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THESIS

**WHEN POLICY AND STRATEGY COLLIDE:
U.S. INTERVENTION IN LEBANON 1982-1984**

by

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March 2015

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U.S. INTERVENTION IN LEBANON 1982-1984**

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ABSTRACT

Clausewitz believed that war and politics are inseparable—that the grim realities of war are just a continuation of the laborious machinations of politics. This relationship is always complicated. States are rarely able to achieve the complete destruction of their foes, settling instead on using their military might to achieve limited political ends. When political goals are pursued by inappropriate or ill-considered military means, disaster may easily result. For the United States 30 years ago, the decision to send combat troops into Lebanon in an ambiguous, peacekeeping role tragically illustrates one such disaster. This thesis examines the U.S. intervention in Lebanon from 1982–1984 to historically analyze U.S. policy and strategy and illustrate the disparities between the strategic goals of the administration and the methods employed to achieve them. These events mark the beginning of direct U.S. military intervention in the post-colonial Middle East, a process that has grown steadily in scale and consequence ever since. Despite the accumulation of such hard-won experience in the region, the harmonization of military means and political ends remains as illusive today as it was at the start.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CJCS	Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
GOL	Government of Lebanon
IDF	Israeli Defense Force
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
LAF	Lebanese Armed Forces
MNF	Multinational Force
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organization
ROE	Rules of Engagement
SECDEF	Secretary of Defense
SECSTATE	Secretary of State
UN	United Nations
UNIFIL	United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon
USEUCOM	United States European Command

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Dedicated to Katherine Kranz Jordan

Wife, Editor, Believer

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I. HOW IT ALL BEGAN

A. INTRODUCTION

Famed military theoretician Carl Von Clausewitz believed that war and politics are inseparable—that the grim realities of war are just a continuation of the laborious machinations of politics.¹ This relationship is always complicated. States are rarely able to achieve the complete destruction of their foes, settling instead on using their military might to achieve limited political ends. When political goals are pursued by inappropriate or ill-considered military means, disaster may easily result. For the United States 30 years ago, the decision to send combat troops into Lebanon in an ambiguous, peacekeeping role tragically illustrates one such disaster. These events mark the beginning of direct U.S. military intervention in the post-colonial Middle East, a process that has grown steadily in scale and consequence ever since.

Following swiftly on the heels of the Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon in June of 1982, the United States attempted to seize an opportunity to promote its salient interests in the region through aggressive diplomatic and military intervention. U.S. politico-military involvement was meant to bolster the battered Lebanese government against insurgent forces, secure the withdrawal of all foreign fighters, and rekindle the Arab-Israeli peace process for the combative Lebanese and Palestinians, which could have resulted in extensive positive changes for the tone of the entire region.² Unfortunately, U.S. intercession in Lebanon did not advance progressive change for any involved.

Militants seized Lebanon's capital by January of 1984 and demanded the withdrawal of allied forces.³ By February, the intervention was over. At the cost of hundreds of allied lives, considerable U.S. diplomatic pressure, and significant economic

¹ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 87.

² Ralph A. Hallenbeck, *Military Force as an Instrument of U.S. Foreign Policy: Intervention in Lebanon, August 1982–February 1984* (New York: Praeger, 1991), xi.

³ *Ibid.*, 124.

and military assistance, the United States' attempts to manage the Lebanese crisis generated long-lasting results that ran completely counter to its strategic goals. Several factors contributed to U.S. failure: marked lack of synergy between U.S. foreign policy and strategy,⁴ ambiguity over exactly what the U.S. hoped to accomplish and how it sought to do so, and finally, the unresolved question as to whether military forces should have been used in an attempt to obtain limited objectives that did not have clear indicators of success.

Despite the accumulation of such hard-won experience in the region, the harmonization of military means and political ends remains as illusive today as it was at the start. For the U.S. in Lebanon, a synergy of ends and means never occurred and the results were unnecessarily crippling to U.S.-led attempts at peace in the Middle East. In the following sections, context for the intervention is provided, policy and strategy for the participants is outlined, and the results of U.S. actions are analyzed. These historical aspects are studied in order to glean how and why the U.S. intervention occurred and what lessons may be drawn from it that are relevant to the future of the United States in its dealings with the Middle East.

B. RELEVANCE

Conflict in the Middle East cannot be understood simply in terms of "X caused Y." Religious and ethnic identities have historically clashed in the area and modern-era international politics only serves to exacerbate the endemic regional problems. The attempts made by Western powers to graft a solution to the Arab-Israeli dispute onto a complex transnational backdrop in the middle of a limited and misunderstood struggle in Lebanon in 1982 further complicated the already existing regional issues.⁵

Similar to other conflicts in the Middle East prior to 1982, the war in Lebanon was one of limited scope and objectives. All of the combatants engaged in Lebanon were

⁴ Strategy, in this case, is defined as the roles and objectives assigned to U.S. armed forces.

⁵ Thomas M. Davis, "Lebanon 1982: The Imbalance of Political Ends and Military Means," Global Security.org, accessed August 9, 2014, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/1985/DTM.htm>.

confined in space, time, and goals.⁶ For example, the United States did not attempt to occupy Lebanon in order to suppress the fighting via total war and mass mobilization; neither did the United States have access to the political freedom of maneuver required to do so. Ultimately, U.S. actions were not sufficiently tailored to make them achievable by the political and military forces brought to bear in the conflict.

The previous point is exactly why an analysis of Lebanon in 1982 is still relevant today as a study in the modern use of force and diplomatic issues in the Middle East. The United States should have established political objectives that were clearly delineated and relatable in military terms if force was going to be used for strategic leverage, but this did not occur throughout the increasingly violent evolution of the conflict. Small-scale conventional forces were sent into a hostile environment with restrictive rules of engagement (ROE), ambiguous mission statements, and little to no guidance for operational execution in a politically sensitive region. The most puzzling aspect of the intervention was the incomplete, off-hand analysis that preceded and persisted throughout the United State's involvement.⁷

The costs associated with this strategic oversight were exorbitant and amounted to pervasive national and international damage control in the aftermath. The Reagan administration was subject to internal fragmentation that led to managerial chaos.⁸ Congress and others reopened the debate of the president's abuse of the War Powers Act of 1974. The U.S. image in the Middle East was irreparably damaged and the U.S.-Israeli relationship was altered, the repercussions of which are still felt today. The conflict itself cost nearly 300 American lives, drove Syria and others closer to the Soviet Union, and renewed questions in American politics regarding the appropriate role of U.S. forces in conflict. To this day, the Arab-Israeli dispute rages on with no clear resolution in sight.⁹

⁶ Thomas M. Davis, *40Km Into Lebanon: Israel's 1982 Invasion* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1985), 16.

⁷ Hallenbeck, *Military Force*, 137–140.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁹ Davis, "Lebanon 1982: The Imbalance of Political Ends and Military Means."

In order to understand the fundamental issues behind the war in Lebanon and the U.S. intervention, it is necessary to elaborate on the germane issues in Lebanese history that relate directly to the Arab-Israeli conflict. To do that, one must follow the rabbit hole down to an all-too-familiar place and back to where this story really began: the formation of Lebanon as a fragmented polity with an inherent disposition for violent sectarian turmoil displays how the state was seemingly fated to become the battlefield for the Israeli and Palestinian struggle.¹⁰

C. A BRIEF HISTORY

Although conflict and foreign power intervention have occurred in Lebanon as far back as Roman times, modern Lebanon is ultimately a creation of the same political process that created Syria, Turkey, Israel, Jordan,¹¹ and others.¹² Post-WWI, the responsibility of dividing the Middle East regions previously held by the Ottoman Empire fell to France and England as victors' spoils at the conclusion of the bloody European conflict's conclusion.¹³ The secret wartime collusion known as the Sykes-Picot Agreement ensured that the northern Levant comprised of southeastern Turkey, Syria, and Lebanon was apportioned to France's dominion while Transjordan, Iraq, and Palestine/Israel went to the British.¹⁴ See Figure 1 for the regional divisions of Lebanon and Syria under the Ottoman Empire.

¹⁰ Davis, *40Km Into Lebanon*, 53.

¹¹ "Transjordan" at its founding.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 55.

¹⁴ Martin W. Lewis, "Greater Syria and the Challenge to Syrian Nationalism," accessed November 19, 2014, <http://www.geocurrents.info/geopolitics/greater-syria-and-the-challenge-to-syrian-nationalism>.

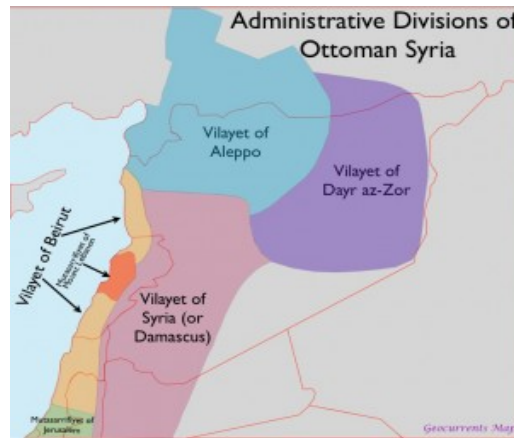


Figure 1. Lebanon and Syria under the Ottomans¹⁵

Based on historical connections between France and the northern Levant region, the French were officially placed in command of Lebanese and Syrian reformations through a mandate obtained in the League of Nations in April 1920. The provisional mandate directed that the French guide the populations to self-determination and report progress regularly to the League.¹⁶ Although the region was supposed to be ruled as separate but equal parts of a larger political body, French leaders ultimately sought to weaken Muslim influence in the region, specifically Syrian influence.¹⁷

France immediately began shuffling the geopolitical building blocks into separate “statelets,” based primarily on religious representation. The French took steps to divide Lebanon from Syria in order to ensure continued reliance on French power in the region by Maronite Christians, the dominant faction in Lebanese society and the French-appointed provisional administrative council.¹⁸ As one can see in Figure 2, the British-French allocations completely disregarded the Ottoman’s previous administrative districts; however, for better or worse, the basis for modern Lebanon was established.

¹⁵ From Lewis, “Greater Syria and the Challenge to Syrian Nationalism.”

¹⁶ William Harris, *Lebanon: A History 600 – 2011* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 170.

¹⁷ Ibid., 175–177.

¹⁸ Davis, *40Km Into Lebanon*, 56.

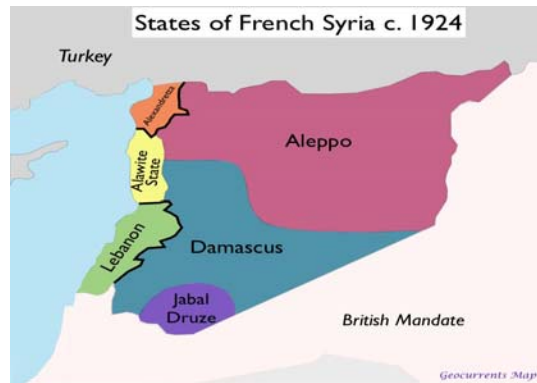


Figure 2. Lebanon and Syria under the French¹⁹

The borders drawn by France would have long-lasting implications. The final dimensions of the new country included the greater Mount Lebanon region, dividing the country in half between the population-heavy coast to the west and the fertile Bekaa Valley to the east, with the Anti-Lebanon mountain range forming a natural barrier to Syria (see Figure 3). It is important to note that France established the Lebanon-Syrian border out of territory that had belonged to the province of Damascus for hundreds of years, and was historically more attached to Damascus than Beirut by culture and influence.²⁰ Redrawing the maps doubled the territory under the control of Lebanon at the expense of Syria and profoundly altered Lebanese demographics, which is exceedingly important when one considers Lebanon's system of governance.

¹⁹ From Lewis, "Greater Syria and the Challenge to Syrian Nationalism."

²⁰ Constantine J. Pettallides, "Cedars to the East: A Study of Modern Lebanon," accessed January 5, 2014, <http://www.studentpulse.com/articles/603/cedars-to-the-east-a-study-of-modern-lebanon>.



Figure 3. Modern Lebanon geographic map (from “Geographic Map of Lebanon,” accessed November 19, 2014, <http://www.geocurrents.info/geopolitics/greater-syria-and-the-challenge-to-syrian-nationalism>).

The Lebanese constitution, co-written with the French in 1926, institutionalized the already ensconced principles of a confessional system of governance with representation based on religious divisions in the population. Confessional government meant that parliamentary seats (spread across the executive, legislative, and civil services sectors of the body politic) were to be distributed equally based on census data obtained in 1922. Maronite Christians were undoubtedly the majority group at the time; however, the data obtained indicated that their majority declined dramatically courtesy of the annexation of larger Muslim population areas into the new country. In 1922, the population estimates showed a Christian majority of 55 percent (down from 80 percent in 1911 before the annexation) with Maronites comprising 33 percent of all Christians. Sunni and Shia Muslims increased from 3.5 to 20 percent and 5.6 to 17.2 percent, respectively.²¹ A second census, conducted in 1932, found the Maronite majority had decreased further, from one-third to 29 percent with Muslims rising 5 percent in total.²² A rising Muslim population seemed to threaten the Maronite hold on political representation and ensured that Lebanon would never have a “clear” majority.²³ France continued to administer Lebanon’s growth until its downfall in 1940.

²¹ Harris, *Lebanon: A History*, 178.

²² Ibid., 185.

²³ There has not been another official census conducted in Lebanon since 1932.

With the fall of France to Germany in WWII, another great power stepped in to oversee Lebanon's development. Between 1941 and 1943, the British consolidated disparate interests between Maronite and Muslim leaders into a shared interest in independence known as the National Pact.²⁴ The spirit of the brokered deal was that Christians had to accept Lebanon as a part of the Arab world alongside Sunni and Shia political partners while the non-Christians had to accept Maronite presidential leadership and a Lebanon that also had interests facing West. The National Pact of 1943 was envisioned as paving the way for a Lebanon free of French meddling and balanced between the Christian and Muslim elites' interests.²⁵ Through the benefit of hindsight, this was clearly a set-up for future schismatic conflict.

The National Pact finalized modern Lebanon's divisions along sectarian lines, though the former constitutional requirements for proportional representation were slightly redefined. Per the agreement, the President of Lebanon would always be a Maronite Christian, the Prime Minister a Sunni Muslim, and the Speaker of the House of Parliament a Shiite. Within the House, for every five Muslim representatives appointed, there would be six Christian representatives. The president was to be elected directly by the Parliament.²⁶

The obvious problem with the confessional system, and the source of the inevitable future friction, was that the ratio used for proportional representation was based on faulty and outdated demographic data. Evidence suggests that Christians and Muslims were on par in terms of population by the early 1940s.²⁷ Also, there were no requirements for the representation system to be readdressed within the National Pact; the constitution gave the President of Lebanon veto power over any legislation produced by the Parliament, ensuring that the distribution ratio would remain. In the wake of WWII, disadvantaged Muslims would let the issue of representation slide, but only for a time.

²⁴ Ibid., 193.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Davis, *40Km Into Lebanon*, 58.

²⁷ Harris, *Lebanon: A History*, 194.

The precarious political system held defiantly in the beginning, but began to show the first signs of collapse before too long.

Shortly after the establishment of the National Pact, external factors and a series of unfortunate events upset the delicate balance in Lebanon and pressurized the state through the following decades. First, the 1947 United Nations resolution, which recommended partition of the British-held territory of Palestine, led to the creation of the state of Israel. The nationalist conflict that followed resulted in almost 120,000 Palestinian refugees fleeing to southern Lebanon.²⁸ Second, during the first Arab-Israeli conflict, Lebanon allied itself with the West against Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser and the neighboring Syrian Ba'thist Muslims. The subsequent military shaming of Nasser and the Arab conservatives garnered the former's heroic image among Sunni Muslims and led that same group to an intellectual revival of the unified Arab caliphate philosophy that Lebanon had abandoned at its formation.²⁹

By May of 1958, external pressures turned into internal problems and led to a brief collapse of the Lebanese political system. American intervention was able to stabilize the situation through a peaceful intercession of 14,000 U.S. Marines.³⁰ The third event to upset Lebanon's precarious balance was the second flood of Palestinian refugees following King Hussein of Jordan's forcible expulsion of the Palestinian Liberation Organization's (PLO) fighters in 1970. The arrival of additional Palestinian forces in Lebanon is arguably the most important factor in 20th century Lebanon's death spiral.

By July 1973, after numerous fractured ceasefire agreements and broken promises of peace, Jordan's forces effectively dissolved the last vestiges of PLO power. The last of the embattled Palestinians in Jordan evacuated to Lebanon to recuperate and continue the conflict with Israel from a new base of operations. As historian William Harris stated, "Without the overwhelming impact of Palestinian militarization, there would have been

²⁸ Ibid., 195.

²⁹ Davis, *40 Km Into Lebanon*, 58–59.

³⁰ Undertaken in a Cold War context to counter Soviet influence and the rising United Arab movement sponsored by Soviet-leaning Nasser and Syria. Alasdair Soussi, "Legacy of U.S.' 1958 Lebanon Invasion," accessed November 15, 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/07/201371411160525538.html>.

time and opportunities to ameliorate domestic imbalances (in Lebanon).”³¹ To further compound the chaos of 1973, the Yom Kippur War between Israel and the Egyptians temporarily diverted international attention away from Lebanese domestic strife. Predictably, Lebanon’s factious government soon reached the end of its tolerance for Arafat’s radical Muslim “freedom fighters.”³²

The Fatah branch of the PLO, under the leadership of Yasser Arafat in 1974, called for the forceful liberation of the Palestinian people and establishment of the Palestinian state following the complete destruction of the Israelis. Following his United Nations general assembly address in 1974, Arafat described the PLO’s approach to the Israeli-Palestine problem going forward as, “carrying an olive branch in one hand and freedom fighter’s gun in the other.”³³ Unfortunately for Christian Lebanese leaders, the staging area for PLO liberation operations had moved to their backyard.

In 1975, mounting internal and regional pressures shattered Lebanon’s fragile domestic stability. Due to extremist activities by various groups embedded in the Connecticut-sized country, Lebanon exploded into another brutal, faction-led civil war that would last for several years and require another international intervention to salvage the beleaguered government. From 1976 through 1982, approximately 30,000 Syrian armed forces remained on Lebanese territory (with U.S., Arab League, and Lebanese diplomatic support) as invited peacekeepers in order to maintain some semblance of peace and order. For the Lebanese, the country became more divided than ever before as Christians backed their various regime-supporting militia groups, supported by Israeli interference, and Muslims backed their own separatist enclaves, supported by Syrian influence.³⁴

³¹ Harris, *Lebanon: A History*, 220.

³² Charles Winslow, *Lebanon: War & Politics in a Fragmented Society* (London: Routledge, 1996), 179–180.

³³ Ofira Seliktar, “Israel’s Menachem Begin,” in *Leadership and Negotiation in the Middle East*, ed. Barbara Kellerman and Jeffrey Z. Rubin (New York: Praeger, 1988), 41.

³⁴ David Sylvan and Stephen Majeski, *U.S. Foreign Policy in Perspective: Clients, Enemies, and Empires* (London: Routledge, 2009), Accompanying Notes website, <http://www.us-foreign-policy-perspective.org/index.php?id=311&L=-1%2527>.

During this tumultuous period in Lebanon, Israel sought to advance its position against the PLO. Using all available political tools, the Israeli government simultaneously provided significant economic and military support to the Maronite Christian faction of Lebanon, the Phalange—led by the Gemayel family—to counter Syrian and Palestinian influence in the region.³⁵ Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, working in tandem with his Defense Minister Ariel Sharon, took advantage of the deteriorated situation in its neighboring state to launch small-scale attacks across the border against PLO forces in southern Lebanon.

Israel's attacks into southern Lebanon did not stem the tide of PLO aggression into northern Israel. In response, Begin and Sharon acted in step with their hard-liner Likud political party; in the Likud's view, the Palestinian problem in Lebanon would be best removed with a war of annihilation.³⁶ The Israelis lacked the proper *casus belli*, however, to launch more than small-scale raids against the PLO without suffering international and domestic backlash. The attempted assassination of the Israeli Ambassador to Britain on June 4, 1982, was construed as a PLO terrorist attack and provided all the reason Begin needed to launch the Israeli invasion into Lebanon two days later.³⁷ Ironically, it was called Operation Peace for Galilee—and it was anything but. In the meantime, the United States watched its foreign policy and grand strategy efforts in the Middle East go up in a blaze of Israeli artillery smoke.

³⁵ Hallenbeck, *Military Force*, 4.

³⁶ Seliktar, "Israel's Menachem," 31–32.

³⁷ Winslow, *Lebanon*, 230.

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II. THE STATE(S) OF AFFAIRS

The following chapter provides insight into the circumstances, policies, and strategic goals of the participant countries prior to the 1982 U.S. intervention. While broad in scope, this is an attempt to establish belligerents' motivations and comprehensive issues that affected their strategic calculus before and during the conflict.

A. UNITED STATES

As a result of the Camp David peace accords of 1979, the United States secured the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Sinai Peninsula in exchange for Egyptian recognition of Israel's sovereignty in the Middle East. Political agreements on the status of Palestinian autonomy and Israeli-occupation of Gaza and the West Bank were negotiated but left unresolved.³⁸ Egypt was summarily ostracized by the rest of the Arab world for recognizing Israel and for making concessions in exchange for land that had once belonged to them. If the Camp David peace process constructed some form of autonomy and resolution for the Palestinian problem, Egypt hoped to leverage that success to rebuke its regional critics.³⁹

The United States shared Egypt's views on Palestine's autonomy issues: the U.S. had to find a peaceable solution to advance its strategic interests. The U.S. backed Israel during the Yom Kippur War, but needed to display its ability to be evenhanded with all parties in order to resolve the Arab-Israeli elephant in the region and supplant Soviet influence. Problematically, U.S. success as a regional influencer in the Middle East depended on Israel's acceptance in the Arab world. Due to the nature of the alliance between the U.S. and Israel, and the fact that U.S. diplomacy orchestrated the Camp David accords that laid Egypt low, the United States reserved vested interests in engineering long-term peace options for the region.

³⁸ "Camp David Accords and the Arab-Israeli Peace Process," last modified October 31, 2013, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1977-1980/camp-david>.

³⁹ Hallenbeck, *Military Force*, 1.

From the outset of U.S. 1980s-era policy efforts in the Middle East, Secretary of State Alexander Haig attempted to build a coalition of partners against Soviet influence in the region before moving on to finding a lasting resolution for the Palestine issue.⁴⁰ In accord with the Republican Party platform of 1980, Reagan's top foreign policy objective was replacing USSR dominance around the world with U.S. superiority.⁴¹ As a result, U.S. foreign policy and strategy with regard to Lebanon and other powers in the Middle East is best understood within a Cold War context.

Haig and others in Reagan's organization saw the conflict in Lebanon as a potential stepping-stone in their quest for dominance over the USSR. If negotiated successfully, Soviet power in the region would be discredited through the departure of Syrian forces from Lebanon, while U.S. influence and preeminence in the Middle East would rise if the U.S. also secured the withdrawal of the Israelis. By aiding the embattled Lebanese government economically, diplomatically, and militarily, the United States could embolden a new regional partner free of Soviet or Zionist influence. If U.S. diplomatic efforts were extremely lucky, Syria could be courted away from the Soviet camp, (as the Egyptians were after Camp David) and the Israelis would be inclined to renegotiate with the PLO after the dust settled.⁴²

By May 26, 1982, Secretary of State Alexander Haig addressed the Chicago Council of Foreign Relations and succinctly described American foreign policy goals. Haig remarked that the ongoing turmoil in the Middle East was of grave concern to the United States, that President Reagan would soon initiate efforts to bring an end to the Iraq-Iran War, revitalize the Palestinian autonomy negotiations, and would seek to end the conflict that had been raging in Lebanon since the early 1970s.⁴³ Less than two weeks after the Chicago speech, and without President Reagan's blessing, Secretary Haig

⁴⁰ Stephen S. Rosenfeld, "The Conduct of American Foreign Policy: Testing the Hard Line," *Foreign Affairs*, February 1, 1983, accessed August 9, 2014. <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/37139/stephen-s-rosenfeld/the-conduct-of-american-foreign-policy-testing-the-hard-line>.

⁴¹ Betty Glad, "The United State's Ronald Reagan," in *Leadership and Negotiation in the Middle East*, ed. Barbara Kellerman and Jeffrey Z. Rubin (New York: Praeger, 1988), 211.

⁴² Hallenbeck, *Military Force*, 8–10.

⁴³ Davis, "Lebanon 1982."

dispatched specific instructions to Phillip Habib, the president's Special Negotiator in the Middle East.

Negotiator Habib was to seek an end to the Lebanese conflict with three specific objectives: compel the withdrawal of all foreign armed forces from Lebanon, bolster the Lebanese government's control of its state, and secure the northern border of Israel.⁴⁴ Though Reagan chastised Haig upon discovering his act of subterfuge (ordering negotiations prior to review by Reagan's other chosen policy professionals), the president never rescinded Haig's marching orders to Habib.⁴⁵ Haig resigned in June of 1982 while Habib continued shuttle politics missions between Beirut, Damascus, Tel Aviv, and Washington. The United States soon discovered that attempting to broker the interests of Syria, the PLO, the divided Lebanese, the warring Israelis, and the rest of the incensed Middle East with U.S. diplomacy would require more than words and beleaguered statesmen.

By August 21, 1982, after a month of relentless Israeli Defense Force (IDF) bombardment and ceaseless U.S. diplomatic leaning on all involved, a plan for cessation of hostilities was finally agreed to. The PLO fighters would evacuate Lebanon in total, leaving their heavy weaponry and noncombatants to be absorbed by the Lebanese army and population, respectively. The tenuous peace plan contained a stipulation that a multinational peacekeeping force would be dispatched to Lebanon to oversee the evacuation of the PLO. Disregarding the objections of his Secretary of Defense, Caspar Weinberger, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General John Vassey, President Reagan committed 800 U.S. Marines as peacekeepers alongside French and Italian forces. Reagan and some of his likeminded advisors saw this as a critical and necessary first step in advancing U.S. objectives in the region.⁴⁶

From the perspectives of President Reagan's military leadership, intervention in Lebanon was high risk with little reward. For the promise of a tentative ceasefire and

⁴⁴ Glad, "The United State's Ronald Reagan," 215.

⁴⁵ Hallenbeck, *Military Force*, 10.

⁴⁶ Hallenbeck, *Military Force*, 12–14.

evacuation, the U.S. military would be deployed into a hostile situation in which it could potentially be targeted and restricted in its response. Analogies were drawn between the Marines' presence in Lebanon and situations American forces faced in Vietnam: constraints on the Marines' ability to respond to the threat of factious forces outside of their understanding would unnecessarily endanger them and had the potential to embroil the United States in another conflict that, to the government and the U.S. public, seemed to be on the periphery of strategic concern at best.⁴⁷

Weinberger and Vassey raised very explicit concerns regarding the size and employment of U.S. forces. From their assessments, "The force was too small to fight successfully if required to do so, but too large to avoid being visible, and therefore vulnerable."⁴⁸ There were also concerns raised about the potential force's host, "As one of the world's two superpowers, the United States could not commit its armed forces into volatile areas without risk of becoming someone else's surrogate."⁴⁹ House Representative Sam Gibbons echoed Weinberger and Vassey's concerns, "If we are there to keep peace, we are far too few.... If we are there to die, then we are far too many."⁵⁰

Reagan understood these concerns, but recognized that great power backing was required to support the government of Lebanon (GOL)—the PLO had to be removed benevolently in order to begin the peace process and convince the Arabs that the U.S. was an honest broker for all in the Middle East. To mitigate the danger to U.S. forces, President Reagan, at the insistence of Weinberger, asserted that peacekeepers would only remain in Beirut as long as the PLO maintained its part of the evacuation agreements and only as long as Marines were not the target of hostilities.⁵¹ In order to ensure Marines were not exposed to unnecessary risk, they would not leave the relative safety of the port of Beirut during the evacuation. The president reported to Congress, as is required under the War Powers Act when deploying forces abroad, that the military's operation would be

⁴⁷ Ibid., 14.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Lawrence Pintak, *Seeds of Hate: How America's Flawed Middle East Policy Ignited the Jihad* (London: Pluto Press, 2003), 3.

⁵¹ Glad, "The United State's Ronald Reagan," 215.

a 30-day commitment. By August 21, the administration's plan was executed and the evacuation was underway.

The multinational peacekeeping force (MNF) successfully interceded and the PLO was peacefully removed. An estimated 15,000 PLO fighters and some elements of the Syrian army were relocated either by sea to sponsored locations or over land to Syria. By September 1, four days after the MNF arrived in Lebanon, President Reagan, hoping to ride the wave of success that followed in the wake of the evacuation, announced his comprehensive plan for peace in the Middle East. He proposed that an autonomous Palestinian body politic be created within a federation of the Kingdom of Jordan. President Reagan also recommended that Israel cease any new immigration efforts into Gaza and the West Bank, and in exchange, the Arab world would recognize Israel's borders and sovereignty.⁵² It was clear from Reagan's newest proposal that the president believed the Middle East was ready to accept a U.S. solution and that the conflict in Lebanon, in his mind, was under control and could be exploited for U.S. strategic gain.

President Reagan attempted to communicate to the Arab World with his new plan that U.S. efforts in Lebanon were intimately linked to broader U.S. goals in the region.⁵³ Undeniably, Reagan's grand strategy was built in direct response to his belief that Soviet backing of Syrian and PLO forces in Lebanon was creating conflict and degrading U.S. influence in the region. As Alexander Haig stated, "the advance of Soviet influence in the Middle East could best be checked by a show of U.S. resolve."⁵⁴ Prior to the announcement, Reagan's Middle East advisors informed him that Jordan would back the peace initiative within hours of the announcement and that the Saudis, who had previously engineered their own proposals in concert with Egypt and Jordan, were onboard as well. The Israeli response was expected to be amenable as public opinion in Israel was pushing Begin's government to get out of Lebanon.⁵⁵ Unfortunately, none of the advisors' forecasts held true.

⁵² Winslow, *Lebanon*, 234.

⁵³ Hallenbeck, *Military Force*, 16.

⁵⁴ Glad, "The United State's Ronald Reagan," 221.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 215.

The Israelis rejected the proposal completely and the Arab League headed by Saudi Arabian King Fahd refused to acknowledge anyone but the PLO as the lawful Palestinian authority.⁵⁶ President Reagan, possibly in response to Israeli inflexibility or frustration at the collapse of his proposal, directed the two-week early withdrawal of U.S. forces from the MNF. The strategy remained to lock the Arab world and the Israelis into a U.S. solution for the region's problems through diplomatic leverage and mediation with minimal (preferably no) military effort. Regrettably, this was not the last time these Marines would have their boots on the ground in Lebanon.

B. ISRAEL

Israel, the focus of Haig's Middle East coalition of partners against the USSR, stood as a difficult and intractable ally for U.S. policy goals. The 1977 political victory of Menachem Begin, leader of the hard-liner, New Zionist Likud party, ensured that Israeli strategic and operational goals in the period before the Lebanese conflict were lockstep with New Zionist beliefs. New Zionism is a loose adaptation of National-Religious Zionism combined with historiophilosophical interpretations regarding the stance of anti-Semitism and the legacy of the Holocaust affecting the nation of Israel.⁵⁷ New Zionism united with Begin's vision of Israel's proper place in the world formed a noted departure from Israel's previous foreign policies.

The Israeli Prime Minister adopted an idealistic approach to foreign policy previously unseen in Israeli leadership. Following closely with the New Zionist's way of thinking, Begin's foreign policy modus operandi was based on two not-necessarily-supportive elements: high risk taking, and calculation of success based on measurable factors coupled with intangibles such as destiny and the will of God.⁵⁸ Strategic calculations made in this fashion affect the international outlook of an actor. The

⁵⁶ Ibid., 211, 218.

⁵⁷ For an overview of New Zionism, see Ofira Seliktar, *New Zionism and the Foreign Policy System of Israel* (London and Sidney: Croom Helm, 1986).

⁵⁸ Seliktar, "Israel's Menachem," 31.

idealistic posture of the Likud party led it to adopt a more aggressive and initiating stance in foreign affairs.⁵⁹

Evidence for Israeli motivation for and transition to more aggressive foreign policies may be extrapolated from Begin's personal beliefs and writings. According to one author's attempt to psychologically profile the Prime Minister, "There is no doubt that in Begin's vision, this universe is one of unrelenting conflict."⁶⁰ Begin's outlook stemmed from what the Prime Minister described as "the rules of history," where struggles of a people engaged in a conflict of liberation must inevitably lead to national sovereignty and international recognition.⁶¹ Begin also believed that resistance to and elimination of PLO aggression was essential for Israel's progress internationally and stated in his 1982 address to the UN⁶² wars of self-defense were "the noblest concept of mankind."⁶³

With Begin's beliefs and ideological influences in mind, it comes as no surprise that he eschewed previously pursued policies as negative and counterproductive to Israel's future. Begin was personally committed to the notion of *Eretz Israel* (the Land of Israel) and rejected the previous parties' notion of territorial compromise with the Palestinians and other Arab leaders in exchange for peace. As a result, Begin maintained throughout his tenure as Prime Minister that Arab nations would never accept a Jewish state in their midst and only violent persuasion would ensure that they had no choice but to acquiesce.⁶⁴ The Yom Kippur conflict provided the stark example the Arab world needed of Israeli capabilities, and the PLO would serve as another illustration of the Likud party's favored brand of coercive diplomacy.

⁵⁹ Yuval Neeman, "National Goals," in *On the Difficulty of Being an Israeli*, ed. Alouf Hareven (Jerusalem: The Van Leer Foundation, 1983), 257–74.

⁶⁰ Seliktar, "Israel's Menachem," 35.

⁶¹ Menachem Begin, *Be Machteret* (Tel Aviv: Hadar Publishers, 1978), 1, 91, 150, 260.

⁶² Which two-thirds of the members boycotted or walked out of.

⁶³ "News Summary; Saturday, June 19, 1982," accessed August 3, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/1982/06/19/nyregion/news-summary-saturday-june-19-1982.html>.

⁶⁴ Seliktar, "Israel's Menachem," 41.

The decision to invade Lebanon ran parallel with the New Zionist administration's long-term ideological pursuits. The Likud party would not seek peace through negotiation with the Muslim political power players in the region (Saudi Arabia and Syria), feeling that their interests could never be realized through Arab-led settlements. Various New Zionist ideologists advocated for alliances with the periphery instead (i.e., non-Muslim minorities like the Maronite Christians of Lebanon).⁶⁵

The resulting operational solution to the PLO problem called for a strong Maronite government in Beirut supportive of Israel's security interests and allied through an Israeli-brokered settlement. Long-standing strategic considerations by the IDF also lent credence to an invasion of Lebanon for a multitude of reasons: Lebanon provided legitimacy to the PLO as a political entity, allowed for a base of military operations against the Israeli border, and PLO in southern Lebanon and the West Bank foiled the Likud party's attempts at annexation and expansion of *Eretz Israel*.⁶⁶ Recognizing that beliefs alone do not necessitate a state's decision to undertake a military invasion, other regional developments also influenced the decision to assault Lebanon.

A conflict along the Israeli-Lebanese border in 1978 would have repercussions for future Israeli efforts. A PLO terrorist attack across the Lebanese border prompted the Israelis to invade and occupy southern Lebanon to the Litani River in order to oust the PLO and establish a security buffer zone to Israel's north. Under international pressure, the Israelis eventually withdrew and were to be replaced with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), however, the Israelis left behind and empowered with funding and arms a rebel Lebanese Army major named Saad Haddad to harass UNIFIL and PLO forces.⁶⁷ Initial efforts to dislodge the PLO failed, but were not forgotten; the failure of Operation Litani would influence later operations.

Other regional and international actions further hardened the Likud party's stance. Syria attempted to implement its program of National Reconciliation in the spring of

⁶⁵ Ibid., 42.

⁶⁶ Richard A. Gabriel, *Operation Peace for Galilee: The Israel-PLO War in Lebanon* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1984), 60–74.

⁶⁷ Davis, *40 Km Into Lebanon*, 61.

1981. The solution called for redistribution of administrative control in Lebanon, further empowered the autonomy of the PLO, and would have weakened Maronite struggles against the Palestinians. The program explicitly called for all Lebanese parties to recognize the “international legitimacy of the Palestinian Liberation Organization.”⁶⁸ In response, the leader of the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), Bashir Gemayel, provoked Syrian action against Christian militia forces in Mount Senin and simultaneously secured Israeli support via air attacks against Syrian helicopter forces. In the aftermath of Syria’s losses in the air, Syria countered by staging anti-aircraft SAM-6 missiles in the Bekaa Valley. U.S. diplomatic mediation was unable to secure the removal of Syria’s missiles. Diplomatic failure only reinforced Begin’s view that greater military power was required.⁶⁹

Another development that enabled Likud party aggression in Lebanon: the Reagan administration assumed office. In Reagan’s campaign speeches of 1979, he noted that Israel was, “perhaps the only remaining strategic asset in the region.”⁷⁰ President Reagan also publically remarked that a U.S.-promoted peace plan in the Middle East should not try to “force any settlement on the Israelis.”⁷¹ The U.S. and Israeli governments signed a Memorandum of Agreement in September of 1981 promising cooperation, including force training and stockpiling of military resources, against any threat to peace from USSR or USSR-sponsored forces. True to the taciturn Prime Minister’s personality, however, the relationship would be tested in short order.

Trouble arose from overt action to expand Likud party regional aspirations. Begin refused, despite U.S. pressure, to relinquish positions in Gaza or the West Bank based on his belief that any Israeli government that recognized Palestinian territorial autonomy or validity would fail to survive politically.⁷² The Israeli cabinet, at Begin’s insistence, also refused to curtail immigration efforts into the disputed territories. The Israeli

⁶⁸ Naomi Joy Weinberger, *Syrian Intervention in Lebanon* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1986), 172–173.

⁶⁹ Davis, *40Km Into Lebanon*, 63

⁷⁰ Glad, “The United State’s Ronald Reagan,” 212.

⁷¹ Laurence I. Barrett, *Gambling with History* (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 264.

⁷² Seliktar, “Israel’s Menachem,” 41.

administration also passed a plan to annex the Syrian-controlled Golan Heights that resulted in the U.S. suspending its memorandum of agreement from September. Begin responded with a venomous diatribe: “Are we a banana republic? Are we fourteen-year-olds, who if we misbehave, we get our wrists slapped?”⁷³ Israeli acts of defiance only served to prevent any delusions that U.S. foreign policy was going to control Israel or gain popularity with the other Middle Eastern states in the early 1980s.

Despite the strained relationship between U.S. and Israeli leaders, the latter did inform the U.S. before they took action in Lebanon, albeit not necessarily to the scale they intended. In October 1981, at the funeral for former Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, Begin informed Alexander Haig that Israel was planning a move against the PLO that would not involve Syria. Under the substantial strategic influence of Israeli Chief of Staff Rafael Eitan and Minister of Defense Ariel Sharon, the IDF was authorized waves of air raids against PLO strongholds in Lebanon during the summer of 1981.⁷⁴ By May 1982, Ariel Sharon visited Washington, DC, and outlined details for two potential plans: one to pacify southern Lebanon, the other to violently re-draw the political map to favor Lebanese Christian parties.⁷⁵

The U.S. response to Israel’s proposed endeavors was mixed at best and provided unspoken approval at worst. Haig answered Begin’s promise of future action by saying, “Israel would be alone if it undertook any such action, but one could not deny their right of self-defense.”⁷⁶ Later, in an act of self-preservation, Haig would claim to have denounced Sharon’s two outlines for invasion in the “plainest possible language.”⁷⁷ Sharon, however, took away from the meeting that the U.S. would not object to Israel’s plans as removal of the PLO problem benefitted everyone’s interests.⁷⁸

⁷³ Glad, “The United State’s Ronald Reagan,” 213.

⁷⁴ Seliktar, “Israel’s Menachem,” 43.

⁷⁵ Barrett, *Gambling with History*, 335.

⁷⁶ Glad, “The United State’s Ronald Reagan,” 213.

⁷⁷ Barrett, *Gambling with History*, 335.

⁷⁸ Seliktar, “Israel’s Menachem,” 44.

The Israeli leadership felt it had a tacit endorsement from its most important ally; an event big enough to supply a proportional cause was still missing. The attempted assassination of the Israeli ambassador Shlomo Argov on June 3, 1982, reportedly by PLO agents, was everything the Israeli hawks needed. The PLO's second-in-command Salah Khalaf immediately disavowed PLO involvement but responded that they were prepared to respond to Israel if necessary.⁷⁹ By June 4, IDF forces launched major bombing campaigns against the PLO in both southern Lebanon and Beirut. The PLO retaliated with mostly ineffectual artillery strikes. With cabinet approval in hand, Begin's strategy for Israeli dominance of the PLO was enacted and the Israeli army advanced around the ineffectual UNIFIL forces on June 6.

The plan for the invasion of Lebanon essentially called for an expanded version of Operation Litani. In the year preceding the invasion, a number of plans were drafted with similar strategic goals: establish a 40-kilometer security zone in southern Lebanon, avoid conflict with the Syrians, and destroy PLO artillery, forces, and potential terrorist positions. The Israeli cabinet met on June 5 and gave Defense Minister Sharon permission to cross the Lebanese border to establish the *cordon sanitaire*. Israel attacked Lebanon in force, sending approximately 80,000 men and 1250 tanks across the border accompanied by heavy air and artillery strikes. Chief of Staff Eitan later insisted on several occasions that he and the army never received instructions to limit the IDF's advance.⁸⁰

C. PALESTINE

Prior to Israel's invasion of Lebanon, the policies and strategies of the PLO reflected its tumultuous beginnings. The PLO was established in 1964 under the supervision of the Arab League and with the support of Egyptian President Nasser in an effort to provide the Palestinians a political voice and secure the Arab League a measure of control. In the minds of the Arab League, the PLO's efforts of righteous retaliation against the Israeli's were better aligned with their interests if employed when they

⁷⁹ Davis, *40 Km Into Lebanon*, 75.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 75–79.

deemed it time to do so.⁸¹ In other words, regionally the PLO was just another instrument in the Arab states' Pan-Arabism toolbox to be used when it fit the situation. The varied factions that formed the PLO in the mid-1960s were restricted in their designs against Israel as bitterly by the Arab states as they were by the USSR and the U.S.—Israeli alliance.⁸²

The intervening years between the PLO's formation and the start of the Lebanese war in 1982 exacerbated Palestinian misfortunes. The death of the Egyptian—Syrian Pan-Arabism movement following the humiliating defeat of Nasser in 1967, military losses suffered in Jordan from 1970–71, and indecisive actions in the Lebanese Civil War from 1975–76 deepened Palestinian struggles and fostered resentment as a people in exile. One point of optimism stood out for the beleaguered people of Palestine; the Arab League and the U.N. General Assembly internationally recognized the PLO, headed by Yasser Arafat's Fatah faction, as the sole representative of the Palestinian people in 1974.⁸³

Yasser Arafat was convinced that the narrow attentions of the Arab states would always demand precedence over Palestinian interests and decided more independent action was required to ensure the PLO's success. Representative of Arafat's charismatic leadership, the Fatah was able to absorb disparate groups with divergent political and military visions of how to remove the Israeli problem and what the future of the Palestinian state should be.⁸⁴ As a result, the PLO contained a coalition of factions that supported Arafat's Fatah ideologies in principle but with potential to vary widely across the spectrum of their beliefs. The coalesced groups also contained sufficient strength to insist their opinions be heard when they dissented. Consequently, the PLO's system of governance is coalition-based (as is Israel's) and subject to the general consensus of its

⁸¹ Ibid., 41.

⁸² Rashid Khalidi, "The PLO's Yasser Arafat," in *Leadership and Negotiation in the Middle East*, ed. Barbara Kellerman and Jeffrey Z. Rubin (New York: Praeger, 1988), 49.

⁸³ Harris, *Lebanon: A History*, 220–227, and Khalidi, "The PLO's Yasser Arafat," 49–50.

⁸⁴ Khalidi, "The PLO's Arafat," 53.

members, making political compromise difficult if any members disagree and are loud enough in their disapproval.⁸⁵

Militarily, the PLO and its Lebanese allies were virtually isolated on the field of battle. Aggregate PLO forces numbered a few thousand irregular combatants and militia fighters, most of which were untrained, ill-equipped, unsupported by any major logistics plan, and chaotically organized. Although Syria maintained significant forces in Lebanon throughout the war, from the outset Israel maintained that the PLO was their sole target and Syrian leaders fell for it. On June 9, three days into the conflict, Israel dealt a humiliating defeat to Syrian anti-air forces. After Syria's ceasefire agreement with Israel on June 11, its armed forces would, with the exception of its army units trapped alongside the PLO in Beirut, not be a factor in the conflict. Barring minor engagements, the PLO was in this fight alone and was vastly inferior to its adversary in almost every conceivable way.⁸⁶

Not only were the PLO alone militarily, they were isolated diplomatically as well. In earlier Israeli assaults, the Palestinians reaped the benefits of true Arab state sympathy; the Arab states were willing to unite around the PLO in order to pressure the U.S. to reign in Israel. By 1982, the Arab states' good will had run out: Lebanon wanted them out, Iraq and Iran were busy killing each other, Syria wanted Lebanon for itself, Saudi Arabia was consolidating its regional influence, Egypt was an Israeli supporter, and Jordan was understandably unwilling to aid the PLO a second time.⁸⁷ To make matters worse, the USSR explicitly told PLO leaders they would not intervene on their behalf; Palestine had no superpower counterweight to the American support.⁸⁸ Knowing that their cause was almost certainly doomed, what could Arafat and his followers have hoped to achieve?

Saddled with an inferior force and with minimal diplomatic aid forthcoming, the PLO's grand strategy reflected their brutal reality. The Palestinians' short-term goal was

⁸⁵ Davis, *40 Km Into Lebanon*, 42–43.

⁸⁶ Khalidi, "The PLO's Arafat," 49–50.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 50–51, 59–61.

⁸⁸ Rashid Khalidi, *Under Siege: P.L.O. Decisionmaking during the 1982 War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 34–35.

to simply survive. Arrayed against Israeli might, this was a genuinely desperate undertaking in and of itself. It also helped, however, that the PLO's continued resistance served to advance their long-term strategies as well. The PLO knew it had to "keep the issue of Palestine open, keep the world community aware of it, and to work to the disadvantage of Israel whenever possible."⁸⁹ Arafat and an increasing number of PLO leaders also realized that their previously stated goals of the complete destruction of Israel alongside the creation of a Palestinian state were impossible in their current state. Militarily and diplomatically, the strategy had to be to create the conditions for cutting the best deal possible, preferably brokered by both superpowers. The Palestinians had no other options.⁹⁰

D. LEBANON

Like all of the other Middle Eastern states, Lebanon is a product of guided creation, not natural evolution. Its borders and its people reflect neither natural cohesion nor sustainable and optimal allocation of control. Lebanon also has a unique feature unlike other Arab states: its history and culture allow for closer Western ties that have served as both a blessing and a curse. It is under the auspices of this curse that Lebanon's struggles coalesced before the conflict of 1982.

In the years leading to the Israeli conflict, Lebanese leaders were characterized as identifying their visions with those of varied nationalist parties. Significantly, this results in political and military conflicts between competing brands of nationalism, as evidenced by the 1975 civil war. The PLO exacerbated sectarian division by arming, training, and employing their favored Muslim militias in order to support Palestinian political establishment against the nationalist counter-movements in the Maronite and Sunni communities. In general, the Muslim factions identified with a larger sense of Arab nationalism while Christians maintained a narrower view of Lebanese identity, as one would expect due to Maronite hegemonic dominance of the Lebanese political system. As a result, powerful military leaders like Bashir Gemayel of the Phalangist Christian

⁸⁹ Davis, *40 Km Into Lebanon*, 46.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 46–48 and Khalidi, "The PLO's Arafat," 52–53.

militia were able to consolidate their power, eliminate weaker rivals, and impose control over fighters in a unified structure under their direct command.⁹¹

Bashir Gemayel's rise to power was marked by dogged determination. Regular intracommunal and proxy wars between factions within Lebanon allowed Gemayel to eliminate his rivals through various atrocities committed between 1978 and 1982. Gemayel's goal was to revive and defend Maronite Christian Lebanon, however, he chose to do so by removing opponents permanently, warlord style. The militarist leader eliminated competing Presidential-hopeful Tony Frangieh in a turf battle,⁹² forcefully absorbed former-President Chamille Chamoun's militia forces and holdings,⁹³ and successfully supplanted then-President Elias Sarkis and his state-sponsored Lebanese Army as the premier force fighting Syrian occupation in the late 1970s.⁹⁴ By the time Gemayel was finished with his violence-driven power grab, the self-proclaimed "liberator of Christian Lebanon"⁹⁵ was the only Christian leader left standing in the rubble.

Regardless of who the last man standing was in the intracommunal conflicts and nationalist struggles, Lebanon's political institutions were so weak that the state had a long history of appealing to outside powers for assistance. Gemayel would do the same at the outset of the Israeli invasion. Throughout Lebanon's conflicted history, it has at one point or another turned to the United States, France, Syria, and Israel to alleviate its woes through military intervention.⁹⁶

The recurring pattern of foreign intervention displays an insurmountable contradiction in Lebanese leadership; the president is elected based on nationalist support

⁹¹ Michael Johnson, *All Honourable Men: The Social Origins of War in Lebanon* (Oxford: The Center for Lebanese Studies, 2001), 24, 35–36.

⁹² And most of his clan's militia forces. Winslow, *Lebanon*, 224–227.

⁹³ Despite the fact that they were often allies working for a common cause. Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ David M. Rosen, "Lebanon's Elias Sarkis, Bashir Gemayel, and Amin Gemayel," in *Leadership and Negotiation in the Middle East*, ed. Barbara Kellerman and Jeffrey Z. Rubin (New York: Praeger, 1988), 20.

and identification with one group's interests.⁹⁷ When conflict rears its bloody head, as it inevitably will in a state like Lebanon with a poisonous political environment and absent reforms, the state's leader lacks the cross-factional support required to sustain government control and pleads for international intervention to reassert their regime for them. While hosting the PLO-Israeli conflict of the 1980s, the Lebanese grand strategy was simple, reflected the nature of the problem, and was also historically sound: get someone else, preferably a certain western superpower, to save them.⁹⁸

E. THE HEART OF THE MATTER

To review briefly, at the heart of the problem is the Arab-Israeli conflict that occurs in a dimension of polarized Middle Eastern politics. Lebanese leaders cried out for foreign intervention in their nationalist, sectarian conflict. The United States decided to intervene under the auspice of "solving" the Arab-Israeli problem, but in reality to supplant the USSR's regional influence with its own and to advance its strategic goals. The Israelis were fighting to destroy, the Palestinians were fighting to survive, the Lebanese were fighting each other while looking for someone else to solve their problem, and the United States never fully understood the quagmire it was stepping into.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 20–21.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 19–21.

III. EXECUTION

“I know that whoever sets his foot in Lebanon has sunk into the Lebanon swamp.”⁹⁹

—Yizhak Rabin

A. NEVER TOO LATE TO START AGAIN

By September 14, 1982, four days after the U.S. Marines finalized reconstitution on their ships, an explosion at Phalangist party headquarters in Beirut assassinated Christian President-elect Bashir Gemayel. In response, the IDF returned to shelling West Beirut in flagrant violation of the ceasefire agreement negotiated by Special Negotiator Habib. In reprisal for the murder of their leader, Phalangist militiamen massacred defenseless women, children, and Palestinian elders in refugee camps at Sabra and Shatila while IDF forces in charge of camp security failed to intercede.¹⁰⁰

The IDF, while not the executors, were undoubtedly complacent, and the United States was seen as culpable as well due to the U.S. decision to withdraw the MNF. Lebanon was once again in flames and unable to assert any control over the rapidly deteriorating situation. The Arab League accused the United States of being “morally responsible” and assertively supported PLO demands for the return of the MNF.¹⁰¹

After the reentry of the IDF into Beirut and the massacre of the Palestinian refugees, senior administration officials felt obligated to respond. President Reagan, however, did not embrace responsibility: “I don’t think that specifically there could be assigned a responsibility on our part for withdrawing our troops...They were sent in there with one understanding...and that mission was completed.”¹⁰² In private, Reagan’s opinions were different; he told his National Security Advisors in a meeting that the

⁹⁹ “Israel an Interview with Yizhak Rabin,” accessed August 9, 2014, <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,960283,00.html>.

¹⁰⁰ Gail E. S. Yoshitani, *Reagan on War: A Reappraisal of the Weinberger Doctrine, 1980–1984* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2012), 85.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 86.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

nation had, “inherited a responsibility (in Lebanon).”¹⁰³ Secretary of State Schultz recalled later in his memoirs: “Everyone knew the President was ready to send the Marines back to Lebanon, so the military had to appear to be responsive.”¹⁰⁴

Most concerning, the decision to redeploy the Marines to Lebanon was made seemingly in haste, with little consideration given to the mission or the objectives. National Security Advisor William Clark’s Deputy, Robert McFarlane, is quoted as saying that, “the Marines were sent in out of guilt and compassion, purely as moral support, without clarity or analysis beyond that level.”¹⁰⁵ CJCS Vessey explained later, “After the massacre we (Weinberger and the Joint Chiefs) didn’t want to go back in, but there wasn’t any good argument for not going back in.”¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, there are allegations that neither SECDEF Weinberger nor Vessey formally requested clarification of the purpose or end date of the deployment prior to the redeploy.¹⁰⁷ However, damning McFarlane’s condemnation may sound,¹⁰⁸ the administration’s actions were not completely devoid of analysis—as will be discussed later, the administration undertook two deliberate reappraisals of strategy and force disposition later in the conflict. This does not, however, excuse the seeming lack of complex analysis prior to the decision to redeploy.

President Reagan’s administration considered three simple options for intervention in Lebanon. One could refer to them as ‘Go Big, Go Small, or Stay Home.’ Go Big, a large force option favored by McFarlane, was proposed and was similar to what the U.S. used in 1958 in Lebanon to assist Chamoun’s regime. In principle, a large force could easily convince all belligerents to stand down and allow for the Lebanese

¹⁰³ George P. Schultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Time as Secretary of State* (New York: Charles Scribner & Sons, 1993), 106.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 107.

¹⁰⁵ Robert McFarlane and Zofia Smardz, *Special Trust* (New York: Cadell & Davies, 1994), 212.

¹⁰⁶ Gerald Strober and Deborah Hart Strober, *Reagan: The Man and His Presidency* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998) 213.

¹⁰⁷ Yoshitani, *Reagan on War*, 86.

¹⁰⁸ One must also note that McFarlane was not fond of Weinberger; he blamed the whole massacre on, “Weinberger’s irresponsible removal of our Marine protection from these hapless innocents.” McFarlane and Smardz, *Special Trust*, 211.

government to reassert control of the state. Second, SECSTATE Schultz proposed 'Go Small,' which envisioned sending in a small multinational force, analogous to the first MNF, to stabilize Beirut and allow diplomacy to resolve the ongoing issues. Special Negotiator Habib supported him.¹⁰⁹ Ralph Hallenbeck, then a senior officer involved with planning U.S. force deployment to Lebanon, captured the general opinions behind the military aspect of the Schultz plan:

A small force seemed prudent and sufficient for the immediate task of stabilizing the situation in Lebanon's capital city. Additionally, a small force could be deployed more quickly than a large one; it would be less likely to provoke a U.S.-Soviet confrontation; and it would be simpler to introduce and less costly to support. It would also keep the U.S. contribution in proportion to the French and Italian contributions, thus fostering perceptions that the interpositional forces were truly multinational and neutral with respect to the military and political interests of the factional antagonists.¹¹⁰

Serious doubts surrounded Schultz's proposal. McFarlane argued that Lebanese leaders and military forces were in no position to obtain a ceasefire. Another critic pointedly asserted that the Schultz plan depended on an, "astounding reliance on a best-case scenario."¹¹¹ In order for Schultz's best-case scenario to occur, the Lebanese government would be required to secure and enforce a ceasefire between the Israelis, PLO, Syrian forces, and warring internal factions while simultaneously assuring the Israelis of a secure northern border and convincing the Syrians to shift the balance of regional power in favor of Israeli and American interests.¹¹² It is hard to imagine any political leader considering Shultz's proposal for Lebanon as anything but a nigh impossible endeavor.

Weinberger proposed 'Stay Home.' His plan requested a delay of the Marines' return until all foreign forces had left Lebanon. Only after the belligerents' departures would the U.S. deploy a large enough contingency capable of isolating the perimeter of

¹⁰⁹ Yoshitani, *Reagan on War*, 89.

¹¹⁰ Hallenbeck, *Military Force*, 29.

¹¹¹ Yoshitani, *Reagan on War*, 89 and Schultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 108–110.

¹¹² Yoshitani, *Reagan on War*, 89.

Lebanon so that the LAF could control its internal security and a government of reconciliation could be formed. According to Schultz, Weinberger felt it was too risky to return to Beirut and “simply hope for the best.”¹¹³ Accordingly, Schultz was less than happy with Weinberger’s response. “I was, under this ‘plan,’ supposed to conduct diplomacy without strength, with no military backup—and in pursuit of a ludicrously impossible ideal.”¹¹⁴ Not surprisingly, determining how to relate military power to political goals and diplomacy would remain a problem throughout the intervention.

The United States received a formal request from the GOL for the return of the MNF on 20 September. The same Marines that oversaw the evacuation of the PLO just nineteen days prior were redeployed to Lebanon, this time with new marching orders.¹¹⁵ The United States decided to keep a lost cause from losing.

The strategy of the second U.S. intervention in Lebanon is best described in political terms vice military doctrine. The Schultz Plan carried the day in Reagan’s administration and is reflected in the intervention’s execution order. From the mission statement sent from Commander, U.S. European Command (USEUCOM) to the Commander in Chief, U.S. European Command, the U.S. MNF was tasked as follows:

To establish an environment which will permit the Lebanese Armed Forces to carry out their responsibilities in the Beirut Area. When directed, USCINCEUR will introduce U.S. Forces as part of a multinational force presence in the Beirut area to occupy and secure positions along a designated section of the line from south of the Beirut International Airport to a position in the vicinity of the Presidential Palace; be prepared to protect U.S. Forces; and, on order, conduct retrograde operations as required.¹¹⁶

Thus U.S. forces were initially deployed as an impartial “presence” and symbol of U.S. power meant to enhance the sovereignty of the GOL. The problem with the strategic framework of the Lebanese intervention is that neither presence nor enhancing

¹¹³ Schultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 108.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Hallenbeck, *Military Force*, 21–22.

¹¹⁶ “Report of the DOD Commission on Beirut International Airport,” last modified October 23, 2011, <http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/AMH/XX/MidEast/Lebanon-1982-1984/DoD-Report/Beirut-1.html>.

sovereignty is a military mission; both terms are political objectives assigned to a military force. The construction of the JCS order also made two other points clear—the Marines in Lebanon were not expected to engage in combat and would be withdrawn if hostilities toward them occurred. The duration of the operation was expected to last for 60 days.¹¹⁷

By September 29, Approximately 1200 Marines were established in positions centering on the Beirut International Airport (BIA). Their objective was to prevent violence through presence while restricted to self-defense-only Rules of Engagement (ROE). Unfortunately, September 28 was the day that President Reagan publicly announced his next policy change for Lebanon. The Marines would continue their mission in perpetuity until all foreign fighters had been withdrawn.¹¹⁸ Reagan's statement cast doubt on the scope and scale of the military's role, and made it subject to the diplomatic acquiescence of other actors that the United States did not control. Sensing an opportunity, newly-installed Lebanese President Amin Gemayel, recently assassinated Bashir's brother, traveled to Washington shortly after the announcement to request expansion of the MNF to include more Marines capable of directly supporting Lebanese army and militia forces in operations.¹¹⁹

While the U.S. continued its negotiations with the various belligerent factions, the first strategic reappraisal of the intervention occurred at home. National Security Decision Directive (NSDD) 64 was signed into effect in late October of 1982. Calling NSDD 64 a strategic reappraisal is not entirely accurate. The document codified the Reagan administration's commitment to remove all foreign fighters from Lebanon, expanded the area of the MNF's patrols into Eastern Beirut, and set a timeline for success—the end of 1982. Essentially, the presence mission remained the same, but expanded to new areas.¹²⁰

American troops were also authorized in November to assist in rebuilding the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) by training and equipping its forces. The strategy to

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Glad, "The United State's Reagan," 219.

¹¹⁹ Winslow, *Lebanon*, 237.

¹²⁰ Yoshitani, *Reagan on War*, 100–101.

rebuild the LAF was aligned with a report provided by Brigadier General Bartlett to the Department of Defense on November 1. The Bartlett Report called for a complete restructuring and rebuilding of the wholly ineffectual LAF command and brigade structures.¹²¹ Significant economic and military aid was poured into Lebanon from the United States in order to assist with rebuilding efforts which may well have reminded some of another, similar effort associated with a conflict still very fresh in their memories: “Vietnamization.”

By mid-November of 1982, the U.S. Department of Defense officially established its Office of Military Cooperation and began to staff it with Army officers tasked with spearheading the LAF revisions.¹²² Regardless of the speed and alacrity that the U.S. attempted to infuse in its Lebanese allies, the fledgling military forces were predicted to be at only 70% strength by February of 1983, and even then, only four brigades—not nearly enough to maintain sovereignty of a deeply domestically troubled state like Lebanon.¹²³ Weinberger and the Joint Chiefs favored redoubling the efforts to train the LAF through the newly established office in order to avoid deploying larger forces into the area.¹²⁴

Due to the significant number of foreign troops still in and threatening Lebanon, the Reagan administration refused to add additional Marines to the MNF but did expand involvement through NSDD 64. The MNF began patrols of the local Beirut area in the vicinity of the airport and Eastern Beirut.¹²⁵ Changes in operational tasking were codified in change three to the original tasking order for the Marine forces in Lebanon, which up to this point had retained its original, ambiguous guidance from the JCS.¹²⁶

¹²¹ Michael Collins Dunn, “Rebuilding Lebanon’s Army,” accessed July 16, 2014, <http://www.disam.dsca.mil/pubs/Vol%206-1/Dunn.pdf>.

¹²² Hallenbeck, *Military Force*, 40.

¹²³ “Rebuilding Lebanon’s Army.”

¹²⁴ Yoshitani, *Reagan on War*, 99.

¹²⁵ “Accompanying Notes website.”

¹²⁶ “Report of the DOD Commission.”

Most importantly, the U.S. and Lebanon failed to capitalize on what proved to be a fleeting opportunity to force a solution. Schultz would later recall, “Our most important missed opportunity came in September and October 1982—a time when the situation was most fluid, when Syria was in a weakened position, and when the Lebanese could have best responded to a strong U.S. initiative.”¹²⁷ The policies and strategies of Reagan’s administration by the close of 1982 created a rapidly expanding morass that threatened to draw the United States into full-blown war in Lebanon by the Spring of 1983.

B. EXPANDED ROLES LEAD TO CONFLICT

In the early months of 1983, the situation in Lebanon was rapidly deteriorating for the MNF and Reagan’s policy hopes were hanging by a frayed thread. President Reagan’s administration made little to no progress toward settling the dispute in Lebanon, and all sides involved, with the exception of the GOL, rejected the Reagan Plan. President Gemayel failed to initiate serious steps of reconciliation, further enflaming Muslim and Druze militant’s anger.¹²⁸ In February, U.S. Ambassador Habib offered, with Reagan and the Senate’s approval, to defend Israel’s northern border with more American and Lebanese troops if the Israelis would withdraw.¹²⁹ In March, the Israelis accepted the offer. By then, however, the tables had begun to turn on the Americans again.

Sporadic attacks on the MNF began in March of 1983; a hand grenade killed five U.S. Marines, and French and Italian Officers were similarly threatened at their locations. On April 18, 1983, the U.S. Embassy was car-bombed and 63 lives were lost, American and international.¹³⁰ Congress began to question the president’s assessment of the potential for hostilities, but did not attempt to force his hand through the War Powers Resolution. Instead, Congress produced legislation that restricted any significant change to the location, mission, or size of the current MNF, effectively hamstringing

¹²⁷ Schultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 232.

¹²⁸ Hallenbeck, *Military Force*, 68.

¹²⁹ Yoshitani, *Reagan on War*, 101.

¹³⁰ “U.S. Multinational Force [USMNF] Lebanon,” last modified May 7, 2011, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/usmnf.htm>.

Ambassador Habib's guarantees of military support.¹³¹ After dispatching Schultz to personally secure a peace accord between Israel and Lebanon, an agreement was finally reached in May. The Israelis promised to withdraw if the Syrians would too.

The Syrians were no longer willing to abandon their interests in Lebanon. With Soviet assistance during the lull in fighting in late 1982, the Syrians rearmed, refitted, and gained support from Lebanese Muslims and Druze clans that were tired of having their requests for political reform ignored by Gemayel's government. From the perspectives of the Muslim militias and Druze clan fighters, Gemayel would be even less likely to relinquish his Maronite Christian chokehold on Lebanon's politics once he was backed by a strong LAF equipped and trained by the Americans. These groups, backed by Syria, would resist all attempts at LAF control of Lebanon. Schultz's mutual withdrawal agreement never had a chance.¹³²

Fast-forward from spring to summer of 1983 and the Marines' role had expanded further, but not nearly as comprehensively as the Lebanese or Schultz would have liked. President Gemayel continued to request enlarged MNF patrols and coordination with LAF offensive movements while JCS and the USEUCOM Commander continued to disprove. SECSTATE Shultz actively sought more international support for the MNF in Lebanon, while the JCS developed plans for expanding U.S. commitment despite discontent amongst civilian and military leaders.¹³³ With no significant progress made over the summer and held in check by congressional legislation, Reagan's administration initiated its next strategic reappraisal in NSDD 103, "Strategy for Lebanon."

NSDD 103 was a policy change produced in September that attempted to walk "a fine line between using military force and avoiding a War Powers dispute."¹³⁴ The NSDD included "aggressive self-defense" ROE in conjunction with artillery support,

¹³¹ Yoshitani, *Reagan on War*, 101–102.

¹³² Yoshitani, *Reagan on War*, 103 and Hallenbeck, *Military Force*, 68.

¹³³ Hallenbeck, *Military Force*, 58.

¹³⁴ Yoshitani, *Reagan on War*, 109.

intelligence gathering, and reconnaissance flights.¹³⁵ Naval and air efforts were coordinated in concert with the other contributing nations of the MNF, the French and Italians. Increased support efforts meant that Gemayel's forces were eligible to receive twenty-minute delayed targeting data from Army radar teams recently positioned alongside the MNF.¹³⁶ All of this was done to demonstrate united resolve to Syria and others while efforts continued to secure more international support for the Lebanese.¹³⁷

Officially, U.S. forces in Lebanon were given more mission flexibility to protect the U.S., UK Embassy and forces embedded at BIA. Reassurances were passed to Congress that the situation on the ground had not dramatically changed and that the recent surge in fighting was merely "isolated events" not targeted at peacekeeping forces.¹³⁸ The change was in fact necessitated by mortars and rockets regularly landing around friendly positions at BIA, and the JCS was concerned about further terrorist attacks.¹³⁹ Robert McFarlane, now President Reagan's personal representative in the Middle East, warned in early September of a "serious threat of a decisive military defeat which could involve the fall of the Government of Lebanon within twenty-four hours."¹⁴⁰ He also requested and received a special addendum to NSDD 103 allowing the Marines at BIA to use naval gunfire and air strikes in support of the Lebanese army.¹⁴¹

It is critical to highlight and evaluate the change to NSDD 103 initiated by McFarlane. From the addendum to the NSDD passed on 11 September:

It has been determined that occupation of the dominant terrain in the vicinity of Suq-Al-Gharb by hostile forces will endanger Marine positions. Therefore, successful LAF *defense of the area of Suq-Al-Gharb is vital to the safety of U.S. personnel....*As a consequence, when the *U.S. ground commander determines* that Suq-Al-Gharb is in danger of falling as a

¹³⁵ "NSDD-National Security Decision Directives: Reagan Administration," accessed July 16, 2014, <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/nsdd-103.htm>.

¹³⁶ Sylvan and Majeski, "Accompanying Notes website."

¹³⁷ Yoshitani, *Reagan on War*, 109.

¹³⁸ Hallenbeck, *Military Force*, 59, 78.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹⁴⁰ McFarlane and Smardz, *Special Trust*, 250–251.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

result of attack involving *non-Lebanese forces* and if requested by the host government, appropriate U.S. military assistance in defense of Suq-Al-Gharb is authorized.¹⁴²

NSDD 103 was an attempt to pacify both sides of Reagan's administration. On one hand, President Reagan had Schultz, McFarlane, and others pressing for undeniable military commitment in Lebanon. On the other, SECDEF Weinberger and CJCS Vessey disagreed vehemently and ensured that the military tool was as narrowly constrained in its use as they could make it. In practice this constraint only served to further obfuscate the situation for forces on the ground.¹⁴³

The U.S. military chain-of-command was incensed with NSDD 103. From the top brass to the combatant commander in charge, USEUCOM, all involved recognized the potential magnitude of the MNF's change in disposition.¹⁴⁴ The NSDD changes undermined the entire purpose of the MNF; "neutral peacekeeping presence operations with a multinational force"¹⁴⁵ was no longer a viable description of the U.S. forces. NSDD 103 completely changed standing ROE, placed responsibility for entering the conflict entirely on the shoulders of an on-scene commander, and endangered the Marines with retaliation on a scale they were not equipped to handle, not to mention the fact that the criteria for engaging in Suq-Al-Gharb were practically impossible for the commander to determine on his own.¹⁴⁶ NSDD 103 was clearly the moment when the United States lost sight of its original mission and made a swift strategic pivot from peaceful intervention to forceful interposition.

On September 17, the U.S. Marines' commander on the ground, Col. Timothy J. Geraghty, ordered naval gunfire support from the U.S. Sixth Fleet ships stationed off Lebanon's coast in response to attacks on BIA.¹⁴⁷ On September 19, after giving in to

¹⁴² Author's emphasis. "NSDD-National Security Decision Directives: Reagan Administration."

¹⁴³ Hallenbeck, *Military Force*, 82–83.

¹⁴⁴ Yoshitani, *Reagan on War*, 111.

¹⁴⁵ Author's juxtaposition of operational words assigned to the MNF.

¹⁴⁶ Hallenbeck, *Military Force*, 82–83, Yoshitani, *Reagan on War*, 206, and "NSDD-National Security Decision Directives: Reagan Administration."

¹⁴⁷ Marine mortars and artillery at BIA were not authorized in defense of Suq-Al-Gharb, only Sixth Fleet naval assets. Hallenbeck, *Military Force*, 82.

political pressure from Special Negotiator Robert McFarlane and others, Geraghty requested that the 16"/50 caliber guns from the United States' intervention fleet rain fire down on Syrian and Soviet armored forces¹⁴⁸ in the mountains surrounding Suq Al Gharb in order to salvage the wilting LAF. The added firepower prevented a total loss, but did not stop the inevitable outcome.¹⁴⁹

C. AFTERMATH

Contrary to Reagan administration assurances that the strategic and political situation was going to improve, it did not. Syria was eventually compelled to accept a ceasefire in late September and a brief spark of hope flared for U.S. strategy. That spark was snuffed on October 23, 1983, when a suicide car-bomb attack on BIA prematurely ended the lives of 241 Marines and rendered ridiculous any remaining sentiment that the MNF was not engaged with a hostile adversary.¹⁵⁰

The devastating attack on BIA spurred the U.S. government to fully reexamine its posture in the Middle East. President Reagan vowed revenge and declared that the Marines' role in Lebanon was now even more essential to countering Soviet influence.¹⁵¹ Congress countered by initiating investigations into the bombing at BIA and avoided by the narrowest of margins a vote to remove the Marines from Lebanon entirely. A political tug of war persisted for nearly a year with no significant progress made in Lebanon politically or militarily. By December of 1983, administration leaders began making plans to withdraw U.S. forces entirely.¹⁵²

Despite increased U.S. firepower and support for the LAF, the GOL and its associated armed forces were unable to achieve victory. Under domestic political pressure at home, the United States withdrew in February of 1984.¹⁵³ The best that the

¹⁴⁸ Confirmed after the battle. Hallenbeck, *Military Force*, 85.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 86–87.

¹⁵⁰ "U.S. Multinational Force (USMNF) Lebanon"

¹⁵¹ Hallenbeck, *Military Force*, 109.

¹⁵² Yoshitani, *Reagan on War*, 126–127.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 127, and Hallenbeck, *Military Force*, 122–123.

Reagan administration could say about the intervention was that it was finally over. Lebanon remained a raging sectarian battlefield well into the early 1990s and only began to settle its differences after a Saudi-led, Syrian-approved peace agreement was reached in 1989.¹⁵⁴ Israeli troops fortified in southern Lebanon until the early 2000s and would continue to combat terrorist acts in southern Lebanon.¹⁵⁵ Syrian occupation forces withdrew after UN Resolution 1559 was issued in 2005 calling for their hasty extraction.¹⁵⁶ The PLO was essentially powerless after Arafat's evacuation of Beirut and has yet to return to levels of pre-1982 prestige.¹⁵⁷ No one profited from war in Lebanon, excepting Hezbollah, which rose to power in 1983 and remains influential as the only authorized armed militia "resistance force" left in Lebanon today.¹⁵⁸

Years after the conflict, American leadership reflected on U.S. mistakes in Lebanon. SECDEF Weinberger recalled, "Beirut was an absolutely inevitable outcome of doing what we did, of putting troops in with no mission that could be carried out. There was no agreement on either side of the pullback. You didn't need a buffer force. There's nothing more dangerous than in the middle of a furious prizefight, inserting a referee in range of both the fighters.... That's what we did."¹⁵⁹ In an interview regarding his time as U.S. MNF commander, Colonel Geraghty remarked, "You could just smell that we were being set up. It's the same pattern... and the whole point is that it hasn't changed."¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁴ Hassan Kreyem, "The Lebanese Civil War and The Taif Agreement," accessed October 10, 2014, <http://ddc.aub.edu.lb/projects/pspa/conflict-resolution.html>.

¹⁵⁵ Harris, *Lebanon: A History*, xxv, 271.

¹⁵⁶ "Security Council Declares Support for Free, Fair Presidential Election in Lebanon; Calls for Withdrawal of Foreign Forces There," accessed November 10, 2014, <http://www.un.org/press/en/2004/sc8181.doc.htm>.

¹⁵⁷ Hallenbeck, *Military Force*, 56 and Khalidi, "The PLO's Arafat," 67.

¹⁵⁸ Harris, *Lebanon: A History*, 261.

¹⁵⁹ "Interview: Caspar Weinberger," accessed July 20, 2014, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/target/interviews/weinberger.html>.

¹⁶⁰ "Beirut: Echoes Of 1983 Marine Barracks Bombing In Hassan Attack," accessed July 30, 2014, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/10/23/beirut-echoes-of-1983-marine-barracks-bombing-in-hassan-attack.html>.

The most pointed remarks, however, come from President Reagan:

Perhaps we didn't appreciate fully enough the depth of the hatred and the complexity of the problems that make the Middle East such a jungle. Perhaps the idea of a suicide car bomber committing mass murder to gain instant entry to Paradise was so foreign to our own values and consciousness that it did not create in us the concern for the marines' safety that it should have. Perhaps we should have anticipated that members of the Lebanese military whom we were trying to assist would simply lay down their arms and refuse to fight their own countrymen. In any case, the sending of the marines to Beirut was the source of my greatest regret and my greatest sorrow as president.¹⁶¹

¹⁶¹ Ronald Reagan, *An American Life: An Enhanced eBook with CBS Video: The Autobiography* (Simon & Schuster, Kindle Edition, 2011), Kindle Locations 6899–6903.

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IV. ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

A. POLICY AND STRATEGY PROBLEMS

U.S. government planners failed to recognize a crucial fact: diplomatically and militarily, Egypt and Israel at Camp David in 1979 did not equate to the PLO and Israel in Lebanon in 1982. With the Camp David Accords, both parties involved had something to trade. Egypt could offer peace in exchange for land, which Israel controlled but was prepared to concede because it judged the Egyptian offer to be credible.

The PLO in Lebanon had nothing to barter with Israel. There was never going to be a credible guarantee of peace from Arafat or the other disparate Palestinian leaders—suggesting that a peace settlement with Israel was possible led to fracturing of the PLO.¹⁶² To further emphasize the point: Anwar Sadat’s assassination in 1981, which was owed in large part to his having agreed to Camp David, cast no doubt on the continuing validity of the deal. Had Yasser Arafat somehow reached a comparable deal with Israel and suffered the same fate, most likely, the PLO would have been back to fighting the same day. Syrian involvement further complicated any possible peace agreement and introduced another variable for consideration in negotiations and strategic gain/loss calculations. Lastly, U.S. injection of the Marines in Lebanon did not sufficiently supply the tactical leverage required to force any sort of solution.

It is critical to remark on the nature of the mission given to the peacekeeping force. Establishing a presence, or simply basing one’s troops in another’s sovereign territory, is a political action undertaken to convey information to the host nation and potential (or in this case actual) belligerents.¹⁶³ For example, the United States based thousands of troops in Europe from 1945–1989 to signal the seriousness of America’s

¹⁶² Kellerman and Rubin, *Leadership and Negotiation*, 62.

¹⁶³ And is not an official military term for operations. “DOD Dictionary of Military Terms,” accessed March 15, 2014, http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/dod_dictionary/?zoom_query=presence+operations&zoom_sort=0&zoom_per_page=10&zoom_and=1.

strategic commitment to the USSR. In this example, thousands of troops in Europe send a very clear message to the intended recipient.

In Lebanon, what message was 1200 Marines supposed to send, and to whom? The notion of presence operations in Lebanon was a failure to connect a coherent message with the appropriate recipient. Lebanese militants of every description were displeased to see foreign military forces sitting in their airport (barring the LAF, perhaps the only force involved who had reason to welcome the American presence unambiguously). At the same time, the forces fighting knew that eventually the U.S. forces would leave. Furthermore, when U.S. actions displayed partiality, vehement retaliation was the result. Military commitments can lend conviction to foreign policy, but not clarity. On the contrary, their presence adds an additional layer of real and symbolic information that policy makers must control.

Based on the mission Marines were given for entering Lebanon—deter violence, compel belligerents to leave, and assist the GOL—it is impossible to suggest that the MNF had any hope of accomplishing this. Restrictive ROE and an ambiguous, out of context mission statement precluded any hope for gainful employment of the Marines.¹⁶⁴ One could argue that the relative eight- to nine-month calm that followed after the MNF's reentry into Beirut justified their employment, but the inability of the political actors to obtain any sort of serious concessions or progress during that lull negates the argument.¹⁶⁵ As Weinberger, Reagan, and others would later concede, a larger, less constrained commitment to Lebanon sooner would have been a more compelling factor for negotiations.¹⁶⁶

Setting aside for a moment the fact that the military forces deployed in Lebanon were not compatible with the depth of strategic objectives sought, it is imperative to reflect on the political situation writ large. The diplomatic agenda of the United States in Lebanon was far more complex in scope than the ill-conceived military mission. As a

¹⁶⁴ "U.S. Multinational Force (MNF) Lebanon"

¹⁶⁵ Hallenbeck, *Military Force*, 143.

¹⁶⁶ Reagan, *American Life*, Kindle location 6894 and Yoshitani, *Reagan on War*, 137–139.

result of President Reagan's 1 September Peace Proposal, negotiations in Lebanon hoped to achieve difficult compromises and the subordinations of disparate national interests in the midst of a shifting, little-understood sectarian conflict.¹⁶⁷ As a result, U.S. objectives hoped to achieve a substantive compromise in Lebanon that was entirely dependent on the incalculable will of actors outside of U.S. control, and none of those actors were prepared to (or compelled to) accept a U.S. solution.

After one accepts that Israel, Syria, and Lebanon were not prepared to accept an American solution, the rest of the story and the actions of the players involved make more sense. Over time, the Lebanese, Syrians, and Israelis came to view U.S. goals for Lebanon and the region as contrary to their own. As one researcher states, "U.S. diplomacy ultimately foundered on an inability to honestly broker Israeli and Syrian interests, not just in Lebanon but also within the context of a regional political-military restructuring."¹⁶⁸ The longer the conflict wore on, the more apparent U.S. duplicity became and ultimately led to regional consternation at U.S. interference. Time was never on America's side in Lebanon.

Fortunately, as a result of losses experienced in Lebanon, government leaders were prompted to reevaluate when employing military force is appropriate. Known today as the Weinberger Doctrine, on November 28, 1984, SECDEF Weinberger outlined six guidelines for the use of force when confronted by international situations without clear-cut military necessity.¹⁶⁹ Those six guidelines were as follows:

1. First, the United States should not commit forces to combat overseas unless the particular engagement or occasion is deemed vital to our national interest or that of our allies....
2. Second, if we decide it is necessary to put combat troops into a given situation, we should do so wholeheartedly, and with the clear intention of winning....
3. Third, if we do decide to commit forces to combat overseas, we should have clearly defined political and military objectives....

¹⁶⁷ Hallenbeck, *Military Force*, 138.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 141.

¹⁶⁹ Yoshitani, *Reagan on War*, 137.

4. Fourth, the relationship between our objectives and the forces we have committed—their size, composition and disposition—must be continually reassessed and adjusted if necessary....
5. Fifth, before the U.S. commits forces abroad, there must be some reasonable assurance we will have the support of the American people and their elected representatives in Congress....
6. Finally, the commitment of U.S. forces to combat should be a last resort.¹⁷⁰

Weinberger's tenets represented a new pattern of civil-military relations to follow in the wake of the disastrous consequences experienced in Lebanon, and also captured the transition of the United States away from "their past use of military *force* to their future use of military *power*."¹⁷¹

B. CONCLUSION

President Reagan and his team pursued their foreign policies in the Middle East in a Cold War context and with the false presumption that domestic strife in the Middle East could be appeased with political solutions alongside symbolic military tools. Furthermore, as the administration's policy efforts spiraled into disarray, the accompanying military intervention became less and less rational with respect to alignment of ends, ways, and means. In the short term, the cost for American intervention in Lebanon was paid with the blood of the MNF and millions of dollars in U.S. treasure, all of which served to lubricate the axle of the Arab-Israeli war machine that ground the American strategy for peace in the Middle East into defeat. Lasting repercussions are still felt today.

There were clearly defined strategic goals for Lebanon; however, they were not achievable with the forces and tactics employed. Reagan's administration made the decision to inject American Marines as a neutral peacekeeping force into a schismatic domestic conflict without proper strategic consideration about the mission they were actually sent to accomplish. While the first intervention was laudable, after the MNF returned, ambiguous mission statements and addendums, restrictive ROE, failure to

¹⁷⁰ "The Use of Military Power," accessed March 15, 2014, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/military/force/weinberger.html>.

¹⁷¹ Yoshitani, *Reagan on War*, 142.

maintain neutrality in the conflict, and failure to recognize the deteriorating situation in 1983 are some of the factors that illustrate the lack of consideration for the second military deployment. If President Reagan's policy initiatives were successful, history may look more kindly on the misguided intervention; sadly, they also failed abysmally.

The intervention in Lebanon produced none of the results expected by the Reagan administration. The Arab-Israeli dispute continues to rage, foreign fighters still occupy territory in Lebanon, and Soviet influence in the region remains, though a shadow of what it was during the Lebanese conflict. The Reagan Plan for peace in the Middle East also failed miserably due to unrealistic perception of the realities of the situation. American prestige and credibility was damaged, Israeli-U.S. relations were strained, and new extremist groups were fostered; Hezbollah, who formed as a direct result of the conflict in Lebanon, is now a household name in the Levant. Most importantly, the United States' role and involvement in the Middle East continues to evolve and the situation, now as then, rings with familiar overtones.

In Lebanon, U.S. forces were required to intervene on behalf of a government that did not command the loyalty of its people and could not unravel its own domestic and political Gordian knots. Tactically, the ROE governing the application of military force failed to reflect the contentious and constantly shifting operational environment. Politico-military success in Lebanon would have entailed risks and costs that the United States was not willing pay—neither the first nor the last time this has been so, and in this instance an insight, one can only conclude, that was fully within reach of the policy-makers at the time. Yet they failed to reach it.

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