Schulhofer-Wohl, Quagmire in Civil War

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Chapter 3

The Lebanese Civil War, 1975-1990:

Issues, Actors, Turning Points, Explanations

> *"There are many kinds of people, and most are malicious."*
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> – Lebanese proverb[1]

Sixteen years of civil war transformed Lebanon from a political model to a bogeyman. In 1975, it was still possible to speak of the country as an example of the power of consociational democracy, and one that stood as such in a region plagued by dictatorship. In 1990, Lebanon served as an implicit threat to the fate of other countries in the Middle East which had once compared unfavorably to it.

That it experienced such a drastic transformation fits a widespread notion of Lebanon as a unique country, with, by extension, a unique civil war. But to the social scientist this claim serves not as deterrent but as challenge. If theories of civil war have explanatory power, we should observe them at work in a case such as Lebanon; or, if they reach their limits in it, we should observe the characteristics of Lebanon that place it outside their scope.

It is more than the challenge, though, that makes the Lebanese Civil War a well-suited setting for assessing the plausibility of the theory of quagmire's pro-

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[1]"an-Nās ajnās, wa aktarhum akhbās" (Freyha 1974:§3950,697).

posed mechanisms. When viewed in comparative perspective, the civil war appears at once unique and universal: unique because of the combination of experiences of war that overlapped and coincided in it, universal because within it can be found examples of the vast majority of cruelties and stratagems that civil wars produce. Lebanon, then, was a laboratory of violence and the politics of conflict during those desperate war years. It is in this sense a consummate bogeyman. Even if taken as a whole the war does not seem to compare well to other countries' experiences, when examined piece by piece, it is all too easy to apprehend its relevance. It is a useful case in which to examine theoretical mechanisms because it is one that is unlikely to have had an unusual path to quagmire in civil war. If the theory's mechanisms are plausible, they should be found in Lebanon; if implausible, Lebanon should furnish a wealth of evidence to dispute their validity.

Studying Lebanon for this purpose raises the concern that its experience may not generalize to other instances of quagmire in civil war. This book's research design directly confronts the issue. The analysis of Lebanon that follows in Chapter 4 does not test the theory, but rather the extent to which its mechanisms can serve as paths to quagmire in civil war. Chapters 5 and 6 evaluate the theory's ability to account for the outcome of quagmire, first using cross-country statistic analysis, then deliberate comparisons of other wars.

Lebanon's free press and political openness, particularly when contrasted with the practices of governments of surrounding countries, made it home to the press offices of opposition movements in the Arab world and East Africa, and an entrepôt for international news coverage of the Arab world. These characteristics have facilitated a voluminous secondary literature on the civil war, and a sea of

primary sources.[2] Lebanon's local press corps provided near-continuous contemporaneous coverage. Resident and visiting foreign correspondents added to the picture. Lebanese and Palestinian political parties maintained their own media – newspapers, publishing houses, and radio and eventually television stations. Many political and military leaders wrote memoirs and provided interviews to researchers and the press; so, too, did ordinary combatants and civilians. Lebanon's scholars and journalists wrote trenchant analyses of the war's devastating events, its wellsprings, and assessed the prospects for its resolution. All of this took place even in the midst of the war, and of course afterwards. For coverage of the 1975-1976 period, Sadaka and Salam (1982) catalogued 810 articles, books, and book chapters published by the end of 1980 alone, 338 in English, French, and German, and 472 in Arabic. By 1987, with the war showing no sign of ending, Laurent and Basbous still asked by way of introduction to their study, "One more book about Lebanon?"[3]

Studies about the war invariably enter into a debate about its causes. This is the case for works directly focused on the outbreak of the war, but really for all that touch on it in some way. The non-expert reader can be taken in unwittingly; some works provide a single perspective without situating it within the debate. Especially problematic are historical accounts and analyses of the war by authors who were or continue to be affiliated with a political party or faction in Lebanon; here, the uninitiated reader runs the risk of accepting as nonpartisan an account that should in fact be accorded a healthy level of skepticism, while, just as problematic, the informed reader risks discounting the evidence or argument solely on

[2]Kanafani-Zahar (2000) characterizes the literature on the war, whether "in its totality or about certain periods," succiently as "trés developée" (83).
[3]Laurent and Basbous (1987:11).

the basis of ad hominem criticism of the author. The same two problems plague the use of foreign authors' work, according to the level of their countries' involvement in the war.

This chapter, then, is not intended as a history of the war. Rather, it provides background for the analysis in Chapter 4. It represents my good-faith effort at sorting through the mass of available sources on the war and distilling well-supported interpretations and evidence from it. A handful of sources have been central to the development of my thinking on and analysis of the war: Sinno's (2008) comprehensive two volume study; Hanf (1993); Salibi (1976); Khalaf (2002, 1987); el Khazen (2000); Zahar (1999, 2005); Makdisi (2004); Leenders (2012); Ajami (1986); Hourani (1981); Rabinovich (1985); Picard (2002, 1999); Khalidi (1979); Deeb (1980); Norton (1987); ʿAṭā Allāh (2007); Hamdan (1997); Hage (1992, 1996); Traboulsi (2007); Jureidini, McLaurin and Price (1979); Randal (1983); Johnson (1986); Dib (2004); Barak (2009); Beydoun (1993); Corm (1986); Tuéni (1985); Kassir (1994); Sayigh (1997); Sirriyeh (1989); Harik (1993); Preston (2004); Siklawi (2012); Stocker (2016); and contributions to the volumes edited by Owen (1976); Legum (1978, 1979); Haley and Snider (1979); Shehadi and Mills (1988); Collings (1994); Hannoyer (1999).

In what follows, I review the issues behind the war and the principal domestic and foreign actors in it. To help think through the conflict's military development, I discuss the idea of turning points as an organizing conceptual tool and review the war's main events and the turning points to be analyzed in Chapter 4. Finally, I summarize three sets of common explanations of belligerents' decision-making found in scholarship on the war. Each of these three is an alternative to the theory of quagmire. I note their logic and potential pitfalls here and consider their

relevance as explanations fully in the analysis in Chapter 4.

3.1 Issues

In 1975, Lebanon faced a seemingly bewildering array of political issues. Emerging ideological political parties more and more surely challenged the grip of traditional political leaders over their turf in a patronage-based political system and society, threatening to replace them. Social change and urbanization continued to alter the landscape of quotidian life and family relations, bringing populations into new contact and proximity, disturbing local patterns of life, fueling tensions and hardening sectarian, class, and generational divisions. Economic growth increased prosperity but reinforced patterns of inequality, and so proved an inadequate balm for social injustice. Added to the mix were the actions and sheer presence of Palestinian armed groups, which posed an ongoing and active challenge to the sovereignty of the Lebanese government. Palestinian military forces had arrived in strength in Lebanon in 1971, taking refuge from their defeat by the Jordanian government in a brief civil war. These supplemented an existing Palestinian armed presence and embedded with an existing refugee population of their co-nationals, which dated to the 1948 war that established Israel. Even before the influx from Jordan, Palestinian armed groups had used Lebanese territory to stage guerrilla raids against Israel. The raids brought Israeli military reprisals on southern Lebanon and even locations within the capital city, Beirut, causing a backlash from Lebanese civilian populations and an outcry for the government to rally to the Palestinian cause. Regional conflict cast a shadow over developments within Lebanon, not only through the Israel-Palestinian conflict but also via the

Arab Israel conflict. The 1973 war punctuated the latter but was no conclusive juncture in it. The contending sides saw in it how costly future battles would be, but remained subject to the pressures of insecurity. Cold War international politics overlay these dynamics. Regional powers and their superpower patrons observed Lebanon to assess how events might tip global competition; and Lebanese political actors looked to take cues from these foreign actors in determining how to play their domestic struggles.

Each issue produced its own strand of tension in Lebanon. Lebanese politics, though, turned on a single fulcrum, around which these issues were therefore structured. That fulcrum was the National Pact.

It has become common for accounts of Lebanese politics to refer to the National Pact of 1943 as the cornerstone of the country's modern political system. Indeed the timing of the Pact, announced on October 7 of that year,[4] roughly coincides with Lebanon's independence, which is celebrated as November 22, 1943.[5] Yet the notion of the National Pact as the founding bargain obscures important features of the type of political system that the Pact represents, and indeed how it even emerged. To understand the Pact, we cannot read history backward from current understandings of the Pact and its place in contemporary Lebanese politics; we

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[4]Historians take Riyadh al-Solh's October 7, 1943 innaugural speech as Prime Minister to the Lebanese Parliament, in which he called for deputies to amend the constitution to remove all references to the French mandate, as the announcement of the Pact. See Rabbath (1973), el Khazen (1991), Hanf (1993), Thompson (2000). As Rabbath explains, referring to al-Solh's speech, "Ce long document représente – préparé par le discours présidentiel du 21 septembre - l'élément de base de ce quit fut plus tard qualifié de Pacte national, consacrant l'accord tactice, mais formel, entre Chrétiens et Muslmans, sur certains principes fondamentaux qui gouverneront, ou devront gouverner, leur association politique: souveraineté et indépendance à l'égard de tous les États, mais arabisme et coopération interarabe, respect du statut des Communautés, mais égalité de tous les citoyens dans la répartition des emplois publics" (455). Al-Solh's speech was reprinted in Lebanese newspapers the following day. A portion is available in English translation in Khalil (1962:105-9).

[5]Hanf (1993:72); Salibi (1965:190).

must read history forward, beginning with the events through which the Pact emerged.

On the eve of the First World War, the territory of what is now the Republic of Lebanon comprised portions of the Ottoman Empire's provinces of Beirut (*Beyrut Vilâyeti*) and Syria (*Suriye Vilâyeti*) and its "semi-autonomous" district of Mount Lebanon (*Cebel-i Lübnan Mutasarrıflığı*).[6] British and French military occupation of the area at the war's end turned immediately into the two countries jockeying to secure their desired strategic positions in the broader region.[7] The lines were codified by the San Remo Conference in April 1920. For Lebanon, this meant a lone French presence, under the auspices of the French Mandate of Syria and Lebanon.[8] The French promptly made adjustments to the Ottoman territorial boundaries, dividing the mandate into several administrative regions. They announced the establishment of Greater Lebanon on September 1, 1920, combining into a single political entity the predominantly Maronite Mount Lebanon with Beirut and majority Sunni towns along the coast.[9]

[Figure: Map of Lebanon]

[Figure: Map of population by sect]

Lebanon's constitution, issued by the French colonial administration in 1926,

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[6]Fawaz (1994:13), Hakim (2013:99).

[7]See Khoury (1987:38-40), Hughes (1999:2,105,133-41), McTague (1982).

[8]Nevakivi (1969:251). The mandate was approved by the League of Nations in 1922 and formally began in September 1923 (Hourani 1946:55).

[9]The other regions within the French mandate were the Territory of the Alawis, established September 1920. renamed a State in July 1922; Jebel Druze, for which a government was formed in March 1921, and independent status as a State within the mandate granted in April 1922; the State of Aleppo, established September 1920; and the State of Damascus, also established September 1920. By 1925, further reorganization yielded the State of Syria, incorporating the Aleppo and Damascus region; the State of the Alawis; Jabal Druze; and Greater Lebanon. See Hourani (1946:172-3).

is often taken as a sign of how Greater Lebanon's demographics led "naturally" to the creation of a consociational, sectarian system of government. But as Thompson (2000:50) artfully shows, the constitution considered in its proper context calls this into question. It was drawn up on the heels of an intense anti-French revolt in Syria in 1925, and in the midst of creeping sectarian violence in Lebanon, which the French administration quelled only by the summer of 1926. A new conservative French government took office and in late 1925 replaced the high commissioner, who had worked to achieve a "vision of secular, nonsectarian government." Due to the personnel change, Sunni leaders in Lebanon, who had increasingly come to support such an option, decisively shifted course and "began openly to support the revolt and union with Syria." The French moved to allay Maronite fears that were heightened by this shift, and "[a]s a result, plans for a nonsectarian political system were dropped." Putting additional pressure on a difficult situation, France "also hurried preparation of the constitution in order to impress the League of Nations with a show of liberal policy and offset bad press reports of the revolt." Contingency and expediency, then, were as much at the root of the Constitution as so-called necessities of balancing the power of sectarian communities.

The 1926 Constitution established a consociational, sectarian system by providing for the "equitable representation of all sects in the cabinet, the parliament, and the civil service."[10] What this required in practice was ambiguous. Still, during the mandate, balanced sectarian representation in parliament and the other institutions of government became a practice.

Lebanon's modern political system emerged a short 15 years after the Con-

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[10]Thompson (2000:51).

stitution, during the intense disruptions that came with the Second World War. Lebanese leaders who had been divided on their visions for Lebanon's political future and regarding support for the French saw the weakness of the Vichy French government, competition with the Free French, and especially the British military presence in the Levant as an opportunity to press for independence and possibly to achieve it in short order.[11] The changing tide began in early summer 1941. Speaking in the name of de Gaulle, on June 8, 1941, his representative General Catroux broadcast the determination of Free France to end Vichy rule in the Levant. Via leaflets dropped by air, Catroux declared the Syrian and Lebanese peoples "sovereign and independent," and the beginning of a process of negotiations between himself and their "representatives" through which they would be able to "form" separate states or one single state.[12] This declaration has been taken as the end of the French mandate, but only "technically." Allied troops did not occupy the area until into July, and it was not until September and November that Catroux issued "formal proclamation[s]" of independence for Syria and Lebanon, respectively. Despite France's continued presence and effective control over the government, the proclamations proved consequential, as Britain "formally recognized" each new country's independence.[13]

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[11]Lawrence (2012) argues that unforeseeable disruptions to French colonial authority in North Africa, due to the U.S. presence during the Second World War, were part of what pushed the emergence of nationalist demands.

[12]Note that Catroux declares the Syrian and Lebanese independent *peoples* "Vous serez donc désormais des peuples souverains et indépendents"), addressing his speech thus, "Syriens et Libanais!"The ambiguity of Catroux's declaration is apparent from his use of verb tenses. He declares the Syrians and Lebanese independent from that moment into the future ("Vous serez donc désormais...") and yet the process through which states would be "constituted" would be ongoing one ("et vous pourrez soit vous constituer en États distincts, soit vous rassembler en un seul État.... votre statut d'indépendance et de souveraineté sera garanti par un traité...Ce traité sera negocié dès que possible entre vos représentats et moi." And concludes by emphasizing independence as of now ("La France vous déclare indépendants par la voix de ceux de ses fils qui combattent pour sa vie et pour la liberté du monde"). Text reproduced in Davis (1953:320-1).

[13]September 27 and November 26 (Salibi 1965:185). Britain formally recognized Syria as in-

The following two years were therefore of great import to Lebanese politi-
cal development. Political parties and the sectarian communities were each pos-
sessed of a multiplicity of perspectives on what arrangements they favored for
Lebanese politics, with the focus of debate the options of incorporation into a
Greater Syria, continued French rule, and independence for Lebanon as a state in
its own right. But by 1942, party leaders who represented large proportions of
the Sunni and Maronite communities had reached a compromise understanding
that cemented a critical mass of support for an independent Lebanon – the Sunni
politician Riyad al-Solh and the Maronite politician Bechara al-Khuri. British en-
couragement was important to moving the agreement forward and motivating
the demand that independence from the French occur in short order.[14]

The Solh-Khuri coalition, which took power in September 1943. The National
Pact is understood as dating to al-Khuri's inaugural speech as president, in which
he explained Lebanon's foreign relations orientation going forward, outlining the
compromise that had been reached on independence – that Lebanon would be in-
dependent and oriented towards the Arab world in its foreign affairs. Al-Solh's
inaugural speech before parliament as prime minister in October laid out the same
terms. By 1943, nearly all the other elements of what is understood as the Pact
were already in place – a 6 to 5 Christian to Muslim ratio of seats in parliament and
the understanding that the sects would be equitably represented in government
positions, particularly high offices like cabinet positions, and the bureaucracy. In-
terestingly, though, the final element of the Pact that is taken as given today – that
of the reserve to the Maronite, Sunni, and Shi'a communities of the three highest

dependent on October 27 and Lebanon as independent on December 26 of that year (Hourani
1946:252).

[14]See, e.g., Zamir (2005).

offices – President, Prime Minister, and Speaker of Parliament, respectively – was not yet in place. The election of a Shia speaker of parliament first occurred in 1948 and only after Shia politicians threatened street violence to protest the impending assumption of this position by a non-Shia.

Many writers represent the Pact as a literal gentlemens' agreement that constituted a shared understanding between Lebanon's sectarian communities about how politics should be structured in their emerging independent state. It should be clear, from the preceding discussion, however, that neither was the Pact as precisely defined a bargain as it came to be understood later, nor was the privileged position that it was to take in the national political imagination clear at the time (Hourani 1966). A little-referenced,[15] key feature of al-Solh's speech indeed belies the Pact's supposed "consecration" of the sectarian system – al-Solh called for eventual abolition of all sectarian features of the political system, decrying their "evils."[16] Rather, it was an instrumental alliance between two political leaders, each of whom represented a faction within his sectarian community against other factions that objected to his plans.[17] El-Khazen (1991) characterizes the Pact as "the lowest common denominator." That view illuminates in that the Pact was the bargain through which a winning electoral coalition was created. But a reader should not conclude from el-Khazen's statement that the Pact represented the largest core of intersecting values that Lebanon's political society, much less all of its communities, still less, its citizens, agreed on and tolerated concerning the features of a new polity. The Pact was simply the winning formula for specific leaders to create a coalition government in a nominally independent Lebanon still

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[15]The exception is Hudson (1968).

[16]See Khalil (1962:107).

[17]See Hourani (1976) for an informative elaboration of the multiple political trends within the different sectarian communities and the essentials of their intellectual history.

controlled by the French. Lebanese independence was not yet guaranteed, and the Pact was the effort of two party leaders to act to push Lebanon's independence forward and cement their role as leading players in the future politics of an independent state via their bargain.[18]

The more nuanced understanding of the pact as a temporal- and actor-specific bargain helps us to make sense of political crises after independence, the civil war of 1958 in particular. The Pact, a bargain struck between Maronite and Sunni factions, favored the interests of Maronite and Sunni businessmen and to a large extent excluded the interests of the Druze, the Shia, and other minority communities. Thompson (2000) shows that elements of a welfare state had begun to emerge out of devastation wrought by Lebanon's experience of the First World War. A staggering human toll due to famine and conscription had pushed the transformation of society, particularly due to a large gender imbalance in the dead, with changes to existing patriarchal norms, advances in education, and the beginnings of protections for labor rights but a few of the many results. Yet these were frozen and quashed, particular regarding labor rights,[19] with the governments that came to office from 1943 on.

The system defined by the Pact secured a central role for sectarianism in the formal features of Lebanese politics – the identity of Lebanon's top leaders, parlia-

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[18]It is perhaps rare to be able to observe as closely, and its terms laid out as explicitly, the process through which such "political bargains" are reached as in the Lebanese case. Yet "political bargains" are a core feature of all political systems On a typology of political bargains and their consequences for economic development and stability in the Middle East and North Africa, see Cammett et al. (2015).

[19]Thompson provides a telling example: "In October [1943], a coalition of Lebanese labor unions petitioned the government to enforce the neglected May 1943 labor laws and to increase aid to poor working families. They too received no concrete response. In his inaugural speech earlier in the month, Prime Minister Riyad al-Sulh promised to improve the economy and claimed to support the 'legitimate' rights of workers, but only on the condition that they 'cooperate with their bosses' in the national interest. This statement effectively rejected the worker-only unions and workers' rights that had been established in the previous decade" (2000:250-1).

mentary elections, and representation in the bureaucracy. As important, the system also institutionalized sectarianism by entrenching the power of self-described leaders of sects: those who had sufficient street power to claim to speak in the name of the community found formal political roles set in front of them. The outside resort to street violence was therefore part of political menu available to Lebanese leaders. In response to a rigid sectarian system that claimed to balance the interests of Lebanon's communities, but advantaged some at the expense of others, leaders who saw themselves as left on the outside could resort to the street.

The 1958 civil war is usually interpreted as revolving around regional politics. Then-President Camille Chamoun's action to attempt an extra-constitutional power grab by removing a two-term limit on the presidency in order to stay in office was set against the background of heightened U.S. concern over the Middle East due to the fall of the Iraqi monarchy in the same year. Chamoun, a conservative pitted against political rivals like Kamal Junblatt who were sympathetic to Nasserism and progressive ideas in the region, could rely on American backing to fend off a "Communist" threat. By backing his objections to Chamoun's power grab with a move from the halls of parliamentary politics to the mountains to fight it out, Junblatt, though, was far from being a pawn in some regional struggle. Instead, he followed the outside option left to him by the Pact-defined political system.[20]

To bring the role of the National Pact into sharper focus, let us return to the areas of change reviewed at the outset of this section. As I will outline below, these areas were all connected to the National Pact. Each either exerted pressure against the stability of the existing balance of sectarian power and represented a

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[20]For a detailed account of the 1958 war, see Qubain (1961).

need for re-equilibration, introduced new forces to be taken into account in the sectarian bargain, or constituted a tool that Lebanese actors believed they could use to achieve or resist either of these preceding goals.

Formal politics had undergone a transition in the years since independence. The era of traditional leadership by notable figures, familiar to studies of Ottoman Lebanon, had passed. A varied cast of politicians and parties stepped into the void. Some amassed large popular followings. Other assumed the role of the traditional politicians catering to a limited geographically-based constituency. But the political system erected barriers to entry for non-sectarian leaders or parties, and made it difficult even for sectarian leaders to consolidate political power commensurate with their popular followings. As the 1958 civil war illustrated, the street and violence were therefore a visible outside option. Mass incorporation into politics driven by urbanization, increased educational attainment, and Lebanon's political development after independence made the potential for mobilization stronger and more dangerous than in 1958.

Demographic change put pressure on validity of the elite economic consensus underpinning the pact, called the political bargain further into question, and put pressure on quotidian interactions in society. Though it is questionable whether the Pact was ever viewed as legitimate by those excluded from it from the very beginning, demographic and associated socioeconomic change meant greater demands from the disenfranchised. Urbanization disconnected new migrants to the cities, principally Beirut, from traditional lines of political control and reciprocal obligation. The harshness of disenfranchisement and deprivation in a laissez-faire system then bit deeper. Urban migrants were now outside the traditional safety net, such as it had existed via traditional political and social structure in

villages. With increasing urbanization, it also became easier for political leaders to mobilize the disenfranchised. Dense residential quarters facilitated class-based movements by providing easier access to workers of different sects. Sectarian-based movements managed to more easily overcome the fragmentation of local ties. Members of growing communities that could consider themselves to be an absolute majority in the Lebanese population (e.g. workers, Shia) or members of minority communities that viewed the power allotted them as inadequate (e.g., the Greek Orthodox) found their needs stymied by the Pact.

Economic inequality created pressure for politics to address long-standing distributional problems. The Sunni-Maronite commercial consensus was entrenched, though, and not interested in addressing this. Existing political parties were largely patronage based and held ideological positions regarding the structure of the polity domestically, and only tangentially regarding policy, economic or social. The first years of the war showed a growth in ideological politics, exposing the inadequacy of the almost apolitical politics as practiced by those in government due to the Pact.

No avenue could be found to settle increasing Lebanese polarization over the role of the Palestinians within the political system. Sects viewed them as a threat to their power within the system or an opportunity to enhance it. The Palestinians were therefore courted as power brokers, making them more central and more dangerous to stability. The Palestinian political organizations that set themselves up in force after 1971 found fertile ground in Lebanon: a weak state, an existing population of their co-nationals, and ideological affinity with disenfranchised Lebanese, and perhaps even common cause with Lebanese exposed to Israel's raids on the Palestinians since 1969. Palestinian armed groups already present

before 1971 increased in visibility and activity after that they were joined by their co-nationals fleeing Jordan. That they were flush with funds from foreign patrons increased their attractiveness to potential Lebanese recruits. At the same time, the Palestinian presence prompted forceful challenges from those opposed to it politically. And that presence in itself caused conflict with local populations; residents of the areas in which Palestinian groups held sway resented their presence and intrusion into everyday life. Especially in southern Lebanon, fear of Israeli reprisals due to Palestinian guerrilla attacks on Israel permeated local communities. Palestinian power, unregulated by the Pact, could thus easily destabilize it. The cultivation of the Palestinians by Lebanese politicians who viewed them as potential allies and even saviors in their domestic political struggles exacerbated the problem.

The turn to outsiders as potential sources of power to augment a sect's capabilities within Lebanon in order to stabilize or renegotiate the Pact brought Lebanese politicians to court foreign states. The international environment in which the Middle East was situated in any given era affected its salience to outside powers, and accordingly attention to Lebanon. The First and Second World Wars and the Arab-Israeli wars were all events that attracted foreign states to meddle in and establish their presence in the region; war challenged or deepened their interests in the region. The years surrounding 1975 made the region more salient to outside powers for these reasons, the 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli wars fresh in memory. Lebanese politicians thus found the turn to foreign states for assistance easier.

What should be clear by now is that the structure of Lebanese politics created incentives for domestic Lebanese parties to first and foremost exist and formulate policy around the idea of preserving or doing away with whatever interpretation

of the National Pact bargain prevailed, to align themselves with or in opposition to regional trends as one of their main policy offerings, to court super-power assistance and often more importantly the direct financial or other backing of regional powers.

With such a wide the range of issues reviewed above, how should one understand the war? The secondary literature, personal narratives looking back on the events, and even contemporaneous analyses (see, e.g., Mattar 1975) offer a range of explanations of the war's causes and the (shifting) issues dividing the Lebanese against one another during this period. But to summarize the narrative to this point, I argue that we can interpret Lebanese politics largely as institutional politics. Parties' attention and efforts were captured by efforts to negotiate, preserve, or re-negotiate the institutions of government themselves. The use of political institutions for the purpose of governing was secondary; fundamental distributional problems or pressing social and economic ills were by and large ignored in formal politics. The perspective I offer here, then, is that for the purposes of understanding the civil war, these diverse issues all can be traced back to the National Pact's role in the political system. As a fulcrum, the Pact defined the principal dividing line between the parties to the conflict: belligerents fought either to reshape the political system or to maintain the status quo.

It is straightforward to use this macro-level divide over the political status quo to categorize the various Lebanese armed groups.[21] But more must be said

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[21]New groups that emerged as the war continued can still be categorized along these lines (e.g. Hizballah). In rare cases, groups switched sides of the macro-level cleavage. The most prominent example is the Zgharta Liberation Army (which came to be known as Giants Brigade, *Marada*), a parochial Maronite Christian militia developed by the Frangieh family in and around Zgharta, in northern Lebanon. In the first two years of the war the Marada joined other Christian militias in fighting against reform and against the Palestinian presence. Disagreements among Christian groups over the Syrian presence in 1978 ultimately led Marada to split off from the pro-status quo Lebanese Front and re-align itself with the Syrians. Since Syrian-supported militias were

about the Palestinian armed groups that were active during the war. The retreat to Lebanon of large numbers of their forces following defeat in a civil war in Jordan in 1970 and subsequent expulsion resulted in the establishment of Lebanon as their lone military headquarters and base of operations. In the war's first years, not only did pro-reform Lebanese groups attempt to capitalize on the weight of the Palestinian presence to press their demands, but pro-status quo Lebanese groups fought the Palestinians over the issue of that presence itself, and against the pro-reform groups over their positions regarding that presence. Since the debate over Palestinian armed groups in Lebanon centered on whether the Lebanese government should allow them freedom of operation against Israel from Lebanese territory and the pre-war government consistently sought to control those groups, even the Lebanese-Palestinian conflict breaks down along the cleavage of the political status quo.

To conclude, it is important to underscore that the Pact was possessed of no institutional structure or informal practice for adjustments, let alone more drastic changes. At any point in time, Lebanese political parties dissatisfied at the status quo could choose between putting up, or resorting to the attempt to leverage the threat of calling the Pact into question in their dealings with one another. The Pact's inherent inflexibility ran up against the reality of change to set up a politics of perpetual constitutional crisis. In this sense, just as the United States' "original sin" was slavery, so was Lebanon's the National Pact.

uniformly in favor of some type of systemic reform, Marada's re-alignment can be considered to at least represent tacit acquiescence to this position.

3.2   Actors

The issues at play in Lebanon were fundamentally internal, yet involved international politics. The principal actors in the war were domestic political parties and armed groups, but foreign states featured prominently in its events. Here I sketch out the domestic political and military forces according to the war's dividing line regarding reform of Lebanon's political system. I enumerate the main characters but cannot mention all organizations. I then describe the role of foreign states in three tiers – Lebanon's neighbors, regional players, and global powers. This account is also a sketch, highlighting the features relevant to Chapter 4, undoubtedly passing over many others that a history would develop sufficiently.

3.2.1   Domestic

By 1975, the opposing camps, one in favor of reform, which I will refer to as the Left, the other set on preserving the status quo, which I will refer to as the Right, each spanned an unwieldy mix of organizations: parties tied to traditional politicians and religious authorities, newly emerging ideological parties, and parties and militias organized due to looming crisis itself. On both sides, the new guard challenged traditional authority. Its organizations staked out positions in ideological terms, displaying a clear alternative to the patron-client based system that traditional leaders embodied. The more they attracted followers, the more they posed a threat. Yet their threat was still graver in that the sectarian system drew them into direct competition for the leadership of sectarian communities, competition which pitted them against the traditional leaders. The result was an escalating radicalization on both sides. Traditional leaders on the Left and the Right,

who under other circumstances would have "eventually effected a compromise"[22] were either harnessing the rising tide of popular mobilization to their advantage, or keen to float along with it rather than suffer being engulfed by standing against it.

State institutions, including the Lebanese Armed Forces, the Internal Security Forces, and other police and security forces, sat on the sidelines. Scenes of 1973, when the Army entered Palestinian refugee camps and fought armed groups resident in them to bring the camps under government control, were not to be repeated.[23] The lesson then had been that the government was possessed of limited autonomy in this area – President Suleiman Frangieh had been warned off continuing the operation by Syrian President Hafiz al-Asad. In addition, politicians and military leaders feared that decisive intervention would risk splitting the LAF. With parties and militias lining up on either side of the conflict, and given the LNM-Palestinian alliance, strong but neutral action was not possible; any consequential moves to preserve the status quo would put a sizeable portion of LAF officers and the majority of its troops in the position of having to choose fealty to the state, in practice bound up with the Right's cause, or fidelity to their conscience.

During the chaos of the war's very first months, the government mobilized small contingents of the security forces to restore order, intervening in limited actions for example in the northern city of Tripoli. As early as fall 1975, though, it was clear that such "peacekeeping" efforts would not be sufficient. The fighting had become more organized, more intense, more openly led by political parties

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[22]Johnson (2001:6).

[23]See Barak (2009) for a detailed account of Lebanese Army operations against the Palestinians, particularly from 1969 on. el Khazen (2000) provides a thorough account and analyis of the agreement ultimately reached between the Army and the Palestinian groups as the Cairo Accords.

and militias.

With the government refusing to act, individual officers and soldiers became involved with the parties and militias in their personal capacity. The LAF officer corps was dominated by Maronites, and as a result as an institution the LAF showed a bias in favor of the existing political system. Parties and militias on the Right benefitted. Pro-Right officers helped to organize and train them, this assistance sometimes going back years before the war broke out. In the final analysis, though, the haphazard nature of the drilling and equipping paled in comparison to the intensity of the fighting that eventually erupted.

The Left, too, would eventually benefit from the LAF, after the war began. In early 1976 a large segment of the army split off, under the command of First Lieutenant Ahmad al-Khatib. Calling itself the Lebanese Arab Army, this faction operated as another among many armed groups. At the same time, its leadership at political leaders on the Left viewed it as still representing the institution of the Lebanese Army, and as such, responsible to government officials aligned with the Left. The LAA attracted the majority of enlisted personnel and lower-ranked officers.[24]

[Figure: Map, Areas of Control, Left/Right, early 1975]

[Figure: Map, Areas of Control, Left/Right, late 1976]

Table 3.1 divides the most militarily significant armed groups according to the pro-reform/pro-status quo divide for the first two years of the war.[25] Groups in brackets were not official members of the political alliance named at the top of the column but were aligned in their stance on the war's main dividing issue.

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[24]Deeb (1980).

[25]For lists of groups within each alliance, see, e.g., Salibi (1976), Odeh (1985), el Khazen (2000).

Table 3.1: Lebanese Armed Groups, 1975-1976

Position Regarding the Political System	
Reform: The National Movement	*Status Quo:* The National Front
Progressive Socialist Party (PSP)	Lebanese Kata'ib Social Democratic Party (LKP)
Lebanese Communist Party (LCP)	National Liberal Party (NLP, *al-Ahrar, Namour al-Ahrar*)
Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP)	Movement of the Cedars (the Organization, *al-Tanzim*)
Organization of Communist Action in Lebanon	Guardians of the Cedars
Independent Nasserist Movement (*al-Mourabitoun*)	Maronite Order of Monks
Movement of the Deprived, the Detachments of the Lebanese Resistance (Amal, *Harakat Amal, Afwaj al-Muqawimah al-Lubnaniyya*)	Zgharta Liberation Army (the Giants Brigade)
Ba'th Socialist Party (Syrian)	[South Lebanon Army]
Ba'th Socialist Party (Iraqi)	[Lebanese Army]
[Lebanese Arab Army]	
[Palestinian Armed Groups: Fatah, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Arab Liberation Front, Sa'iqa, PFLP-General Command, Popular Struggle Front]	

Below, I describe the core features of the Left and the Right. I explain where each camp stood at the outset of the war and in its significant characteristics overall taking into account the entire period of the conflict. A final section flags significant developments in the evolution of each camp over the course of the war.

The Left: For Reform

The Lebanese National Movement, created by Kamal Junblatt in 1969 and expanded at several points in time to its final coalition breadth,[26] was the principal political vehicle of the Left. Junblatt's PSP was a mainstay of it and fit the model of a traditional party. Musa al-Sadr's Movement of the Deprived, known colloquially by the Arabic acronym of its military wing, which meant "hope," developed quickly in the years before the war into a powerful political force within Lebanon. While its main supporters were Shia, Sadr's party found sympathizers of all sects who saw him as a radical figure who might, along with Junblatt, finally force Lebanon outside the gravitational pull of the sectarian system into a modern orbit. The tragic irony for Amal and the PSP was that their opponents accused the two of insincerity because the ideological positions they staked out would benefit the average member of the Shia and Druze communities; never mind that if one viewed Lebanon through an economic lens, the positions of the two were to the benefit of Lebanese cut from all kinds of sectarian cloth.

The LNM coalition also counted a number of Nasserist parties that, pan-Arab ideology aside, were locally based and leader-centered – including the Beirut-based Independent Nasserists (the Mourabitoun), the Sidon-based Popular Nasserist

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[26]Created as as the National and Progressive Front, then expanded in 1970, renamed the Front of National and Progressive Parties and Forces in 1972, to become the National Movement by the war's start. See Hiro (1992:24).

Organization, and the Tripoli-based 24 October Movement. This category of LNM member rated closer to the traditional in a traditional to ideological spectrum of parties. In contrast to the Nasserists local focus and reach were a number of secularist parties that tended to have country-wide presence and to prioritize their ideological positions as they related to the Lebanese struggle: the LCP, the OCAL, the SSNP, and the Lebanese branches of the Iraqi and Syrian Ba'th parties. The latter two were unusual in their emphasis on a transnational agenda; as much as the Nasserist parties were pan-Arab, and as much as the LCP and OCAL saw themselves as heirs to and participants in an international communist struggle, the focus of these parties' activities was solely on Lebanon.

The main military force of the Left was the Palestinian military organization Fatah, which operated under the umbrella of the PLO, led by its chairman, Yasser Arafat. The PLO's headquarters was, as of 1974, located in Beirut. But Fatah kept its distance from the fighting for much of the war's first year, publicly focusing on efforts to restore order. Radical members of the PLO, though, were heavily involved in fighting from the very beginning, particularly the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a splinter group from it - the PFLP-General Command, and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine. State-sponsored Palestinian armed groups linked to Syria and Iraq rounded out the Palestinian military forces: Sa'iqa and the Arab Liberation Front.

The Palestinian presence provided the Left with an avenue to power via action on the streets. The Left received arms, training, organizational support from Palestinian armed groups from the outset, and indeed even during the pre-war period when limited mobilization and training occurred. The Palestinians also created opportunities for the Left in a broader sense. Their presence in the South and

the resulting Israeli raids and invasions caused, along with urbanization, shifts in Lebanon's. The result? A more easily mobilized population settling in and around Beirut.[27]

The LNM and its fellow travelers sought to deconfessionalize the political system. In their international orientation, they wanted to insulate Lebanon from international "reactionary" forces – read the West and its regional allies – and to free its government to pursue a foreign policy sympathetic to pan-Arabism and the political but also military cause of the Palestinians. In their view, parties on the Right were "isolationists," having made common cause with the West in opposing progressive domestic politics in Lebanon, rejecting the pan-Arabism, and thwarting Palestinian aims. With these priorities, the LNM could trace a clear line back to the 1958 civil war, when the PSP under Junblatt had fought against then-President Camille Chamoun.[28]

The Right: For the Status Quo

The establishment of the Lebanese National Front[29] on January 31, 1976 codified the relationship between the leading politicians, parties, and organizations of the Right that had already developed in the lead up to the civil war and during its first year. Like Junblatt for the LNM, the LNF had well-known political figures who had held high office in Lebanon and who served as central, founding figures and leading personalities in its work, particularly former President Chamoun and

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[27]Communities that favored the Left did not have a knee-jerk positive response to the Palestinians, particularly in southern Lebanon itself. A good deal of animosity developed among the Shia, who saw the Palestinians as outsiders who brought war and violence to their doorstep. This may have aided the Right's mobilization in the area.

[28]Khalidi (1979) gives a concise yet thorough summary of the LNM. On Junblatt and the PSP in Lebanese politics, spanning both civil wars, see Hazran (2014).

[29]See Deeb (1980:21), Hanf (1993:190).

the LKP's leader Pierre Gemayel.[30] Chamoun's NLP, like the PSP, fit the model of a traditional party. The LKP on the other had, drew on mass mobilization. It had been designed not strictly as an electoral political party but as a vehicle for mobilization to counter the street power of SSNP during the anti-colonial struggle of the 1930s and 1940s. The LKP had thus formed alongside state institutions and saw itself as responsible for preserving a Lebanese state that would continue to function under the parameters of the National Pact.[31] The LKP thus once delivered a message to the Army in the years before the war that if the Army did not successfully curtail Palestinian military activities, the LKP would step in and do so – more a message to be expected from another organ of the state.

In the lead-up to the war there was a widespread fear among supporters of the Right that the Lebanese government had abdicated its responsibility to exercise sovereignty and reign in Palestinian armed groups. With these groups representing the main military potential of the Left, such a concern cut not just to the Right's priorities concerning Lebanon's position in foreign affairs but to its domestic objectives. The spur to action for the Right dated especially to the 1969 Cairo Accord between the Lebanese government and the Palestinians, which provided Palestinian armed groups with autonomy within the boundaries of Lebanon's refugee camps.

In addition to mobilization activities designed to create the ability to take back power on the street and to fight the Palestinian threat directly, an ideological shift took place on the Right. New political organizations formed which rejected compromise and saw military action to preserve the status quo as the only option, not a last resort. By 1975 and in the first two years of the war, then, new, hard-line or-

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[30]Hanf (1993:190-3) describes the leadership of the LNF in its entirety.
[31]See Entelis (1973); Stoakes (1975).

ganizations like the Guardians of the Cedars and The Organization (Tanzim) had formed, with the agenda of a military defense of Lebanon's Maronite and other Christian communities, down to the neighborhood level, and the political system to which their elites were tied. The South Lebanese Army also formed in response to the Palestinian presence.

For the Right, as for the Left, the demographic shifts brought about in part by the Palestinian presence reinforced party-direct actions to mobilize the population. Christian populations in the South and Beirut mobilized against the Palestinians, who were viewed as an occupying force. The Right began to refer to the south as Fatahland, after the dominant Palestinian party.

The LNF aimed to preserve Maronite and more broadly Christian sectarian political hegemony in Lebanon. The National Pact as it stood in practice preserved the commercial privileges that were to the benefit of the business elite in these communities. It also upheld the central role of a traditional form of leadership that could now be extended to apply to relatively new political figures like Chamoun – who was a businessman – and Gemayel, who despite leading a mass-mobilization based party stood at its helm as a personalistic leader.

3.2.2   Foreign

Security needs and competition for power guided foreign states' actions with respect to the Lebanese Civil War. Proximity to Lebanon affected their choices; neighbors felt the security imperative most strongly. But positioning in the three struggles that played out in post-war Middle East as a region, state system – that between monarchies and new revolutionary regimes, that between the Arab states and Israel, and the Cold War – was also a key structuring factor.

Neighbors

The 1973 war indelibly shaped the behavior of Lebanon's neighbors, Syria and Israel. Both sought to avoid conflict with each other in the aftermath of the war. Each sought to find an edge in the balance of power against the other. And both were incredibly concerned by the potential for the Palestinian armed groups in Lebanon to destabilize Lebanon and thereby set in motion a process that would escalate into another war between the Arab states and Israel.[32]

Syria's regime had particular concerns. The Palestinian movements represented a radical political trend in the Arab world – in their social agendas and their now-aggressive pursuit of conflict with Israel through raids on Israeli territory and attacks on Israeli civilians there and abroad. Syria, a so-called front-line state in Arab-Israeli conflict, wanted the ability to present itself as a fighter for domestic and international audiences, but also to be able to regulate the conflict. It did not want to be dragged into war. Accumulating military power in Lebanon, the Palestinians had the capacity to outmaneuver Syria, to present it as a conservative regime trying to disguise itself with radical rhetoric, and one that was opposed to taking the fight to the Zionist enemy. This political threat haunted the Syrian regime. Should the Palestinians successfully undermine Syria's front-line credentials, the impact on the regime's legitimacy,[33] not only regionally but more importantly domestically, would be considerable; indeed al-Asad had only taken

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[32]Details on and analysis of the evolution of Syrian and Israeli involvement in Lebanon can be found in Dawisha (1980, 1984); Chalala (1985); Weinberger (1986); Ma'oz and Yaniv (1986); Evron (1987); Seale (1988); Deeb (1989); Avi-Ran (1991); Abu-Khalil (1994); Osoegawa (2013); Naor (2017); Schiff and Ya'ari (1984); Shiffer (1984); Hof (1985); Yaniv (1987); Jones (1997); Schulze (1998); Ménargues (2004).

[33]The regime may not have had a deep well of legitimacy to draw on, even after even in after its military successes in the 1973 war with Israel. A civil war in Syria was to start in 1978. See Perthes (1995), Lawson (1982), van Dam (1996).

power via a coup in 1970. Syria worried that the rising strength of the Palestinians in Lebanon – but especially if they took power in Lebanon – could result in an overthrow of the Syrian regime by radical forces. A second possibility also gravely concerned the Syrian regime. A Palestinian-led government in Lebanon could easily precipitate an Israeli invasion of Lebanon. Syria was loathe to go to war with Israel right after 1973, when it still wanted time and resources to build its capabilities and have a chance of victory. But Arab public opinion, especially Syrian domestic public opinion, and its own strategic concerns about Israel developing a foothold on Lebanese territory, would force its hand. These weighty strategic concerns aside, a Palestinian-led Lebanon could also provide cover to Syria's regional enemies like Iraq and compete with Syria for Soviet patronage.

The moves of the Lebanese Right were no consolation to Damascus either. If the Right somehow effected the partition of Lebanon and establish a de facto Maronite state, Syrian leaders feared the effects on domestic stability. Syrian minority groups might press demands for autonomy or even rebel against the government's control. And the demonstration effect of the Maronites could extend to other countries in the region too.[34]

Syria's position as a so-called front-line state in the Arab-Israeli conflict and its aspiration to play a leading role in inter-Arab affairs guided its approach to the crisis in Lebanon. Its primary relationships were ones of assistance to Palestinian armed groups. This made the entire Left spectrum, too, potential allies for Syria. At the same time, the paramount nature of Syria's security concerns, internally as well as externally, meant that the relationships with Palestinian armed groups and the Left might be amended or sacrificed at will as necessity dictated. Syria's

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[34]Khalidi (1979).

competition with other Arab states, too, meant that not all groups on the Left enjoyed close relationships with it, and it might undermine and even attack those supported by its rivals.

Syria preferred indirect military intervention in the crisis, particularly because of the risk of escalation with Israel but also to obscure its hand as a way of not offending Arab public opinion. To start, Syria used proxy forces, units from the Palestine Liberation Army, to support the LNM in 1975. Quickly, though, Syria grew wary of the LNM's power and possibility that the Palestinians could take over Lebanon or short of that through their example catalyze anti-regime forces in Syria itself. The PLA and Sa'iqa were Syria's preferred tools to attempt to check the LNM, but proved too small to make the difference.

After first mobilizing troops on the border with Lebanon as an open threat to the LNM, Syria directly intervened with its army after the LNM and its Palestinian allies did not change course. The Syrian forces, the first contingent 6,000 strong when it entered Lebanon on June 1, 1976, was soon doubled, ultimately increasing to 30,000 by fall.[35] Syrian troops then became the bulk of the Arab Deterrence Force, a peacekeeping operation authorized by the Arab League through the late October 1976 conference on the war convened by Saudi Arabia.

A convergence of interests among strange bedfellows in the first two years of the war meant that Syria was also looked to as the actor on scene that could safe-guard shared Israeli, U.S. and Soviet Union interests in preventing an escalation of regional conflict. Syria and Israel pursued back channel understandings related to the prospects for or actual direct military actions of each in Lebanon, to clarify intentions; without such communication, defensive moves viewed as necessary

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[35]Khalidi (1979:58-65), Dawisha (1980:99-100).

response's to the other's actions could initiate mutual military escalation. Communications were passed obliquely through the United States, with King Hussein of Jordan conveying messages from Syria's president, which the United States then passed on to Israel, and vice versa.[36]

Syria continued its involvement for the duration of the war. It supported militias on the Left and Palestinian groups. The use of multiple clients gave it leverage against any one and meant that its Lebanese partners would find it harder to sacrifice Syrian interests if those ever ran into conflict with their own. In addition to maintaining influence in this way, Syria, due to its interest in preventing escalation of conflict and in avoiding a Palestinian take-over, was the motivating force behind mediation attempts and peace talks about Lebanon, throughout the course of the war.

Israel's concerns mirrored those of the Syrian regime. It feared that the Palestinians in Lebanon could generate a new Arab-Israeli war. As with the logic of the Syrian regime, the paths were two-fold. A Palestinian take-over of Lebanon would force Israel to invade to defend its security, particularly the security of its northern border area. Israel knew that this in turn would produce a military confrontation with Syria. Or, a Palestinian-take over of Lebanon would result in the overthrow of the Syrian regime, and either its replacement by a more radical Syrian regime or a Palestinian-led Syria regime. And the result would be the same. To protect its security, Israel would have to go to war, and this would produce a wider war between Israel and the Arab states, not just Syria.

Israel covertly trained, armed, and other assisted parties on the Right as a way

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[36]For detailed discussions of the high-level U.S. diplomatic efforts to promote Syrian intervention in Lebanon and mollify Israel (or at least mollify U.S. fears about a possible Israeli response), see Stocker (2016), Wight (2013).

of limiting Palestinian prospects in Lebanon. It worked in close cooperation with the South Lebanese Army and other parties on the Right which operated in southern Lebanon. It also intervened directly in a military capacity, conducting raids with ground troops and air power, and ultimately invading significant portions of southern Lebanon.

The raids represented a new doctrine of retaliation (see Barak 2009), under which Israel held Arab states responsible for any Palestinian attacks initiated from their territories, and accordingly might attack within those states rather than limit its response to Palestinian targets. In 1978, after raids and the capabilities of its local Lebanese allies proved insufficient to counter the Palestinian presence, Israel invaded southern Lebanon (see Hiro 1992:51).

While the 1978 invasion put pressure on the Palestinian armed groups, worried Syria, and bolstered the armed presence of the Right in southern Lebanon, it was soon checked by international action through the United Nations and the deployment of UNIFIL, a peacekeeping force. The next time Israel was to invade, in June 1982, it would usher in a sea-change in Lebanese politics. The 1982 invasion not only aimed to completely destroy the Palestinian armed groups throughout Lebanon, but also brought about the realistic prospect for Israel to collaborate with a friendly Lebanese government. Like Syria's mediation and peace attempts, Israel might be able to secure through diplomacy what it until then had been forced to try to achieve through military force. It successfully supported the candidacy of the Lebanese Forces' Bachir Gemayel for the presidency of Lebanon. Despite his assassination before assuming office, Israel continued to push for a peace treaty with Lebanon. It was able to get one signed by the Amine Gemayel administration but this ultimately fell through after intense Syrian pressure. And eventually

in its 1985 pull-out from the area it had occupied in the Chouf Mountains, Israel was accused of perfidy by its largely erstwhile Lebanese Forces allies; accusation was that it had supported the PSP and the LF against each other and intentionally created a vacuum that would lead to conflict between them, rather than withdrawing in a coordinated fashion with the Lebanese Army to allow it to interpose itself between the PSP and the LF.

Regional Players

The politics of the Arab-Israeli conflict, strategic rivalries, and regime security concerns were all part of regional powers' calculus concerning Lebanon. The more a government supported a hard-line position on the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the more it represented domestically a revolutionary tendency in its own domestic politics, the more likely it was to support Palestinian armed groups in Lebanon as well as core members of the Lebanese Left. The more a government supported negotiations and the possibility of a peace treaty with Israel, and the more it represented a reactionary tendency in its own domestic politics, the more likely it was to support efforts to curtail Palestinian freedom of action in Lebanon and to support, militarily and diplomatically, the Lebanese Right.[37]

In the years leading up to the war in Lebanon, Egypt was central to inter-Arab affairs and indeed still interested in expanding its influence in the Arab world, in competition with Syria. Indeed, it was only in 1969 that Cairo hosted the negotiations between the Palestinian armed groups and the Lebanese government. But the 1973 war with Israel was a critical influence on Egypt's foreign policy, and it began to pursue engagement with Israel. With the Sinai II agreement, signed in

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[37]Sirriyeh (1989) places the position of each country discussed below in its regional context.

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September 1975, Egypt's commitment to a peace process with Israel put it publicly at odds with many Arab governments still competing to take a leading role in regional politics. Once Egypt and Israel signed the Camp David Accords in 1978, Egypt definitively dropped out of regional power competition, including efforts to gain influence in Lebanon, whether through backing specific armed groups or attempting to take the lead in mediation efforts.[38]

Iraq and Libya both competed with Syria's attempts to be the principal Arab sponsor of Palestinian armed groups. The two bolstered hard-line factions against the traditional leadership favored by Syria. Iraq trained Palestinian armed groups and hosted their cadres. The outbreak of war with Iran, however, pulled Iraq's attention fully away from Lebanon. It only returned to the Lebanese scene after the war with Iran concluded, in 1989 interested in re-asserting its power against Syrian efforts, supporting the Lebanese Forces on the Right with arms shipments, military training, and possibly financing. For its part, Libya funded the Lebanese Arab Army, the Mourabitoun, the PSP, and other armed groups on the Left. But as inter-Arab competition in Lebanon subsided, first with Egypt's exit due to the peace process with Israel, then with Iraq's exit due to the war with Iran, Libya's concern over Lebanon as an arena in which to prove its leadership or to further its radical agenda subsided.

The stalwart supporters of the Right were, from the beginning, the region's monarchies: Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Iran.[39] Eventually, their roles changed. Saudi Arabia shifted its focus in Lebanon towards mediation. Jordan was at the outset most concerned with limiting the power of the Palestinian armed groups,

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[38]On the Egypt-Israel negotiations in this period, see (Quandt 2005).

[39]Jordan and Iran had recent experience cooperating to support a conservative Arab regime against a revolutionary threat, both having intervened military to support the Sultan of Oman in fighting a counterinsurgency in that country's Dhofar region.

but with Syria and Israel taking lead, active military roles in this project, Jordan's interests were secured. After the fall of Shah in the Iranian Revolution, Iran's government switched sides and began to back the Left in Lebanon. Iran based a small detachment of its Revolutionary Guards in Lebanon to train militias on the Left, principally Hizballah, and played an active role in the massive truck bomb attack on the U.S. Marine Barracks in Beirut in 1983.

Of the powerful states in the region, only Turkey was not involved in Lebanon. This was by design: successive Turkish government's adhered to the Kemalist foreign policy doctrine of no entanglements.[40] A minor exception to this was Turkey's engagement in espionage activity in Lebanon, sometimes involving armed groups on the Right as partners, in efforts to target Lebanese Armenian political parties with possible links to groups responsible for assassinating Turkish diplomats around the world, principally in Europe.[41]

Global Powers

International ties of patronage and obligation, pressures on the superpowers as alliance leaders in a bipolar international system , attempts by would-be competitors to each superpower within its own side to stake out an independent position of power, lower-ranked states' competitive actions within the alliances to secure better positioning and superpower favor, and the efforts of each superpower and its allies to bolster its ideological cause and maintain and increase its material power worldwide, with attention to long term prospects – these complex and often intertwined forces influenced global powers' actions regarding the war in Lebanon.

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[40]See Hale (2000).

[41]The assassinations began in the United States in 1973 and continued through the early 1990s.

The superpowers, the U.S. and the Soviet Union, had similar interests. First and foremost, each was concerned that events in Lebanon could lead to another war between the Arab states and Israel, with the potential for this to escalate and draw it into confrontation with the other superpower. Each also sought to manage its own influence in the region, pushing a little where small gains might be possible, and trying to suss out ways of excluding its rival. Both had client states involved in Lebanon. For the Soviet Union, these were Egypt, Libya, and Syria, plus Palestinian armed groups as non-state clients. For the U.S., Iran – up until the Iranian Revolution, Israel, and, to an extent, Jordan. Through their own involvement, the clients created indirect relationships between the superpowers and Lebanese armed groups that stood in addition to any direct contact. Although at times the indirect links could be tenuous, they were clear to the actors involved.

Allies of the two superpowers took on supporting roles, sometimes independently, sometimes in coordination with their superpower ally to help to support its agenda or the broad agenda of the alliance as a whole. While the Soviet Union proved a willing audience for the Left, it was not necessarily a helpful, forthcoming supplier of arms, matériel or financing. The Left turned to instead to Soviet clients to benefit from the superpower's largess. Its military commanders trained in Eastern European countries. Arms flowed from Warsaw Pact governments, which also facilitated the Left's connections with the Syria. The UK and other western European powers, as well as the Vatican, supported mediation efforts and other attempts at de-escalation favored by the U.S. The UK, France, and Italy took on peacekeeping roles together with the U.S. in deploying troops as the Multinational Forces I and II between 1982 and 1984.

France's role extended beyond that of a participant in the Western alliance, if

a maverick one at that. As the former colonial power, France understood itself to have ties of responsibility, in addition to those of commerce, not only to Lebanon generally, but particularly with respect to the Maronite community. Such ties reflected France's traditional role in the Levant long before it held the mandate, when it acted as the foreign protector of the Maronites in Ottoman Lebanon.

China, too, was involved in Lebanon, principally through its connections to Palestinian armed groups. China supported the PLO and was in general sympathetic to the endeavors of left-wing militant groups fighting to overthrow Western-led regimes, which could be taken to include the members of the Left in Lebanon. Chinese support flowed particularly to Fatah,[42] and from Fatah to its Lebanese allies. Such efforts fit with China's drive to establish itself as a center of international communist power to rival the Soviet Union. In this way, Chinese clients also came to aid, if in rather small ways, the Left in Lebanon. Assistance also made it indirectly to the Left, via governments China supported – even if in competition with the Soviets – in Vietnam and South Yemen.

3.3 Turning Points

Above, I have gone over the principal issues and actors involved in the Lebanese Civil War. To evaluate how plausible are the theory of quagmire's mechanisms against the war's empirical record also requires a basic understanding of how the war unfolded. I contend that turning points are useful devices in structuring the analysis to come in Chapter 4. After explaining here what I mean by turning point, I provide a broad overview of the war's main military events. I then highlight two

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[42]See Cobban (1984); Harris (1978).

types of turning points on which the analysis in Chapter 4 focuses. The first type is a turning point at which a weak belligerent takes steps to escalate the fighting. The second type is a turning point at which a strong belligerent does not press its advantage against the enemy but rather acts in a restrained fashion.

Observers frequently break the Lebanese Civil War into multiple phases to facilitate analysis. A necessary project to be sure; by doing so, we obtain clean narratives for each of the phases (other authors even break some established phases into micro-wars, which in turn might have their own phases). Thus we have descriptions, even whole works, devoted to "The Two Years War" (1975-6), "The 100 Days War" (1978), "The Israeli Invasion" (1982), "The War of the Mountain" (1983-4), "The War of the Camps," "The War of Elimination" (1989), and so on. But periodization can mislead – certainly more than a list of named battles. It implies that the focus, bulk, or even entirety of the war during a phase, including its politics, its social dimensions, and its geographic reach, can be summarized under the rubric of its eponymous heading. Periodization also implies that the phases are comprehensive; if some set of events or development are not encapsulated by one of the phases, then they must either be irrelevant or simply did not occur.

Due, then, precisely to that which is valuable in it for historical purposes – the clean narratives – I avoid the periodization approach common to accounts of the war in Lebanon. I do not adopt an existing one or attempt to synthesize those developed by other scholars.[43] My contention is that the clean narratives make periodization particularly unsuited for the study of decision-making. By its

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[43]To attempt to synthesize phases of the war accross the body of scholarship on Lebanon creates the sensation of encountering something like Borges' Biblioteca Total. A synthesis would contain "Everything, but for one reasonable line or true piece of news [there will be] millions of unintelligable cacophonies....Everything, but generations of men can come and go without the vertiginous stacks....having given them a tolerable page" (1939:16).

structure, periodization pre-supposes some explanation, however implicit, for the events in a given phase, and then offers up for analysis empirical material that by design supports that explanation. It may also be unusually unsuited to studying decision-making in that its analytical lens steers the reader away from isolating transitions or developments in the war; with phases, one focuses on the phases themselves, less on how Lebanon went from one to another, although that often that is precisely the point in trying to understand decision-making.

My contention here is that because of these clean narratives, the micro-wars approach to Lebanon is particularly unsuited to studying decision-making. It essentially pre-supposes explanation, provides empirical material to be "analyzed", which necessarily supports those explanations. It is also perhaps uniquely unsuited to studying decision-making in that it its analytical lens steers away from focusing on any kind of transition or development in the war. Meaning, it cannot help us see how Lebanon went from one micro-war to another. But often that is precisely the point in trying to understand decision-making.

In light of the above-mentioned concerns, I pursue an alternative approach, of examining "turning points" in the war. I apply the term using its plain-language meaning: a point at which multiple courses of action were possible. This implies two important features. It consists both of a course of action taken and a counterfactual or set of counterfactuals. And, the counterfactuals must have been plausible at the time. The micro-wars approach organizes itself geographically, chronologically, and sometimes thematically according to which actors opposed one another in the fighting. The turning points approach, in contrast, isolates the decisions of a single actor.

3.3.1 Military Overview of the War

Like most wars, the Lebanese Civil War is typically dated to a single, high-profile incident. In Lebanon, this was the attack on a bus carrying members of a Palestinian armed group by members of the Lebanese Kata'ib Social Democratic Party (LKP) as it passed through the Beirut suburb of 'Ain al-Remmaneh on April 13, 1975. The shooting, which left 26 of the Palestinians dead, was itself preceded by other violent incidents on the same day, including an assassination attempt on the life of the president of the LKP, Pierre Gemayel. Although there is a consensus among scholars and participants alike that April 13 marks the war's beginning, the eruption of fighting that occurred on that day had been preceded by smaller incidents and even intense but very temporally contained fighting in the months and years before. But especially pictures of the shot-out bus, carried on the front page of Lebanon's major newspapers, and the magnitude of the incident captured the public imagination. What makes the events of 'Ain al-Remmaneh significant in dating the beginning of the war, however, are the armed actions by Lebanese and Palestinian political parties which followed, on that evening and in subsequent days. Public order had disappeared from Lebanon, dispelling any doubt that power was contested, divided between opposing, armed political parties.

Exchanges of gunfire, shelling, rocket fire, explosions, shootings, kidnappings, and other forms of violence continued throughout the spring and into the summer of 1975 despite cease-fires and various ongoing negotiations. A lull in the fighting in July and August did not indicate that tensions were abating; the armed groups pushed ahead with intensive training during the summer months. Violence was particularly intense along fronts separating predominantly Christian and predominantly Muslim neighborhoods of Beirut's suburbs, and between Pales-

tinian refugee camps and the neighborhoods surrounding them. Often, heavy weapons were used intentionally against civilian populations. Holding the line against one's enemy was also accompanied in areas controlled by the right-wing parties by efforts at political homogenization. Due to the overlap between sectarian identities and leftist political affiliations, in practice this amounted to evicting Muslim populations. However, ongoing expulsion of Christians suspected of membership in leftist parties and their own preemptive voluntary relocations underscores the political and security-related nature of these actions. In Palestinian and left-wing controlled areas, particularly near the fronts, Christians were also targeted. Both sides engaged in killings and kidnappings at "flying checkpoints" based on the sect of victims indicated on their national identity cards.

The battles of the next 16 years of the war were fought not only between groups supporting and seeking to overturn the political status quo in Lebanon, but also between groups within a given side as they strove to achieve hegemony. The major military actions which constituted fighting between, not within the sides were:

- Battles for control of Beirut's hotel district, central business district and port, October 1975-May 1976

- Right-wing operations to remove Palestinian refugee camps and displace Muslims in order to secure Christian residential areas in Beirut and their lines of communication to other Christian population centers outside of Beirut followed by similar reprisals by Palestinian and left-wing and Muslim armed groups, December 1975-August 1976

- Syrian military intervention in support of the Lebanese National Movement to prevent a Lebanese Front victory, December 20, 1975-March 1976

- Syrian military intervention in support of the Lebanese Front to prevent a Lebanese National Movement victory, April-October 1976

- Palestinian groups and leftist allies fight the South Lebanese Army, its rightist allies, and the Israeli Army, 1976-1982

- Syrian peacekeeping occupation of Beirut as the principal troop contributor to the Arab Deterrent Force, November 1976-1978

- Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon, March 1978 and subsequent creation of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

- Lebanese Forces against the Syrian Army in Zahleh, 1981

- Israeli invasion of Lebanon culminating in occupation from southern Lebanon through west Beirut, June 1982; resistance to the occupation and fighting against the SLA by remnants of Palestinian armed groups, and leftist and Shi'a armed groups

- Presence of Multi-National Peacekeeping Forces I and II, 1982, 1983-1984

- U.S. military support, through its MNF contingent, for the Lebanese Army in operations against the PSP and Amal, 1983-1984

- The Mountain war between the Lebanese Forces and the Progressive Socialist Party, 1983

- Fighting between the Lebanese Army and the PSP, and between the Army and Amal, 1984

- Fighting between the Lebanese Forces and Shi'a militias around Zahleh, 1985

- Lebanese Forces fight leftist, Sunni, Palestinian groups and Sunni Lebanese army units in and around Sidon, 1985

- Units of the Lebanese Army under General Michel Aoun fight the Syrian Army, 1989, with Lebanese Forces eventually drawn into the fighting in 1990; Syrian occupation of East Beirut in October 1990

Throughout the 16 years of war, the fighting was typified not by these intermittent campaigns, but ongoing violence across largely fixed fronts following the form of the violence of the early months of the war in 1975: shelling, especially deep into civilian areas; exchanges of gunfire and sniping across the lines; kidnappings, detentions, and murders; and other forms of attacks on civilians or high-profile political or military figures, including car bombings. After 1976, the front lines of the war hardly changed, with the exception of events surrounding the Israeli invasion in 1982 and staggered withdrawals through 1985. During most of the war, then, thousands upon thousands of Lebanese lost their lives to so-called artillery duels and the other forms of fighting which sustained the war and are discussed above.

3.3.2 Escalation by the Weak, Restraint by the Strong

The theory of quagmire hones in on belligerents' decisions to continue to fight. We can think of this broadly, not just direct decisions to continue to fight, but any decision or activity that deepens participation in the war, even anything that precludes agreement with measures designed to resolve the conflict or steps that miht facilitate exit from the war. The theoretical focus isolates two types of turning point for our analysis in the next chapter: turning points at which the weak engage in escalatory behavior, and turning points at which the strong act in a restrained manner.

I examine two main examples of escalation by the weak in Chapter 4, along with two additional ones. The first turning point consists of the Right's decision to escalate during the winter of 1976, despite its losing position. The second consists again of a decision by the Right, this time to instigate fighting with the Syrian army, an overwhelmingly stronger force than itself, in the summer of 1978. The additional examples come from the 1982-1984 period, during which the administration of President Amine Gemayel turned away from a political settlement, and the fall of 1989, when General Michel Aoun rejected the Ta'if peace accords.

I examine two main examples of restraint by the strong in Chapter 4. The first is the 1978 escalation already mentioned, but viewed from the other side. Here, the Syrians and their allies acted with restraint. The second is the collapse of the Tripartite Agreement in the winter of 1986 due to disagreements within the Right. In the aftermath, the Left, stronger militarily and backed by Syria, which had sponsored the accords, refrained from territorial fighting and inflicting any true military pressure on the Right. I contrast this to the way in which the war ultimately ended through military operations begun in October 1990.

3.4 Explaining Decision-Making

Studies of Lebanon highlight three categories of explanations for the events of the war: ideological commitment, social polarization, and foreign machinations. Each category has its analogs in the social scientific literature on the phenomena in question.[44] Here, though, I introduce the logic of these explanations as prevalent in analyses of Lebanon itself. In Chapter 4, I will engage with the three categories of explanation in the course of presenting my own analysis of the war.

3.4.1 Ideological Commitment

The ideological beliefs of the parties to the war are a clear candidate explanation for their behavior. Organizations may follow a path charted by their professed ideology. Levels of ideological commitment, and in particular extremism or fanaticism, might explain actions that prioritize adherence to ideology over the material welfare of the organization or its individual members. The ideologies in question might be found in the formal platforms of political parties, the teachings of religious institutions, or in the content of popular social discourse.

A primary difficulty for ideational explanations is that it is difficult to establish whether a given actor subscribes to a set of ideological beliefs. We have to infer these beliefs from statements or behavior. To take this category of explanation seriously, though, we must avoid citing the behaviors the account attempts to explain as evidence of the ideology. Thus Christia (2012) underscores the primacy of the timing of ideology to investigate it as an explanation. To this we can also

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[44]An exemplary work on ideas as cause is Berman's (1998) book on the divergent cases of social democratic parties in Germany and Sweden between the First and Second World Wars. Semelin (2007) highlights the integral role of ideology to violence perpetrated in the form of massacres and genocide.

add the need for there to have been a process by which the ideas were spread to and received and assimilated by those who are posited to have acted based on them.

If ideological explanations of events have traction, we would expect to see evidence that the ideology was developed intellectually, promulgated, and put to an audience of constituents to motivate them prior to the events in question. It would take a series of quite unreasonable assumptions to explain the absence of such evidence but still argue that ideology accounted for behavior. As important, the actors directly responsible for shaping the events in question should demonstrate some link to the ideology. If ideologues speak to and motivate an audience that is separate from political and military decision-making, we cannot assume that ideology must have been relevant. Instead, how do the actors themselves account for their decisions? Does the documentary record support that these were their professed beliefs at the time?

3.4.2 Social Polarization

The host of problems created by identity-based social distance is also seen as an important explanation of events in Lebanon. Parties, combatants, politicians were thought to act due to fear of "the other." Identity-based political and military groups provided protection under the anarchic conditions of civil war. Increasing polarization of the opposing sides shaped social and strategic interaction. Social polarization-based explanations are distinct from ideological ones, for example ideological hatred, especially in the mechanisms at work. For social polarization-based explanations, the quality of social interaction – repeated, close – necessary to sustain peace, fades and ultimately disappears during war, and its absence sus-

tains conflict.

This explanatory view suggests that the distance separating the polarized sides is of consequence to events. If polarization drives decision-making, leaders should suffer from a lack of trust of their opponents that is nigh-insurmountable. We should not expect them to take steps to overcome a lack of trust. As with the previous explanatory category, sequencing is key. If polarization lies behind events, we should expect political actors to be influenced by it, rather than to work actively to foment and shape it.

3.4.3 Foreign Machinations

The title of Ghassan Tueni's (1985) book, "Une Guerre pour les autres," expressed Lebanese citizens' exasperation over the circumstances in which they found themselves after years and years of war. Such a formulation of the conflict is expressed popularly in Lebanon as "the Others' war on Lebanese soil" (*harb al-akhereen bi sahat Libnan*).[45] The author of a book from the war's early years which was published by a Right-wing press writes that the war was a situation "visited upon" the Lebanese (Naṣr 1977). A spinning globe on the cover of the same book depicts a geopolitical soccer match between the United States and the Soviet Union, with the Middle East as the ball (Figure 3.1).

Like ideological commitment, foreign machinations as an explanatory category is best investigated by close attention to events and their sequencing. If a useful explanation, foreign manipulation of domestic actors should account for their behavior not in the aggregate but at specific points in time, and should precede changes in it. If foreign machinations are not a useful explanation, though,

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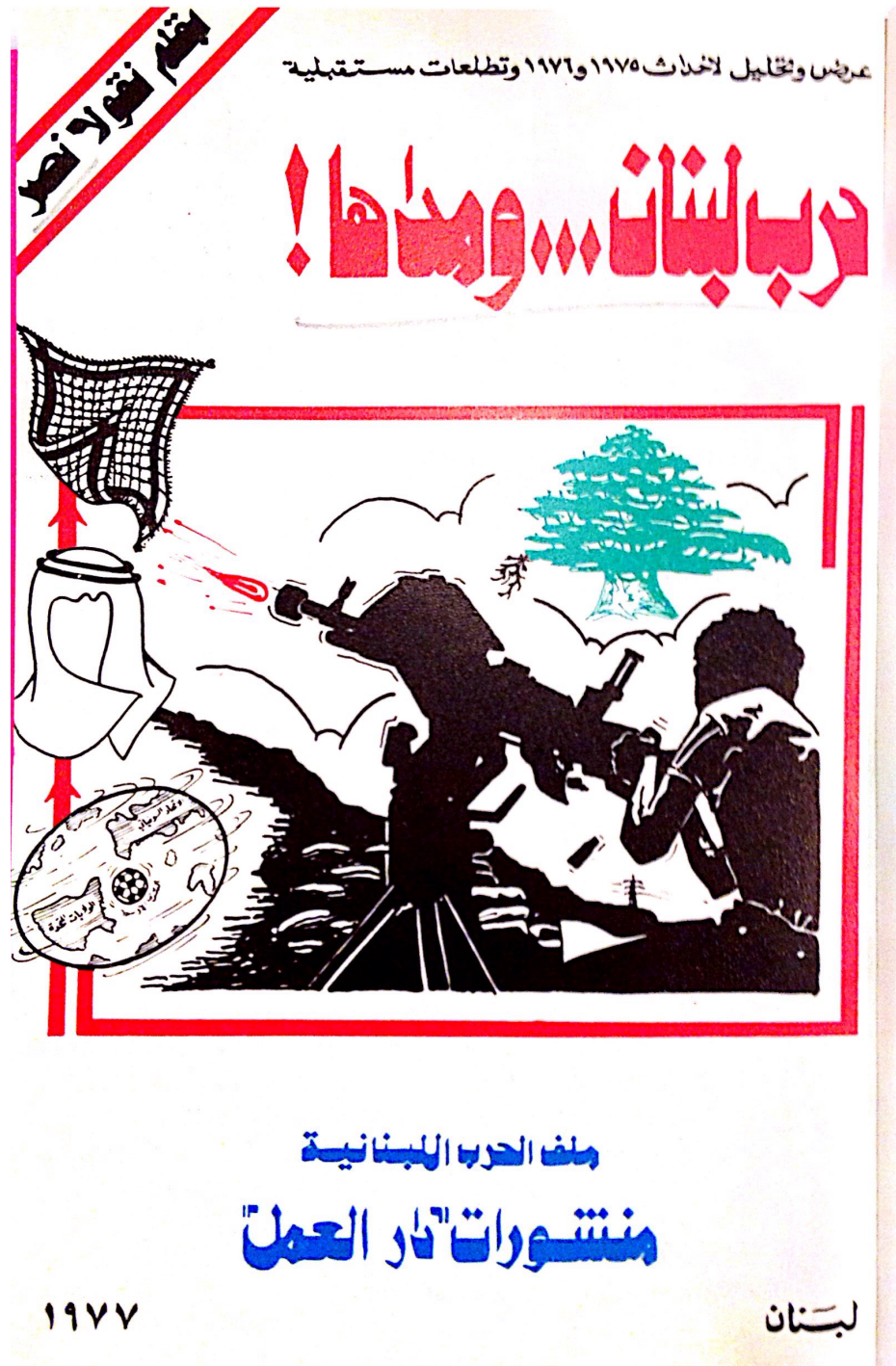[45]The phrase translates literally to "the Others' war in the Lebanon theater [of war]."

Figure 3.1: The Middle East as Soccer Ball in the Geopolitical Match between the U.S. and the Soviet Union

we should expect to see violations of the causal chain that the account posits. We should not, however, require that there be no foreign hand in the picture. The question is whether foreign powers direct the action, as the explanation predicts, or are, alternatively, interactive participants in it, affected by and making decisions contingent on the behavior of the Lebanese participants.

Lebanon is rife with analyses of the war that privilege foreign machinations as the explanation for developments large and small. Sniper fire in 1975 was assumed even at the time to be the work of a fifth column trying to bait the Lebanese into civil war. Turning points in the war, changes in the fortunes of a political actor or organization, all are ascribed to the hyperstrategic decisions of foreign powers. Nearly three decades after the war started, two decades after it ended, the interviews I conducted were haunted by this formulation. When I described my research project as being about "the Lebanese Civil War," I usually received an earnest but critical, well-intentioned half-hour long correction of my erroneous description. I should have known, my interlocutors explained, that the war in Lebanon was not among the Lebanese themselves, but was the result of foreign manipulation. The next chapter turns to that interview material to assess the mechanisms underpinning the theory of quagmire.