSR came to an end in the favor of the US. The US was proved to be the single-most super power while USSR ceased its existence and dissolved in 1991. The disappearance of the USSR's role as the

major balancing actor against the US resulted in a new structure of international politics characterized by the US hegemony. In other words, the end of bipolarity in international structure followed by the establishment of unipolarity under US supremacy. In the immediate after of the USSR's dissolution the general tendency was to celebrate the triumph of liberal ideologies and Western political and economic structures. The best illustration was Francis Fukuyama's study in 1992 which celebrates the triumph of liberal democracy against other forms of governance. He, in his famous work, declared the end of history by arguing that 'a remarkable consensus concerning the legitimacy of liberal democracy as a system of government had emerged throughout the world over the past few years, as it conquered rival ideologies like hereditary monarchy, fascism and most recently communism.'¹⁶⁹ Hence, he supported the idea that there would not be a new clash because liberal democracy could not be improved on anymore. His quick declaration soon criticized overwhelmingly but it is important to understand the general tendency of rewarding Western camp's victory and supposed hegemony.

The Middle Eastern states were affected from the end of Cold War structure in global politics as well. The disappearance of USSR as a balancing actor of US power changed the course of events within the region as well. The Middle Eastern states which were supported by Soviets against American power found themselves in a tough situation. The US, benefiting from its position as the sole super power, was quick to implement its own policies. Bush administration defined the basic goals as to buttress the American position in the region and secure access to the Gulf oil. To this end, the stability in the region scrutinized for realizing American interests. The stability, on the other hand, can be sustained by the settlement of Arab-Israeli conflict and the suppression Iranian influence. The prioritization of stability increased the importance of Syria and Lebanon in US policy toward the Middle East. Syria appeared to be an influential actor with its leading position in Arab resistance front against Israel, and its close ties with Iran. Lebanon, on the hand, increased its significance for Bush administration since a Lebanon on the boil would complicate stability in the region.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History*, (New York: Penguin, 1992)

¹⁷⁰ Harris, *Faces of Lebanon: Sects, Wars and Global Extensions*, p.237-239

Asad regime was probably the quickest one to interpret and benefit from the changing structure in international structure. The disappearance of USSR was a major blow to Syrian regime which had developed important alliance with the Soviets since 1950s and became the major partner of it after the Camp David process in 1970s. Moreover, Syria was already isolated internationally and regionally due to its support to Iran during the Iran-Iraq war in 1980s. The side effect of the isolation was the loss of the financial aid from Gulf countries which damaged Syrian economy heavily.¹⁷¹ The loss of Soviet patronage, isolation, and economic problems resulted in the necessity of reformalization of the Syrian foreign policy according to new circumstances. However, the reformalization should not be understood as a total reverse from previous establishment. E. Zisser defines the Syrian policy in 1990s as waving between East and West or between keeping status quo and integration into the new world order.¹⁷² In this sense, the US-Syrian rapprochement was the product of the changing international structure. The US was eager to bring Syria into the new order in Middle East, while Syria was searching for alternative alliances to break its isolation and overcome economic hardship. Lebanon, arose as the major case for testing the US-Syrian relations. In the end, Syria awarded with hegemony in Lebanon for its rapprochement with the US.

4.1.1 The Gulf War and the Assault against Aoun

The Gulf Crisis erupted subsequent to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. The Bush administration immediately started an international campaign against Iraqi invasion. It was a useful opportunity for Syria to indicate its willingness of cooperation with the US. Indeed, Syria was the first country to condemn the Iraqi invasion and call for the withdrawal of its troops. It supported all the UN Resolutions throughout the war and contributed to the international military force set under US

¹⁷¹ Meliha Altunışık, 'Soğuk Savaş Sonrası Dönemde Suriye'nin Dış Politikası: Değişime Uyum Çabası', in Mustafa Türkeş, İlhan Uzgel (et.al.), *Türkiye'nin Komşuları*, (Ankara: İmge Kitapevi, 2002), p.262-266

¹⁷² Zisser, *Asad's Legacy: Syria in Transition*, p.94

leadership against the Iraqi regime.¹⁷³ The economic considerations of re-gaining the Gulf aid or the benefits of harming the traditional Iraqi rival can be counted as Syrian calculations. Still, the major reason behind the Syrian decision to participate in US led coalition against Iraq was the changing nature of international politics. Asad realized that he cannot pursue his policies in opposition to the US. 'In short, Syria saw the New World Order shaping up and wanted to influence it rather than be its victim.'¹⁷⁴ Indeed, it was a risky policy for a regime which defined itself with the Pan-Arabist ideology for years. The Syrian stance in the war was one of the best illustrations of the pragmatist foreign policy of Asad and independence of it from public opinion since all the Baathists, Islamists, bourgeoisie and peasants were against the Syrian joining of US led coalition.

In return for Syrian collaboration, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia resumed the transfer of financial aid to Syria. Yet, the major reward was the US acceptance of Syrian dominance in Lebanon. Bush administration gave a green light for ousting Aoun out and establishing Syrian hegemony over Lebanon. M. Deeb takes a critical approach to US policy by arguing that '[The US Secretary of State James] Baker allowed Syria to complete its occupation of Lebanon in order to get its support in the Gulf War- on irony that escaped Baker, as the coalition's goal was the liberation of Kuwait from Iraqi occupation.'¹⁷⁵

In eliminating Aoun's forces, Syria initially chose to play the game of waiting while the Lebanese Forces and General Aoun entered into an open conflict with each other. The Lebanese Forces under Geagea's leadership was eager to have a share from the Taif regime while Aoun openly delegitimized it. After waiting for each to weaken other, Asad began the assault against the Presidential Palace in Baadba on 13 October 1990 where Aoun resided.¹⁷⁶ Indeed, the use of Syrian air force was against the red-line agreement with Israel but thanks to the US efforts, Israeli retaliation prevented.¹⁷⁷ The defeated General Aoun first sought refuge in French Embassy in Beirut then exiled to

¹⁷³ Syria dispatched ninth Armed Division composed of 10,000 troops, and 300 tanks to Saudi Arabia for containment of crisis in Gulf region, Eyal Zisser, *Asad's Legacy: Syria in Transition*, (London: Hurst & Company, 2001), p.54-55

¹⁷⁴ Ehteshami & Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran: Middle Powers in a Penetrated Regional System*, p.82

¹⁷⁵ Deeb, *Syria's Terrorist War on Lebanon and the Peace Process*, p.177

¹⁷⁶ Harris, *Faces of Lebanon: Sects, Wars and Global Extensions*, p.266-275

¹⁷⁷ Nasrallah, 'Syria After Taif: Lebanon and the Lebanese in Syrian Politics', p.135-136

France. The Pax-Syriana fully established in Lebanon after the main opposition to Taif eliminated with a military crash.

The Government of National Reconciliation formed in December 1990 with Omar Karami's Prime Ministry. The militia leaders incorporated into the government for buying their obedience in return for political gains. The major Lebanese force remained out of the government was Hizballah which rejected the legitimacy of the system itself. Hence the six Shia seats filled by Amal members. The green line, symbolic for dividing the capital into Eastern and Western sectors was down in December 1990.¹⁷⁸

The major concerns of the first post-civil war government were the extension of state control, and the disarmament of militias formed since the outbreak of clashes in 1975. To this end, 30 April 1991 declared as the final date for the militias to leave their arms voluntarily. The only exception to the disarmament policy was Hizballah which defined as a resistance movement against Israeli occupation rather than a conventional militia. The Karami government resigned in May 1992 in response to protests erupted in the country as a result of economic crisis. After the resignation of Karami, Rashid Solh appointed as prime minister on 13 May.

4.1.2 The General Characteristics of Pax-Syriana in Lebanon

The Lebanese-Syrian relations in the post-Cold War era shaped by the internationally recognized Syrian hegemony over Lebanon. The prioritization of stability in the region reflected itself in the Lebanon by the Syrian role of keeping stability in Lebanon. As long as the Lebanese arena kept its quite, the demands of reforming the Lebanese system that was contested by Shia and Sunni communities were disregarded. Syria, the main power broker in Lebanese politics established the rules of game in the country according to its own interests.

The Ta'if regime in Lebanon established under the Syrian dominance. From the Syrian purge of Aounist forces, until the withdrawal in 2005, Syria had the full control over Lebanon's domestic and foreign policies. The legitimacy for Syrian hegemony adhered to the peace-keeping role of Asad regime in Lebanon. The logic was simple:

¹⁷⁸ Norton, 'Lebanon After Ta'if: Is The Civil War Over?', p. 467-468

‘Hafez al-Asad’s troops insure Lebanon’s peace: take them away and the former foes will again fight each other.’¹⁷⁹ It is hard to examine the verification of the argument since it is impossible to see what would have happened otherwise but it would not be wrong to argue that Syria had its own interests for establishing hegemony over Lebanon besides keeping peace in Lebanon.

The Syrian regime had stakes in economic, security, and political arrangements of Lebanese state. Economic interests of Syria were vital taking into account the role of Syrian businessman and huge number of workers in Lebanon. The liberalization attempts of Syria in 1990s further contributed to the economic concerns. The security considerations on the other hand were related to Syrian struggle against Israel. Lebanon constituted a buffer zone between Syria and Israel. In 1990s new variable added to the picture with the beginning of Madrid Peace Process in 1991. The details of the negotiations will be examined later but at this point it is important to note that the control over Lebanon was vital for Syria since it enabled Asad regime to play Hizballah card against Israel when needed and prevent Lebanon from signing a separate peace deal with Israel as in the case of 17 May Agreement.¹⁸⁰ The political submission of Lebanon was first and foremost crucial to manipulate the important political decisions in line with Syrian interests. The major aim of Asad was to ensure the presence of a stable pro-Syrian government.

The initial arrangements for the establishment of Syrian hegemony were the bilateral agreements signed between Lebanon and Syria. The Treaty of Brotherhood, Cooperation and Coordination was signed on 22 May 1991. It called for the formation of joint policies on security, political and economic affairs. Accordingly, a Higher Council composed of senior political personalities from both countries established to oversee the institutional structure of four permanent interstate committees: Prime Ministerial Coordination, Foreign Affairs, Economic and Social Policy, and Defense and Security. The Defense and Security Pact signed in August 1991. It aimed to connect the Lebanese army, intelligence services, security agencies, and Interior Ministry to the Syrian

¹⁷⁹ Habib C. Malik, ‘Is There Still a Lebanon?’, *Middle East Quarterly*, (December 1997), p.2, <http://www.meforum.org/371/is-there-still-a-lebanon>, accessed on 08.02.2011

¹⁸⁰ Bassel Salloukh, ‘Syria and Lebanon: A Brotherhood Transformed’, *Middle East Report*, No.236, (Fall 2005), p.19

apparatus. Furthermore, the Labor Accord of 1994 legitimized and stabilized the positions of Syrian workers in Lebanon. In addition to those, ten more agreements signed in 1993 and 1994 to arrange social and economic affairs.¹⁸¹

The presence of Syrian apparatus in Lebanon was used as another direct way of imposing Syrian hegemony. The presence of troops was already legitimized by the Ta'if Agreement. Besides the regular troops, the huge network of Syrian intelligence service operated in Lebanon. In the absence of the embassies and regular diplomatic relations, head of Syrian military intelligence General Ghazi Kanaan in Beirut and Vice President Abdal Khaddam worked for conducting the relations. In this conjuncture, the means of both rewarding and punishing used to manipulate Lebanese politicians. Since the Lebanese politicians owed their positions to Syria, they consulted every decision to Damascus. The dominant role of Syria and subordination of Lebanon lead proponents of Greater Syria understanding to evaluate the situation as a Syrian attempt to annex Lebanon. In fact Syria did not have an ambition for annexation since the existing structure was sufficient for Syrian regime to secure its interests.¹⁸²

The Lebanese position vis-a-vis Syria was also complicated. Indeed, although the main beneficiary of the existing structure was the Syrian regime, Lebanese leaders also utilized the links with Damascus for economic and political leverage. Zisser explains it clearly by arguing that;

A significant portion of the power struggles waged in Lebanon was brought for arbitration or final decision to Damascus, and one cannot avoid the impression that it was often the Lebanese politicians who involved the Syrians in their power struggles in order to win their backing and thereby improve their own positions.¹⁸³

George Emile Irani also states that, 'There's a very close connection between the ruling elites in Syria and the ruling elites in Lebanon. They both use Lebanon as a cash cow.'¹⁸⁴ The detailed relations of Lebanese parties with Syria will be examined later but

¹⁸¹ Harris, *Faces of Lebanon: Sects, Wars and Global Extensions*, p.292-294

¹⁸² Asad Abukhalil, 'Syrian Policy' in *Peace for Lebanon: From War to Reconstruction*, ed by Deirdre Collings (USA: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1994), p.133

¹⁸³ Zisser, *Asad's Legacy: Syria in Transition*, p.145

¹⁸⁴ 'Lebanon and Syria: Internal and Regional Dimensions', *Middle East Policy*, Vol. VIII, No.3, (September 2001), p.9

at this point it can be concluded that the Syrian full control of Lebanese affairs established in the post-Ta'if period with additional beneficiaries in Lebanon as well.

4.2 The Economic Relations: Horizon 2000 vs. Second Infitah

The economic relations were complex in nature regarding the different paths of economic development in Lebanon and Syria. Lebanon tried to regain its position as the commercial and financial center of region with its laissez faire economy while Syrian economic problems forced it to reform the state dependent economic development program. Indeed, the contradiction among both served for Syrian interests in redirecting its bourgeoisie to operate in Lebanon to limit their pressures for liberalization. Moreover, the huge numbers of Syrian workers in Lebanon was helpful to Syrian regime in decreasing unemployment and increasing revenues via remittances. Lebanon, on the other hand, tried to remain free from Syrian control in economic domain by subordinating its domestic politics and foreign policy to the Syrian regime.

4.2.1 Rafiq Hariri and Economic Reconstruction Program: Horizon 2000

The Lebanese economy was heavily damaged throughout the fifteen years of fighting in the country. The infrastructure was destroyed while the bourgeoisie and middle class fled to other countries. The post-war governments tried to bring a solution to economic problems unsuccessfully until 1992. In parliamentary elections of 1992, Rafiq Hariri appeared on the Lebanese political scene as a prominent name to recover the economic damage of civil war.

Hariri was born into a poor family in 1944 in Sidon and moved to Saudi Arabia to work when he was 22. He established good relations with King Fahd there and rose as an international businessman particularly in the field of construction. He returned to Lebanon after the end of civil war and put himself forward as prime minister. His international links and personal wealth made him a prominent name for the reconstruction of Lebanese economy. Syrian regime accepted his premiership despite his relative independence from Syrian influence as a result of a deal. 'Hariri was to be given

free rein to deal with economic issues, while the longer political and military issues, including the redeployment of Syrian troops and the disarming of Hizballah were to be decided by Syria.¹⁸⁵ Since the recovery of Lebanese economy was also vital for Syria for stabilizing the pro-Syrian political order in the country, Syrian choice of Hariri was predictable. Perthes explains that, ‘the Syrian leadership, tending to view Lebanon not as competitor but rather as complement to its own economy- some would even speak of Lebanon as Syria’s Hong Kong- is interested in the success of Lebanon’s reconstruction process and in the job opportunities this process offers for a substantial part of Syria’s unemployed labor force.’¹⁸⁶

In April 1993, Hariri government introduced the reconstruction program for recovery process named as Horizon 2000. It was a ten year economic plan setting the public investment goals for the period 1993-2002. The Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR), established in 1977, was supposed to manage the program and assist Lebanese ministries and agencies. Technical Coordination Committee, consisted of the members of Programme Management Units staffed by international consultants set up to assist CDR while Sector Implementation Unit also staffed by international consultants set up to reinforce ministries’ capabilities and deal with technical details and routines. Besides this institutional structure of program, Hariri always had the control over the program and the final say. He kept important cabinet and CDR posts for his close team and whenever disputes erupted among different parts of state institutions, he sided with his circle of close associates. On several occasions he played the card of threat of resignation and insisted his own will.¹⁸⁷

The major aim of the reconstruction program was to restore Lebanon’s role as the commercial and financial center of the region. The pre-war Lebanon was appreciated mostly for its economic role in the region with its successful laissez faire economy hence the post-war reconstruction program focused on turning the clock back to pre-civil-war period. Prime Minister Refiq Hariri declared his desire to turn Lebanon into

¹⁸⁵ Tom Pierre Najem, *Lebanon’s Renaissance: The Political Economy of Reconstruction*, (UK: Ithaca Press, 2000), p.47

¹⁸⁶ Volker Perthes, ‘Myths and Money: Four Years of Hariri and Lebanon’s Preparation for a New Middle East’, *Middle East Report*, No.203, (Spring 1997), p.18

¹⁸⁷ Najem, *Lebanon’s Renaissance: The Political Economy of Reconstruction*, p.94-96

Singapore of the Middle East.¹⁸⁸ The funding of the program sustained by domestic and international aids and loans thanks to Hariri's personal links.¹⁸⁹

The implementation of program was not without constraints. Syria was an important external constraint for efficiency of Hariri program for several considerations. First of all, the Syrian regime had potential to reverse or stop program at any time it regards it problem for her interests. Secondly, the low level conflict between Syrian proxy Hizballah and Israel cause further damage to the Lebanese infrastructure. Thirdly, Asad regime's attempt to include Syrian clientele in parliament and cabinet decreased the efficiency of those institutions. Domestically, the internal rivals of Hariri tried to decrease the power and role of Hariri. Last but not least, the institutional inadequacies of CDR and Lebanese public sector made the implementation of program harder.¹⁹⁰

In addition to the constraints defined above, Hariri's program had its own deficits as well.

It was clear from the beginning that Hariri's reconstruction project would emphasize development of Beirut rather than of the country as a whole; that it would concentrate on the financial sector at the expense of agriculture and industry; that it would stress physical infrastructure as opposed to human capital; that, in the short run at least, it would be more preoccupied with the stability of the currency than with the overall rate of growth of the economy; and that it would devote far more resources to the construction of ultramodern, high-rise commercial and residential buildings than to the rehabilitation of existing structures.¹⁹¹

Although the deficits of the program were on the ground, the initial progress and success prevented the criticisms. The achievements included the enhancement of electricity generation, communication network, progress in the work on airport, and a plan for

¹⁸⁸ Guilain Denoeux & Robert Springborg, 'Hariri's Lebanon: Singapore of the Middle East or Sanaa or Sanaa of the Levant?', *Middle East Policy*, Vol.6, Issue 2. (1998), p.158

¹⁸⁹ The percentages of international contribution were as follow: World Bank 17%, European Investment Bank 13%, Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development 12%, Italy 11%, France 9%, Saudi Arabia 5%, Japan 4%, Saudi Fund for Development 4%, Commission of European Communities 3%, Islamic Development Bank 3%, Kuwait 1%, Tom Pierre Najem, *Lebanon's Renaissance: The Political Economy of Reconstruction*, (UK: Ithaca Press, 2000), p.133

¹⁹⁰ Najem, *Lebanon's Renaissance: The Political Economy of Reconstruction*, p.83-85

¹⁹¹ Denoeux & Springborg, 'Hariri's Lebanon: Singapore of the Middle East or Sanaa or Sanaa of the Levant?', p.160

building a campus. The criticisms against Hariri started to be heard when the expectations turned from rosy to gloomy due to the problems of program.¹⁹²

The economic difficulties in 1997 can be counted as the slowing growth alongside with the increasing public debt and budgetary deficit.¹⁹³ The funding of the huge program of reconstruction necessitated governmental borrowings which in turn increased the public debt of the country. When the declared goals of the program was not achieved, and government was forced to increase taxes and trade barriers as a result of growing deficits; Lebanese civil society and opposition figures started to increase their voices against Hariri. The criticisms directed against the neglect of agriculture, industry, peripheral areas, and social welfare in the Hariri program for reconstruction. Moreover, the hold of the strategic posts by close friends of Hariri increased suspicions of their manipulation of political advantages for increasing their own personal wealth. Indeed, the blurry distinction between the public and private spheres designed by Hariri in order to facilitate the implementation of the program. However, the mixed public-private structure also served for corruption of the system. The most obvious example of Hariri's mixed public and private structure was the special relationship between CDR and Solidere, a joint stock company privately owned by Hariri. The reconstruction of Beirut Central District, the major arena of program, awarded to Solidere by the CDR. The criticism against the corruption can be read from following statement.

In short, a multi-millionaire businessman turned prime minister maintains a dominant interest in a private company (Solidere) to which his government awarded the single most important and potentially lucrative reconstruction project, while a public agency (the CDR) provides that private company with vital services.¹⁹⁴

Perthes argued that Hariri was trying to run the government and country like a company to increase his and his allies' material interests.¹⁹⁵ A prominent Lebanese economist

¹⁹² Marwan Iskandar, *Rafiq Hariri and The Fate of Lebanon*, (London: Saqi Books, 2006), p.71

¹⁹³ The public debt exceeded \$14.5 billion including \$2.7 billion foreign debt while the budgetary deficit was the highest of last 5 years equal to 59.3% of expenditure. Marwan Iskandar, *Rafiq Hariri and The Fate of Lebanon*, (London, Saqi Books, 2006), p.81

¹⁹⁴ Denoeux & Springborg, 'Hariri's Lebanon: Singapore of the Middle East or Sanaa of the Levant?', p.162

¹⁹⁵ Perthes, 'Myths and Money: Four Years of Hariri and Lebanon's Preparation for a New Middle East', p.17

Marwan Iskandar, on the other hand, responds the accusations of Hariri by praising the attributions of Hariri's men to reconstruction process. He argues that 'without good and capable people in these positions, little could be done.'¹⁹⁶ All in all, the public opinion turned against Hariri in 1997-98, corruption being the most important weapon in the hands of opposition. In 1998 presidential elections, General Emile Lahoud took the office, in the same year Hariri resigned and Salim al-Hoss became the prime minister.

4.2.2 The Syrian Second Infitah

Syria followed the socialist path of economic development since the Baath revolution in 1963. The state planned economy and the dominant role of public sector were the major characteristics of it. The economic policies depended on the import substitution, domestic protection by taxes and quantitative restrictions on imports, and industrial development. The first change in policies realized after Hafez Asad's corrective movement in 1970. The first infitah- meaning opening up- was introduced in early 1970s, abandoning former policy of socialist transformation, reducing Syrian reliance to USSR, and linking it up with conservative Arab regimes. The infitah policies of seventies were compatible with the development strategy of state-led growth and limited role of private sector. The major aim was to broaden social basis of regime by opening it up to middle class and bourgeoisie. Indeed, the opening was very limited, the private sector involvement permitted in sectors like tourism and transport while the strategic sectors kept for the public sector.¹⁹⁷

The economic crisis in mid 1980s forced the regime for taking further measures. The economic hardship was the result of the loss of Gulf aid, decline of remittances coming from Syrians working in Gulf countries-due to decline in oil prices-, and the bad harvest caused by drought in 1982-1984. The economic growth of Syria declined substantially from 10% in seventies to 2.4% in eighties.¹⁹⁸ The slow economic growth

¹⁹⁶ Iskandar, *Rafiq Hariri and The Fate of Lebanon*, p.90

¹⁹⁷ Volker Perthes, 'Stage of Economic and Political Liberalization', in *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization between Cold War and Cold Peace*, ed. by Eberhard Kienle (London: British Academic Press, 1994), p.44

¹⁹⁸ Paul Rivlin, *The Syrian Economy in the 1990s*, in *Syria: Domestic Political Stress and Globalization*, (Data Analysis Series, 1999), p.30

and the balance of payment difficulties paved the way to urge for reforming economy in mid 1980s. 'This was not done on the basis of a comprehensive program, but rather as a series of ad hoc attempts to cope with increasing pressures.'¹⁹⁹ According to Hinnebusch, the economic crisis had owed much to the structure of Syrian economy. The regime for long prioritized political logic over economic one. In this regard, the statist/populist strategies of regime peripheralized private sector while the public sector failed to accommodate capital due to its inherent inefficiencies in planning and management. In the end, state could not support its excessive size and function without the foreign rent in the mid eighties. 'In short, the crisis was a sign that political logic had gone as far as it could at the expense of economic logic. If political logic was not brought into harmony with economic logic it would itself fail.'²⁰⁰

The infitah in Syria can be explained as; 'the relaxation of economic controls and the encouragement of the private sector and thus reflects the partial withdrawal of the state from its hegemonic role as an entrepreneur and as a provider of welfare and other services.'²⁰¹ The reform measures taken were the extension of the role of private sector; the trade reforms by expanding the list of allowable private sector imports and replacing quantitative controls of tariffs; the pricing of foreign exchange in realistic terms; the introduction of exchange oriented development strategy to generate foreign exchange resources; the liberalization of prices; and the reduction of subsidies.²⁰² The reforms generally aimed to break the deadlock in economy by sharing the economic sphere with private sector and bourgeoisie. The attempt of attracting private investment concretized in the Law no.10 issued in 1991. It encouraged the inflow of capital and investment from Syrian bourgeoisie and from Syrian residents living abroad.²⁰³ The major beneficiary of

¹⁹⁹ Rivlin, *The Syrian Economy in the 1990s*, in *Syria: Domestic Political Stress and Globalization*, p.32

²⁰⁰ Raymond Hinnebusch, 'Liberalization in Syria: the Struggle of Economic and Political Rationality', in *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization between Cold War and Cold Peace*, ed. by Eberhard Kienle, (London: British Academic Press, 1994), p.101

²⁰¹ Eberhard Kienle, 'Introduction: Liberalization Between Cold War and Cold Peace', in *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization between Cold War and Cold Peace*, ed. by Eberhard Kienle (London: British Academic Press, 1994), p.5

²⁰² Nabil Sukkar, 'The Crisis of 1986 and Syrian Plan for Reform', in *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization between Cold War and Cold Peace*, ed. by Eberhard Kienle (London: British Academic Press, 1994), p.33-35

²⁰³ Sylvia Polling, 'Investment Law no.10: Which Future for the Private Sector', in *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization between Cold War and Cold Peace*, ed. by Eberhard Kienle, (London: British Academic Press, 1994), p.19

the law was expatriate Syrians living in Lebanon. The liberalization attempts increased Lebanese entrepreneurs' investment and dealing with Syrian economy thanks to their personal and familiar links and geographical proximity. Fida Nasrallah forwards the argument to an interesting point by arguing that 'Indeed, given the right kind of economy treaty Syria's second infitah may very well result in its colonization by Lebanon.'²⁰⁴

The reforms introduced in a slow pace and limited manner. Whenever rental incomes in the forms of foreign aid or oil revenue are low the reform attempts accelerated. However when the rents increased, the government avoided taking further steps. The major recovery of economy in 1990s was result of the opening up of a new oil field, rather than the reforms. In 1995, for instance, oil accounted for about 20% of GDP.²⁰⁵

The infitah policies also aimed to have a place in the new world order but still Syrian regime tried to avoid a total change in state structure similar to USSR. The dichotomy mirrored in the economic policies of the regime. As will be recalled, the major social base of the regime were workers, peasants and public employees while the core elites were belong to army and Alawi sect. The reform process would change the balances within the segments of society since they attempted to increase the role of bourgeoisie and private sector. The limitation of the reforms was a direct result of the urge for regime survival because more opening would cause changes in the situation of regime's own social base. Hinnebusch argues that 'to liberalize means that the authoritarian-populist state has significantly to shift its social base toward the bourgeoisie, a task made all harder in Syria because of a certain overlap between state/private and Alawi/Sunni cleavages.'²⁰⁶ Thus, the reform program was called as selective stabilization and selective liberalization. 'It had to be 'selective' because of the following dilemma: If Asad were to liberalize too much and/or too quickly, it could

²⁰⁴Nasrallah, 'Syria after Ta'if: Lebanon and the Lebanese in Syrian Politics', p.138

²⁰⁵Rivlin, 'The Syrian Economy in the 1990s', in Syria:Domestic Political Stress and Globalization', p.41-42

²⁰⁶Raymond Hinnebusch, 'Liberalization in Syria:the Struggle of Economic and Political Rationality', in *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization between Cold War and Cold Peace*, ed. by Eberhard Kienle (London: British Academic Press, 1994), p.100

undercut the public sector patronage system that has maintained the regime in power.²⁰⁷ Having all those in mind, the regime tried to have a smooth transition from existing structure and as a result the needed bourgeoisie for economic liberalization created among the existing power elites. In the mean time, the state also tried to co-opt important elements of the private sector, hence the private sector became too fragmented and dependent upon state to become a significant pressure group.²⁰⁸

At this point, the relationship with Lebanon became important for Syria. First of all, the Syrian regime directed the businessman, and private sector to operate in Lebanon which had a laissez faire system. Secondly, the huge numbers of workers in Lebanon, approximated between 350.000 and 500.000 gave state a breathing space for its own unemployment problem-in a society that had inevitable unemployment problem due to high population growth rates. Moreover, remittances from Lebanon flew to Syria. It is counted that the Syrian workers in Lebanon gain approximately \$1 billion a year, sometimes equated to the same amount of loss for the Lebanese economy.²⁰⁹ However, since the Syrian workers work for cheaper wages and in the fields that Lebanese ones refuse to work like construction, agriculture, and basic services, the Lebanese economy argued to be gained by paying less.²¹⁰ Thirdly, the Syrian intelligence service accumulated fortunes in Lebanon through costs and fees paid by Lebanese public and private companies. In all through three ways, the Syrian regime became able to postpone introducing deeper economic measure.²¹¹

4.3 The Security Relations: Arab Israeli Peace Process and Hizballah

The Lebanese state had relative control of its economic domain but the security issues and the Lebanese foreign policy were strictly tied to Syrian interests. In 1990s, the major arena for both security arrangements and foreign policy initiatives was the Arab-Israeli peace process started in July 1991. The vitality of full compliance of Lebanon

²⁰⁷ David W. Lesch, 'History and Political Culture: Obstacles to Integration', in *Modern Syria: From Ottoman Rule to pivotal Role in the Middle East*, Moshe Ma'oz, Joseph Ginat (et.al.), (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 1999), p.64

²⁰⁸ Lesch, 'History and Political Culture: Obstacles to Integration', p.67

²⁰⁹ Taking the number of workers as 400.000, earning \$10 dollar each day and working 250 days per year.

²¹⁰ Iskandar, *Rafiq Hariri and The Fate of Lebanon*, p.154

²¹¹ Salloukh, 'Syria and Lebanon: A Brotherhood Transformed', p.19

with Syria in this regard had more than one dimensions. First of all, since the beginning of the conflict, Lebanon served as a buffer zone between Syria and Israel. The vulnerability of Syria in the case of an Israeli attacks through Lebanese Bekaa Valley contributed to the defensive considerations of Asad regime. Secondly, although the PLO leadership left the country, the control over remaining Palestinian groups was important for Syria. Thirdly, the south Lebanon, with Hizballah dominance in the area, was vital for Syria as an additional front against Israel, out of Syrian territory. Fourthly, Hizballah, proxy of Syria and Iran in the region used as a bargaining chip in the negotiations on twofold: to pressure Israel through Hizballahi attacks, to show Syrian goodwill by pacifying Hizballah against Israel. Fifthly, Syria anxious from the previous developments of 1983 Lebanese-Israeli agreement tried to have full control over Lebanese relations with Israel in order to prevent a new round of conflict with Israel in Lebanon.

In this regard, Lebanon did not enter into negotiations with Israel as a part of Arab-Israeli peace process independent from Syria. The Lebanese and Syrian tracks merged and the future of a possible Lebanese agreement with Israel was bound to future of Syrian track. Shulze argues that for Lebanon, there were no obstacles to peace with Israel except Syria. In contrast, the normalization of relations and the resolve of South Lebanese issue would serve for Lebanese declared aim of becoming commercial and financial center of the region.²¹²

4.3.1 The Madrid Peace Process

The end of Cold War and the US hegemony in the world reflected itself in the Middle East with the increasing US influence. The American power and will to transform the region according to US interests symbolized by the Gulf War. As will be recalled, the US strategy towards the region was to establish stability in the region. The two legs of this strategy were the resolve of Arab-Israeli conflict and isolation of Iran in the Middle East. The favorable atmosphere for US after the Gulf War convinced Bush administration to take steps in bringing a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. The

²¹² K.irsten.E. Schulze, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict*, (Essex, Pearson Education Limited, 1999), p.89

efforts of President Bush and Secretary of State James Baker bore fruit when Arab states and Israel agreed to participate in Madrid Peace Conference scheduled for July 1991. The enthusiasm of US for brokering a solution can be read from Baker's famous quote which defines the peace process as 'the window of opportunity.'²¹³ The Madrid framework for negotiations divided into bilateral and multilateral tracks. Bilateral tracks aimed at achieving separate peace treaties between Israel and neighboring Arab countries, namely Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine. The multilateral tracks, participated also by representatives from international community, aimed to resolve the regional issues like water, the environment, arms control, refugees, and economic development.²¹⁴

Syrian acceptance to join the process and enter into negotiations with Israel was a result of the changing international structure after the Cold War. 'For Damascus, being the ideological capital of Pan Arabism and struggle against Israel, the peace negotiations with Israel was the imposition of strategic and political developments emerged in the post Cold War and post gulf war era, alongside with the domestic economic and political problems.'²¹⁵ In this conjuncture, Syrian regime aimed at regaining the Golan Heights, captured by Israel in 1967 War; continuing its dominance in Lebanon; developing good relations with the US; and breaking Syria's isolation within the region. Israel, on the other hand, participated to the process as a result of huge American pressure.²¹⁶ The bilateral negotiations between Israel and Syria continued with the US involvement as mediator, facilitator, sponsor and participant.

The years 1992-1996 witnessed negotiations between Syria and Israel for peace settlement with ups and downs in a give-and-take manner. There was some progress in that period but it could not transform itself into a written agreement. Throughout the negotiations Syrian part demanded full withdrawal from Golan Heights to pre-1967 borders in return for peace and normalization of relations. Israeli side, on the other hand, insisted on clarifying and expanding the extent of peace. Indeed, the major asymmetry of the Syrian and Israeli approaches prioritizing withdrawal versus prioritizing security and

²¹³ Zisser, *Asad's Legacy: Syria in Transition*, p.104

²¹⁴ Schulze, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict*, p.84-85

²¹⁵ Altunışık, 'Soğuk Savaş Sonrası Dönemde Suriye'nin Dış Politikası: Değişime Uyum Çabası', p.271

²¹⁶ *ibid.*, p.271-272

normalization created the basis of contention. Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin found it hard to commit himself to withdrawal in the absence of an agreement for the details of both withdrawal and normalization processes. In this manner, the Israeli settlements on the Golan Heights, the Israeli public opinion towards withdrawal, and the ambiguities of peace were problematic to Rabin. In contrast, the neutralization of withdrawal by spreading it over a long time, or by the phased or interim settlement of the issue was unacceptable to Asad.²¹⁷

The direction of the negotiations had two historical moments for peace: Rabin's offer for full withdrawal in 1993 and the agreement reached at Wye talks at the end of 1995. The first one was the result of Rabin's secret message to Asad conveyed by US Secretary Warren Christopher on 4 August 1993. The message included a commitment to full withdrawal from Golan Heights in return for security arrangements and a five year interim period to test Syrian good behavior.²¹⁸ Asad responded positively to the idea of full withdrawal but rejected the proposal of diplomatic relations in the interim period and demanded the five-year interim period to be limited by six months. In literature Rabin's offer and Asad's response interpreted as a missed historical opportunity for Syria to recover the territories. But Seale defines it as 'a political deception' of Israeli side due to the ambiguity of the offer and the great secrecy in the way it conveyed. He also questions the timing of it, coincided with the great progress in Palestinian track, as a result of secret channel established between two sides. According to Seale, Rabin tailored to engage Asad just enough to blunt his attack on Palestinian track while, at the same time, frightening the Palestinians into concessions.²¹⁹ Rabinovich, himself attended to negotiations in the Israeli team, defines Rabin's message as a hypothetical way to test Asad's willingness to sign a peace agreement with Israel on the eve of the Palestinian agreement to weigh between the Syrian and Palestinian negotiations. When he was disappointed by Asad's response, the Palestinian

²¹⁷ Itamar Rabinovich, *The Brink of Peace: the Israeli-Syrian Negotiations*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), p.73

²¹⁸ The security arrangements included the American participation, a peace treaty with full normalization up front, readiness to crack down Hizballah in south Lebanon and other rejectionist Palestinian organizations in Syria.

²¹⁹ Parickt Seale, 'The Syria-Israel Negotiations: Who Is Telling the Truth?', *the Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol.29, No.2, (Winter 2000), p.67-68

track speeded up and two sides signed the Oslo Accords in 1993.²²⁰ The Syrian track had a secondary importance subsequent to Oslo Accords and the Israeli-Jordanian peace agreement in 1994. More importantly, the signing of separate peace agreements in Palestinian and Jordanian tracks forced Asad to change his understanding of comprehensive peace. According to Asad peace was indivisible. 'Only a comprehensive settlement could protect the Arab environment from Israeli encroachment and prevent Israel from picking off weaker Arab parties one by one.'²²¹ After the Oslo and Jordanian peace agreement finalized, the comprehensive peace meant Israeli withdrawal from Golan and southern Lebanon in Syrian rhetoric. The bilateral talks between Syria and Israel continued in 1994 and 1995 with an emphasis on security arrangements like Israeli demands of the demilitarization of Syrian territory and implementation of early warning stations after withdrawal from the Golan Heights.

The second important opportunity for peace reached at the end of 1995 and early 1996. The assassination of Rabin on 4 November 1995 followed by the rise of Shimon Peres to power in Israel. Peres, unlike Rabin, prioritized the quality of peace and economic issues beyond the security considerations of Israel. He worked for speeding up the peace process and signing the treaty before the scheduled elections. The two sides came together at Wye Plantation, in the US to negotiate the peace. However, Peres was not satisfied with Syrian commitment to peace and frustrated for taking risks before elections. He suspended the negotiations after Syria rejected to condemn the terrorist attacks of HAMAS in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. Peres called for an early Israeli election in May 1996.²²²

The major problems of the peace process were the asymmetry in the approaches to peace and the chronic mistrust among two sides. Throughout the negotiations, Asad saw the peace as a way of containing Israel hence he was determined to prevent further Israeli gains from the peace agreement. Israeli side, on the other hand, embraced the idea of establishing influence in the Arab world, gaining access to money and raw materials

²²⁰ Rabinovich, *The Brink of Peace: the Israeli-Syrian Negotiations*, p.105-107

²²¹ Patrick Seale & Linda Butler, 'Asad's Regional Strategy and the Challenge from Netanyahu', *the Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol.26, No.1, (Autumn 1996), p.33

²²² Rabinovich, *The Brink of Peace: the Israeli-Syrian Negotiations*, p.200-222

from Gulf, containing Arab forces from confronting Israel.²²³ Asad, not trusting its partner, continuously demanded clarifications for Israeli offers on withdrawal from Golan Heights. The lack of trust to Asad on Israeli side can be read from Pipes' following analysis:

Yes, Asad reached out to the West by joining the peace process, but he did not give up his long-established stance as an enemy of Israel. He kept options open: even while pleasing the United States by talking to Israel; he signaled hard-core anti-Zionists that his heart remained with them. He hinted at readiness to make peace with Israel, if need be, while also indicating that, if possible, he would rather make war on it.²²⁴

In addition to inherent problems between Syrians and Israelis, the US influence in the negotiations was important to finalize agreement. In this regard, American administration can also be criticized for not pushing enough. During the Bush administration, President Bush and Baker were successful in bringing sides to table but failed to involve actively enough for melting the ices among both sides. The Clinton administration, took office in 1992, with Warren Christopher as State Secretary, there were several visits of US officials to both Syria and Israel but the US role defined as facilitator rather than an involved mediator.²²⁵

In the Israeli elections of 1996, Benjamin Netanyahu from Likud Party came to power and reversed Israeli attitude toward Syria. Netanyahu, unwilling to give up Golan Heights, demanded the resume of negotiations without preconditions- ignoring the previous progress including Israeli promises to withdraw from Golan Heights- and with the formula of peace for peace instead of territory for peace understanding. When Asad rejected those demands, he tried to launch the Likud formula of 'Lebanon First'. However, the separation of Lebanon from Syria was rejected by both Lebanon and Syria. For three years under Netanyahu government in Israel, there was no meaningful

²²³ Seale & Butler, 'Asad's Regional Strategy and the Challenge from Netanyahu', p.37

²²⁴ Daniel Pipes, 'Asad's Art of the Double Game', in *Modern Syria: From Ottoman Rule to pivotal Role in the Middle East*, Moshe Ma'oz, Joseph Ginat (et al.) (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 1999), p.287

²²⁵ Helena Cobban, *Israeli-Syrian Peace Talks 1991-96 and Beyond*, (Washington: United States Institute of Peace, 1999), p.192-194

movement on the Israeli-Syrian track.²²⁶ On 17 May 1999, Ehud Barak from Labor Party came to power in Israel and the hopes for resuming negotiations increased.

The talks resumed in December 1998 from the point where they left off. However both sides could not agree on the basis of withdrawal, more particularly on the inclusion of waterline along the northeastern flank of the Sea of Galilee. Clinton, at this point tried to put his prestige and on 26 March 2000, Asad and Clinton met in Geneva. Asad reaffirmed his demand of withdrawal to the defined border. Barak, willing to withdraw from Golan Heights but trying to keep the Sea of Galilee, rejected a deal in this manner and the Israeli-Syrian negotiations suspended.²²⁷

4.3.2 The South Lebanese Problem, Hizballah and Syria

The end of civil war in Lebanon, the optimistic mood for reconstruction of country, and the ongoing peace negotiations between Syria and Israel did not bring calm to the South Lebanon. Hizballah continued its struggle against Israel in the Security Zone, occupied by Israel and patrolled by its proxy South Lebanese Army (SLA) since 1985, by the virtue of being the sole Lebanese organization continue to acquire its weapons. As will be recalled, Hizballah established subsequent to the Israeli invasion in 1982. Thanks to its foreign sponsors of Syria and Iran, the organization managed to pursue a successful campaign against Western powers in the country, resulted in the evacuation of MNF from the country. Later on, it continued to struggle against IDF and SLA in the Security Zone. After the end of the civil war, when all militias forces to be disarmed by the Lebanese government, Hizballah defined as an exception due its role for national resistance against foreign occupation of country. Needless to say, the Syrian hegemony of country was influential for Hizballah's dominant role in the south.

The Iranian-Syrian cooperation was vital for Hizballah since it sought financial, military, and strategic support from them. Syria and Iran, as a part of their strategic interests like opposition to Iraq, Israel and the Western hegemony in the region came close to cooperate each other. The weak point for that strategic alliance was the Islamic character of the Iranian regime while Syria adopts a secular identity. The problem solved

²²⁶ *ibid.*, p.169-170

²²⁷ Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict 1881-2001*, p.654-655

after the end of Cold War coincided with the death of Ayetollah Khomeini, the leader of Islamic Revolution of 1979, in Iran. Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, who is a pragmatist and moderate politician, rose to power in Iran. From that time onward, the Damascus-Tehran alliance sought to moderate Hizballah's views of Islamic Revolution in Lebanon.²²⁸

The transformation of Hizballah from a guerilla organization fighting against Israel with backing from foreign sponsors to an important political party participating in Lebanese system realized within this conjuncture. The Hizballah leaders themselves differed on the question of which path to follow: either rejecting Lebanese secular system with the aim of establishing Islamic rule in the country or participating in politics and moderating views for future of the country. Sheikh Tufeili, the Secretary General of Hizballah embraced the first argument and rejected the cooperation with the emerging Lebanese system. Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah, the spiritual leader of organization, believed that the Islamic Republic could not be imposed on Lebanon's large Christian community and it would also be rejected by secular Muslims. Hasan Nasrallah, another prominent leader, understood the need for an adoption to the Lebanese system for guaranteeing struggle against Israel. In the end, the organization chose the path of cooperation with Lebanese system and Sheikh Tufeili replaced by Abbas al-Musawi as the Secretary General. After Musawi's assassination by Israel in February 1992, Nasrallah became the next Secretary General.²²⁹

The deal between Hizballah and Lebanese state was sustained by the transformation of organization Syrian mediation. Accordingly, Hizballah would agree to cooperate with secular government and give up its calls for Islamic rule in Lebanon while the Lebanese government would accept Hizballah's struggle against Israel as a national resistance.²³⁰ All in all, Hizballah entered the 1992 parliamentary elections and secured 8 seats, with an additional 4 seats of its allies, and emerged as the largest single block of the 128 member parliament.

²²⁸ For a more detailed information of Syrian-Iranian alliance and its relations with Hizballah, see A. Ehteshami & R.Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran: Middle Powers in a Penetrated Regional System*, (London: Routledge, 1997)

²²⁹ Judith Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), p.56-59

²³⁰ *ibid.*, p.47

Besides its role as a political party with a huge base in Shia constituents, the organization continued its struggle against Israel in the South Lebanon. The struggle had served for the interests of Hizballah bidding for Israeli withdrawal, Syria trying to play Hizballah card in its relations with Israel, and Iran trying to have a direct entrance into Middle East war or peace game by a proxy and to expand Shiite Islam's influence in Lebanon. Hizballah's call for Israeli withdrawal had a nationalist outlook. In this regard, Norton underlines the indigenous character of organization by arguing that 'If Hizballah has acted as a cat's paw of complementary Syrian and Iranian interests in Lebanon, its primary agenda was very much its own: ridding Lebanon of the Israeli occupation.'²³¹ Syria had its own stakes for backing Hizballah attacks against Israel in Security Zone for two reasons. First of all, the military struggle was used to pressure Israel for dealing with Syria in Asad's terms throughout the peace process. Secondly, the role of Syria as the only power that can stop, disarm or dissolve Hizballah increased Asad regime's leverage against Israel.²³² Hence, by backing or stopping Hizballah operations, Syria tried to squeeze Israel in peace negotiations for giving up Golan Heights. Deeb had a more rigid approach to Syria's role in destabilizing South Lebanon. According to him, Asad regime tried legitimize the minority rule of country by the ongoing struggle against Zionist regime in Israel. A peace deal with Israel would endanger the regime survival in this manner.²³³ Hence, Asad entered into peace negotiation due to changing international structure with an aim to secure rapprochement with the US, but he did not want to finalize it. At this point, according to Deeb, Syria saw the Hizballah's resistance as a mean to prevent peace deal with Israel and speeded up Hizballah attacks every time the hopes for Syrian-Israeli peace increased. He also underlines that, both the US and Israel misunderstood Syrian unwillingness to peace and its relations with Hizballah and saw Syrian role as broker for Hizballah-Israeli clashes.²³⁴ His approach can be criticized for being too rigid and reductionist in a complex environment of Lebanese-Syrian-Israeli relations but the Syrian interest in destabilization of South cannot be disregarded either. Asad regime was not unwilling to sign peace deal but it could only enter into peaceful

²³¹ Norton, 'Hizballah and the Israeli Withdrawal from Southern Lebanon', p.27

²³² Schulze, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict*, p.89

²³³ Deeb, *Syria's Terrorist War on Lebanon and the Peace Process*, p.3

²³⁴ *ibid.*, p.211

relations with Israel if its conditions, majorly Israeli withdrawal from Golan Heights, would be met as outlined previously.

The clashes between Hizballah and Israel continued throughout 1990s. They were characterized by the unwritten rules of war among which were designed to define the scope of fight. According to them, the clashes narrowed by the frontiers of the Security Zone and a major distinction made between military and civilian targets. In this sense, when one of sides hit civilian targets, the retaliation was inevitable.²³⁵ Israel launched two major operations to stop Hizballah attacks in 1990s: Operation Accountability in 1993 and Operation Grapes of Wrath in 1996. Both were retaliations for Hizballah's fire of Katyusha rockets to northern Israeli villages. Israel used air power beyond security zone and hit Lebanese infrastructure. The major calculation behind the operations was forcing Lebanese government and civilian population to contain Hizballah. But, the punitive Israeli actions had the opposite result that increased the support to Hizballah as a resistance movement against a foreign power trying to demolish what Lebanon could accomplish after the long-lasting civil war. Moreover, in both operations, Syria emerged as the sole power which can exert pressure on Hizballah to accept cease-fire. In 1993, the cease-fire achieved without a written agreement. In the Operation Grapes of Wrath of 1996, Israeli planes hit a civilian population sought shelter in UN camp at Qana. In the tragic events, 98 Lebanese civilians killed and 101 wounded.²³⁶ The Qana tragedy increased international attention to the Lebanese arena. Prime Minister Hariri's international links were beneficial to rally international support for Lebanese at that time. With Syria, as the main broker, the US and France mediated a cease-fire agreement. The agreement called as April Understanding, was a detailed and written form of the rules of war. Accordingly,

Armed groups in Lebanon will not carry out attacks by Katyusha rockets or by any kind of weapon into Israel; Israel and those cooperating with it will not fire any kind of weapon at civilians or civilian targets in Lebanon; Under no circumstances will civilians be the target of attack and that civilian populated areas and industrial and electrical installations will not be used as launching

²³⁵ Norton, 'Hizballah and the Israeli Withdrawal from Southern Lebanon', p.29

²³⁶ Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, London, p.115-121

grounds for attacks; Without violating this understanding, nothing herein shall preclude any party from exercising the right of self-defense.²³⁷

A committee including representatives from the US, France, Syria, Israel and Lebanon set up to monitor the implementation of cease-fire. The importance of the April understanding was the legitimacy of Hizballah as a resistance movement in an agreement also signed by the US, France and Israel.

The clashes and Israeli use of air power continued in the upcoming years. The Israeli public more and more irritated by the situation in South Lebanon, averaging 30 Israeli fatalities annually.²³⁸ The ineffectiveness of Israeli Operations was clear and at the end, Ehud Barak, leading opposition, promised for withdrawal from South Lebanon in its election campaign for 2000 parliamentary elections.

4.4 The Political Relations: Patronage and Intimidation

Syrian regime sought to have full control of Lebanese politicians in order to secure its dominance over domestic and foreign policies of Lebanon. The Syrian policy of preventing any Lebanese group from growing stronger than others continued in the post-Taif era. The confessional system of Lebanon, itself balancing the several Lebanese factions vis a vis each other, suited the Syrian plans in this manner. The presence of Syrian troops and intelligence service- mukhabarat- was already instrumental for Asad regime to have control over oppositional groups. Besides, the means of both intimidation and patronage used to deal with the prominent Lebanese leaders. The threat of punishment to the oppositional forces and rewards to clients determined the basic characteristics of Lebanese-Syrian political relations in the post-Taif process. The major beneficiary of the established links was clearly the Asad regime but as already mentioned earlier the economic and political interests of clients were also met. Bassel Saloukh summarized the situation as ‘By 1995, the Syrian order in Lebanon was in place, glued together by what opposition Lebanese politicians later labeled as-nizam al-

²³⁷ Cobban, *Israeli-Syrian Peace Talks 1991-96 and Beyond*, p.164

²³⁸ Eyal Zisser, ‘The Israeli-Syrian-Lebanese Triangle: The Renewed Struggle over Lebanon’, in *Conflict, Diplomacy and Society in Israeli-Lebanese Relations*, Efraim Karsh, Rory Miller (et al.), (New York: Routledge, 2010), p.86

amni al-mushtarak, or the mutual Syrian-Lebanese security apparatus controlling the country.²³⁹

4.4.1 The Lebanese Groups and Their Relations with Syria

The confessional system of Lebanon was based on the assumption of avoiding conflict and protecting the rights of distinct communities. It created a democracy in which power is shared rather than a one that power is contested. In such a system the purpose of political parties is not to obtain power or become the government. Instead, they turn out to be the organizations through which a distinct community secures its own representation in national government.²⁴⁰ Although the political parties had nationalist agendas or try to secure support from diverse sects, they most for the time appealed to interests of their own sects. In this regard, it would be more accurate to analyze the post-Taif political process by investigating the positioning of major Lebanese groups vis-a-vis Syrian role in the country.

The Taif Accord restructured the power-share among different sects. Harris illustrates the situation subsequent to Taif arrangement as follows;

Maronites found it hard to accept a Lebanon in which they no longer played the pre-eminent role; Shi'is, notwithstanding their internal divisions, felt cheated by the Ta'if constitution and were impatient to have a more notable role in determining Lebanon's direction; Sunnis resented Shii influence, and may looked to Prime Minister Hariri and his Arab connections as a countervailing weight; and Druze sought to survive as a special element in a pluralist Lebanon.²⁴¹

There was a fundamental leadership vacuum among Christian population after the demise of General Aoun's forces. Patriarch Sfeirr emerged as the main interlocutor with Islamic leaders and Syria. Although he accepted Taif Accord he remained as the only senior religious figure not to visit Damascus in the first quarter of Taif regime. In time, Maronites also had a pragmatic consciousness and integrated into the system by learning to live with Syrian dominance. Sunnis was dragged behind during the civil war in

²³⁹ Salloukh, 'Syria and Lebanon: A Brotherhood Transformed', p.20

²⁴⁰ Jones Jones, *Negotiating Change: The New Politics of Middle East*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), p.106

²⁴¹ Harris, *Faces of Lebanon: Sects, Wars and Global Extensions*, p.297

establishing a communal organization that can compete with others. Hence in general, they appreciated the rise of Hariri as a prominent Sunni leader. He had pragmatic relations with Syria besides its organic relations with Saudis for securing his political position. However, since Hariri's rise was personal, the leading Sunni families like Karamis and Hoss stood against him. Shia population, on the other hand was divided among Amal and Hizballah alongside with their sympathies to Islamic rule and secularism. Druzes, under the leadership of Joumblatt, had two fundamental threats, demographic obliteration by Shias and electoral obliteration by Christians in Mount Lebanon. Hence Joumblatt tried to have good relations with both Hariri and Syria.²⁴²

4.4.2 The Lebanese elections and the Syrian Involvement

The Lebanese system restricted each sect's number of seats in the parliament based on the confessional political system of the country. The election system in the country was itself complicated. First of all, the country was divided along several electoral districts according to electoral law. The parliamentary seats allocates to those districts according to the sectarian composition of them. Voters, regardless of their sectarian affiliation, voted for all seats allocated for their districts. Hence, the candidates had to secure votes from all confessional groups of the district. Within this system, the job of districting the country becomes important, especially in the mixed sectarian areas. The Ta'if Accord embraced large administrative districts, called as muhafazat, instead of smaller qadas, to encourage confessional intermixing as a step for eliminating the confessional system. The six muhafazat defined in Taif were; the North, Beirut, the Bekaa, the Mount Lebanon, the South and the Nabatieh. Later on Nabatieh reunited with Sidon and integrated into the South. Secondly, the system of lists used in the election. In Lebanon, voters vote for each individual name, not for the political parties, in the elections. However, the individuals tended to band together in lists to make sure their election since the voters voted for all seats.²⁴³ Hence, the parties tend to bargain among each other to come with the election lists.

²⁴² Harris, *Faces of Lebanon: Sects, Wars and Global Extensions*, p.297-308

²⁴³ 'Skirting Democracy: Lebanon's 1996 Elections and Beyond', *the Middle East Report*, No.203, (Spring 1997), p.26-27

The parliamentary elections of 1992 were instructive for understanding the general outlook of Lebanese-Syrian relations in 1990s. The results of it was important for Syria since the elected parliament would discuss the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon scheduled by the Ta'if Agreement vaguely for two years after the implementation of Taif. For Lebanese it was symbolic as the first election since the end of civil war.

The opposition groups to Syrian presence, especially the Maronites demanded the elections to be held after the redeployment of Syrian troops and the establishment of free environment. When their demand did not satisfied, they chose to boycott the elections. Although their action aimed to show their uneasiness with Syrian military presence and their adherence to Lebanese sovereignty, it was a miscalculated act and resulted in the dispose of their supposed candidates from the parliament.²⁴⁴

The elections held despite the criticisms for its electoral law, timing, corruption and low level of participation - 30 percent of voters, the lowest record in Lebanese history. The electoral law calling for larger districts changed in order to protect the Druze votes in Mount Lebanon. The Mount Lebanon has been populated by Christians and Druzes, the latter being the minority. In the case of elections in whole area, the result would lead to Joumlatt's failure. Both in order to divide the Christian votes, major opposition to Syria, and to secure Joumlatt's election, the area divided to smaller districts in the electoral law.²⁴⁵ The timing of it, before the expected Syrian redeployment, also found as problematic by opposition. The issue of corruption can be generalized for nearly all Lebanese elections. Both Lebanese politicians themselves and Syria can be blamed for corruption of the election process. Gambill and Aoun, in their report called as 'How Syria Orchestrates Lebanon's Elections' explores the corruption related to Syrian manipulation of elections in detail. In sum, the arbitrary districting, the manipulation of electoral lists, the manipulation of who can vote by disenfranchising opposition voters while extending Lebanese citizenship to Syrian residents, the means of intimidation, the extortion and bribery of voter, the manipulation of the media cover of

²⁴⁴ Augustus Richard Norton & Jillian Schwedler, 'Swiss Soldiers, Ta'if Clocks, and Early Elections: Toward a Happy Ending?' in *Peace for Lebanon: From War to Reconstruction*, ed. by Deirdre Collings, (USA: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1994), p.54

²⁴⁵ 'Skirting Democracy: Lebanon's 1996 Elections and Beyond', the Middle East Report, No.203, Spring 1997, p.27

election campaigns, and the falsification of electoral votes were all used for influencing the election result.²⁴⁶

The results of the 1992 elections satisfied Syria. As a result of the previously examined deal, Rafiq Hariri became the prime minister of Lebanon, with an ambition to reconstruct the Lebanese economy. Nebih Berri, from Amal had the post of Speaker of Parliament while Elias Hrawi was the Lebanese President. The defined troika continued to dominate Lebanese politics until 1998. One major aspect of the election was the success of Amal-Hizballah joint list in the south and integration of Hizballah to Lebanese politics by entering the parliament.

In 1995, the presidential term of Hrawi came to an end. Syria, content with the existing troika pressed for the extension of Hrawi's term for additional three years. Hariri also insisted for the extension, a move that was heavily unpopular among Lebanese public opinion. The amendment of constitution for the extension of Presidential term contributed to the increasing criticisms to Hariri.

The parliamentary elections of 1996 differed from the previous one by the increasing Maronite participation. In Mount Lebanon, 45 percent of electorate participated. Joubblatt once again secured tenure in the parliament by the same process of districting in qada system. In Beirut, Hariri list won 13 of 19 votes. The Shia constituents faced the Amal-Hizballah rivalry in pre-election period. The proposal of Nebih Berri for joint list²⁴⁷ with Hizballah did not satisfy the latter's interests which increased its popularity by its huge social welfare services provided to Shias who were neglected by Lebanese state. In response, the Secretary General of Hizballah vowed that Hizballah decided to run independently in a mass rally in August 1995. One week after, both Nasrallah and Berri summoned to Damascus and Hizballah announced that it would run joint list for the South and Bekaa Valley elections in a similar offer to Berri's. The Hizballah-Amal deal was important to understand the Syrian leverage over Lebanese politicians.²⁴⁸ The elections resulted with a parliament having 95 percent pro-

²⁴⁶Gary C. Gambill & Elie Abau Aoun, 'How Syria Orchestrated Lebanon's Elections', *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin*, Vol. 2 No. 7, (August 2000)

²⁴⁷ Berri offered 3 of 13 seats designated to Shia in South. Moreover, the list included anti-Hizballah candidates like Bahia Hariri.

²⁴⁸ Graham Usher, 'Hizballah, Syria and the Lebanese Elections', *the Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol.26 No.2, (Winter 1997), p.59-61

government orientation. The Hariri bloc was the largest one with 30-40 loyalists; it was followed by Berri's bloc of 20-30 loyalists and Jomblatt's one with 10 loyalists.²⁴⁹

The extended term of President Hrawi ended in 1998. The presidential election was in the advantage of Syria since it had a chance to bring a new name to troika, at the time when the criticisms against corruption increased among Lebanese public. General Emile Lahoud was an important name with his clean reputation and pro-Syrian orientation. The constitutional law that prohibits military figures from being president amended and General Emile Lahoud elected as the President of Lebanon in November 1998. Prime Minister Hariri resigned after Lahoud's election, knowing that he could not continue to push for his own program. Salim Hoss was given the task to form government while the importance passed from Prime Minister to President within the troika. Until the 2000 elections, Hoss government undertook the policy of anti-corruption. Unsurprisingly the cleansing policy was selective; those continue to enjoy Syrian support left alone. The reforms of Lebanese bureaucracy followed the same selective path by purging pro-Hariri associates from their posts.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁹ 'Skirting Democracy: Lebanon's 1996 Elections and Beyond', *Middle East Report*, No.203, (Spring 1997), p.28

²⁵⁰ Tom Pierre Najem, *Lebanon's Renaissance: The Political Economy of Reconstruction*, (UK: Ithaca Press, 2000), p.231-234

CHAPTER 5

THE CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN RELATIONS: THE ROAD TO SYRIAN WITHDRAWAL (2000-2005)

The period of 2000-2005 in Lebanese-Syrian relations can be characterized by both changes and continuities in the patterns of relations. On the one hand, the changes in international, regional and domestic conjunctures resulted in lessening of Syrian control of Lebanese affairs, in the end leading to Syrian troops' withdrawal in 2005. On the other hand, Syria pushed for keeping its hegemony intact and tried to benefit from its already established links for it. Indeed, in the light of previous historical analysis it can be concluded that the presence of Syrian troops was not the only means of intervention. Hence, the Syrian allies in Lebanon, the Syrian intelligence service penetrated into Lebanese domains, the patterns of economic relations, and the Hizballah's role as a proxy organization against Israel can be interpreted as the main lines of continuing Syrian control over Lebanese affairs.

In the new period, the major transformation of international and regional composition had important repercussions for Syrian role in regional politics and affected its relations with Lebanon as well. In the first part of the chapter, the setting up of a new environment in which Lebanese-Syrian relations conducted will be analyzed with a particular aim of explaining Syrian hardship on dealing with external challenges. Those challenges coincided with transition of leadership in both countries by succession of Bashar Asad in Syria and election of Rafiq Hariri as prime minister in Lebanon. The new characteristics of Lebanese-Syrian relations will be outlined as well.

The economic relations among two states, in favor of Syrian benefits, tried to be kept by Syrian leadership. Syria continued to have economic hardship, could not transform its economy despite ongoing reform project, and tried to benefit from its ties with Lebanese economy. Hariri's persisting efforts for reconstruction and Syrian shadow on Lebanese attempts will be analyzed in the second part.

The South Lebanese problem and Hizballah's role as a Syrian proxy in the struggle against Israel remain unchanged too. The Israeli withdrawal from South Lebanon in 2000 did not bring an end to Hizballah's resistance which was also serving for Syrian interests. In the third part, the changes and continuities of struggle in South Lebanon and its repercussions on Lebanese-Syrian relations will be examined.

The fourth part of the chapter will deal with the major arena of change in relations. The domestic Lebanese politics witnessed an increasing opposition to Syrian intervention. The anti-Syrian movement, which was encouraged by the changes in regional and international politics, started to increase their voices against Syrian hegemony over Lebanon. In time, the domestic politics were dominated by pro- and anti-Syrian figures.

In the end, the Syrian troops withdrew from Lebanon, ending 29 year of occupation in 2005. However, does it really led to emergence of full Lebanese independence from Syrian control will be questioned in the last part of the chapter.

5.1 The Change in International, Regional and Domestic Environment

The 2000 has been an important year for Lebanese-Syrian relations. The collapse of Arab-Israeli peace negotiations; the Israeli unilateral withdrawal from South Lebanon; and the outbreak of Palestinian Intifada within the same year changed the course of events in the Arab-Israeli arena. The death of Hafez Asad and rise of his son Bashar al-Asad to Presidency again in 2000 was influential for both domestic and foreign policy considerations in Syria. In the meantime, Rafiq Hariri returned to the post of prime ministry. Following the developments of the year 2000, the regional politics further changed by the election of George W. Bush administration in the US and Ariel Sharon in Israel. The terrorist attacks to World Trade Center and Pentagon on 11 September 2001, had important repercussions for President Bush's foreign policy toward Middle East. The American 'war on terror' forced other Middle Eastern states to reshape their foreign policy conducts in the region. The Lebanese-Syrian relations had much to be affected by the developments of the new century.

5.1.1 The Regional and International Environment

During the peak of Syrian hegemony over Lebanon in 1990s, the Middle Eastern affairs were dominated by Arab-Israeli peace process and President Clinton's adherence to Syrian role in peace talks. The foreign policy priority of US toward Middle East was based on the hopes of achieving peace and for this end the stability in the region was prioritized. The Syrian presence in Lebanon interpreted as a means of stability. In this regard, the failure of peace negotiations, the outbreak of intifada and the subsequent election of Sharon in Israel and Bush in the US was important in the sense that the importance of peace process and related importance of Syria for US declined.

The Arab-Israeli arena witnessed important developments in early twenty-first century. Firstly, the Syrian-Israeli peace negotiations halted at Geneva Summit between Asad and Clinton in 2000. As a result, Barak lost his hope for Syrian track and turned to Lebanese issue. He already promised to withdraw Israeli forces from South Lebanon in the election campaigns of 1999. The collapse of peace negotiations with Syria and the ineffectiveness of the policy of large-scale operations against Hizballah convinced him to withdraw IDF from South Lebanon unilaterally without reaching an agreement. In other words, Barak gambled on unilateral withdrawal with an aim to solve the Lebanese problem.²⁵¹ The IDF withdrew by 24 May 2000 bringing an end to 22 year of occupation. Secondly, the failures on Palestinian-Israeli track in July 2000 followed by the outbreak of Al-Aqsa Intifada of Palestinians in October 2000. The culmination of Palestinian irritation toward Israel throughout the negotiations since Oslo Accords and the collapse of peace efforts in 2000 were the underlining reasons of Intifada. In this conjuncture, the leader of Likud Party Ariel Sharon's visit to Haram al-Sharif, which sits on the al-Aqsa Mosque and Dome of Rock both holy places for Muslims, on 28 September, provoked the uprising among Palestinians. In Palestinian vantage point, the intifada signified the end of humiliations of the Oslo peace process. The uprising increased cooperation between radical Palestinian militias like HAMAS and Islamic Jihad on the one hand and Al-Fatah on the other. Thirdly, Ariel Sharon won the Israeli elections for prime ministry on 6 February 2001. His election signaled the shift of Israeli

²⁵¹ Itamar Rabinovich, *The View From Damascus: State, Political Community and Foreign Relations in Twentieth-Century Syria*, (London: Valentine Mitchell, 2008), p. 334-335

policy toward Arabs in favor of an antagonistic approach.²⁵² Consequently, the culmination of sequent developments led to the total collapse of Arab-Israeli peace process which was dominated the regional politics throughout 1990s. The pivotal role of Syria for achieving peace in the region lost by the failure of process. Hence, the Syrian position in American foreign policy ceased to be important in Arab-Israeli context.

The failure of Arab-Israeli peace initiative coincided with the election of George W. Bush to Presidency in the US in January 2001. His election marked the changing US policy toward Middle East. In contrast to Clinton administration, Bush administration had reservations about making the peace process a cornerstone of foreign policy and instead prioritized the reinforcement of the sanctions against Iraq which were imposed after the Gulf War. In State Department's explanation a 'minimalist' approach to peace talks adopted instead of President Clinton's hands-on approach.²⁵³ Once again Syria's position vis-à-vis the US hardened due to its diminished significance for peace and its complicated relations with Iraq. In this conjuncture, 'Bashar considers Bush to be anti-Arab and pro-Israel while Bush regards Bashar as anti-American and a terror-sponsoring tyrant.'²⁵⁴

The catastrophic event to change the whole course of events in the Middle East realized on 11 September 2001. The followers of Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda terrorist organization hijacked planes, used them as explosives, and struck the World Trade Center and Pentagon, the symbols of economic and military power of the US. The killing of thousands of civilians and the magnitude of terrorist attack had a shocking affect throughout the world. In terms of US foreign policy, the effect of September 11 events were of great importance. President Bush declared the 'war on terrorism' and divided the world between those with the United States and those with the terrorists by saying:

²⁵² Owendale, *The Origins of the Arab Israeli Wars*, p.305-308

²⁵³ Robert G. Rabil, *Syria, The United States, and the War on Terror in the Middle East*, (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2006), p.128

²⁵⁴ Moshe Ma'oz 'Washington and Damascus: Between Confrontation and Cooperation', *United States Institute of Peace*, Special Report 146, (August 2005), p.2

Our war on terror begins with al Qaeda, but it does not end there... From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime. Every nation in every region now has a decision to make: you are with us or you are with the terrorists.²⁵⁵

In this context, the neo-conservatives in US administration envisaged a transformation of the whole Middle East in terms of strategic, political, economic, and cultural domains. They defined the basic problems of the region as the tyranny, extremism, social oppression, corruption, and economic stagnation. In their vantage point, the culmination of those problems paved the way to September 11 attacks. In this sense, the solution would be found in the establishment of freedom, democracy, human rights, rule of law, pluralism, and market capitalism. The implementation of those norms could also be done through using force. Hence, the policies of containment or deterrence would be replaced by pre-emption in fighting terrorism. In this way, any potential threat to US or its allies would be forestalled before it had a chance to turn into a real threat.²⁵⁶ In the declared war on terror, US and allies would not only fight with terrorist organizations but also fight the states hosting those organizations. The first US target was Afghanistan, in which it was successful in overthrowing Taliban but could not capture bin Laden. In 2002, President Bush declared North Korea, Iran and Iraq as the axis of evil, being supporters of terrorist organizations and possessing weapons of mass destruction.²⁵⁷ The new context characterized by the US war on terror worsened Syrian position both in international and regional arena. Although President Bush left Syria out of axis of evil in his speech, the Syrian regime was accused for hosting Palestinian terrorist organizations, supporting Hizballah, and possessing weapons of mass destruction (WMD). The already strained US-Syrian relations further deteriorated by the invasion of Iraq in 2003. The Syrian regime vehemently opposed the US invasion of Iraq while alleging that it was launched due to American ambitions to obtain oil and redraw regional map in

²⁵⁵ President Bush's address to a joint session of Congress on Thursday night, 20 September 2001, Transcript of President Bush's address, CNN, 21.11.2001, http://articles.cnn.com/2001-09-20/us/gen.bush.transcript.1_joint-session-national-anthem-citizens?_s=PM:US, accessed on 19.04.2011

²⁵⁶ David Hirst, *Beware of Small States: Lebanon, Battleground of the Middle East*, (New York: Nation Books, 2010), p.281

²⁵⁷ Bush State of the Union address, CNN, 29 January 2002, http://articles.cnn.com/2002-01-29/politics/bush.speech.txt.1_firefighter-returns-terrorist-training-camps-interim-leader?_s=PM:ALLPOLITICS, accessed 19.04.2011

accordance with Israeli interests. US, on the other hand, accused Syria of supporting Iraqi insurgents.²⁵⁸

In conclusion, Syria's role in regional affairs deteriorated by the collapse of Arab-Israeli peace process and by the change in US orientation toward Middle East under Bush administration. The significance of this change on the Lebanese-Syrian relations was the gradual loss of US support to the Syrian presence in Lebanon as a means of stability. During those significant developments, the domestic politics in Syria also changed by death of Hafez Asad and his succession by his son Bashar Asad.

5.1.2 The Succession of Bashar and Lebanon

Hafez Asad died on 10 June 2000. The death of the founder of the Syrian regime and leader of it since 1970 raised doubts about the succession of leadership within the country. However, the succession process to his son Bashar Asad was a smooth one thanks to the President Hafez Asad's earlier attempts to clean the way for Bashar's presidency. Indeed, in early 1990s, it was thought that Hafez Asad was grooming his eldest son Basil as his heir. In the period, Basil was named in top military posts, exposed to public, and gained popularity in Syrian domestic politics. However, after Basil died in a car accident on 21 January 1994, Hafez Asad started to promote Bashar Asad although he never mentioned his name as his heir. Bashar, immediately returned from Britain where he was serving as an ophthalmologist and groomed by his father. He entered into the high echelons of army; appeared on public frequently; granted authority in politics; and promoted his skills in modern technology, especially in computer science.²⁵⁹ He took the charge Lebanese files on 1998. Furthermore, Hafez Asad eased the way to Bashar's succession by removing potential rivals from their positions. The threatening figures in Syrian top echelons who could challenge Bashar's presidency in future forced retirement or removed as a result of anti-corruption campaign.²⁶⁰ After Hafez's death, Bashar al-Asad elected as the new president of Syria on 10 July 2000.

²⁵⁸ Ma'oz, 'Washington and Damascus: Between Confrontation and Cooperation', p.5

²⁵⁹Zisser, *Commanding Syria: Bashar al-Asad and the First Years in Power*, p.28-33

²⁶⁰David W. Lesch, *The New Lion of Damascus: Bashar al-Asad and Modern Syria*, (London: Yale University Press, 2005), p.75

The transfer of presidential power to Bashar Asad raised suspicions of the regime survivability in Syria. Bashar's capabilities as a young leader, at an age of 34, were doubtful for many. Indeed, Zisser explains his smooth transition to power with the lack of alternatives. According to Zisser, the Syrian ruling elite recognized the importance of filling the vacuum quickly to prevent threat of stability to regime and in the absence of alternative ones, already purged by Hafez, they agreed on Bashar's name.²⁶¹ David Lesch, on the other hand, underlines the significance of the personality of Bashar and positive public attitude toward him for his succession. Lesch argues that, Bashar was seen as the hope for Syria with his personality as a young, educated, compassionate leader and represented the next generation. In addition, he was still an 'Asad' and gained confidence of main power circles for the continuation of existing structure.²⁶²

Bashar Asad, either the hope for Syria or the choice in the lack of alternatives, had to deal with both internal and external challenges immediately as he took office. He inherited the Syrian leadership at a time when country was having both external and internal problems. The transformation in international and regional set up coincided with transition period in Syria and it can be said that the process could not be handled successfully. Internally, Syrian society had political and economic problems which could not be solved by reform projects under Hafez Asad.

In the mean time, Rafiq Hariri won the 2000 parliamentary elections and elected as the next prime minister in Lebanon. His return to prime ministry was important parameter for both Lebanese politics and its relations with Syria. Indeed, the poor performance of Hoss government during 1998-2000 governmental period allowed Hariri to pursue a successful opposition rhetoric. Syrian leadership recalled him in 2000 as the only figure that could provide impetus to economy by his international connections, as in the case of 1992. Hariri accepted the post by hoping that economic revival would convince Syria of his role.²⁶³

The new pattern of relations between Syria and Lebanon established under Bashar's presidency. First of all, Hariri's international links, especially with the US,

²⁶¹Zisser, *Commanding Syria: Bashar al-Asad and the First Years in Power*, p.45

²⁶² Lesch, *The New Lion of Damascus: Bashar al-Asad and Modern Syria*, p.79

²⁶³ Talal Nizameddin, 'The Political Economy of Lebanon under Rafiq Hariri: An Interpretation', *the Middle East Journal*, Vol. 60 No.1, (Winter 2006), p.110

Europe and Saudi Arabia irritated Bashar at a time when Syria had problems with them. For Bashar, Hariri represented Western foothold in Lebanon that undermined Syrian position. For Hariri, taking a pro-Syrian stance would complicate his relations with Saudi Arabia and the West but abandoning Syria would threaten Lebanese future. Secondly, in the power struggle between President Lahoud and Hariri, Syria sided with Lahoud. Indeed, after Lahoud became President in 1998, he transformed Lebanese army and intelligence in Syrian style and tried to establish a security regime in the country and tried to shift power from government to security machine. After Hariri's election in 2000, the two men of troika entered into a struggle. Syria acted as a peace-maker among them but in reality supported Lahoud and undermined Hariri.²⁶⁴

In conclusion, the transformations in international, regional and domestic arenas had important repercussions for Lebanese-Syrian relations. The deteriorating Syrian position vis-à-vis the US declined the American support for Syrian hegemony over Lebanon. The transition of leadership in Syria to Bashar made things more delicate while Bashar sought to establish a new kind of relationship with Lebanon by trusting on President Lahoud while sidelining Hariri.

5.2. Economic Relations: Syrian Reform Program and Lebanese Reconstruction

5.2.1 Damascus Spring & Economic Reforms

President Bashar faced economic and social problems as he stepped to Presidency in Syria. The previous attempts during Syrian previous infitah policies could not revive Syrian economy. Bashar was seen as the hope at least for reforming the country although there were doubts about his ability to do so.

In economic terms, the country faced troubles related to job creation in a society with high population growth and high employment; economic dependence on oil revenues with a risk of depletion of oil fields; encouragement of private capital due to domination of inefficient public sector; and social instability caused by increasing

²⁶⁴ Nizameddin, 'The Political Economy of Lebanon under Rafiq Hariri: An Interpretation', p.97

poverty and decreasing standards of human development.²⁶⁵ Besides the economic constraints, the political reforms started to be demanded after the death of Hafez Asad.

President Asad's initial steps were indicated his will for reforming and modernizing country. First of all, the generational change in top echelons interpreted as a step taken in reform process. Although some of the old-guard of old regime remained, Bashar tried to integrate young generation and technocrats to the system. Secondly, Bashar's inaugural speech was in favor of the change in country. In his speech he talked about the needs for economic reforms and democratic thinking although favoring a democratic experience special to Syria.²⁶⁶ In the light of these developments, the Damascus Spring, which was an economic and political reform program, began in the initial months of Bashar's Presidency. Throughout the Damascus Spring, the prominent Syrian intellectuals initiated a civil society movement. They formed salons and forums and published petitions calling for an end to state of emergency, release of political prisoners, establishment of the state of law, and freedom of expression and press.²⁶⁷ The regime responded by releasing some of the political prisoners, licensing privately owned newspapers, and keeping atmosphere relatively open for the establishment of civil society organizations. However, the Spring in Damascus did not last long. The remaining old-guards of the Syrian regime were influential in the halt of political openness. Its end specified by an interview of President Asad to daily newspaper Al-Sharq al-Awsat on 9 February 2001. In this interview, he defined Syrian intellectuals as 'a small group small, collection of spies and fools'.²⁶⁸ In the following period, the forums were closed and the major critics of the regime were arrested.

After the end of Damascus Spring, the reform program focused on solely economic ones. The economic development prioritized over political openness. It was argued that the economic development plan necessitates a strong central government. In order to prevent Russian style economic breakdown, the regime pursued economic

²⁶⁵ Volker Perthes, 'Syria under Bashar al-Asad: Modernisation and the Limits of Change', (London: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 29-31

²⁶⁶ President Bashar al-Asad's Inaugural Speech, 17 July 2000, http://www.presidentassad.net/SPEECHES/BASHAR_ASSAD_2000_INAUGURATION_SPEECH.htm, accessed on 30 March 2011

²⁶⁷ The major petitions were Statement of 99, published in September 2000 and Statement of 1000 released in January 2001. For further information on Damascus Spring see, Alan George, *Syria: Neither Bread nor Freedom*, (London: Zed Books 2003), p. 33-46

²⁶⁸ Alan George, *Syria: Neither Bread nor Freedom*, (London: Zed Books 2003), p.49

opening without a political one.²⁶⁹ The reforming of Syrian economy was not an easy task although nearly all Syrians believed in its necessity. Bashar Asad may have genuine intentions of political and economic reforms but the lack of political institutions to facilitate a new contract between the regime and society and the fact that president is beholden to a small regime-insider group brought reforms to be halted. In the end economic reforms did not lead to an economic revival in Syria. In these circumstances, Asad regime found it easier to utilize Lebanon as an economic buffer zone, as Hong Kong is for China, for easing Syria's integration into the world economy.²⁷⁰

5.2.2 The Lebanese Economy and the Syrian Shadows

While Syria was having its own attempts for economic reforms, Rafiq Hariri continued its ambitions for economic reconstruction of Lebanon. The economic reconstruction program followed the footsteps of 1992-1998 period and aimed to attract foreign investment in Lebanon. Rafiq Hariri's international connections continued to be supportive of the program. Although the Lebanese economy improved financial standing and avoided financial crisis, the problem of generating growth and indebtedness of the country continued.²⁷¹ The policy of integration to the world economy continued by opening ups to Arab countries, European Union, and the World Trade Organization. However the inherent neglect of domestic economic reform remained as the main obstacle to economic development. Baroudi puts it as, 'The biggest challenge facing the success of Lebanon's efforts at integration lies in the mismatch between the fast at which Lebanon is proceeding with free trade agreements and the far slower pace at which it is implementing much needed domestic economic reforms.'²⁷²

Besides the inherent problem of Lebanese reconstruction program, Hariri government faced constraints by President Lahoud who was backed by Syrians. As mentioned earlier, in the changing regional conjuncture, Syrian regime saw Hariri's international links as a threat to Syrian interest and cooperated with Lahoud as its main

²⁶⁹ Lesch, *The New Lion of Damascus: Bashar al-Asad and Modern Syria*, p.221

²⁷⁰ Zisser, *Commanding Syria: Bashar al-Asad and the First Years in Power*, p.121

²⁷¹ Iskandar, *Rafiq Hariri and The Fate of Lebanon*, p.125

²⁷² Sami E. Baroudi, 'Lebanon's Foreign Trade Relations in the Postwar Era: Scenerios for Integration (1990- Present)', *the Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.41, No.2, (March 2005), p.220

ally. Moreover, Hariri's concerns for Hizballah's struggle, which was damaging his reconstruction program, distasted Syrian regime. The struggle between President Lahoud and Hariri continued until the death of Hariri in 2005. In the period, Hariri most of the time compelled to cooperate with Lahoud's decisions not to antagonize Lahoud's Syrian patrons. Blanford exemplifies the severity of the situation as follows. 'During one heated cabinet debate, Hariri felt compelled to vote against his own proposal after it was rejected by Lahoud.'²⁷³

In conclusion, the Syrian needs and benefits from Lebanese economy continued while new determinant introduced to economic relations by Syrian support to Lahoud and their joint attempt to constraint Hariri's policies.

5.3 Israel, Syria and Hizballah

The Israeli unilateral withdrawal from South Lebanon completed on 24 May 2000. Parallel to the end of peace negotiations between Israel and Syria, the withdrawal was a crucial moment for the embedded relations of Syria, Hizballah and Israel. The reasons for Israeli unilateral withdrawal were defined by the Foreign Minister David Levy in a press briefing on 23 May 2000 as follows,

The government decision was the result of our recognition that the security zone could not stop the katyushas that threaten and inflict damage on our northern settlements. Our continued presence there exacted a heavy security and political price:

1. It endangered the lives of our soldiers and citizens;
2. It legitimized attacks against Israel as an occupying force;
3. It severely limited the action of our soldiers by the presence of Hizballah in the heart of the Lebanese civilian population and our consequent fear of harming innocent civilians.
4. It forced us to accept the rules of the game as dictated by Syria and Iran, implemented by the Hizballah and their like; and
5. It resulted in ongoing attrition and the inability to achieve results.

²⁷³ Blanford, *Killing Mr Lebanon: The Assassination of Rafik Hariri and Its Impact on the Middle East*, p.85

Faced with this reality, the Israeli government decided to put an end to this absurd situation. In redeploying along the international border, we are regaining control of the initiative.²⁷⁴

Later on the Prime Minister Ehud Barak stated that ‘From now on, the government of Lebanon is accountable for what takes place within its territory, and the Lebanese and Syrian governments are responsible for preventing acts of terror or aggression against Israel, which is from today deployed within its borders.’²⁷⁵ The Israeli side argued that the IDF withdrew in accordance with the UNSC Resolution 425.

The impact of withdrawal on Hizballah was complicated. On the one hand, the organization’s popularity increased both in Lebanon and in the Arab countries. The unilateral withdrawal was interpreted as a victory and success of resistance. Hizballah tried to use his increased popularity in order to enhance its role in Lebanese political system.²⁷⁶ On the other hand, Hizballah’s weapons and presence in the south became more questionable as well.²⁷⁷ Besides Hizballah, the Syrian regime also faced new potential challenges after IDF’s withdrawal for the legitimacy of Syrian troops in Lebanon and the loss of Hizballah leverage in its relations with Israel.²⁷⁸

Hizballah came up with two major motives for continuing its resistance against Israel and keep its arms: the complete withdrawal of Israel and the release of Lebanese prisoners held by Israelis. Hizballah, with tacit agreements of Lebanese government and Syria argued that Israeli withdrawal was not complete since the IDF still occupies Lebanese territory in the region called as Shebaa Farms. The Shebaa Farms lay at the intersect of Syrian-Lebanese-Israeli border. It is 14 kilometers in length and 2 kilometers in width and composed of 14 agricultural farmlands. The main problem was the question on to which state the Shebaa Farms belong since the border demarcation is problematic between Israel, Syria and Lebanon. According to Lebanese government and Hizballah,

²⁷⁴D. Levy, ‘Withdrawal from Lebanon: Press Briefing’, May 23, 2000, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Speeches+by+Israeli+leaders/2000/Withdrawal+from+Lebanon+-+Press+Briefing+by+FM+Levy.htm>, accessed on 21.04.2011

²⁷⁵Israel Completes Pull-out from Lebanon’, May 24, 2000, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/History/Modern+History/Historic+Events/The+Israeli+Withdrawal+from+South+Lebanon+-+Spec.htm>, accessed on 21.04.2011

²⁷⁶Meliha Altunışık, *Lübnan Krizi: Nedenleri ve Sonuçları*, (İstanbul: TESEV, 2007), p.10

²⁷⁷ Özlem Tür, ‘The Lebanese War of 2006: Reasons and Consequences’, *Perceptions*, (Spring 2007), p.113

²⁷⁸Rabil, Syria, *The United States, and the War on Terror in the Middle East*, p.123

the area belongs to Lebanese state. The tax payments in mandate period set forth to provide evidence. Syrian side also declared that Shebaa Farms to be Lebanese. The UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, on the other hand, declared officially on 16 June that Israel had completed its withdrawal from Lebanon. According to UN, the Shebaa Farms belongs to Syria and any deal on the issue should be between Syria and Israel under jurisdiction of UNSC Resolution 242.²⁷⁹ The Shebaa Farms issue was instrumental for both Hizballah and Syria to continue Hizballah resistance. The organization was able to sustain its legitimacy for keeping its arms while Syria continued to use resistance as an indirect pressure on Israel to force its withdrawal from Golan Heights. Indeed, the approval of all Lebanese groups and government that Shebaa Farms belongs to Lebanon could be analyzed as Hizballah's success. On the other hand, Israel thought that Hizballah uses it as an excuse for its resistance.²⁸⁰

After the IDF and SLA left South Lebanon Hizballah fulfilled the vacuum immediately while Lebanese government refrained from sending its army to the region. In post-withdrawal period Hizballah continued its integration to domestic Lebanese system, parallel to its ongoing resistance against Israel in the south. In 2000 elections, which were held after the Israeli withdrawal, Hizballah formed the largest single bloc in the parliament by holding 9 of 128 seats.²⁸¹ The struggle against Israel resumed after nearly five months of quiet in the region. The post-2000 period can be characterized by flare-ups between Israel and Hizballah, the latter attempting to kidnap IDF troops, to release the Lebanese and Palestinian prisoners in a parallel development of massive investment of Hizballah's military infrastructure.²⁸²

The Al-Aqsa Intifada gave impetus to Hizballah resistance. The operations mostly held in the contested area of Shebaa Farms. The first operation held on 7 October 2000 when Hizballah kidnapped 3 Israeli soldiers. Barak government in Israel refrained from retaliation in order not to accelerate tension. However, after Sharon government came to power in 2001 having aggressive attitude toward both Syria and Hizballah,

²⁷⁹ For more information on the issue of Shebaa Farms, see, Asher Kaufman, 'Who Owns the Shebaa Farms? Chronicle of a Territorial Dispute', *the Middle East Journal*, Volume 56 No 4, (Autumn 2002)

²⁸⁰ Altunışık, *Lübnan Krizi: Nedenleri ve Sonuçları*, p.18

²⁸¹ Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, p.151

²⁸² Jonathan Spyer, 'Israel and Lebanon: Problematic Proximity', in *Lebanon: Liberation, Conflict and Crisis*, ed. by Bary Rubin, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p.206

Israel also retaliated to Hizballah attacks. Israeli aircraft responded Hizballah killings by attacking Syrian radar stations in Dhar al-Baydar and Riyaq in Lebanon in April and July 2001. Syria did not respond not to provoke Israelis.²⁸³

The Syrian support to Hizballah continued after the Israeli withdrawal as well. As Harik asserts Damascus set the rules down as follows: Hizballah would continue its struggle against Israel while the government would undertake state affairs.²⁸⁴ A new dimension added to the Syrian-Hizballah relations under Bashar Asad's Presidency. Unlike Hafez Asad's cautious handling of Hizballah, Bashar cultivated a close personal relationship with Hizballah General Secretary Nasrallah. In an environment of deteriorating regional conditions Bashar both admired and aligned with Hizballah's confrontational attitude to West.²⁸⁵

The changing international and regional conjuncture by Bush administration's 'war on terrorism' had repercussions for Lebanon, Hizballah and Syria as well. Hizballah was on the US list of the terrorist organizations. The question of defining Hizballah as a terrorist organization renewed after 9/11. The organization quickly understood that US antipathy against it would increase. In this conjuncture it tried to differentiate itself from al-Qaeda and rejected mass indiscriminate international terror. But the organization's support to Palestinian intifada and anti-Israeli operations in Shebaa Farms were enough for US anxiety.²⁸⁶ However, Israeli and American efforts were not successful. Lebanese government claimed Hizballah as resistance movement. The European Union countries did not define Hizballah as a terrorist organization. In 2005, European Parliament included Hizballah on the list of terrorist organizations but the Parliament's decision did not obliged the member countries. Only Canada, Australia and Holland added the organization to terror list as a result of US efforts.²⁸⁷

The Syrian-Israeli relations, on the other hand, affected from the changing regional balance of power as well. The Syrian regime supported Palestinian Intifada and President Bashar adopted anti-Israeli rhetoric at the time. Later on, while US-Syrian

²⁸³ Zisser, *Commanding Syria: Bashar al-Asad and the First Years in Power*, p.159-160

²⁸⁴ Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, p.152

²⁸⁵ Emile El-Hokayem, 'Hizballah and Syria: Outgrawing the Proxy Relationship', *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol.30, No.2, (Spring 2007), p.42-43

²⁸⁶ Hirst, *Beware of Small States: Lebanon, Battleground of the Middle East*, p.292

²⁸⁷ Eitan Azani, *Hezbollah: The Story of the Party of God: From Revolution to Institutionalization*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), p. 238

relations deteriorated, Syria made some moves for resume of Syrian-Israeli peace negotiation but both Sharon and Bush refused Syrian calls asserting that it must first stop sponsoring Palestinian and Lebanese terrorist organizations.²⁸⁸

5.4 The Continuing Syrian Involvement in Lebanese Domestic Politics and the Rise of Anti-Syrian Camp

When Syrian hegemony established in the post-Taif period, the major component of it was the full dominance over Lebanese political life. The presence of Syrian troops in the country, the tacit acceptance of Lebanese government of Hizballah's resistance in the South, and the economic interests of Syria were all bound to Syrian control of Lebanese politicians. As will be recalled, Syrian policy depended on rewarding clients and punishing foes while Syrian intelligence service acted as a means of enhancing Syrian rule in Lebanon. The Syrian presence in Lebanon tried to be presented as a source of stability in the country. Hence, Syria also acted as a political arbiter among the competing parties.

The Syrian rules of the game did not face a disturbing challenge throughout 1990s. The US adherence to Madrid peace process paralleled with its tacit acceptance of Syrian dominance in Lebanon. The Lebanese clientele, benefiting from their close relationship with Asad regime, made it easier for Syria to impose its rule while oppositional forces could not grasp an opportunity to raise their voices. However, the dramatic changes in international and regional affairs mostly felt in the Lebanese-Syrian relations. The deteriorating US-Syrian relations increased pressures on Syria on the issues of its support to terrorist organizations, possession of WMD and dominance on Lebanon. In the meantime, the Israeli withdrawal from South Lebanon increased concerns about Syrian presence. As a result, an indigenous anti-Syrian movement found opportunity to raise its voice in Lebanon.

²⁸⁸ Ma'oz 'Washington and Damascus: Between Confrontation and Cooperation', p.6

5.4.1 The Rise of Anti-Syrian Movement in Lebanon

The anti-Syrian movement in Lebanon emerged immediately after the Israeli withdrawal from South Lebanon in May 2000. The Israeli withdrawal opened the way for questioning of Syrian presence in the absence of an Israeli one. The subsequent death of Hafez Asad raised hopes for removal of Syrian troops under the leadership of Bashar, initially seen as an inexperienced and incapable one.²⁸⁹

In this conjuncture, the Maronite led opposition started to call for Lebanese independence and the normalization of relations with Syria on equal terms. They were demanding Syrian withdrawal before the upcoming parliamentary elections of 2005. The opposition organized student demonstrations and made statements criticizing Syrian hegemony. Gebran Tueni, the editor of Lebanese daily newspaper al-Nahar, for instance published an open letter to Bashar Asad on 23 March 2000. He argued that many Lebanese are not at ease with Syria but uncover their real thoughts due to their fears of Syrian response. Tueni called for Lebanese independence and Syrian recognition of Lebanese sovereignty.²⁹⁰ He also raised concerns about the Syrian role in the upcoming parliamentary elections of 2000, a concern proved to be right when it became apparent that Syria once again gerrymandered Lebanese elections of 2000. Robert Fisk ironically argued that 'For despite the 589 pro- and anti-government candidates standing for the 128 seats in Lebanon's national assembly, every one of them is pro-Syrian. The government is pro-Syrian. The opposition is pro-Syrian.'²⁹¹ Indeed, as in the case of 1992 and 1996 elections, Syria secured the election of its allies by intervening in the defining of electoral district and electoral lists in a way to reward allies and punish foes.²⁹² After elections, Patriarch Nasrallah Sfeir's statement published on 20 September 2000. He criticized the corruption of Lebanese elections and Syrian role in it. The

²⁸⁹ Zisser, *Commanding Syria: Bashar al-Asad and the First Years in Power*, p.185

²⁹⁰ Gebran Tueni, 'Open Letter to Bashar al-Asad', Beirut, Al-Nahar News, 23 March 2000, cited by, *the Middle East Intelligence Bulletin*, Vol.2, No.4, (April 2000), http://www.meforum.org/meib/articles/0004_doc1.htm, accessed on 04.05.2011

²⁹¹ Robert Fisk, 'Money Ranks Higher Than Democracy in Lebanese Polls', *The Independent*, 27 August 2000 <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/money-ranks-higher-than-democracy-in-lebanese-polls-711573.html>, accessed on 07.04.2011

²⁹² For detailed analysis of Syrian intervention in Lebanese elections, see Bassel F. Salloukh, 'The Limits of Electoral Engineering in Divided Societies: Elections in Postwar Lebanon', *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 39, Issue 3, 2006

statement called for Syrian withdrawal by asking the question ‘Now that Israel has left, isn’t it time for Syrian troops to completely withdraw pursuant to the Ta’if Accord?’²⁹³

The anti-Syrian movement initially spread among Maronites and Druzes. The Maronites were historically anxious about the Lebanese identity and independence and cautious of its relations with Arab neighbors. The Maronite opposition parties²⁹⁴ gathered and established Qornet Shehwan Gathering in April 2001. They adopted Maronite Patriarch Sfeir’s political discourse of the need to implement Ta’if and establish balanced relations between Syria and Lebanon.²⁹⁵ Druzes under Joumblatt’s leadership, on the other hand, gave their support to the movement for political calculations. The change in electoral law and single districting of Ba’adba-Alay created a mixed confessional voter profile and made Maronite votes critical for Druze leader. Joumblatt’s anti-Syrian stance was a result of his aim to gain Christian backing for securing his election.²⁹⁶

The successes of the movement realized in 2001 when Syrian troops withdrew from Beirut. Although the Syrian regime intended to present withdrawal as a sign of good faith to President Lahoud, it is generally understood as a success of opposition forces. However, the inability to attract nation-wide popular support including Sunnis and Shias and the lack of foreign support made the movement’s attempt inefficient for the time. Hence the anti-Syrian figures, themselves, had to cooperate with Syria from time to time.²⁹⁷

The years of 2000 and 2004 witnessed a political competition between President Lahoud, backed by Syrian regime and supported by Speaker of Parliament Birri, Amal and Hizballah; and Prime Minister Hariri, supported by Joumblatt. The rivalry paralyzed the government, but Hariri and his allies had chosen to wait until the expiration of

²⁹³ Nadine Sibai, ‘Declaration of The Maronite Archbishops Council’, 5 October 2000, *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin*, Vol.2, No.9

²⁹⁴ It included the National Liberal Party of Dony Shamoun, unofficial Phalange Party loyal to Amin Gemayel and Elie Karameh, Lebanese Forces of Samir Geagea, National Bloc led by Carlos Edde and some independents.

²⁹⁵ Farid el-Khazen, ‘Political Parties in Postwar Lebanon: Parties in Search of Partisans’, *the Middle East Journal*, Volume 57, No. 4, (Autumn 2003), p.622

²⁹⁶ Bassel F. Salloukh, ‘The Limits of Electoral Engineering in Divided Societies: Elections in Postwar Lebanon’, *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 39, Issue 3,(2006)

²⁹⁷ Veysel Ayhan & Özlem Tür, *Lübnan: Savaş, Barış, Direniş ve Türkiye ile İlişkiler*, (Bursa: Dora, 2009), p.188-190

Lahoud's term in 2004.²⁹⁸ The incorporation of Sunnis to the movement and the concrete foreign backing to anti-Syrian opposition realized after the 2003 Iraqi invasion.

5.4.2 The Invasion of Iraq and the US Support to Anti-Syrian Movement

The 2003 invasion of Iraq was a turning point for the US-Syrian relations. As mentioned before, the relations were deteriorated after the collapse of Israeli-Syrian peace negotiations and the US 'war on terrorism' declared after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Syria, already squeezed by US pressures for the US accusations of its support to Palestinian terrorist organizations, possession of WMDs, and its relations with Iraq had to face the new reality in the region with the US invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003. The US accusations were contestable in terms of the capacity of Syria for possessing WMD or definition of some Palestinian organizations as terrorists. However, the major point here is not the proof of the US accusations or their understanding by the other actors but the tension that Syria had with the US administration while the latter became the eastern neighbor of Syria after the Iraqi occupation.

The US pursued a relatively moderate policy toward Syria until the Iraqi invasion thanks to latter's support for war against international terrorism and cooperation with US against al-Qaeda cells in Europe and Middle East. The turning point for severing of US-Syrian relations was 2003 invasion of Iraq. Indeed, before the invasion Syria was already at odds with US on Iraqi issue due to Syria's opening up to its eastern neighbor in 2001. On the eve of the war, Syria vehemently opposed the use of military force to remove Saddam Hussein. The Syrian vote for UNSC Resolution 1441, demanding Iraqi compliance with previous Resolutions on development of WMDs, legitimized by Syrian attempt to save Iraq from a military strike. Thereafter, Syria became the leading critic of US-led campaign against Iraq.²⁹⁹ When US invasion started in March 2003, President Asad interpreted invasion as a US-Israeli plan to reorganize the region according to their own interests and exaggerated Iraq's ability to stand against US. In fact, from Syrian regime's point of view, the occupation was a direct threat to its

²⁹⁸ Gary C. Gambill, 'The Cedar Revolution's Slow Death', *The National Post*, 26 July 2005, <http://www.mideastmonitor.org/gambill/0507261.htm>, accessed on 26.04.2011

²⁹⁹ Rabil, *Syria, The United States, and the War on Terror in the Middle East*, p.133-134

geopolitical interests and regime security. The installation of a stable pro-American government would encircle Syria with pro-Western states while the division of Iraq on ethnic-sectarian lines would threaten Syrian own heterogeneous identity. Moreover, a sudden collapse of Iraq would trigger Bush administration to move against Syria as the new target.³⁰⁰

After the Iraqi invasion, the tense in US-Syrian relations increased. US administration blamed Syria for its support to Iraqi insurgents by smuggling equipment, allowing Arab volunteers to reach Iraq, and assisting Iraqi leaders to escape through the Syrian-Iraqi border. At the same time, the neo-conservatives in Bush administration increased their voices for using military force for a regime change in Syria as well. In this conjuncture, American Congress reintroduced Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act (SALSA) on 12 April 2003 which was previously shelved thanks to Syrian cooperation against al-Qaeda. The act called for punitive economic and diplomatic actions against Syria to halt its 'support to terrorism', to stop its 'development of WMD', and to end its occupation of Lebanon. Following the introduction of SALSA, the US Secretary of State Colin Powell visited Damascus on 3 May 2003. He presented Bashar with a long list of US demands including full cooperation of Damascus in the 'war on terrorism' and in Iraq, strict monitoring of Syrian-Iraqi border, an end to the support for HAMAS and Islamic Jihad, a verification of Syria's WMD, the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon, disarmament of Hizballah, and deployment of Lebanese Army over all Lebanese territory.³⁰¹ 'In short, to give up its 'cards' in the struggle over the Golan, its sphere of influence in the Levant, and its Arab nationalist stature in the Arab world.'³⁰² Syria responded by conciliatory moves to decrease pressure but continued its support to Iraqi insurgents to escalate the crisis in Iraq.

The changing US-Syrian relations had important repercussion for Lebanese-Syrian relations as well. The previous US support to, or at least tacit acceptance of, Syrian dominance over Lebanon declined by Syrian rejection to US efforts in Middle

³⁰⁰ Bassel F. Salloukh, 'Demystifying Syrian Foreign Policy under Bashar al-Asad', in *Demystifying Syria*, ed. by Fred Lawson, (London: Saqi, 2009), p.163

³⁰¹ Salloukh, 'Demystifying Syrian Foreign Policy under Bashar al-Asad', p.163-164

³⁰² Raymond Hinnebusch, 'Syrian Foreign Policy under Bashar al-Asad', *Ortadoğu Etütleri*, Vol.1, No.1, (July 2009), p.19

East. Chomsky, in this regard, argues that US position towards Syria has always been opportunistic. In past, US accepted Syrian military entrance to Lebanon and favored their stay in 1991 for opportunistic reasons. In the former, the Syrian military action directed against Palestinians while in the latter Syria joined US-led coalition against Iraq during the Gulf War. However, when Syria not obeyed US orders the Bush administration changed its attitude for Syria's Lebanese policy.³⁰³ Gilbert Achcar also found Washington's attitude towards Syria as purely instrumental in the past. He argued that when Syria took hostile position toward US war on Iraq, US tried to use Lebanon to punish and exert pressure on Syria.³⁰⁴ The anti-Syrian movement in Lebanon which was emerged after the Israeli withdrawal, this time sought support from US.

5.4.3 The Extension of President Lahoud's Term

After the invasion of Iraq, Lebanese politics were dominated by the upcoming presidential elections at the end of 2004. The rivalry between President Lahoud and Prime Minister Hariri within the Lebanese troika arouse when Syria were troubled in its relations with US. The Syrian regime, in the deteriorated atmosphere in the region was reluctant to define a new candidate for presidency. As will be recalled, Lahoud was in full compliance with Syrian demands and acted as a Syrian foot in Lebanon. Hariri, on the other hand, was seen as a Western agency in Lebanon trying to curb Syrian influence there. Indeed, it was true that Hariri was demanding the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon for the establishment of Lebanese sovereignty but as a pragmatist leader he was trying to solve the issue smoothly to prevent a new crisis in the country.³⁰⁵

Throughout 2004, Hariri opposed the extension of President Lahoud's term in office by necessary amendments in the constitution. Hariri's rejection created friction between President Asad and Hariri. The Syrian bid for its control over Lebanese politics revealed when Hariri summoned to Damascus to discuss the issue of extension. When Hariri and Bashar met on 26 August 2004, Hariri tried to convince Bashar not to extend

³⁰³ Noam Chomsky & Gilbert Achcar, *Perilous Power: Middle East and the U.S Foreign Policy: Dialogues on Terror, Democracy, War, and Justice*, (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2007), p.131

³⁰⁴ *ibid.*, p.134

³⁰⁵ Ayhan & Tür, *Lübnan: Savaş, Barış, Direniş ve Türkiye ile İlişkiler*, p.194-195

Lahoud's term. Bashar replied by saying 'I am Lahoud and Lahoud is me. If your friend Chirac wants me out of Lebanon, I would sooner break Lebanon on your head and the head of Chirac than break my word.'³⁰⁶ It was clear that Hariri's international links, especially with France irritated Bashar.

The Syrian insistence to extend Lahoud's term provoked American, French officials and Lebanese opposition at a time when the international concern regarding Syrian role in Lebanon was high. The US was already pressing for Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon. The French government, on the other hand, tried to reach a deal with Syria. It demanded an increased French role in Beirut for buttressing US opposition to Syrian dominance in the Levant. The Syrian insistence to extend Lahoud's term embraced Chirac and he also started to side with US.³⁰⁷ On 2 September 2004, French and American sponsored UNSC Resolution 1559 passed. It called upon for all remaining foreign forces to withdraw from Lebanon; called for the disbanding and disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias; supported the extension of the control of the Lebanese government over all Lebanese territory; and supported free and fair electoral process in upcoming presidential elections without foreign intervention.³⁰⁸ Although the Resolution did not mention Syria openly, it was obvious that it was directed against Syrian domination of Lebanon. Both Syria and Lebanon rejected the Resolution. From Damascus' perspective it was another attempt to curb Syria's regional position. He related it to French effort to repair relation with the US and argued that 'The UN resolution really had nothing to do with the extension of Lahoud. It was coming anyway.'³⁰⁹ Syrian regime responded by extending Lahoud's term for additional three years on the next day. The Lebanese parliament passed the decree by 96 to 29 votes while Hariri voted for extension too.³¹⁰ The extension was Syrian response to Resolution 1559 which was seen as an instrument to further pressure Syria. According to

³⁰⁶ Blanford, *Killing Mr Lebanon: The Assassination of Rafik Hariri and Its Impact on the Middle East*, p.100

³⁰⁷ William Harris, 'Bashar al-Assad's Lebanon Gamble', *Middle East Quarterly*, (Summer 2005), <http://www.meforum.org/730/bashar-al-assads-lebanon-gamble>, accessed on 25.04.2011

³⁰⁸ UNSC Resolution 1559, <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N04/498/92/PDF/N0449892.pdf?OpenElement>

³⁰⁹ Bashar al-Asad's interview with David Lesch on 3 May 2005, Lesch, *The New Lion of Damascus: Bashar al-Asad and Modern Syria*, p.129

³¹⁰ Lebanon extends president's term, BBC News, 3 September 2004, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3626280.stm, accessed on 26.04.2011

Syrian regime, Lahoud as the unquestionably loyal ally of Syria was the only name that could maintain the pro-Syrian orientation of the Lebanese army in the case of a forces Syrian withdrawal.³¹¹

The Syrian insistence on Lahoud energized the political opposition in Lebanon. The Sunni's incorporation to anti-Syrian movement under Rafiq Hariri's leadership was an important turning point for oppositional forces. Hariri, hopefully waiting for the expiration of Lahoud's term once again sidelined by the extension. After the parliamentary session for approving the decree of extension, four ministers including Ministry of Economy Marwan Hamadeh resigned. The failed assassination attempt to Hamadeh on 1 October further antagonized Hariri and his supporters. When Syrian regime made further demands from Hariri in the process of forming new government, Hariri resigned and the already severed relations among Damascus and Hariri broke off. Omar Karameh appointed to form the new government. Hariri immediately started to prepare for the upcoming parliamentary elections in May 2005 and established relations with prominent names from anti-Syrian movement. In December 2004, opposition front composed of Joumblatt, Samir Geagea, and Michel Aoun gathered at Bristol Meeting. Although Hariri not attended personally due to the fears of increasing threats he sent his close aide to the meeting. In February 2005, Bristol Meeting demanded full Syrian withdrawal. At the time, it was clear that Hariri bloc would win the parliamentary elections.³¹²

As will be recalled, the Sunni support to anti-Syrian movement and foreign backing were crucial for the success of opposition. The Resolution 1559 marked the international backing while Hariri's incorporation to opposition signed increasing Sunni resentment against Syria. The division of Lebanese politics among pro- and anti- Syrian camp sharpened by the assassination of Rafiq Hariri in 2005.

³¹¹ Salloukh, 'Demystifying Syrian Foreign Policy under Bashar al-Asad', p.168

³¹² Blanford, *Killing Mr Lebanon: The Assassination of Rafik Hariri and Its Impact on the Middle East*, p.112-122

5.4.4 The Assassination of Rafiq Hariri and Its Impact on Lebanese-Syrian Relations

Rafiq Hariri was killed in a car bomb on 14 February 2005 along with 21 others.³¹³ His death was an important corner stone in Lebanese history. The curators and their intention being still contested, his departure had important repercussions for the future of Lebanese politics.

In the immediate aftermath of the assassination, the general mood in Lebanon were divided among two camps: anti-Syrian figures pointing to Damascus' involvement in the killing and pro-Syrian ones seeing the murder as a plot to put further pressure on Syria. Hariri's opposition to Syrian dictate over Lebanon, his international connections irritating Syrian regime, and increasing anti-Syrian sentiments in Lebanon gathering under his leadership made many observers to point to Syrian regime as the responsible of Hariri murder. The conduct of the assassination, with a massive explosion in the supposedly secure part of Lebanon, also convinced them for the involvement of Syrian hand.³¹⁴ Marwan Iskandar enumerates the reasons of assassination as: Hariri's role in transforming Sunni Muslims community's position from a defeatist one to pro-active role of political awareness and participation; reaffirming of Lebanon's identity as a sovereign state; securing of Arab and international support for an independent Lebanon; and his personal ties with prominent leaders all over the world.³¹⁵ Harris argued that 'the perpetrators of the bombing likely wanted to terrorize the Lebanese opposition into submission, to destroy the nascent Lebanese coalition's call for Syrian departure, and to remove Hariri as the main pillar of an opposition electoral challenge to the Syrian backed regime.'³¹⁶ The pro-Syrians figures, like Hizballah, pointed to the possibility of a plot against Syria which aims increasing pressures on Syrian regime that would in the

³¹³ On 14 February 2005 at approximately 1250 hrs, the former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri left the Nejme Square in Beirut going back to the Kuraytem Palace. He traveled in a motorcade comprising of 6 cars, together with his security detail and Member of Parliament, Bassel Fleyhan., REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION COMMISSION ESTABLISHED PURSUANT TO SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1595 (2005), <http://www.un.org/News/dh/docs/mehlisreport/>

³¹⁴ Robert Fisk, 'Who killed Mr. Lebanon?: The Hunt for Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri's Assassins', *The Independent*, 11 January 2009, <http://www.independent.co.uk/opinion/commentators/fisk/who-killed-mr-lebanon-the-hunt-for-prime-minister-rafiq-hariris-assassins-1231542.html>, accessed on 26.04.2011

³¹⁵ Iskandar, *Rafiq Hariri and The Fate of Lebanon*, p.164

³¹⁶ Harris, 'Bashar al-Assad's Lebanon Gamble', *Middle East Quarterly*, (Summer 2005), <http://www.meforum.org/730/bashar-al-assads-lebanon-gamble>, accessed on 25.04.2011

end force its withdrawal. Indeed, there were some who found it doubtful to point to Syrian regime for murder since it would drag Syria into trouble. Seale for instance claims that 'If Syria killed Rafik Hariri, Lebanon's former prime minister and mastermind of its revival after the civil war; it must be judged an act of political suicide.'³¹⁷ Rather he refers to other potential candidates like far-right Christians, Islamist extremists, and Israel. In this conjuncture, the most important development for the Lebanese-Syrian relations was the increasing resentment among Sunni community against Syrian regime. Their belief in the Syrian regime's role in the assassination sharpened their anti-Syrian attitude and enhanced their ties with opposition movement.

The first reaction to the assassination from Lebanese public was the organization of huge demonstrations against Syrian dominance of the country. Hariri's funeral itself turned into an anti-Syrian demonstration and it was followed by several others. On 18 February 2005 the opposition jointly announced the democratic and peaceful intifada for independence and demanded an impartial investigation into Hariri's killing, ousting of all Lebanese security and intelligence chiefs, and the resignation of Karamah's government. On 28 February, Omar Karamah resigned.³¹⁸

The Bush administration did not publicly blame Syria for the murder but the US ambassador to Damascus was recalled for consultations a day after Hariri's death. US supported Lebanese opposition as a part of its adherence to democratic rule in the Middle East. The Lebanese independence intifada labeled as 'Cedar Revolution', the term first aired by US Undersecretary for Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky, due to the negative connotation of the term intifada, reminding Palestinian uprising. The UN Fact Finding Mission headed by Irish Policeman Peter Fitzgerald formed after the assassination. In its first report on March 2005, he recommended that UN should launch a full investigation of its own due to lack of commitment of the Lebanese authorities.³¹⁹

³¹⁷ Patrick Seale, 'Who killed Rafik Hariri', *The Guardian*, Wednesday 23 February 2005, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2005/feb/23/syria.comment>, accessed on 01.04.2011

³¹⁸ 'Syria After Lebanon, Lebanon After Syria', *International Crisis Group*, Middle East Report no.39, 12 April 2005, p.15

³¹⁹ Blanford, *Killing Mr Lebanon: The Assassination of Rafik Hariri and Its Impact on the Middle East*, p.147-156

The international pressure on Syria to withdraw from Lebanon grew by calls from US, France, Russia, European countries, Saudi Arabia and Egypt.³²⁰

In conclusion, the assassination of Rafiq Hariri and the suspicions of Syrian role in it was a turning point for Lebanese independence from Syria. The opposition forces of Maronites, Druzes and Sunnis increased their voices against Syrian presence in Syria overtly and opened the way for Syrian withdrawal. The Shia Hizballah and Amal remained loyal to Syrian ally and tried to enhance their position in Lebanese politics as the remnants of Syrian role in the case of a withdrawal.

5.5 The Syrian Withdrawal

5.5.1 The Lebanese Groups on the Syrian Withdrawal

The international and Lebanese pressures resulted in Bashar Asad's commitment to withdrawal. In his speech in the People's Assembly on 5 March 2005, Bashar evaluated the situation in Lebanon and Syria after the Hariri murder. He stated that 'The atrocious crime which claimed the life of Prime Minister Hariri targeted Lebanon's stability and unity; and it also targeted the role and position of Syria in Lebanon and the whole region... They used this crime to inflame hostile feelings against Syria and to escalate accusations against it.'³²¹ He argued that Lebanese-Syrian relations did not depend on the presence of Syrian troops in Lebanon but to facts of geography, history, politics, culture, spiritualism and humanity. Regarding this, he promised to withdraw Syrian forces completely in line with Ta'if Accord and Resolution 1559.³²²

Although Bashar Asad called for a full withdrawal, he did not define a precise time table hence the anti-Syrian demonstrations continued until the withdrawal in late April 2005. In this period, the pro-Syrian Lebanese also tried to enhance their role in

³²⁰ 'Syria After Lebanon, Lebanon After Syria', *International Crisis Group*, Middle East Report no.39, 12 April 2005, p.10

³²¹ The President's Speech in the People's Assembly, 5 March 2005, http://www.syrianembassy.org.au/syr/english/index.php?page=show_det&category_id=54&id=31&num, accessed on 11.04.2011

³²² The President's Speech in the People's Assembly, 5 March 2005, http://www.syrianembassy.org.au/syr/english/index.php?page=show_det&category_id=54&id=31&num, accessed on 11.04.2011

Lebanese politics. The division among pro- and anti-Syrian groups symbolized by two large demonstrations on 8 March and 14 March.

On 8 March 2005 nearly half million people rallied in Beirut downtown. Nasrallah apologized for others' insults on Syria and promised that Lebanon will remain as a country of Arabism, nationalism and resistance. The rally was the largest one until that time but still it was a single-sect gathering composed of Shias.³²³ The positioning of large Shia population was important and complicated in the Lebanese context after the start of Independence Intifadah. Some Shia population also criticized Syrian role in Lebanon, particularly the presence of Syrian workers as cheap labor force that deprived Shia from job opportunities. However, most part of them felt underrepresented in the existing Lebanese structure. Moreover they were suspicious of US support to Lebanese opposition; Israeli aggression in the case of opposition's success; and Maronite ambitions.³²⁴ In the end, both Amal and Hizballah remained as the leading Syrian allies, rallied Shia public support behind them. Following Hizballah show out, opposition rallied a huge demonstration on 14 March 2005. This time the turnout reached to one million. The Sunni, Christian and Druze communities poured to Martyr's Square in Beirut.³²⁵ The major importance of it was the huge Sunni participation to the opposition against Syria. The rival groups started to be called as 8 March and 14 March coalitions.

The international pressure on Syria tightened. The US administration supported the Lebanese opposition overtly. The top officials made statement in the period in this line.³²⁶ On 7 April, more alarming international support to opposition realized with the UNSC Resolution 1595. It decided 'to establish an international independent investigation Commission ("the Commission") based in Lebanon to assist the Lebanese authorities in their investigation of all aspects of this terrorist act, including to help identify its perpetrators, sponsors, organizers and accomplices.'³²⁷ The Resolution was in line with the opposition demand to investigate Hariri murders.

³²³ Hirst, *Beware of Small States: Lebanon, Battleground of the Middle East*, p.309

³²⁴ 'Syria After Lebanon, Lebanon After Syria', *International Crisis Group*, Middle East Report no.39, 12 April 2005, p.18-19

³²⁵ 'Record' protest held in Beirut, BBC News, 14 March 2005, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4346613.stm, accessed on 27.04.2011

³²⁶ Schenker, 'America and Lebanon Issue', p.223

³²⁷ UNSC Resolution 1595, <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N05/299/98/PDF/N0529998.pdf?OpenElement>, accessed on 27.04.2011

The Syrian troops completed their withdrawal on 27 April 2005, ending 29 year of occupation. It was the result of international pressures culminated in Resolutions 1559 and 1595, and the Lebanese opposition movement called as 'Independence Intifadah' or 'Cedar Revolution'. The road opened by the Syrian move to extend President Lahoud's term for additional three years. Still, the turning point for the Lebanese opposition and international pressure was the assassination of Rafiq Hariri. Although the culprits were not identified, the suspicion for the Syrian role in murder was enough for increasing the opposition. The success of Cedar Revolution was the coming together of several Lebanese groups with different orientation under the umbrella of anti-Syrian sentiment. The parliamentary elections in Lebanon were scheduled for immediate after the Syrian withdrawal. It was important for both 8 March and 14 March coalitions for defining their roles in Lebanese politics.

5.5.2 The 2005 Parliamentary Elections

The Lebanese parliamentary elections of 2005 had symbolic importance for being the first free elections since the end of civil war. The new configuration in the parliament would be shaped in the absence of foreign occupation. The results were vital for both 8 March and 14 March coalitions both bidding to enhance its position in Lebanese political life after the Syrian withdrawal. However free environment in the elections should not be exaggerated and understood as the absence of interference or fairness. Firstly, The Lebanese confessional system and the electoral law were the major obstacles against fairness. The 2005 elections again defined as 'free but not fair'³²⁸ in this respect. Secondly, Syria did not recognized Lebanon as a sovereign state and its support to pro-Syrian elements within the system remained intact.

The two major blocs of 8 March and 14 March coalitions run for the elections in 2005. The 8 March coalition was composed of Hizballah, Amal, Emile Lahoud, Michel Aoun, Suleiman Frangieh, Armenian Tashnak Party, Druze Talal Arslan, Omar

³²⁸ Annia Ciezadlo, 'Lebanon's Election: Free but Not Fair', *The Washington Post*, 22 May 2005, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/05/20/AR2005052001868.html>, accessed on 27.04.2011

Karameh, SSNP, and Salim Hoss. They took part in the election campaign in a joint list called as the Liberation, Resistance and Development backed by Syria and Iran. The 14 March coalition included Future Movement of Saad Hariri who was the son of Rafiq Hariri and took the leadership after his father, Fuad Siniora, the PSP of Walid Joumblatt, Armenian Hinchak Party, Lebanese Forces under Samir Geagea, the supporters of Phalanges, and the Maronite Patriarch Sfeir. They were supported by the US.³²⁹ The complex election system in Lebanon under sectarian rivalries ended up with interesting alliances in preparing lists for election for the sake of gaining votes rather than ideological or political choices. In 2005, The Hariri-Jumblatt coalition has allied Hizbollah in Beirut while Aoun has allied himself with several pro-Syrians in the Metn district.³³⁰

The elections held according to the 2000 electoral law designed by Ghazi Kanaan. It divided the country into 14 electoral districts, defined in order to secure the election of pro-Syrian figures to the parliament. In 2005, the law adopted against the Maronite demands of smaller electorates on the one hand and the Hizballahi demand of proportional representation that would increase the importance of Shia votes, the largest sect of the country on the other.³³¹ It was held in four stages between 29 May and 19 June.

The results of the election were in favor of the 14 March alliance which gained a clear majority of 72 seats in 128 member parliament. The Hariri list gained huge victories mainly in Beirut. Hariri's success can be expressed by the emotional mood of voters after the assassination of Rafiq Hariri; his families' financial empire making his team able to distribute large amounts of money to voters; and his use of religion as a weapon in his campaign.³³² The Hizballah-Amal list won 33 seats while Aoun's supporters in alliance with them secured 21 seats. Although the victory of Hariri list in the elections were clear, the alliance of Aoun with 8 March indicated that Hariri and his

³²⁹ Ayhan & Tür, *Lübnan: Savaş, Barış, Direniş ve Türkiye ile İlişkiler*, p.199-200

³³⁰ Robert Fisk, 'Civil war casts a sinister shadow on Lebanon's election', *the Independent*, 31 May 2005,

³³¹ Joseph Alagha, 'Hizballah after the Syrian Withdrawal', *Middle East Report*, No.237, (Winter 2005), p.35

³³² Joseph Ajami, 'Lebanese Elections 2005 Version: Land Liberation or Mind Liberation?', *American Behavioral Scientist*, (2005)

majority in the parliament had to compromise with the opposition for important parliamentary decisions like the election of new President and its timing.³³³

The results were also important for Syria and its allies in Lebanon since they lost the parliamentary majority in the elections. The anti-Syrian movement in the country revealed in the choices of electorates furthermore underlined the success of ‘Cedar Revolution.’ The US and EU welcomed the results of Lebanese elections. Washington blessed the Lebanese election results by praising the polls that ‘represent an important step in the process of consolidating Lebanon's freedom and democracy.’³³⁴

The Syria’s Lebanese allies also pushed hard for fulfilling the vacuum in political system after Syrian withdrawal. Hizballah tried to present the results as a success of the Party and interpreted it as a legitimate ground to continue to hold its arms. Hizballah has been joining to the elections and parliament since 1992 but did not want to join the government before. In 2005, the party entered Lebanese government by two ministers. The party officials explained that the party resolved not to join the government as long as the Syrians provided political protection by their presence in Lebanon. However, their withdrawal and the important decisions that would be taken by the new cabinet forced Hizballah to join. The country’s state of war with Israel, the status of the disputed Shebaa Farms and the status of Islamic Resistance had a crucial importance for Hizballah.³³⁵

The remnants of 29 year occupation were not expected to be disappeared in a short time. It should be kept in mind that the presence of Syrian troops was not the only means of Syrian dominance in the country. The Syrian regime established strong linkages with its clientele, particularly Amal and Hizballah, as a result of its historical and cultural ties. The position of Hizballah, a Syrian proxy, and its ongoing struggle in South was an unresolved issue after the withdrawal of Syria that makes it impossible for anti-Syrian figures to disregard Syria within the Lebanese political life. Hizballah joined the cabinet after Syrian withdrawal and rose as an important political actor besides its role as a resistance movement against Israel. However, unlike the other political actors,

³³³ Ayhan & Tür, *Lübnan: Savaş, Barış, Direniş ve Türkiye ile İlişkiler*, p.207

³³⁴ ‘United States and EU welcome Lebanon election’, 20 June 2005, Lebanon Wire, <http://www.lebanonwire.com/0605/05062014AFP.asp>, accessed on 27.04.2005.

³³⁵ Alagha, ‘Hizballah after the Syrian Withdrawal’, p.36

it continued to possess arms and legitimized it by the ongoing resistance against Israel in South Lebanon. The 2006 war between Hizballah and Israel in the post-withdrawal era once more brought the question of disarmament of Hizballah among Christian, Sunni and Druze groups but at the same time it once more increased the popularity of organization throughout the region that bound the hands of those groups.³³⁶ Hence, still the disarmament of Hizballah continued to hold an important place in Lebanese politics which involves Syria as well.

The other major issue that makes the Lebanese and Syrian politics inextricable is the international inquiry on Hariri murder. The reports of United Nations Independent Investigation Commission (UNIIC) focused on the possibility of involvement of the Lebanese-Syrian security machine and put a stress on Syrian regime to cooperate with the Hariri murder inquiry.³³⁷ In the mean-time the political assassinations against anti-Syrian figures continued after the Syrian withdrawal. Although the culprits were not identified, the suspicions against directed toward the Syrian regime among the anti-Syrian figures in Lebanon. The major examples were, Samir Kassir, an anti-Syrian journalist, Georges Hawi, former Communist Party secretary-general, Elias Murr, Lebanon's defense minister, May Chidiac, a journalist, and Gibran Tueni, both parliamentarian and anti-Syrian journalist in 2005.³³⁸

The Syrian intervention in Lebanese affairs has a long history. There are several established relations among Lebanese groups and Syrian regime. The already existing ties with pro-Syrian groups facilitates the Syrian involvement in Lebanese affairs in the post-withdrawal era as well. Besides the ongoing Syrian stakes in the country, the major issues of Hizballahi situation and Hariri murder inquiry further makes it impossible to separate the Lebanese and Syrian politics. In short, it can be concluded that the Lebanese-Syrian relations although had important changes that were culminated in Syrian withdrawal, the post-withdrawal period did not witness a total collapse of Syrian influence in Lebanon.

³³⁶ William Harris, 'Lebanon's Roller Coaster Ride', in *Lebanon: Liberation, Conflict and Crisis*, ed. by Barry Rubin, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p.74

³³⁷ *ibid.*, p.68

³³⁸Timeline: Lebanon Assassinations, Al Jazeera, 13.02.2008, <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2007/12/2008525172717634160.html>, accessed on 25.03.2011

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The Lebanese-Syrian relations between the years 1989 and 2005 were characterized by the establishment and dissolve of Syrian hegemony over Lebanon. The analysis of this transformation in the relations is the major aim of this thesis. In this regard, the main determinants of their bilateral relations and the continuities and changes in these determinants revealed out in order to have an inclusive understanding on how the Lebanese-Syrian relations transformed, how they affected and were affected by the broader regional setting.

The first principle continuity that shaped the direction of the Lebanese-Syrian relations is the Syrian ambition to dominate the Lebanese affairs. It is pointed out that Syria has vital interests in having the full control over Lebanon and pursued an active foreign policy to sustain its hegemony in a consistent manner. The Syrian interests were basically related to the Syrian regime's ideological, economic, political and foreign policy considerations. Indeed, historically, the dispatchment of Lebanon from Greater Syria by the French rule in 1920 was seen as a product of Western imperialism against the wills of local populations by the Syrian Arab nationalists and the Lebanese state was seen as an artificial creation dictated by European powers. Hence, as concluded in Chapter I, the first irredentist claims rooted in the consciousness of Syrian ruling elite since the creation of Lebanese state. The Baath ideology, later on, gave an importance to Lebanon as a part of Greater Syria in line with its Pan-Arabist rhetoric. However, the internal instability of Syria prevented it from pursuing an efficient foreign policy until 1970s. The stabilization of Syrian politics realized after the rise of Hafez Asad to power and the desire to have dominance over Lebanon turned into an active foreign policy that continued up until today.

Beyond the ideological and historical claims, the Syrian regime under Hafez Asad had economic and political stakes besides the foreign policy considerations to search for a considerable control over Lebanese affairs. In this sense, the establishment

of hegemony over Lebanon at the end of the civil war with the Taif agreement in 1989 was an important success for Syrian regime. First, Syria secured economic benefits by its hegemony over Lebanon. The major aim was sustaining the presence of huge numbers of workers and the financial gains of Syrian bourgeoisie and intelligence barons operating in Lebanon. The major point here is the ease that these benefits brought to Syrian domestic problems. Whenever the Syrian state dependent economic structure had its own crisis and so the calls for economic liberalization increased, the Lebanese arena gave Syria a breathing space and an opportunity to postpone implementation of deeper economic measures. Second, the Syrian regime managed to have effective influence on the Lebanese domestic politics and manipulate Lebanese political life according to its own policy considerations. Third, Syria shaped the Lebanese foreign policy as a reflection of the Syrian regime's own foreign policy goals. In this regard, Lebanon's standing within the Arab-Israeli context was bound to the direction of Syrian-Israeli relations. Moreover, Hizballah, as a Syrian proxy continued its armed resistance against Israel in South Lebanon and enhanced Syrian hand in the regional politics.

When Hafez Asad died in 2000 and Bashar Asad rose to Presidency, the Syrian policy toward Lebanon continued in the same manner. The major aim of the Syrian regime remained as the bid for sustaining the Syrian hegemony over Lebanon. In short, it is concluded that in 1989-2005 the nature of Syrian stakes and the Syrian regime's bid for keeping its hegemony over Lebanon had a consistent pattern. Hence, the transformation of relations was not a result of changing Syrian interests or foreign policy initiatives.

The second continuity that affected the direction of the Lebanese-Syrian relations was the inherent vulnerability of Lebanese state to foreign intervention due to the lack of solidarity among Lebanese communities. It is true that the Syrian hegemony established by the presence of its military troops and intelligence service in Lebanon in order to keep the Lebanese opposition under control. However, it is also revealed in this study that, the lack of social solidarity among Lebanese communities was influential for facilitating the Syrian domination.

The confessional democracy as a political system designed to sustain peace among sectarian communities of Lebanon but in turn it became the source of conflict

itself. The political system depending on the proportional sectarian participation in Lebanon dates back to the introduction of a new administration, namely Mutasariyya, to Mount Lebanon in 1861. When Lebanese state gained its independence, the proportional sectarian participation as a mechanism suitable for the complex nature of Lebanese society once again introduced by National Pact in 1943. However, the political structure of the country made the competition and power struggle among various sectarian communities inevitable. These communities continuously sought to have foreign backing in their struggles within the Lebanese system. In this way, the Lebanese state became vulnerable to foreign intervention and external influence. Although a new deal among Lebanese communities introduced by the Taif Agreement at the end of the civil war, the confessionalism and the distrust among Lebanese sectarian communities toward each other continued in the post-civil war era as well. The prominent Lebanese historian Kemal Salibi argued at the end of the civil war that any solution to the conflict would not solve the crisis permanently unless the Lebanese communities could reach a compromise among themselves on the meaning of Lebanese identity. He argued that,

Otherwise, regardless of how the present quarrel in Lebanon is patched up, they will continue to be so many tribes: each tribe forever suspicious and distrustful of the others; each tribe always alert, extending feelers to the outside world in different directions, probing for possible sources of external support in preparation for yet another round of open conflict.³³⁹

In this complex environment, Syria was able to find voluntary proxies to follow its policies. In this sense, the inherent problems of Lebanese system which excluded some communities like Shias from the power share, the power struggle among various communities, and the Syrian policy of rewarding its clientele influenced the decisions of some Lebanese groups in aligning themselves with Syria. In other words, there was no common ground among Lebanese groups to resist against Syrian hegemony. Thus, it is pointed out in this study that, the lack of solidarity among Lebanese communities and the power struggle within the Lebanese system continued and made the Syrian involvement in Lebanese affairs easier.

³³⁹ Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions: The History of Lebanon Reconsidered*, p.217-218

In this regard it is argued that the Syrian hegemony established over Lebanon had the consent of some Lebanese groups. In time the pro- or anti-Syrian Lebanese communities changed by their priorities but a total rejection of Syrian domination could not be sustained. In this sense, it is also interesting to see that the consent given to Syrian regime was not depended on the sectarian divisions. The Maronites for instance called for Syrian intervention against the Palestinians at the beginning of the civil war. Later on while the Maronites strictly demanded Lebanese independence, the Shias this time demanded Syrian patronage. Hence, the Syrian hegemony had consent of changing Lebanese groups from time to time and this consent was not defined by sectarian divisions against all the sectarian language of Lebanese politics.

Another aspect of the Lebanese political system was the effort to keep the Lebanese state as minimal as it can in order to keep the fragile balance within the system. Hence, the minimal Lebanese state with minimal army faced with Syrian threat and as expected could not resist it. The difference in the state capacities of Syria, which is a mukhabarat state with huge bureaucracy, depending on the power of army and intelligence services, and Lebanon, the most minimal state in the region, had played an important role for facilitating Syrian hegemony.

The third major determinant that shaped the direction of bilateral relationship between Lebanon and Syria was the changing regional and international environment. The transformation of the Lebanese-Syrian relations had owed much to the changing regional conjuncture. In other words, although the Syrian foreign policy approach to Lebanon and the vulnerability of Lebanese state to Syrian intervention continued, it was the effects of regional and international changes that led to the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon. At this point, the blurry interaction between external developments and internal ones shaped the direction of relations. When Syrian standing in the region had a compromising characteristic as in the case of 1990s, Syrian regime had more room for maneuver in Lebanon thanks to the tacit acceptance of international community. The Lebanese communities also shape their policies according to the existing structure as well. However when Syrian standing in the region deteriorated by the changing atmosphere, as in the case of 2000s, it had repercussions for its control

over Lebanese affairs and the anti-Syrian Lebanese groups found an opportunity to increase their voices that in turn transformed the direction of relations.

In the post-Cold War structure, the Asad regime's rapprochement with the US rewarded by the US green light to Syrian domination over Lebanon. Throughout the 1990s, the Syrian-Israeli peace negotiations dominated the politics in the Levant and the Syrian influence over Lebanon was tolerated in the name of keeping stability within the region. However, the changing conjuncture by the year 2000 had repercussions on the bilateral relationship between Lebanon and Syria. The collapse of Syrian-Israeli peace negotiations and the subsequent Israeli unilateral withdrawal from South Lebanon turned the attention to the Syrian presence in the country. However, the chronic deficit of creating a common policy among Lebanese communities continued and the first anti-Syrian campaign rose among Maronites and Druzes and failed to include the large segments of society composed of Muslims.

The further deterioration of Syrian role in Lebanon realized by more influential changes in international arena. The 9/11 terrorist attacks to the US and the subsequent declaration of 'war on terrorism' by the Bush administration strained ties on Syrian regime. The Syrian-American relations further distorted by the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 and vehement Syrian opposition to it. The international and regional atmosphere which was favoring Syrian patronage of Lebanon in 1990s, turned against it by the new developments while Syria continued to push for the preservation of its role.

In 2000-2005, the direction of bilateral Lebanese-Syrian relations has been characterized by the friction between the continuing Syrian ambition to sustain its hegemony and the international and Lebanese pressures to bring an end to it. The mobilization of Lebanese masses against Syrian domination realized by the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri in February 2005. The suspicion of the Syrian involvement in his killing incorporated the Sunni masses to anti-Syrian movement previously initiated by Maronites and Druzes. The images of the Lebanese mass demonstrations in which the crowd hold postcards written 'Syria out' started to be circulated by the media throughout the world. The Lebanese opposition to Syria, this time incorporated Sunni masses and had foreign backing from American-French axis, proved its success when Syrian troops withdrew from Lebanon in April 2005.

On the other hand, the 14 March coalition of Lebanese oppositional front to Syria could not mobilize the Lebanese Shia population in their struggle. In opposition, the Shia parties of Amal and Hizballah continued to ally themselves with Syrians and continued to act as a Syrian proxy in Lebanon. The Shia alignment with Syria can be read as a result of their continuous exclusion from Lebanese political structure. The Taif agreement introduced some changes to the previous deal of National Pact between Maronites and Sunnis, and relatively upgraded Shia position but still the mass Shia population felt underrepresented in the Lebanese political system. In this sense, once again Lebanese communities failed to compromise among themselves on developing a unified stance against Syria.

In conclusion, the major patterns of Lebanese-Syrian relations were determined by the continuous Syrian ambition for having control over Lebanon in line with its urges of regime stability and predominance in the region on the one hand and the lack of solidarity among Lebanese communities and vulnerability of Lebanese system to foreign intervention on the other hand. But the major turning points in the direction of relations were results of the changing regional politics and its reflections on both Syria and Lebanon.

The Syrian withdrawal had major impacts for both the bilateral Lebanese-Syrian relations and the countries' standings within the region. First of all, in the absence of its troops, the Syrian influence over Lebanon was limited although it did not disappear. It can be assumed that the Syrian regime would not impose its will on Lebanon in the post-2005 era as easier as in the past decades. In this relatively free environment, the 14 March coalition of anti-Syrian forces tried to sustain Lebanese independence while the 8 March coalition tried to enhance its position in Lebanese politics in order to fulfill the vacuum left by Syrians. Secondly, Syria found itself in a hardened regional position, considering the loss of Syrian benefits from its hegemony over Lebanon. Since the control over Lebanese affairs was influential for both domestic problems of Syrian regime and for its standing in the region, the withdrawal in 2005 was detrimental for Asad regime. In this conjuncture, Asad both tried to regain its advantageous position in Lebanon and diversify its regional alignments in order to escape from isolation.

However, a detailed look at the both changes and continuities of the relations, it reveals that the Lebanese-Syrian relations had a much more embedded nature than to rely solely on the presence of Syrian troops. In other words, the military presence was not the only Syrian mean to have influence on Lebanese affairs. Since their relations are bound both to internal and external developments, the direction of it still in an open ended process. In this regard, this study concludes that as long as the Syrian regime continues to see Lebanon as the major component of its foreign policy initiatives; the Lebanese communities fail to form social solidarity among themselves; and the Lebanese arena continue to be the major playground for regional politics, it would still be impossible to talk about Lebanon without referring to Syria.

The developments following the withdrawal also underlined the continuous Syrian ambition for regaining its influential position in Lebanon. The Lebanese-Israeli crisis of July-August 2006 once more brought the risk of destabilization to Lebanese arena. The Hizballah-Israeli war underlined the continuity of Syrian and Hizballah's interest in keeping the military resistance against Israel. Furthermore, the subsequent political crisis escalated by the failure of the election of new president in Lebanon paralyzed Lebanese politics until the Doha Agreement of 2008. It was the vivid expression of Hizballah's struggle to enhance its position within the Lebanese political system in the absence of Syrian hegemony. The results of the latest Parliamentary elections of Lebanon in 2009 also presented that the political camps in Lebanon defined along the 14 March and 8 March coalitions in line with the regional division among US and its regional allies on the one hand, and the Syrian-Iranian axis on the other.

Although it is out of the scope of this study, is there a new parameter in shaping the Lebanese-Syrian relations after the Syrian withdrawal could be analyzed in order to see the changes and continuities in the post-withdrawal period. The latest development in the region, labeled as the Arab Spring of 2011, had a potential also to create new dynamics for the Lebanese-Syrian relations. The future of the Asad regime, today facing challenges from opposition calling for deeper reforms or step down of the Baath regime, will be very influential for the Lebanese as well. Would the Arab Spring bring a new wave of change to the region is yet an unanswered question.

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