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Executive Summary

Title: United States Diplomacy in Lebanon and the Price Paid - U.S. Embassy Bombing Beirut, 1983

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Thesis: U.S. policy and military intervention in Lebanon during the Reagan Administration *significantly* contributed to the 1983 U.S. Embassy bombing in Beirut, Lebanon due to three significant reasons. These reasons are: the U.S. failure to understand the overarching concerns within the region with regard to cultural and religious ideology, the U.S. failure to present a neutral posture to the international community, and lastly the U.S. failure to calculate the growing radical Islamic fundamentalism in the region, predominantly fostered by Iran.

Discussion: Lebanon's strategic location between the Eastern and Western markets of the world is historically viewed as a regional interest to the United States. The Cold War and the spread of Communism throughout the Middle East in the 1980's was a paramount concern within the Reagan Administration as Soviet influence threatened U.S. alliances within the region. Washington's fear of Communist expansion blinded the Administration from focusing on the real issues within Lebanon. The issues were multifaceted and complex, and the result of historical religious and cultural differences among numerous factions within the Lebanese populace. Washington's inability to understand the overarching issues within Lebanon placed U.S. diplomatic personnel operating in Lebanon at risk as Washington's strong alliances with Israel prevented the U.S. from maintaining a neutral and unbiased position among the stakeholders. As a result of failed optics, growing Islamic extremism in Lebanon went virtually undetected and eventually yielded catastrophic results that cost the lives of 63 Embassy personnel, 17 of which were American diplomats.

Conclusion: The United States entered Lebanon in the hopes of establishing a resolution to the Arab-Israeli crisis. However, America's narrow view of the regional issues through a Western lens prevented success from the beginning. The Reagan Administration failed to recognize that Communism was not *the* paramount threat in the region, rather growing radical Islamic fundamentalism, instigated by Israeli aggression and Shi'a displacement, was the emerging threat. The U.S. diplomatic community made significant inroads with the Lebanese government and key groups within the country. Unfortunately, a comprehensive understanding of the numerous factions within Lebanon was lost at the Washington level, resulting in weak strategy that left diplomats in Beirut vulnerable to extremist actors in the region.

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THE OPINIONS AND CONCLUSIONS EXPRESSED HEREIN ARE THOSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT AUTHOR AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF EITHER THE MARINE CORPS COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE OR ANY OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY. REFERENCES TO THIS STUDY SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOREGOING STATEMENT.

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Preface

The Beirut Embassy bombing of 1983 was a catastrophic event that marked the beginning of a new adversary that would challenge the United States for decades to follow, Islamic extremist terrorism. This paper provides the reader with a historical context of Lebanon and the specifics regarding the dynamics that played out between Washington and Beirut during a period of substantial conflict and turmoil. The purpose of this research paper was to examine the relationship between the diplomatic community in Lebanon and the policymakers in Washington to provide a greater understanding of why U.S. diplomatic personnel were targeted and murdered in a terrorist attack against the U.S. Embassy in 1983. Historical research provided the answers to this question and additionally revealed that this single bombing changed the face of the American adversary from communism to radical Islamic extremism; the same adversary we struggle to combat today.

While researching and writing this paper, I received guidance and assistance from numerous faculty and staff at the Marine Corps University, Marine Corps Command and Staff College. I would like to thank my Faculty Advisors, Lieutenant Colonel Winston Gould and Dr. James Joyner for providing exceptional guidance and support throughout the academic year. The Leadership Communications Skills Center, particularly Christi A. Bayha, for providing outstanding research support throughout the Masters process. I would like to express my most sincere gratitude to Dr. Charles D. McKenna who provided instrumental insight, direction, and perspective throughout this research study.

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United States Diplomacy in Lebanon and the Price Paid
U.S. Embassy Bombing Beirut, 1983

The bombing of the United States Embassy in Beirut, Lebanon on April 18, 1983 was a watershed event in the history of U.S. diplomacy that generates inquiry regarding the reasons behind the attack. As a nation with a strong desire to support Israeli and Arab peace accords within the region to further their own interests, the United States established a strong diplomatic presence as a stabilizing force within Lebanon to ensure that the Lebanese established a sovereign and democratic-based government. This raises the question, *to what extent did U.S. policy, U.S. military intervention, and the United States Department of State's (DoS) presence in Lebanon contribute to the U.S. Embassy bombing of 1983?* Extensive research and first-hand interviews with key diplomatic figures who played an integral role carrying out U.S. policy as members of the diplomatic corps revealed that U.S. policy and military intervention in Lebanon during the Reagan Administration *significantly* contributed to the 1983 U.S. Embassy bombing in Beirut. This paper will provide the reader with a historical context regarding U.S. and Lebanese relations, specifically citing the Eisenhower and Reagan Administrations. The paper will then discuss three significant reasons in U.S. policy that contributed to the 1983 Beirut Embassy bombing. These reasons are: the U.S. failure to understand the overarching concerns within the region with regard to cultural and religious ideology, the U.S. failure to present a neutral posture to the international community as connections with the Israelis projected a bias to the Arab world, and lastly the U.S. failure to calculate the growing radical Islamic fundamentalism in the region, predominantly fostered by Iran, which placed U.S. personnel at serious risk in an already volatile country. The paper will

conclude by presenting the outcome of the Beirut U.S. Embassy bombing, specifically highlighting how this event affected U.S. foreign policy with Lebanon as well as what mandates were created from the insights derived from this catastrophic event.

Background – History of U.S. and Lebanese Relations

Lebanon is a unique country whose historic composition has consisted of multi-ethnic and multi-religious factions for centuries. Lebanon was created by France, in consultation with the Lebanese Christian population (the Maronites) after the First World War and has simultaneously supported a robust Christian and Muslim dominated government ever since. The fabric of Lebanon's multi-cultural composition consists of the Maronite Christians (to include the Christian Phalange), Sunni Muslims, Shiite Muslims, and Druze, which is a sect that incorporates elements of both Islam and Gnosticism as their religious makeup. Each of these religious factions has maintained an element of power and influence that has engendered conflict and discord within Lebanon, thereby laying the foundation for the country to become vulnerable to foreign influence and internal conflict. Upon independence (from France) in 1943, an informal National Pact among Lebanon's religious factions was established, which created the framework under which Lebanon would govern itself as a multi-confessional state. A multi-confessional state is a sovereign territory that proportionally distributes the power of its government among different religious and/or political factions. The National Pact stipulated that the Lebanese president would be from the dominant Christian sect, Maronite Catholic, the Lebanese prime minister would be a Sunni, and the Lebanese parliament would be led by a Shi'a.¹ Competing agendas emerged between the Christian

¹ Robert Looney and Anne Marie Baylouny, *Handbook of US-Middle East Relations – US Foreign Policy in Lebanon*, (New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2009), 312.

and Muslim factions creating discord as the Christians sought to align themselves with Western ideology and the Muslims aligned themselves with Arab-centric states, and Palestine.ⁱⁱ This inevitable schism between rival religious factions was initially a conflict that resulted from the desire of each group (the Muslims and Christians) to obtain more power and lead the country in different directions based on connections with ideologically similar countries. Eventually, this discord transitioned into religious-based conflict that resulted in significant intrastate hostility, severely dividing the country among rival militias that prevented stability and progress within Lebanon.

U.S. Interests in Lebanon

Lebanon's strategic location has served as a gateway between the Eastern and Western markets of the world. The post-World War II era was a time of substantial economic recovery and Beirut was at the epicenter of that growth. Beirut supported a number of U.S. businesses that enhanced American democracy and commercial interests that were able to flourish within a minimally stable geographic region. Oil and free trade as well as access to other foreign markets made Lebanon a strategic ally that remained significant to U.S. foreign policy. The U.S. maintained a heavy hand in Lebanese politics, ensuring that the pro-Western elites were placed in positions of power within the Lebanese government, but amidst the optics that Lebanon was a championed example of pro-Western ideology in the Arab world, the seeds of conflict were growing among varying regional factions that threatened the stability of Lebanon and its future.ⁱⁱ

The U.S. became an integral part of Lebanon's domestic stability in 1958 when Christian Lebanese President Camille Chamoun invoked the Eisenhower Doctrine. The

ⁱⁱ Robert Looney and Anne Marie Baylouny, *Handbook of US-Middle East Relations – US Foreign Policy in Lebanon*, (New York: Taylor & Francis Group,2009), 313.

Eisenhower Doctrine was enacted by Congress in 1957 to, “secure and protect the territorial integrity and political independence of such nations, requesting such aid against overt armed aggression from any nation controlled by international communism.”^{III} As Arab nationalism grew within the region as a means to discard historically western government institutions, and when Lebanon erupted in civil war as the Muslim Lebanese sought to overthrow the Christian-dominated confessional system, Chamoun’s security within his presidency began to diminish, causing him to seek western assistance to secure his government. Chamoun’s political rivals, namely Syria and Egypt, became the scapegoats for his insecurity as he professed that their ties with communism threatened his regime and the security of Lebanon. After deliberation, the U.S. conceded and sent 15,000 U.S. Marines to assist Chamoun and secure the Western sphere of influence. Ultimately, the intervention resulted in a non-kinetic overthrow of Chamoun’s regime and the installation of pro-Western General Shehab, the commander of the Lebanese Armed Forces, as the new president of Lebanon while the Lebanese civil war continued.

Lebanon – An International Battleground

Regional neighbors, specifically Syria, Palestine, and Israel, have historically had a vested interest in Lebanon and the dominant religious and cultural factions that control the Lebanese government. Geographically located North of Israel and West of Syria, Lebanon has historically been the battleground for Arab-Israeli, Israeli-Palestinian, and regional superpower conflict.^{IV} As a multi-ethnic state administered by a confessional government, Lebanon has never cultivated strong and united leadership augmented by a

^{III} U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, *Milestones: 1953-1960, The Eisenhower Doctrine, 1957* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State), <http://history.state.gov/milestones/1953-1960/eisenhower-doctrine>.

^{IV} Ali M. Tarrabain, “The Four Powers Multinational Force in Lebanon 1982-1984: Peacekeeping and Intervention” (doctoral thesis, University of Kent at Canterbury, 1990), 91.

supporting robust military force. As a result, Lebanon has fallen victim to surrounding circumstances and regional turmoil, namely the Palestinian and Israeli conflict.

The decades between the Eisenhower and Reagan Administrations witnessed a significant amount of regional conflict that played out in Lebanon. Israel was recognized as an official state by the United States on May 14, 1948.^V The United States Commission on Palestine adopted U.N. Resolution 181, which mandated that Palestine, once the British relinquished control, would be divided into Jewish and Arab states.^{VI} Israel and Palestine have failed as neighbors as conflict and territorial struggles have historically defined their homelands. These territorial disputes caused thousands of Palestinian refugees to seek asylum in the neighboring countries of Syria and Lebanon. By 1967 there were approximately 300,000 Palestinian refugees living in sixteen refugee camps in Lebanon.^{VII} The ethnic displacement and regional animosity caused by the establishment of the Jewish state gave birth to political factions such as the Palestinian Liberation Organization - PLO (led by Yassar Arafat) and Hezbollah, a Lebanese Shi'a Islamist political party deemed a terrorist organization by the U.S. These organizations were fueled by anger and hatred toward a common enemy, Israel, which the United States recognized as a legitimate state and an ally.

Lebanon's Civil War

Lebanon's civil war of 1975 was characterized by intrastate conflict between warring religious factions (Muslims versus Christians) who were seeking to achieve opposing objectives within Lebanon. The *Lebanese Front* was composed of Christian

^V U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, *Milestones: 1945-1952, Creation of Israel* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State), <http://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/creation-israel>.

^{VI} U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, *Milestones: 1945-1952, Creation of Israel* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State), <http://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/creation-israel>.

^{VII} Robert Looney and Anne Marie Baylouny, *Handbook of US-Middle East Relations – US Foreign Policy in Lebanon*, (New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2009), 315.

Maronite and Phalange militias, Shamun, and Franjiyah Clans, who fought to maintain the historic dispersal of political power in the Lebanese government, which favored the Christians.^{VIII} The opposing side to the Lebanese Front was called the *Lebanese National Movement*, consisting of Muslim Druze, the Palestinian Liberation Organization, pro-Syrian, and Pan-Arab sympathizers who sought to alter the balance of the Lebanese political power in favor of the Muslims.^{IX} It is important to note that the Lebanese government, which includes the Lebanese Army, was powerless to intervene in the civil war simply because the confessional-based system that comprised the Lebanese government prevented the stakeholders from making any decisions due to their differences of opinions regarding corrective action.^X The paralysis of the Lebanese government enabled the warring militias to divide the country into religious dominated areas that fueled the war and simultaneously contributed to the momentum of the conflict.

Israel and the United States additionally played an integral role in the Lebanese war. As a means to protect their homeland and maintain secure borders with Lebanon, the Israeli's sent arms to the Christian Lebanese Front with support from the U.S.^{XI} The Lebanese Front represented economic, political, and regional stability to both the U.S. and Israel, therefore both countries wanted to ensure that the Lebanese division of political power remained the same to comport with U.S. and Israeli interests. In 1976 Syria entered Lebanon on the side of the Christians to foster a peace negotiation, which was viewed as a favorable intervention by both Israel and the U.S. Diplomacy eventually

^{VIII} "Lebanon (Civil War 1975-1991)," *Global Security*, last modified February 16, 2015, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/lebanon.htm>.

^{IX} "Lebanon (Civil War 1975-1991)," *Global Security*, last modified February 16, 2015, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/lebanon.htm>.

^X "Lebanon (Civil War 1975-1991)," *Global Security*, last modified February 16, 2015, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/lebanon.htm>.

^{XI} Robert Looney and Anne Marie Baylouny, *Handbook of US-Middle East Relations – US Foreign Policy in Lebanon*, (New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2009), 315.

prevailed after the Syrian Army quelled all resistance from the Lebanese National Movement. In October 1976 the Riyadh Conference, followed by a meeting of the Arab League, resulted in the culmination of the Lebanese civil war.^{XII} To ensure Lebanese security and maintain the peace, the Arab Deterrent Force (ADF) – a contingent of predominantly Syrian military soldiers, augmented by Saudi Arabia and a small contingent of other Arab allies, remained in Lebanon as a security mechanism to honor the peace that had been established by the accords.^{XIII} It is important to note that the Syrian presence in Lebanon, which was initially viewed as a beneficial intervention, was later viewed as a threat to Lebanese sovereignty by Israel and the U.S.^{XIV} The ultimate U.S. and Israeli objectives for Lebanon remained the same – a sovereign state dominated by a Christian-run government that ensured border security for its regional neighbors and served as an economic gateway for the West. Prolonged Syrian influence and presence in Lebanon threatened these goals and could potentially draw the Soviet Union into Lebanon if Israel got into a kinetic altercation with Syria, since the Soviets were allies with Syria. The U.S. had tremendous concerns with regard to Communist influence and Syria represented this ideological threat.

In 1978 Israel invaded Lebanon to establish a strong buffer between PLO forces and the Israeli border. Leading up to this invasion, 38 Israeli citizens had been killed in the famous “Coastal Road Massacre”, where PLO militants entered Israel and killed Jewish men, women and children on a passenger bus. Though the U.S. had previously been aligned with Israeli actions in Lebanon, Washington protested the invasion and

^{XII} “Lebanon (Civil War 1975-1991),” *Global Security*, last modified February 16, 2015, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/lebanon.htm>.

^{XIII} “Lebanon (Civil War 1975-1991),” *Global Security*, last modified February 16, 2015, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/lebanon.htm>.

^{XIV} George P. Schultz, *Turmoil and Triumph* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1993), 72.

appealed to the UN to request an immediate Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon.^{xv} This is one of the few examples in U.S. policy where Washington attempted to combat Israeli actions in Lebanon, demonstrating marginal neutrality toward the conflict. The entrance of the Reagan Administration changed U.S. policy dynamics and solidified the benevolent relationship with Israel, highlighting the U.S.'s intense concern regarding the spread of Communism and all those who aligned themselves with this ideology.

Balancing the Cultural Divide -Failed Optics - The Reagan Administration

The Lebanon crisis was of significant concern to the Reagan Administration as conflict in the Middle East had residual effects with regard to stability in other parts of the world. Reagan identified Israel as a strong ally and clearly demonstrated the desire to secure Israel's borders and remove the PLO and other foreign fighters from Lebanon, but the Administration failed to recognize the overarching issues that played out in Lebanon among a number of religious and ethnic factions. The Administration was in the midst of the Cold War and the Soviet threat was paramount to the U.S. and a solid factor in U.S. foreign policy decisions. The Lebanese crisis was not a product of Communism. The issues within Lebanon were multifaceted and complex among a number of multi-ethnic stakeholders, but Washington did not understand this. Rather, the Reagan Administration had its own views regarding the conflict and based U.S. policy on this informational void. Washington's policy and optics contradicted the reports that came from the U.S. Embassy in Beirut. Ambassador Dillon, the U.S. Ambassador to Beirut, in a transcribed interview, states the following with regard to information provided to Congressional delegates visiting Beirut:

^{xv} Robert Looney and Anne Marie Baylouny, *Handbook of US-Middle East Relations – US Foreign Policy in Lebanon*, (New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2009), 316.

We were not trying to sell something. We were trying to demonstrate to people that the problems in Lebanon--indeed the problems in the Middle East--were very complicated and inter-locking. That had to be understood. Simplistic views, including the one that held that Israel was a 'strategic asset' for the US in the area, were wrong. To that degree, we were certainly running against US policy because Al Haig (U.S. Secretary of State) had come to office with the strong belief that Israel was a strategic asset. Haig was not a stupid man at all, but his point of view was that the central problem was the contest with the Soviet Union--the East-West confrontation. He and his closest advisors saw the Middle East in that context and therefore Israel looked like a strong point. When you have this view--that the Soviet Union was the over-riding problem--it is very easy to fall into the idea, as many of them did, that whatever is happening in the area somehow involved the Russians. There were members of the Reagan administration who believed that Lebanese events were driven by Soviet efforts. It was a very skewed view.^{XVI}

Additionally, in the same transcribed interview Ambassador Dillon states the following with regard to Washington's view of the Lebanon crisis:

The idea was that Russians were still the threat and that therefore certain countries like Saudi Arabia and Israel had much in common because they were the ones who would be the biggest losers by Soviet involvement in the Middle East. Therefore, it should have been important to them to become involved in some strategic cooperation with the US. My impression is that the White House and NSC staffs had this strategic mind-set and therefore were neither interested in nor sensitive to regional issues. I would fault Haig for letting himself be trapped into this White House perception of the world. But seeing the world through the East-West confrontation prism was the way the White House and the NSC saw all events in the Middle East. It was so unrealistic, so unrelated to what was going on. There was not a gap between us in Lebanon and the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs or between us and the working levels of the CIA. But the gap between ourselves and the rest of the US government was immense because their people kept talking about the importance of our arrangements with the Israelis--our "strategic Allies"--which was sheer nonsense.^{XVII}

The important thing is for Americans to understand that in Washington, partly because of the desperate need to rationalize the policy built on an alliance with Israel, vast oversimplification and misunderstandings of these relationships were very common. Some officials sitting in Washington liked to hear that in Lebanon many Christians were 'pro-Israel' or that some of the terrible Muslims were 'pro-Syria' and therefore untrustworthy. This fitted their preconceptions. None of

^{XVI} Robert S. Dillon, "An Interview with Ambassador Robert S. Dillon," interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, *The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training – Foreign Affairs Oral History Project*, May 17, 1990, 113.

^{XVII} Robert S. Dillon, "An Interview with Ambassador Robert S. Dillon," interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, *The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training – Foreign Affairs Oral History Project*, May 17, 1990, 103.

that made any sense in the Lebanon context.^{XVIII}

The Administration's failure to understand the depth of the issues placed U.S. diplomats in Beirut in a precarious position as flawed optics produced imperfect policy, which yielded weak and uninformed strategy.

Sleeping with the Instigator – the U.S. and Israeli Alliance

In 1981 President Reagan sent Ambassador Philip Habib to Lebanon as the United States Special Envoy to negotiate the PLO departure and address the Syrian/Israeli missile crisis, since Syria had placed surface-to-air missiles in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley. The presence of Syrian missiles in Lebanon served as a power play by Syrian President Assad to further and enhance Syria's regional authority, thereby disrupting the Arab/Israeli peace process that the U.S. was attempting to broker. Ambassador Habib entered Beirut as the go between for both Israel and the PLO and successfully negotiated an eleven-month cease-fire between the Israelis and the PLO from July 1981 – June 1982.^{XIX}

In June of 1982 an assassination attempt on the Israeli ambassador to Britain reignited the fire and Israel, heavily armed with tanks, sea support, and air assets, entered Southern Lebanon with one goal – to destroy the PLO. The Israelis blamed the Palestinians for the assassination attempt and used that as a reason to enter Lebanon forcibly and annihilate the PLO. According to Ambassador Dillon, the assassination attempt was carried out by the Abu Nidal group, which is an independent, non-PLO

^{XVIII} Robert S. Dillon, "An Interview with Ambassador Robert S. Dillon," interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, *The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training – Foreign Affairs Oral History Project*, May 17, 1990, 112.

^{XIX} George P. Schultz, *Turmoil and Triumph* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1993), 43.

affiliated terrorist organization that is at war with the PLO for the assassinations of moderate Palestinians.^{XX} The propaganda campaign instituted by Israel was created as a means to justify their actions in Lebanon. Israel honed in on the Christian led Lebanese government and sought to leverage Lebanon's western leaning political views as a means to maintain Lebanon as an ideological stronghold in favor of Israel. Additionally, the Israeli's felt empowered by the fact that the U.S. was seen as an Israeli ally and they used this to their advantage. The United States failed to give the Israelis boundaries, therefore the Israelis were free to behave anyway they liked while carrying out, what the world perceived, were U.S. sanctioned actions.

Prior to the assassination attempt of the Israeli Ambassador to Britain, Israeli Defense Minister, Ariel Sharon, met with U.S. Secretary of State Al Haig in Washington D.C. in May of 1982. The purpose of Sharon's visit was to outline his plan for the invasion of Lebanon. Sharon met resistance from the Secretary of State as Haig advised that Sharon could not enter Lebanon under a "flimsy pretext" and the U.S. would not support this type of Israeli aggression.^{XXI} Haig failed to realize that Sharon was not seeking permission from the U.S., rather Sharon wanted to know if the U.S. would respond to an Israeli invasion with kinetic action as a means to stop them. Once Sharon deduced, from his meeting with Haig, that the Israeli's would not meet military resistance from the U.S., he essentially accepted this as a "green light" from Secretary Haig and

^{XX} Robert S. Dillon, "An Interview with Ambassador Robert S. Dillon," interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, *The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training – Foreign Affairs Oral History Project*, May 17, 1990, 116.

^{XXI} Robert S. Dillon, "An Interview with Ambassador Robert S. Dillon," interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, *The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training – Foreign Affairs Oral History Project*, May 17, 1990, 118.

proceeded to invade Lebanon in June of 1982.^{XXII} The June assassination attempt merely served as an excuse for actions that were already devised in Israel.

In her book *U.S. Intervention in Lebanon, 1958 and 1982*, Agnes G. Korbani cites that the Israelis never had limited goals with regard to Lebanon. Israel had strategic objectives of expansionism that were broken down into three military phases against the PLO and Syrians.^{XXIII} The first phase was a military campaign, which targeted the PLO in Southern Lebanon, essentially eliminating the PLO terrorist threat in Israel by driving them north in Lebanon and further away from the Israeli border.^{XXIV} The second phase was called “Operation Peace for Galilee,” which aimed to annihilate the PLO with the assistance of the Lebanese Armed Forces.^{XXV} Lastly, the third phase was called the “Big Plan” which targeted both the PLO and Syrians pushing them further North into the outlying territories outside of Beirut.^{XXVI} Many believe that the Israeli objectives and plans to invade Lebanon were clearly presented to the U.S. government, though President Reagan stated: “We were not warned or notified of the invasion that was going to take place.”^{XXVII} Regardless of the U.S. Government’s public stance, the overarching similarities and concerns that were shared by the United States and Israel placed the two countries hand in hand – demonstrating to the Arab world that the U.S.’s true loyalties were with the Israelis.

^{XXII} Robert S. Dillon, “An Interview with Ambassador Robert S. Dillon,” interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, *The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training – Foreign Affairs Oral History Project*, May 17, 1990, 117.

^{XXIII} Agnes G. Korbani, *U.S. Intervention in Lebanon, 1958 and 1982* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1991), 65-66.

^{XXIV} Agnes G. Korbani, *U.S. Intervention in Lebanon, 1958 and 1982* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1991), 65-66.

^{XXV} Agnes G. Korbani, *U.S. Intervention in Lebanon, 1958 and 1982* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1991), 65-66.

^{XXVI} Agnes G. Korbani, *U.S. Intervention in Lebanon, 1958 and 1982* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1991), 65-66.

^{XXVII} Agnes G. Korbani, *U.S. Intervention in Lebanon, 1958 and 1982* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1991), 65-66.

The Israeli Invasion of Lebanon – Hand in Hand with the U.S.

On June 6, 1982 Israel conducted a full invasion of Lebanon, with what the Israeli's postulated was the full support of the U.S., per the "green light" they received from Secretary Haig. The Israelis claimed that the invasion was to, "drive the Palestinian artillery back from the border" where it was a threat to Israel.^{XXVIII} The Israelis announced that they would only penetrate 25 miles into Lebanon to destroy PLO artillery, but they continued to move North toward Beirut. The Israeli Prime Minister, Menachem Begin, additionally called President Reagan to assure Washington that the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) was conducting the invasion to remove PLO artillery in Southern Lebanon that threatened the Israeli border. Washington concurred with Begin while Ambassador Dillon reported that no such artillery existed and the IDF was heading toward his residence in Beirut.^{XXIX} As the fighting intensified, all U.S. diplomatic dependents were evacuated from Beirut and Israel agreed to a temporary cease-fire that allowed the non-essential Americans to depart Lebanon. The Israelis continued to advance further North into Lebanon as two different information streams came to the U.S. Department of State's Operational Command Center (Ops Center) – one information stream was from Tel Aviv, the other from Ambassador Dillon and the diplomatic channels in Lebanon. Washington refused to believe the reports that came in from Ambassador Dillon and his staff. In one particular instance Ambassador Dillon called the Ops Center from his residence in Beirut and reported that Israeli tanks were advancing up the road toward his residence. The Ops Center replied "Well, we have assurances from Tel Aviv that the

^{XXVIII} Robert S. Dillon, "An Interview with Ambassador Robert S. Dillon," interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, *The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training – Foreign Affairs Oral History Project*, May 17, 1990, 117-118.

^{XXIX} Robert S. Dillon, "An Interview with Ambassador Robert S. Dillon," interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, *The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training – Foreign Affairs Oral History Project*, May 17, 1990, 120.

Israelis are still well south of Beirut" to which Ambassador Dillon replied, "God damn it, this is the American Ambassador. Tel Aviv is lying to you. Doesn't anybody care back there?"^{xxx} Tel Aviv channels were providing false information and Washington chose to believe them, despite the fact that both Ambassador Dillon and Ambassador Habib reported otherwise. Washington had a preconceived notion of how this crisis would play out and they were unwilling to deviate from this vision despite the fact that leading senior diplomatic officials in Lebanon blatantly told Washington that they were misled by the Israelis.

Once Israel's intention became clear the U.S. objectives were revealed:

Attain a cease-fire between the Israeli and Syrian forces; use the Israeli presence and threat as a means to negotiate the evacuation of the PLO from Beirut, and in turn use that prospect to keep Israeli forces out of Arab capital; lay the groundwork for putting in place an international peacekeeping force as the Lebanese were requesting; work for diplomatic arrangement that would get all foreign forces out of Lebanon; and use the opportunity to help Lebanon get back on its feet, assert its national identity, and, if possible, develop some sort of stable relationship with Israel.^{xxxI}

The Israelis continued to move North, plowing through Lebanon killing civilians, looting, demonstrating an overall lack of discipline and respect toward some that could be viewed as their allies, particularly the Americans. Israeli tanks surrounded Ambassador Dillon's residence which was located in the Christian Maronite dominated Eastern sector of Beirut called Yarze. From Dillon's residence the Israelis shelled the city below, which then caused the PLO to return fire in the direction of the Ambassador's residence.^{xxxII}

The psychological effects of this maneuver were two-pronged. The Israelis were

^{xxx} Robert S. Dillon, "An Interview with Ambassador Robert S. Dillon," interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, *The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training – Foreign Affairs Oral History Project*, May 17, 1990, 121.

^{xxxI} George P. Schultz, *Turmoil and Triumph* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1993), 44.

^{xxxII} Robert S. Dillon, "An Interview with Ambassador Robert S. Dillon," interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, *The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training – Foreign Affairs Oral History Project*, May 17, 1990, 121.

demonstrating outright disrespect for the U.S. while simultaneously showing the Arabs of Lebanon that they were aligned with the United States. The false optics that the Israeli's presented had catastrophic effects on the U.S.'s reputation in the region and additionally negated the U.S.'s ability to legitimately serve as a neutral actor in the negotiation process.

U.S. Special Envoy to Lebanon, Ambassador Philip Habib, continued to negotiate between the Israeli's and the PLO for a Palestinian departure that would provide Israel the assurances they needed to also depart Lebanon so the U.S. could focus on assisting Lebanon in developing a sovereign and stable government. The negotiations were complex and demanding, but in August of 1982 an agreement was reached and the PLO agreed to depart Lebanon under the security of the U.S.-led Multinational Force (MNF) consisting of the U.S., French, British, and Italian militaries. There was controversy regarding what international military forces would comprise the MNF. Many, including Ambassador Dillon, believed it should be the United Nations, but the Israeli's refused to agree to a UN-led Multi-National Force (MNF) and Yassar Arafat, the leader of the PLO, additionally requested that the U.S. military be present during the PLO evacuation.

Ambassador Dillon states the following regarding the composition of the MNF in a Marine Corps University Symposium dated May 3, 1993 where the roles of the U.S. military in Lebanon were discussed:

Now, in arranging the cease-fire, it became evident fairly early on that a force of some kind was going to have to be interjected to in effect police and divide the participants. The distrust between the Israelis and the PLO was so massive that they could not expect to simply stand and watch each other as an evacuation took place. Phil Habib—the Israelis said that there would have to be American participation. This is since I subsequently worked for the U.N., this is a point that

I now—well, at the time I felt strongly about; I now feel even more strongly about. *I believe this was a mistake.* It could have been done by the U.N. peacekeepers and probably should not have been done. I think it's important to understand why the Israelis object so strongly to the U.N. It has been important over the years for the Israelis to deny the legitimacy of the U.N. presence or U.N. operations in the Middle East. They themselves are always and inevitably in defiance of U.N. operations, U.N. resolutions. So politically it is very important to them to maintain the stance that the U.N. can't be trusted. Anyhow, this is all arguable, but I simply put that forward. It was apparent to Phil very early on that Americans were going to have be involved.^{xxxiii}

Throughout the PLO departure negotiations, the paramount concern of the Palestinians was the safety and the security of their families who would remain in Lebanon in the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila. The PLO wanted to confirm that no harm would come to their families. Ambassador Dillon and former Secretary of State George Schultz (who replaced Secretary Haig) confirmed that Ambassador Habib had provided assurances to Arafat and promised the safety of PLO families that remained in Lebanon. Ambassador Habib had received his own assurances that no kinetic action would be taken against the Palestinian refugees at a meeting in Ambassador Dillon's house with future Lebanese President Bashir Gemayel and the Lebanese Prime Minister Wazan (the negotiator between the U.S. and the PLO). In a transcribed interview discussing this meeting Ambassador Dillon states the following:

I was there with Habib and Bashir Gemayel and Wazan, the Prime Minister. Bashir had just given his personal guarantee to Habib that if the Palestinians fighters left, no action would be taken against the remaining Palestinians. Phil, in turn, had gotten assurances from the Israelis that they would not enter Beirut, once the fighters had evacuated and that they would not take any reprisals against the remaining Palestinians. Wazan was the interlocutor with the PLO; we were still maintaining the fiction, except for my 'security' contact, that we didn't deal directly with the PLO. So we were all listening in as Wazan on a speakerphone

^{xxxiii} The U.S. Marine Corps University, Command and Staff College, "Symposium – Marines n Lebanon – A Ten Year Retrospective: Lesson Learned," Symposium at the USMC Command and Staff College (May 3, 1993), 5-6.

was trying to convince a frantic Arafat, who was really concerned, that the remaining civilians would not be harmed. Arafat finally agreed to evacuate.^{xxxiv}

A Peacekeeping Mission – The U.S. Marines Enter Lebanon

On August 25, 1982 the U.S. Marines entered Lebanon as the leaders of the Multi-National Force. The primary mission of the U.S. Marines and partner MNF nations was to maintain peace and order throughout Lebanon while the PLO departed the country. It was “mutually agreed between the Lebanese government and the governments contributing to the MNF that the forces would depart no later than 30 days after arrival, or sooner at the request of the government of Lebanon or at the direction of the contributing individual governments or in accordance with the termination of the mandate of the MNF.”^{xxxv} It is important to note that U.S. Secretary of Defense, Caspar Weinberger, did not agree with a U.S. military presence in Lebanon. Once the international community determined that the U.S. would lead the MNF, Weinberger wanted the troops deployed for a very limited period of time. Weinberger was concerned that U.S. troops would be caught in the middle of a complex political and military situation and it was paramount to him that an imminent departure date for U.S. personnel would be established once the PLO were successfully evacuated. Defense Secretary Weinberger was reported to have said that, “U.S. troops would have a very limited mission and would not remain in Beirut until the full authority of the Lebanese government had been restored as such a move would be a totally open-ended indefinite

^{xxxiv} Robert S. Dillon, “An Interview with Ambassador Robert S. Dillon,” interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, *The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training – Foreign Affairs Oral History Project*, May 17, 1990, 122.

^{xxxv} Agnes G. Korbani, *U.S. Intervention in Lebanon, 1958 and 1982* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1991), 87.

kind of commitment.”^{xxxvi}

The U.S. Marines departed Lebanon on September 10, 1982 after an 18-day deployment. Partner nations that composed the MNF were not consulted regarding the withdrawal of U.S. troops and an overall sense of shock permeated Lebanon as growing concerns emerged regarding the stability of the country now that the “peace force” had departed.

On August 23, 1980, three days before the U.S. Marines entered Lebanon as part of the MNF, Christian Maronite leader Bashir Gemayel was elected the president of Lebanon. The election of Bashir pleased the U.S. and Israel as Gemayel was seen as an extension of Israeli and U.S. policy as his western leaning views favored the ideology of both countries. Gemayel was in office for less than one month when he was assassinated by the Syrians in a building explosion on September 14, 1982. This incident reignited previously quelled hostilities between Israel and Syria and Israel reentered Lebanon to “restore order”, but per Ambassador Dillon, “There was no disorder. People were stunned; the Muslims were extremely apprehensive because they were afraid that the assassination would open them to massacres. The Israelis moved in, over our (U.S.) objections, and took over the entire city.”^{xxxvii} Despite the fact that the U.S. was staunchly against the Israelis reentering Lebanon in full force, the optics were solidified and all Israeli action was paired with U.S. support in the eyes of the Arab world. These optics significantly contributed to the U.S. Embassy – Beirut bombing that would occur less than one year later.

^{xxxvi} Agnes G. Korbani, *U.S. Intervention in Lebanon, 1958 and 1982* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1991), 87.

^{xxxvii} Robert S. Dillon, “An Interview with Ambassador Robert S. Dillon,” interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, *The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training – Foreign Affairs Oral History Project*, May 17, 1990, 124.

The Massacres of Sabra and Shatila – Deepening the Wound

The Israelis were outraged at the assassination of President Bashir Gemayel. The Syrians were behind the assassination, but at the time the Israelis and the Christian Maronites wanted revenge. The PLO refugee camp known as *Shatila* was located on the outskirts of Beirut in a neighborhood called *Sabra*. The refugee camp housed the families of the PLO fighters who were earlier evacuated from Lebanon. Yasser Arafat was previously assured by Ambassador Habib and Bashir Gemayel that the PLO families would remain secure in the camps. Once Bashir was assassinated that promise no longer held, and shortly after Gemayel was declared dead, the Maronites, assisted by the Israelis who essentially turned a blind eye, descended on Shatila and slaughtered all of the Palestinian women, children, and elderly men in the camp. The orchestrator of this massacre was a man by the name of Elie Hobeika, who was a Christian Maronite and had served as Bashir Gemayel's bodyguard and loyal friend.^{xxxviii} The United States was outraged and embarrassed at the Shatila refugee massacre as they had provided assurances to the PLO that this would never happen. In a knee jerk reaction to the massacres, Reagan redeployed the multinational force that had previously secured the successful PLO departure from Lebanon. The White House was shocked that the Israelis were hell bent on maintaining war and conflict within Lebanon and out of an emotional reaction and a sense of obligation to the Lebanese people, Reagan sent the U.S. Marines back to Lebanon on September 29, 1982 with no clear timeline and an ambiguous mission.

^{xxxviii} Robert S. Dillon, "An Interview with Ambassador Robert S. Dillon," interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, *The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training – Foreign Affairs Oral History Project*, May 17, 1990, 125.

In a letter to the speaker of the House of Representatives, President Reagan stated the following in regard to redeploying U.S. Marines into Lebanon:

Their mission is to provide an interposition force at agreed locations and thereby provide the multinational presence requested by the Lebanese Government to assist it and the Lebanese Armed Forces. In carrying out this mission, the American force will not engage in combat. It may, however, exercise the right of self-defense and will be equipped accordingly.....All armed elements in the area have given assurance that they will refrain from hostilities and will not interfere with the activities of the Multinational Force.^{XXXIX}

The Israelis denied any knowledge or hand in the Sabra and Shatila massacres, but America and the world knew this was a lie. Former U.S. Secretary of State, George Schultz, cites in his book *Turmoil and Triumph*, the following with regard to the massacres in a conversation between himself and Moshe Arens, the Israeli Ambassador to the U.S.:

My session with Arens went well past midnight. He seemed jolted by my demand that Israel vacate all of Beirut and the airport. 'The president isn't demanding anything; the events are,' I said. Arens asked that the president delay his statement so that a response could come from Israel. 'Time's a-wasting,' I said. Arens's primary concern was the swiftly spreading public belief that Israel was responsible for the Sabra-Shatila massacres.

'I want to emphasize,' Arens told me, 'that any insinuation that Israel bears part of the responsibility for the killings will be a shadow across the U.S.-Israel relationship'

'Face the facts,' I said. 'You bear responsibility.' And we shared it, I thought, because we took them at their word to ensure safety in the camps.^{XL}

The Sabra and Shantila massacres sent Lebanon into an utter state of conflict. The Israelis had no intentions of leaving Lebanon and abandoning their "security zone", and the Syrians would not pullout unless Israel agreed to remove every soldier from

^{XXXIX} Agnes G. Korbani, *U.S. Intervention in Lebanon, 1958 and 1982* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1991), 88.

^{XL} George P. Schultz, *Turmoil and Triumph* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1993), 110.

Lebanon. The U.S. redeployed a contingent of U.S. Marines as part of the MNF without a clear mission or strategy except to “restore order”, which ultimately left the military leadership on the ground to devise their own day to day operations.^{XL1}

Washington was at a loss for solutions. The diplomatic corps in Lebanon was under marginal instruction from the White House to essentially rebuild the Lebanese government and military, but beyond that diplomats in Beirut were void of any directives.^{XLII} In an interview, Ambassador Dillon stated that his “instructions from Washington were so nebulous that in some sense I could have done anything I wanted. I rarely got any instructions, although I reported and reported. Never any response!”^{XLIII} The Israelis continued to destabilize Lebanon by arming internal warring factions (mainly Druze and Maronites) as the Israeli Army, Shin Bet (Israeli Security Forces), and Mossad (Israeli Intelligence) had competing alliances with the warring factions within Lebanon.^{XLIV} The instability and chaos that was perpetrated by Israeli forces incited local resentment and disdain against the IDF, particularly among Shiites. Despite the fact that the U.S. was attempting to broker negotiations among warring Lebanese factions as well as Israel, Lebanon, Syria to remove all foreign fighters from Lebanon, the Arab extremist Arab world was blinded by the optics of our alliances with Israel.

Emerging Radicalism – The Birth of Hezbollah

The assassination of Bashir Gemayal was a political loss to both the Western and

^{XL1} Robert S. Dillon, “An Interview with Ambassador Robert S. Dillon,” interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, *The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training – Foreign Affairs Oral History Project*, May 17, 1990, 126.

^{XLII} Robert S. Dillon, “An Interview with Ambassador Robert S. Dillon,” interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, *The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training – Foreign Affairs Oral History Project*, May 17, 1990, 129.

^{XLIII} Robert S. Dillon, “An Interview with Ambassador Robert S. Dillon,” interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, *The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training – Foreign Affairs Oral History Project*, May 17, 1990, 130.

^{XLIV} Robert S. Dillon, “An Interview with Ambassador Robert S. Dillon,” interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, *The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training – Foreign Affairs Oral History Project*, May 17, 1990, 127.

Arab worlds. Unlike Amin Gemayel, the brother who succeeded him, Bashir learned to understand the intricacies of Lebanon's multi-confessional government and the importance of recognizing all religious factions that resided within Lebanon, especially the neglected Shiite majority. Bashir was a Christian Maronite who sought to change the ideological dynamic among Lebanon's diverse religious community, by reaching out to Lebanese Shiites and incorporating them into the sociopolitical foundation of Lebanon. The Lebanese Shiite community was neglected for a long period of time, which made it easy to not recognize the emerging extremist Shiite factions that were gaining momentum in abandoned Lebanese neighborhoods. Ambassador Dillon states the following when discussing Shiite communities in Lebanon that eventually yielded Hezbollah, the terrorist organization responsible for the bombings of the U.S. Embassy:

They (Non-diplomat American citizens residing in Lebanon), and all of us, were guilty of underestimating the importance of the Shiites. That is a very important point! During 1981 and 1982, the simple truth was that Shiites were still being underestimated. The Maronites were scornful of them, but it wasn't just them. One could live in Beirut with an active social life and rarely meet a Shiite. There were enough Greek Orthodox, Maronites, Druze and Sunni Muslims to provide the social contact. It was a social class distinction and religious.

I think I have already mentioned that we were concerned about the Amal. By the time you got to know Nabih Berri, who was the leader of the Amal, you immediately took them seriously. One would quickly come to understand that in the Lebanese context, these were fairly modern men who were moderates. The Washington perception was clouded by a lag. Now everyone understands that the Amal were moderates, but then it wasn't that clear to Washington. It was more concerned with the possibility of Russian influence in these groups and the alliances with the Syrians. I don't know when it was that I first heard of Hezbollah. It was surely they who blew up our Embassy. Shortly after I arrived the name "Hezbollah" cropped up. Crocker and the Agency people who were concerned with internal Lebanese affairs began to report on this group. I suppose that other governments were beginning to get similar reports on the Shiites. This explains in part what happened. Many people who had spent a lot of time in

Lebanon never noticed the Shiites.^{XLV}

To shed some light on Ambassador Dillon's remarks it is important to understand the history of Lebanon's Amal Movement, which later divided, part of the group evolving into Hezbollah.

In the early 1970's (precise date is not clear), Iran-born Imam Musa Sadr founded the Movement of the Dispossessed (or Deprived), an organization that sought to unite Shiite communities within Lebanon.^{XLVI} The onset of the Lebanese Revolution in 1975 established the Amal Movement, which acted as the militant arm of the Movement of the Dispossessed.^{XLVII} The substantial and dramatic unification among the Shiite community was a result of the discrimination and scorn that was afflicted on the group by various Lebanese religious factions. The pro-Shiite movements sought to promote their own interests and establish a strong cultural and political identity within Lebanon. In addition to leveraging influence within Lebanon, the Amal Movement wanted to remain separate from the Israeli-PLO conflict and establish peace and security for the Shiite of Southern Lebanon and the Beqaa Valley (the Shiite strongholds within Lebanon).

The Amal were angered at PLO forces as their presence incited conflict with Israel, thereby creating violence and instability throughout Lebanon, but specifically in the South.^{XLVIII} Divided beliefs within the Movement regarding Israeli action in Southern Lebanon created a deep schism within the group as certain Amal members

^{XLV} Robert S. Dillon, "An Interview with Ambassador Robert S. Dillon," interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, *The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training – Foreign Affairs Oral History Project*, May 17, 1990, 99-100.

^{XLVI} "Lebanon Political Parties: Amal Movement," Lebanon Wire, last modified September 15, 2004, <http://www.lebanonwire.com/0409/04091507LW.asp>.

^{XLVII} "Lebanon Political Parties: Amal Movement," Lebanon Wire, last modified September 15, 2004, <http://www.lebanonwire.com/0409/04091507LW.asp>.

^{XLVIII} Richard Augustus Norton, *Hezbollah*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007), 22.

believed that the *modus vivendi* that was established between Amal leaders, Nabih Berri and Daoud Sulieman Daoud, and the United States and Israel was a deal with the devil that enabled the West to enter the region and assert its influence and control.^{XLIX} Another catalyst that created organizational divide within the Movement was Nabih Berri's participation in the National Salvation Committee, a group established by then Lebanese President, Elias Sarkis, to foster dialogue among Lebanon's most powerful militias during Israel's invasion of Lebanon.^L Competing interests among Amal members, specifically anti-Western and pro-Western beliefs, changed the composition of the Movement and spawned a number of other revolutionary groups as the growing desire for radical change continued to fester among the young Shiite community.

The Iranian Revolution of 1979 in which the pro-Western monarch was removed and replaced with an anti-American Shiite Muslim cleric, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, served as a significant unifying event among Lebanon's Shiite community and imparted an anti-Western ideology that permeated the revolutionary mindset. This Iranian Revolution set the stage for the future Hezbollah and Israel's invasion of Lebanon on June 5, 1982 solidified the emergence of this terrorist organization that would bomb the U.S. Embassy in Beirut 10 months later.

Hezbollah's leading members refer to 1982 as the year of its inception, but in reality Hezbollah did not formally exist until the mid-1980's.^{LI} In its early phase, Hezbollah was trained and sponsored by both Syria and the Iranian Pasdaran (Iranian Revolutionary Guards). Iran cultivated the group as a means to spread the "Islamic

^{XLIX} Richard Augustus Norton, *Hezbollah*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007), 23.

^L Richard Augustus Norton, *Hezbollah*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007), 23.

^{LI} Richard Augustus Norton, *Hezbollah*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007), 34.

Revolution” and rid the region of Western influence.^{LII} Syria exploited Hezbollah as a means to maintain influence within Lebanon, which required an element of instability and unification against Israel and the U.S.

The undertones of a regional Islamic Revolution were finally coming to a head and the continued Israeli presence in Lebanon only fueled the flames of an impending war that would be directed toward Israel and its Western allies. In Augustus Richard Norton’s book titled *Hezbollah*, he quotes former Israeli prime minister, Ehud Barak, in July 2006 as stating the following with regard to the Israeli presence in Lebanon in the 1980’s:

When we entered Lebanon....there was no Hezbollah. We were accepted with perfumed rice and flowers by the Shi’a in the south. It was our presence there that created Hezbollah.^{LIII}

Norton goes on to also quote former Israeli prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin, who echoes the same sentiments as Barak:

Another Israeli prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin, who was assassinated in 1995, made precisely the same point (as Ehud Barak) in 1987, speaking of how Israel had let the ‘genie out of the bottle.’ When Rabin asked to see me (Norton) in December 1984, I urged him to leave Lebanon because continued Israeli presence would inevitably radicalize the Shi’a community. He replied, to the best of my recollection, ‘Professor, I am a politician, and what will I say to the people of Kiryat Shimona when the rockets fall?’ And so the die was cast.^{LIV}

In hindsight, Israeli leadership was able to identify failed courses of action in Lebanon in the 1980’s, but at the time Defense Minister Ariel Sharon had charted a course that set

^{LII} Richard Augustus Norton, *Hezbollah*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007), 34.

^{LIII} Richard Augustus Norton, *Hezbollah*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007), 33.

^{LIV} Richard Augustus Norton, *Hezbollah*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007), 33-34.

Hezbollah author Augustus Richard Norton is a Professor of International Relations and Anthropology at Boston University and was a military observer for the United Nations and southern Lebanon when Hezbollah and rival Shi’a parties were taking form in the early 1980’s. A former U.S. Army officer and West Point professor, he has conducted research in Lebanon for close to three decades.

out to establish a strong presence in Lebanon termed a “security zone”, creating chaos and laying waste to those who stood in his way. These actions, which aligned themselves with the United States, created animosity among revolutionary-minded Shi’a in Southern Lebanon. This created the perfect storm that would yield catastrophic events against United States personnel in Lebanon in the form of the U.S. Embassy bombing in Beirut in 1983.

U.S. Embassy Bombing – Beirut April 18, 1983

On April 18, 1983 a truck carrying in excess of 2000 pounds of explosives drove through the gates of the U.S. Embassy killing 63 people, 17 of them were American.^{LV} The group that claimed responsibility for the attack was al-Jihad al-Islami, Islamic Jihad, one of several names used by Hezbollah before the group was formally established.^{LVI} The goals of this attack were simple, to remove U.S. presence and influence from the region and send a political message to the West that simply states ***you are not wanted here***. In an interview conducted by PBS Frontline, with former U.S. Department of State coordinator for counterterrorism in the 1980’s, Robert Oakley states the following with regard to why Iran and Syria sponsored Hezbollah in Lebanon:

It was primarily Iranians, the Syrians were sort of a secondary player, if you will, a facilitator more than a principal. The Iranians wanted to drive us out of Lebanon. **The Iranians also wanted to create a Hezbollah party**, that is, a party based on the Shiite Islamic movement in Lebanon, **which would be their tool for Islamizing Lebanon, hopefully turning it into an Islamic state similar to Iran.**

But to do that there were two obstacles that had to be gotten out of the way: the

^{LV} Thrall, Nathaniel, “How the Reagan Administration Taught Iran the Wrong Lessons,” *The Rubin Center – Research in International Affairs – The Middle East Review International Affairs (MERIA) Journal*, December 2007, 3, <http://www.rubincenter.org/meria/2007/06/Thrall.pdf>.

House Committee on Foreign Affairs, *The U.S. Embassy Bombing in Beirut*, 98th Congress, 1983, 7. <http://congressional.proquest.com>.

^{LVI} Thrall, Nathaniel, “How the Reagan Administration Taught Iran the Wrong Lessons,” *The Rubin Center – Research in International Affairs – The Middle East Review International Affairs (MERIA) Journal*, December 2007, 3, <http://www.rubincenter.org/meria/2007/06/Thrall.pdf>.

United States and the French--and not merely our military presence, because the French military barracks was also blown up at that time--**but our cultural presence**, the American University of Beirut and things of that sort. ... A number of American University of Beirut professors were taken hostage to put the pressure on us to get out of there.

And so it was a concerted effort, a well-planned effort, which succeeded in pushing the United States essentially out of Lebanon, and it also produced a big change in our policy towards the Middle East. We'd been pursuing a very positive, active policy towards the Middle East as a whole, encouraging further agreements between the Arab governments and Israel. This put a stop to it. We really went into a period of paralysis so far as Middle East diplomatic policy was concerned. We were very much on the defensive.

At that time we were not as convinced, not as certain of the military links to Iran as we became a little bit later on. As it turns out, they were not only trying to drive us out of Lebanon, but they also wanted to punish us for what they saw as us taking sides in the war that they were waging against Iraq. **And so they had a double reason for trying to punish us. But we were unable to find the direct link.**^{LVII}

The hostility that was brewing in Southern Lebanon and later fostered by Iran and Syria was lost on the United States. U.S. policy and strategy was consumed by the Arab-Israeli conflict, which blinded the Reagan Administration from identifying the impending threat – Hezbollah and other radical Shi'a groups developing in Lebanon. Ambassador Dillon states, in a transcribed interview, that Ambassador Ryan Crocker, then political officer at U.S. Embassy in Lebanon, was monitoring the Shi'a groups and attempting to establish contact to develop relationships within the community, but it was difficult to spearhead relations with a group that had been discarded by Lebanon.^{LVIII}

^{LVII} Oakley, Robert, "An Interview with Robert Oakley," interview by Target America, Frontline, PBS, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/target/interviews/oakley.html>.

^{LVIII} Robert S. Dillon, "An Interview with Ambassador Robert S. Dillon," interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, *The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training – Foreign Affairs Oral History Project*, May 17, 1990, 100.

Conclusion – U.S. Policy in the Aftermath

In the aftermath of the U.S. Embassy bombing the United States pledged continued support to the Lebanese government, requesting \$30 million from the House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Affairs, in support of temporary and new diplomatic facilities in Beirut that would continue to promote diplomacy in Lebanon and throughout the region.^{LIX} In February of 1984, ten months after the U.S. Embassy bombing and subsequently the U.S. Marines Barracks bombing, the Marines stationed in Beirut returned to the U.S.

Retaliatory action against the perpetrators of both the U.S. Embassy bombing and the Beirut Marine Barracks bombing (October 1983) was endorsed by Secretary of State Schultz and National Security Advisor, Robert “Bud” McFarlane, but Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger rejected the idea fearing that kinetic and punitive action against those responsible for the attacks would significantly harm U.S. relations with other Arab states. Therefore, a retaliatory mission was aborted.^{LX}

The Embassy attack could be viewed as *the* event in U.S. history that put terrorism on the map for the United States. Various radical groups existed throughout the world, but the U.S. Embassy bombing in Beirut, Lebanon was the cataclysmic event that jolted America and changed the face of an American adversary that would become the focus of U.S. aggression for future decades. This new adversary posed a myriad of challenges to the U.S. government as it wasn’t a state or a nation, but an ideology that took many forms and presented different tactics and procedures with regard to

^{LIX} House Committee on Foreign Affairs, *The U.S. Embassy Bombing in Beirut*, 98th Congress, 1983, 1. <http://congressional.proquest.com>.

^{LX} McFarlane, Robert C, “An Interview with Robert C. McFarlane,” Interview by Target America, Frontline, PBS Frontline, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/target/interviews/mcfarlane.html>.

asymmetrical warfare that truly presented a quandary to America. The U.S. lacked the intelligence and unity of effort, at the cabinet level, in crafting a response to this new adversary.^{LXI} An attempt to topple the Khomeini regime in Iran would not be supported by either the American people or U.S. allies, and covert support of a Lebanese opposition force that could direct attacks on Hezbollah operatives was too risky as Lebanese forces failed to demonstrate the competence to successfully carry out retaliatory attacks on behalf of the U.S. government.^{LXII} Therefore, the government reaction to the attacks in Beirut was hollow and void of any clear, definitive response.

The United States entered Lebanon in the hopes of establishing a resolution to the Arab-Israeli crisis. However, America's narrow view of the regional issues through a Western lens prevented success from the beginning. The Reagan Administration failed to recognize that Communism was not *the* paramount threat in the region, rather growing radical Islamic fundamentalism, instigated by Israeli aggression and Shi'a displacement, was the emerging threat. The U.S. diplomatic community made significant inroads with the Lebanese government and key groups within the country. Unfortunately, a comprehensive understanding of the numerous factions within Lebanon was lost at the Washington level, resulting in weak strategy that left diplomats in Beirut vulnerable to extremist actors in the region.

Radical Islamic extremism continues to grow under different banners, imparting similar ideologies that converge on a common enemy, the West and its allies. *The 9/11*

^{LXI} McFarlane, Robert C, "An Interview with Robert C. McFarlane," Interview by Target America, Frontline, PBS Frontline, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/target/interviews/mcfarlane.html>.

^{LXII} McFarlane, Robert C, "An Interview with Robert C. McFarlane," Interview by Target America, Frontline, PBS Frontline, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/target/interviews/mcfarlane.html>.

Oakley, Robert, "An Interview with Robert Oakley," interview by Target America, Frontline, PBS, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/target/interviews/oakley.html>.

Commission Report revealed that al Qaeda operatives have been linked to Hezbollah and Iran, and the Beirut bombings have served as a doctrinal training tool studied by terrorist leaders for future operations.^{LXIII} The adversaries of *today* pulled the adversary of *then* into the *now* as the United States continues to struggle to identify the center of gravity within Islamic extremism that will eventually yield compromise and stability throughout the world.

^{LXIII} Thrall, Nathaniel, "How the Reagan Administration Taught Iran the Wrong Lessons," *The Rubin Center – Research in International Affairs – The Middle East Review International Affairs (MERIA) Journal*, December 2007, 8, <http://www.rubincenter.org/meria/2007/06/Thrall.pdf>.

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