LEBANON: THE CRISIS OF 1958

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The Lebanese conflict of 1958 - like other crises in the postwar Middle East - had closely internal, local, and international dimensions. Only by examining these three sources and by surveying the whole landscape can the Lebanese crisis and the following civil war be understood. On the domestic front, a struggle for power between the opposition and President Kam"il Sham"un was polarizing Lebanese society and politics. Kam"il Sham"un, a staunchly pro-Western Maronite politician, was determined to assert his political will at all costs.

From the point of view of the pan-Arab nationalist, indeed, the existence of an independent Lebanon was as unnatural as the existence of an independent Austria was to the pan-German nationalist of the 1930s or earlier. Arabic was the language of the Lebanese people; and to use the Christian religion professed by approximately half their number as a reason for giving Lebanon sovereignty as a separate state seemed a survival of the sectarian considerations which the Arab nationalist claimed to repudiate. In fact, however, the region of Mount Lebanon had known a separate existence for centuries, and its autonomy under a Christian governor had received international recognition in 1861. The French creation of Grand Liban in 1920 was not merely a piece of imperialist divide-and-rule technique, as Arab nationalists have since claimed, but also a concession to the territorial claims of a Lebanese Maronite delegation that had presented its views to the Peace Conference of 1919.

Lebanon stood out from the other Middle Eastern states, not in having minority communities of political importance, but in having no clear majority community as almost all other Middle Eastern countries had. The clear Christian majority of the former Sanjaq of Lebanon (1861-1914) was almost swamped by the extension of its boundaries into the Grand Liban of 1920. Even though the French

had conferred Lebanese citizenship on thousands of Armenian Christian refugees who had settled in the country after World War I, the census of 1932 showed a clear Christian majority only if large numbers from the extensive Lebanese diaspora abroad were included. But the omission of the Armenians and the émigrés would not produce a clear Muslim majority either, as some superficial writers supposed. The balance almost certainly lay with the Druze, who constituted 6% of the population and whose peculiar religion was historically an offshoot of Shi’i Islam but, like other heresies, had exposed them in the past to persecution by the majority community in Syria and Lebanon as a whole, the Sunni Muslims. In the 19th century, therefore, although Druze and Christians had fought bitterly among themselves between 1841 and 1860, they had been equally concerned with securing the maximum degree of autonomy from the Sunni Ottoman Empire; and as the Maronites and other Uniate Christians had looked for protection to France, so had the Druze looked to Britain. At the termination of the French mandate (1941-1945), there were relatively few Lebanese Druze who preferred incorporation in a predominantly Sunni Syrian republic to remaining a minority in Lebanon.

The Sunni community, on the other hand, had been enlarged by the creation of Grand Liban to become the largest one after that of the Maronites, numbering some 20% of the total population. The strength of the Sunnis lay in the three traditional Ottoman coastal towns – Beirut, Tripoli, and Sidon (Saida) – which had not formed part of the Sanjak, and in the hinterlands of the last two of these. Their leading political families thus felt loyalty not to Lebanon but rather to a “greater Syria” including Lebanon, and they regretted the loss to the Christians, favoured by the French, of the ascendancy which they as Sunnis had enjoyed during the centuries of Ottoman domination. Accordingly, even after the establishment in 1926 of the Lebanese Republic within the framework of the French mandate the Sunnis were reluctant to share in the affairs of Lebanon and cooperate with the mandatory authorities. While a few ambitious leaders did accept public office in spite of popular censure, the majority of Sunnis refused to take part in the running of a state the existence of which they resented. While the Sunnis refused to cooperate in Lebanese politics, the affairs of Lebanon tended to become the preserve of Christian politicians. The Shi’ites, who formed the least advanced section of the country’s population, could only play a minor role; and the Druzes, who were able and willing to cooperate, were a comparatively small group. Thus, while the Sunnis remained outside, the Christians took virtual charge of state affairs and added considerably to the political and administrative experience they had gained under the Ottomans.

After the French occupation in 1920, when Tripoli was separated from Syria and Christians were considered the majority in Lebanon, the Muslims began to

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suffer, wrote a parliamentary deputy from Tripoli, using his town as an example. The town of Tripoli remained prosperous at first, but its inhabitants did not relish the loss of their connections with Syria. Throughout the mandatory era, the Muslims sustained their loyalty to Syria. Centres of discontent with "second-class citizenship" sprang up in Beirut, Sidon, Tripoli, Baalbek, and other largely Muslim towns. Every Muslim in Lebanon was suffering. In Ottoman days, when the town of Tripoli was the capital of Tripoli province, its leaders "enjoyed prestige and its learned men respect before sultans and ministers and governors". Its commerce, agriculture and industry then made it one of the richest Syrian provinces. Its markets, hotels, restaurants, clinics, hospitals, and courts were crowded with thousands of fellow Arabs, just as Beirut, the capital, today is full of the inhabitants of the outlying regions of the Republic and the neighboring countries.7

However, among the Maronites themselves, with their 30% of the population, political rivalries led to divergences of policy. Some favoured continued reliance on the French; others wanted to make a bid for independence through association with the Muslims. By 1943, the weakening of the French as a result of their misfortunes in World War II enabled Bishāra al-Khūrī, the leader of one of Maronite factions, to reach an unwritten agreement with the Sunni leader Riyād aṣ-Ṣulḥ. In this so-called National Covenant (al-Mītāq al-Waṭanī), "Bishāra al-Khūri, on behalf of the Christians, recognized Lebanon as an Arab state that should never seek assistance from any European power to the detriment of sister Arab states. In return, Riyād aṣ-Ṣulḥ vowed Muslim loyalty to Lebanon and promised never to seek her dissolution in a larger Arab political unit".8

After shaking off the French mandate, independent Lebanon retained one peculiar institution that had come down unchanged from the Sanjaq: the treatment of the religious communities almost as the units of a federal state. Article 95 of the Constitution, as amended by the nationalists in November 1943, read: "As a provisional measure and for the sake of justice and concord, the communities shall be equitably represented in public employment and in the composition of the Cabinet, such measure, however, not to cause prejudice to the general welfare of the State." Thus, the Maronite Bishāra al-Khūrī became President of the Republic, the Sunni Riyād aṣ-Ṣulḥ became Prime Minister, the president of the Chamber of Deputies was usually a Shiʿī, the Foreign Minister an Orthodox Christian, the Minister of Defence a Druze, and so on; and the Electoral Law, as successively revised, continued to prescribe, for the country as a whole and for each electoral district, the religious sects from which the parliamentary representatives should be proportionately drawn.9

Riyād aṣ-Ṣulḥ was so far loyal to the National Covenant (and to the interests of his family) that he ordered the execution after a summary court-martial of Anṭūn

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Saāda, the Orthodox Christian leader of "al-Ḥizb al-Qawmī as-Sūrī", who had attempted an insurrection in 1949 to further the party’s aim of uniting Lebanon with Syria. In retaliation, Riyāḍ as-Ṣulḥ was murdered by a Syrian National Party assassin in Amman, Jordan in 1951. Of the Sunni politicians who succeeded him, none had his gift of leadership.

The powers accorded to the President of the Republic by the Constitution were quite limited and ultimate authority was attributed to the Chamber of Deputies as the representatives of the people. But on the termination of the Mandate in 1943 the wide powers previously held by the High Commissioner had passed to the Lebanese President, who virtually became his successor. The President had come to exercise, as if by force of local habit, the autocratic authority of both the former French High Commissioner or the Ottoman Pasha. Such powers could easily enable a president to exercise autocratic power. Until 1951, however, the presence of a strong Muslim Premier like Riyāḍ as-Ṣulḥ had kept Bishāra al-Khūrī’s actual power within bounds. When Kamīl Shamʿūn (Camille Chamoun) succeeded in 1952, the Muslims could boast no effective leadership.

In 1945 when Lebanon became independent, many Muslims believed that they would acquire full equality. Muslim grievances, which had not been expressed for a decade because of the National Pact, now came to the surface. Demands for a new census, which would obviously indicate a Muslim majority, were put forward. However, continued the Tripoli deputy, independence brought no real change, for authority “in its entirety” was controlled by non-Muslims. Muslims, who held positions, “became a pliant tool in the hands of the Christian President of the Republic who disposed of everything, large and small, according to whim and fancy”.

Muslims began to feel discriminated against by the Christian majority. Even illiteracy was widespread, ran the complaint, because the government failed to open adequate schools or enforce compulsory education. The government also practiced economic discrimination and failed to assist Tripoli’s rural population “as though there were a planned policy to impoverish the Muslims”. When high customs or duties were placed on the articles of commerce that passed between Syria and Lebanon after 1950, following collapse of the French-established customs and currency union, Tripoli lost its markets, “its trade stagnated, its industries came to a stand-still, and its agriculture deteriorated”.

This finally led to the overthrow of Bishāra al-Khūrī in the bloodless “Rose Water” revolution of 1952 and the election to the Presidency of one of his principal Maronite critics, Kamīl Shamʿūn. This power struggle within the power bloc

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13 Ibid., p. 338.
and on the political scene reflected the development of the Lebanese economy.\textsuperscript{14} But it was not long before Muslim leaders began to give expression to a series of grievances (some of them well founded), charging that their communities were being discriminated against by a predominantly Christian state apparatus. The Muslim deputy acknowledged that President Kamil Shamčūn attempted to “soften the harshness of economic neglect” after 1952 by expanding Tripoli’s port, but it was too late to save the town from economic ruin. While the state was spending hundreds of millions of Lebanese pounds on roads leading to the Maronite heartland, Mount Lebanon, he declared, those in “every other Muslim region” were neglected.

The delicate balance on which the National Covenant depended was thus already threatened in 1953. Muslim grievances found expression in an English-language pamphlet entitled \textit{Moslem Lebanon Today}, which described Lebanese Muslims as a downtrodden majority in a Christian-dominated state. After 1954, there was a growing tendency among these Muslims, particularly the Sunnites, to look towards Egypt for support.\textsuperscript{15} The year 1954 had been designated by the Pope as one of special honour to the Blessed Virgin, and in Lebanon its celebration by the Maronites and other Catholics culminated in a well-publicized procession with a statue of the Virgin from Beirut to her mountain shrine. The Muslims accordingly felt constrained to demonstrate their rival strength and unity a months later by celebrating the birthday of their Prophet with an exceptionally large torchlight procession in Beirut. But because of the organizers’ lack of attention to safety details, this resulted in a fire and stampede in which twenty-one persons died and several hundred were injured.\textsuperscript{16}

Nor was this the only factor in a rapidly evolving situation: The Egyptian \textit{coup d’état} of 1952 and the rapid rise of Jamāl Ī Abdunnāsir (Nasser) captured the imagination of the Muslims of Lebanon, as it did that of Muslim Arabs everywhere. Lebanese Muslim opinion rallied around Jamāl Ī Abdunnāsir, and previously minor Sunni leaders stepped in to take advantage of the change. Thus Sā’īb Salām, whose father had been the leader of a Sunni group in opposition to the French\textsuperscript{17} and who had previously been overshadowed by Sāmī as-Sulh and Ī Abdullāh al-Yāfī, rose to prominence as a \textit{Nasserist} spokesman, with full support from Cairo and Damascus.

It is possible, however, that the enormous political success of Jamāl Ī Abdunnāsir’s arms deal with the USSR (in the guise of Czechoslovakia) in September, 1955, convinced Sā’īb Salām that the way to do international business was to “carry a big stick”. Lebanon’s narrow width from east to west was traversed by two oil pipelines, conveying a part of the output of the Iraq Petroleum

\textsuperscript{15} Salibi, op. cit., p. 198.
\textsuperscript{17} Salibi, Kamal: The Lebanese Crisis in Perspective, p. 369.
Company and of the Arabian-American Oil Company to tanker ports on the Medi­
terranean at Tripoli and Sidon, respectively. Each of the countries traversed by
these pipelines received a royalty calculated on the tonnage of oil multiplied by
the distance traversed, plus an additional royalty for the provision of port facili­
ties.18 Successive Lebanese governments had, however, been dissatisfied for some
years that Lebanon should receive less than the other transit countries because of
the exigency of her territory; and the IPC’s negotiation in 1955 of a new scale of
transit payments with Syria (which the company was prepared to extend propor­
tionately to Lebanon) was answered by a Lebanese demand for complete parity of
payment with the other transit countries. The conduct of the subsequent negotia­
tions was assumed in 1956 by Șa’ib Salām, who handled them with a stiffness to
which IPC was not prepared to capitulate, especially as it now had a second pipe­
line operating to the Syrian Mediterranean tanker port of Baniyas which did not
pass through Lebanese territory. Șa’ib Salām’s stiffness culminated, immediately
after Jamal ‘Abdunnaṣir’s expropriation of the Suez Canal Company, in a threat
by him to nationalize IPC’s Tripoli refinery.19

By the beginning of September, 1956, “the fierce spirit of Muslim nationalism
that (was) growing rapidly in the Arab world” was reawakening the tension be­
tween Muslim and Christian in Lebanon, and there was said to be reason to fear
that Șa’ib Salām’s supporters in the Muslim quarters of Beirut would cause dis­
turbances if his intransigent policy were not followed.20 The Anglo-French mili­
tary action against Egypt at the end of October (the Suez crisis) presented the
Lebanese Government with a dilemma for which President Kamil Shamṭūn’s pre­
vious policy of offering himself as a mediator in the frequent inter-Arab quarrels
(e.g., the Egyptian denunciation of the Iraqi Government for joining the Baghdad
Pact) provided no guidance. Pressed by Egypt, the two Sunni members of the
Cabinet (Șa’ib Salām and the Premier, ʿAbdullāḥ al-Yāfī) wished to break off
diplomatic relations with the British and French aggressors and line up solidly
with the other Arab states,21 but the rest of the Cabinet had regard for the thou­
sands of Lebanese (mainly Christians) settled in French or British dependencies.
After a long debate, the two Sunnis tried to force the government’s hand by pre­
senting their resignation.22 The President accepted it, and found a Sunni elder
statesman (Sāmī as-Ṣulḥ, a survivor of the Ottoman tradition of politics) ready to
form an alternative Cabinet, with Dr. Charles Mālīk as Foreign Minister.

Mālīk, for many years Ambassador in Washington and Delegate to the United
Nations, was well known for his pro-Western inclinations, and his very inclusion
in the new Government was a declaration of policy; but the Government made its

18 Longrigg, Stephen Hemsley: Oil in the Middle East. London, Oxford University Press,
1968, p. 329.
19 The Times, 3 October 1956, p. 10.
20 Ibid., p. 10.
21 Al-ʿAqqād, op. cit., p. 142.
stand even clearer when it accepted the Eisenhower Doctrine in March, 1957. During the months that followed the Suez crisis Lebanon’s relations with Egypt and Syria became steadily worse. Lebanon was never forgiven for having maintained diplomatic relations with Britain and France, and her acceptance of the Eisenhower Doctrine made her the target of constant attacks. When, in April 1957, Lebanon allowed the Sixth Fleet to stand by in Beirut while King Husayn carried out his coup d’état in Jordan, Cairo and Damascus branded the act as treason, and Lebanon was furthermore accused of being a hotbed of plots against the Syrian regime. All this time the Sunni opposition in Lebanon was denouncing the “treasonable” behaviour of the Government and keeping in constant touch with the Egyptian and Syrian authorities. To the Sunnis, the acceptance of the Eisenhower Doctrine was a distinct breach of the National Covenant, and implied that the Christians were calling upon the United States to replace France as their traditional protector and to intervene in Lebanon on their behalf.

Lebanon, under increasing pressure from a combination of internal and external forces, could hardly avoid the conflict. Domestic tranquility in Lebanon had rested on a Christian-Muslim balance maintained only with great difficulty and by an adroit use of a wide variety of confessional and tribal loyalties. Muslim opposition to the Sham‘ūn government became a serious matter in 1957 and 1958 when by his policies and methods the President managed to alienate influential non-Muslim leaders as well. The last straw for all these opponents was Kamīl Sham‘ūn’s alleged design to have a second term as president.

Once out of office, Abdullāh al-Yāfī and Sā‘īb Salām set to work on forming a united opposition front. Parliamentary elections were due to be held in June-July 1957, and the personal grudges of several Christian, Shī‘īte and Druze leaders against Kamīl Sham‘ūn could be capitalized to embarrass the President’s supporters during the elections. Kamīl Sham‘ūn’s term of office was due to end in September 1958, and the Parliament to be elected was to select his successor; and it was already feared that Kamíl Sham‘ūn might use a predominantly loyal Parliament to secure a second term of office. It was at this juncture that the march of Arab nationalism threatened to tear apart this small country which – because of the political shortsightedness of the Maronite élites – had not resolved the basic conflict between loyalty to an independent Lebanon with a destiny of its own and loyalty to the Arab nation.

The opposition demanded a neutral Government to supervise the forthcoming elections. When their demand was rejected they staged a demonstration (30 May 1957) in defiance of a Government ban. The security forces disbanded the demo-

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26 CAMPBELL, op. cit., p. 139.
onstration by force, and among those wounded was Şa‘ib Salām. It was not difficult to attract strong Maronite leaders who cherished hopes of the presidency ... to the Opposition camp. The Maronite partisans of Bishāra al-Khūrī, like the patriarch, were already hostile to Kamīl Sham‘ūn. ʿAbdullāh al-Yāfī and Şa‘ib Salām had little trouble in winning over the Junbulātī Druze. Kamāl Junbulāt had helped Kamīl Sham‘ūn to office in 1952, but the latter had not allowed him a free hand in the government, as he had expected. He had, therefore, been opposing Kamīl Sham‘ūn vigorously since 1953; and, although he did not disapprove of the President’s foreign policy and had no particular liking for Jamāl ʿAbdunnaṣir, he promptly joined ʿAbdullāh al-Yāfī, Şa‘ib Salām, and their Christian allies in what came to be known as the National Front (the first Lebanese political front to be Muslim led). When Sham‘ūn’s supporters won the parliamentary elections by a vast majority, many unsuccessful candidates, some of them unimportant, joined the National Front in illogical protest. 27

Already, at the time of the formation of the Sāml as-Sulḥ-Charles Mālik Government, there had been dynamite-throwing against British and French buildings in Beirut, allegedly organized by the Egyptian Military Attaché. 28 In February 1957, a Syrian colonel, who had been sentenced to death in absentia for alleged conspiracy against the Syrian leftist regime, was shot dead in a Beirut street. Other dynamite attacks on United States and Jordanian buildings in Beirut occurred after King Ḥusayn’s counterrevolution in Jordan, and there was circumstantial evidence of arms smuggling over the border from Syria, organized (it was alleged) by Colonel Sarrāj’s military intelligence in Damascus. The steady deterioration in security as the year drew to a close led the Lebanese Government to decide on swifter justice and sharper penalties for terrorism. 29

The Lebanese-Egyptian crisis came during the presidency of Kamīl Sham‘ūn, which was to witness a chain of serious events that swept the Middle East and had an impact on the Lebanese domestic situation as well as on its foreign relations, particularly with the Arab countries. Internally, until 1957, relative calm prevailed in Lebanon. However, under the surface of this situation strong undercurrents of hostility between Christians and Muslims, rich and poor, left and right, Palestinians and Lebanese, were discernible. For the most part, this sectarianism was reinforced by the fact, that by and large, Maronite areas were developed and non-Maronite areas were not. 30 The fact that the capitalist Christians were predominant in practically every area, with the possible exception of numerical superiority, underlay the basic problems of the Lebanese situation. Muslims wanted a fairer say in the running of the affairs of their country.

On the external level, Lebanon during Kamīl Sham‘ūn’s presidency was to cause an international crisis that involved regional powers as well as major powers

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27 Sālibi, Kamal: The Lebanese Crisis in Perspective, pp. 376-378.
30 Odeh, op. cit., p. 100.
with an interest in the Middle East area. Nonetheless, its proximity and significant role in Arab commercial and political arenas made Lebanon of crucial importance to the Arab states. Indeed Lebanon was a mirror which reflected Arab rivalries and activities. When the Arabs were at peace with each other, generally Lebanon too was at peace with itself and with its neighbours. But when the Arab countries were engaged in intrigue and plotting against each other, Lebanon, because of its circumstances, was bound to be involved. This was well illustrated during Jamāl ʾAbdunnāsīr’s championing of pan-Arabism and Arab unity.

Kamīl Shamīʿūn was pro-Western and, in the view of some Lebanese leaders, such as Kamāl Junbulāt, he was “an agent of the British intelligence service”. This became evident after the Suez crisis, when all the Arab countries except Lebanon broke off relations with Britain and France. This failure on the part of Kamīl Shamīʿūn angered Arab nationalists, including many Lebanese who openly criticized his action. Obviously Jamāl ʾAbdunnāsīr, who was riding high in the Arab world under the banner of pan-Arabism, did not like it at all. How, in Jamāl ʾAbdunnāsīr’s perception, could an Arab leader defy the rest of the Arab countries and continue his normal relations with the aggressors? As if to strengthen Jamāl ʾAbdunnāsīr’s case against him, the Lebanese president subscribed to the Eisenhower Doctrine in 1957. When Lebanon accepted the Doctrine, completely disregarding the fact that Egypt strongly opposed it, Lebanese-Egyptian relations became highly strained, almost reaching the point of open breach.

Jamāl ʾAbdunnāsīr was the first Arab leader to reject the doctrine, and he was soon joined by the pan-Arabist press and radio in Damascus which violently attacked the Shamīʿūn government for accepting it. An Egyptian official spokesman said that Cairo would not allow any power, eastern or western, to fill the previously British and French imperialist role in that area. The spokesman described the Eisenhower doctrine as “the replacement of the British and French aggression”. These external pressures on Lebanon affected its internal political life. The pan-Arabism of Jamāl ʾAbdunnāsīr had a profound impact on Lebanon which led to polarization of forces between rightist Lebanese nationalists (particularists) and Lebanese pan-Arabists.

As early as May 1957, the commander of the Lebanese army, General Fuʿād Shihāb (Fouad Chehab), privately told US representatives in Beirut that Kamīl Shamīʿūn’s “dictatorial” style was driving the opposition into a corner and splitting the political élite across sectarian and religious lines. Fuʿād Shihāb contended that he had often warned Kamīl Shamīʿūn against tampering with the parliamentary elections scheduled for June 1957. According to the general, the system was

34 BOUTROS-GHALI, Boutros: League of Arab States and the Settlement of Local Disputes (in Arabic), Cairo, 1977, p. 68.
Kamīl Shamʿūn, however, still had a strong following in the country. Among the Christians, a vast majority approved his foreign policy. The Katāʾb party (Phalanges Libanaises) of Pierre Jumayyil and the National Bloc of the Iddah brothers stood stoutly behind him, as did the supporters of the Syrian National Social Party.

The June election in which the pro-Shamʿūn candidates won and the pro-Nasser candidates suffered a setback, made the situation worse. The president was accused of interfering in the election. The Lebanese pan-Arabists did not like losing and they argued that Kamīl Shamʿūn engineered the election so that the winners would approve his wish to amend the National Pact which did not allow a president to have a second term, so as to allow him to run for re-election. Pro-Nasser Lebanese, Christians, and Muslims alike strongly objected to Kamīl Shamʿūn’s ambitions. Sāʿib Salām, Kamāl Junbulāt, Ḥamīd Franjiyāh, and other Lebanese leaders called on Kamīl Shamʿūn not to violate the Pact: “There is no doubt at all about the fact that one of the principal causes of the critical situation in which the country has been plunged lies in the equivocation with regard to the renewal of the presidential term. A renewal shall be an attack on the constitution itself and will go against the very aims which its framers had laid down.”

Kamīl Shamʿūn did not yield to the opposition. The opposition bitterly contested the magnitude and legality of the government’s triumph and alleged, that Kamīl Shamʿūn wanted to amend the constitution so that he could be re-elected. The president’s refusal to deny publicly these allegations convinced his opponents and supporters alike of his intention to seek a second term. Both the CIA and the US embassy in Beirut asserted, that Kamīl Shamʿūn fixed the elections to ensure his re-election.

The opposition also accused the US government of financing pro-Shamʿūn candidates and there was some truth in this charge. The main CIA contact with Kamīl Shamʿūn, Wilbur Eveland, claimed that the CIA provided “massive” funding to the progovernment deputies, and he portrayed the elections as a CIA-run operation: “We’d already bought him a parliament.” According to Eveland, the United States did so with the assumption that the new parliament would elect a new president in 1958. A former high-ranking CIA officer working in the Middle East, Miles Copeland, also admits that the US Embassy in Beirut “gave modest campaign contributions to a few pro-Western candidates in the June 1957 elections.” Although no specific US documents relating to the CIA’s meddling in the elections have yet been released, recently declassified sources hinted that the

43 Copeland, op. cit., p. 192.
such that it would not be possible to eliminate opposition. The balance between Christians and Muslims, maintained Fu’ād Shihāb, would not allow Kamil Shamʿūn to become a "dictator". Hence, in the general’s views, the solution lay in a compromise that would save face for the government and "give the opposition a slice of the cheese". He implored his US inter-locutors not to view the internal power struggle in Lebanon in terms of East-West rivalry. Most of the men opposed to Kamil Shamʿūn, concluded Fu’ād Shihāb, were patriotic Lebanese: "If Sulaymān Franjīyah or Kamāl Junbulāṭ are communists then I am afraid you must consider me one also." In a similar vein, the secretary general of the Muslim National Organization, ʿAbdulwahhāb Rifāʿī, informed a US official that Kamil Shamʿūn’s handling of local political issues and personalities was at the heart of the problem. He accused Kamil Shamʿūn and Charles Mājik of being egocentric, adding that "they sought to impose their personal conviction upon the people without sufficient spadework".

Opposition to Kamil Shamʿūn was broad based and included some important members of the ruling establishment. They blamed the president personally and argued that his authoritarian approach was responsible for alienating a large segment of the political élite. In Fu’ād Shihāb’s words, Kamil Shamʿūn was the problem. Given the level of opposition to his administration, one would have expected Kamil Shamʿūn to try to placate his opponents and to try to come to terms with them. But the tenacious Kamil Shamʿūn and his combative foreign minister would not tolerate dissent. They were determined to win by relying on the physical and political support of the Western powers. However, overestimation of Lebanon’s strategic importance to the West and overconfidence were Kamil Shamʿūn’s undoing. Initially, his strategy was translated into a resounding victory for the pro-Shamʿūn forces in the 1957 parliamentary elections, which further polarized Lebanese political life.

Meanwhile, with the approach of general elections, ʿAbdullāh al-Yāfī, Sāʿib Salām, and other Muslim leaders began to form an electoral front to oppose Kamil Shamʿūn. By June, a new opposition had been organized, calling itself the National Front and gathering around it all Shamʿūn’s political opponents. Among the adherents of the National front were Rashīd Karāmī of Tripoli, Kamāl Junbulāṭ of the Shūf, the members of Bishāra Khūrt’s Constitutional Bloc, and other Christian and Muslim leaders who had been antagonized by the President over past five years.

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36 Ibid.: McClintock to Department of State, Beirut 27 March 1958. Foreign Service Dispatch No. 547.
38 Al-Jaridah (Beirut daily), 18 May 1958. Article by Nadim al-Jisr.
United States “played an active role”. They also showed that foreign minister Charles Malik sought US assistance to influence the elections.\textsuperscript{44}

It would be misleading, however, to think of the Lebanese crisis as simply an internal struggle for power or as a clash of temperaments and personalities. Internal dissatisfaction with Kamil Sham\'un was mainly fueled by the government’s pursuit of regional and international policies that were seen to be provocative and divisive. In the second half of the 1950s the polarization of the Arab world exacerbated internal divisions in Lebanon. Two currents competed for dominance in the Middle East and Arab scene: Nasser’s Egypt led the revolutionary pan-Arab nationalist movement as Iraq, representing the pro-Western Arab states, spearheaded the opposition to Egypt’s quest for regional hegemony.

The Egyptian-Iraqi rivalry infected inter-Arab relations, and the Arab cold war poisoned regional politics. Lebanon was not exempt. Kamil Sham\'un’s pro-Iraqi policy manifested itself as he flirted with the idea of joining the Baghdad Pact, antagonizing Egypt and later Syria. Not only did Jam\'al \'Abdunn\'asir and Kamil Sham\'un hold conflicting views on the major issues that divided the Arab world, but they also had a serious clash of personalities.\textsuperscript{45}

Kamil Sham\'un’s stand on other regional issues added further to the strained relations between Egypt-Syria and Lebanon and deepened internal divisions in Lebanon. When Britain and France invaded Egypt in 1956, Kamil Sham\'un refused to sever diplomatic relations with the two European powers. “The rulers of Lebanon,” Jam\'al \'Abdunn\'asir declared later, “stabbed us in the back during our time of stress.”\textsuperscript{46} The Eisenhower Doctrine became a device through which the USA was drawn into local disputes in the Middle East.\textsuperscript{47} During the Syrian crisis of 1957, Kamil Sham\'un and Charles Malik received US envoy Loy Henderson without consulting Syria. Charles Malik exhorted the Eisenhower administration to topple the Syrian regime. He told Henderson that pro-Western Lebanon could not coexist with a neutralist or communist-oriented Syria. In return, the Syrian foreign ministry denounced Kamil Sham\'un for serving “imperialistic and Zionist designs”.\textsuperscript{48}

The Lebanese president was not deterred, however. He perceived radical Arab nationalism as a threat to the regional conservative order, of which Lebanon was an integral part. Kamil Sham\'un and Charles Malik were prepared to make risky decisions to combat the rise of Jam\'al \'Abdunn\'asir’s pan-Arabism. For example,

\textsuperscript{46} Egypt. Ministry of Information. President Gamal Abdel Nasser’s Speeches and Press Interviews. Cairo, Information Department, 1959, p. 197.
in February 1958 when Egypt and Syria united to form the UAR, Kamil Shamʿūn initially refused to recognize the new entity.\(^4\) Neither Kamil Shamʿūn nor Charles Mālik seemed to take into account the domestic implications of pursuing an anti-Egyptian policy. Instead, they swam against the tide of public opinion and undermined their political legitimacy.\(^5\)

In the 1950s Jamāl ʿAbdunnāsirʾs slogans and ideas were very popular throughout the Arab lands. His defiance of the West and his call for Arab unity found receptive audiences in every Arab country, including Lebanon. In the words of Sheikh Nadīm al-Jisr, a leading opposition figure, by standing up to the West and by defending the Arab cause, Jamāl ʿAbdunnāsir “became, to all Arabs and Moslems, an object of worship next to God”.\(^5\) The opposition also resented Kamil Shamʿūnʾs lukewarm attitude toward the UAR. After the inception of the union, Damascus became a virtual pilgrimage site for many Lebanese politicians and citizens wishing to pay homage to Jamāl ʿAbdunnāsir. Even the speaker of the Lebanese parliament, ʿAdil ʿUsayrān, declared that “Lebanon will march with the Arab caravan and that anyone (a reference to Kamil Shamʿūn) who thinks of working for interests other than those of the Arabs will have no room in Lebanon”.\(^5\)

In their zeal for Arab unity under Jamāl ʿAbdunnāsir, Muslim demonstrators trampled the Lebanese flag in the streets of Tyre. In his turn, Jamāl ʿAbdunnāsir appealed indirectly to all Arabs, including the Lebanese, to join the UAR and defeat “the traitors and plotters”.\(^5\)

Given the strength of the pan-nationalist sentiment, Kamil Shamʿūnʾs hostile attitude was bound to have internal repercussions. Kamil Shamʿūn and Charles Mālikʾs challenge of the dominant ideology of the Arab order set the stage for a confrontation in which each side would seek external support to consolidate its position. While Kamil Shamʿūn and Charles Mālik courted the Eisenhower administration, the opposition welcomed Egyptian and Syrian political and material assistance. Both sides played a dangerous game; they mortgaged the future of their country to foreign creditors. But this was part of a familiar game where small players looked outward for assistance in order to outmanoeuvre their local opponents.

Kamil Shamʿūnʾs pursuit of a pronounced pro-Western policy only compounded his difficulties internally and regionally. Kamil Shamʿūn, Charles Mālik and Prime Minister Sāmī ʿas-Ṣullāḥ tied Lebanonʾs fortunes to US policy in the Middle East. Their strategy would have been beneficial but for the steady deterioration of rela-

\(^4\) AGWANI, op. cit., pp. 3-4.


\(^5\) The Egyptian Gazette, 5 March 1958.

tions between the West and the forces of radical Arab nationalism since the mid-1950s. This development presented the Kamil Shamūn government with problematic choices. Kamil Shamūn had to choose between a close association with the United States, thus risking internal instability and regional isolation, and a low-key and neutral approach in order to appease pan-Arab nationalist forces. He hoped to preempt the opposition by aligning Lebanese foreign policy with that of the United States.

Kamil Shamūn and Charles Mālik quickly seized on the Eisenhower Doctrine as a tool to request US military assistance. It was Charles Mālik, rather than Kamil Shamūn, who was the driving force behind Lebanon’s active alignment of its foreign policy with the United States. Even before Congress approved the Eisenhower Doctrine in March 1957, Charles Mālik had informed Eisenhower that Lebanon welcomed his initiative and was ready to combat communist subversion in the region. He also asserted that since Egypt and Syria were gradually falling under Soviet domination Lebanon must unreservedly remain a part of the Western camp.

With the exception of Libya, Lebanon was the only Arab country to endorse the Eisenhower Doctrine officially. The other pro-Western Arab governments recognized the inherent danger in such a move. Kamil Shamūn’s opponents believed that by aligning Lebanon with the West against Egypt and Syria, the president not only violated Beirut’s traditional neutrality but also upset the delicate balance among the various Lebanese factions. They also felt that the President wanted to ally Lebanon with Iraq, Jordan and Saudi Arabia to enhance the US position in the area and open the country further to Western capitalist interests. This diametrically opposed to the interests of the great majority of the Arab masses. Those interests expressed themselves in Arab unity and independent political and economic development. More than any other issue, Lebanon’s international alignment and its estrangement from the Arab fold brought the crisis to a head. These events reflected the close links between domestic, regional, and international politics in Lebanon and the Arab arena generally.

Early in October 1957, a self-styled “Third Force” consisting of Christian and Druze leading personalities had issued a manifesto in which they declared that one of the principal causes of the critical situation in which the country was “... placed lies in the uncertainty about the renewal of the president’s term of office. Such a renewal would be an attack on the inviolable character of the Constitution and would be directed against the very objectives that its drafters had in mind. Those Lebanese in responsible positions, to whichever faction they belong, do not seem aware of the consequences of their actions. Distracted from their proper

54 Politika SShA na Arabskom vostoke. Moscow, 1961, p. 181.
55 Eveland, op. cit., p. 245.
56 Campbell, op. cit., p. 139.
57 Odeh, op. cit., p. 100.
58 Al-'Aqqād, op. cit., p. 144.
duties, they are just adding to the uneasiness of public opinion and endangering public order. We see them defying the law and lowering the prestige of authority, while no coherent action is undertaken to deal with economic and social problems. They are thus the best agents of the Communism and the subversion which they claim to be fighting. On 30 December 1957 a delegation from this group called on President Kamil Sham'ūn and invited him to repudiate any idea of his seeking re-election. The President replied that while he had not changed his mind on the unsuitability of altering the Constitution, he would be obliged to “reconsider his position if he were not certain of finding a successor who would carry on his policy”, an answer which naturally did not satisfy his interlocutors.

In February 1958 Egypt and Syria announced the formation of the UAR. This union was welcomed enthusiastically by the anti-Sham'ūn pan-Arabists in Lebanon. Despite the government’s censorship and bans, schools were closed down for celebrations and pro-Cairo demonstrations were held throughout the country. For example, Lebanese politician Rashid Karāmī told Jamāl c Abdunnāsir on 27 February: “The Lebanese people, O President, believe in your principles and mission, and are following your footsteps and example... You can rest assured, O President, that when the hour strikes we will all leap up as one man to hoist the banner to which all the Arabs will rally.” A few days later President Jamāl c Abdunnāsir repeated Karāmī’s comment and hinted to a Lebanese delegation his wish to see Lebanon to join the UAR: “we feel that this unity which springs from the heart of Arab nation and from its will is the strength we aim at achieving and the nucleus of the all-embracing unity we hope to see accomplished soon in every Arab country”. The opposition forces were obtaining moral and material support from the UAR. Egypt’s man in Damascus, c Abdulhamīd as-Sarrāj, chief of intelligence and security in Syria, was organizing the UAR to help the pro-Nasser groups, and bloody clashes and press attacks on Kamil Sham'ūn intensified.

The situation was made more acute by the proclamation on 1 February 1958 of the United Arab Republic (Egypt and Syria). The Lebanese opposition leaders c Abdullāh al-Yāfī, Sā'ib Salām and others flocked to Damascus to tender their congratulations and were told by the retiring Syrian President that Lebanon might join the union whenever she wished, retaining her own existence and culture; a clash occurred on the north-eastern frontier when Lebanese officials turned back thirty carloads of Lebanese Muslims, decked with Syrian, Egyptian, and pan-Arab flags, bound for the Syrian capital. Their enthusiasm for the new union was a clear challenge to the Lebanese National Covenant and on 4 March, the Maronite Patriarch gave the following equivocal reply to a Maronite sponsor of the “Third Force” who had asked him to clarify his position: “We do not deny that the inter-

61 Agwani, op. cit., p. 44.
62 Ibid., p. 45.
nal situation is causing us anxiety: corruption in the public service, an atmosphere of uncertainty, a stiffening on unreasonable principles, polemics that take the form of personal attacks, discord between the religious communities. We are concerned about the personal ambition of some among us who admit no limitation upon their aims. We are concerned about unbridled materialism. From the bottom of our heart we invite all Lebanese of whatever party or community to renew their faith in an independent, sovereign, and free Lebanon and work together in the spirit and the framework of their Covenant. We love our Arab brethren as we do ourselves. We hope for complete success for every union and every agreement that they conclude among themselves.

We have absolute faith in Lebanon, her independence, sovereignty, and freedom. We are convinced that collaboration between Lebanon and the West, based on equality and mutual respect, is to the advantage of Lebanon on the economic and social as on the cultural level; we see in such collaboration every advantage for the Arabs. It is in such collaboration that Lebanon can serve the Arabs and safeguard their rights. Such collaboration is more useful than any action that might lead to a breach of relations between Lebanon and the West... To our Arab brethren everywhere we say that for the good of Lebanon and of the Arabs the independence of Lebanon must be maintained and strengthened... We shall not join any union that could weaken the sovereignty and independence of Lebanon.”

On 28 March there were riots in the southern town of Tyre (Sur) and sympathetic strikes in other towns of this predominantly Muslim region when five youths were sent to jail for trampling on the Lebanese flag and replacing it with that of the UAR; the Minister of Education stated that a local college largely staffed by Egyptian teachers had had a good deal to do with the incidents. Two weeks later, there were disorders in the predominantly Druze district of the Shuf, revolving around the Druze aristocrat and opposition leader Kamal Junbulat, whose profession of socialism and attachment to the nonviolence of the late Gandhi stood in marked contrast to the warlike enthusiasm of his feudal Druze henchmen. On 19 April the Maronite Patriarch spoke out again in a press interview against the “destructive egoism of those in high places in the present time”, and this time declared: “Everyone knows that the Arabs have for many centuries had a fair dream of unity. Providence has now given them honest and brave leaders, especially Gamal Abdel Nasser, who do not shrink from any sacrifice to hasten the revival of this part of the world. No wonder therefore that the Arabs turn with hope to President Gamal Abdel Nasser and his colleagues who symbolize their deepest aspirations. Personally, I am convinced that President Gamal Abdel Nasser desires for sovereign and independent Lebanon the same prosperity and well-being as for the Arab countries over whose future he presides. He asks only that Lebanon should not become a hotbed of plots against the Arab countries.”

64 Ibid., pp. 220-221.
65 Ibid., pp. 317-319.
Without replying directly to this, President Kamil Shamūn on the following day concluded a strong indictment of his critics, "the very persons who are directly or indirectly responsible for the attacks on public order and security", with these words: "The struggle for the Arab cause is a duty and an act of faith. I never thought that it could one day become, for some in Lebanon, a source of income, a springboard for attaining cheap popularity, and a stage for dwarfs and mountebanks."

The Muslim religious leaders boycotted the official receptions marking the end of Ramadan, and the opposition replied to the President by charging him with financial malpractices. Spokesmen for the "Third Force" attacked the President's past record and impugned his desire to obtain, before the Chamber adjourned, a constitutional amendment which would enable him to be a candidate for the presidency when his present term expired in September. Muslims also attacked President Kamil Shamūn's failure to take a more forceful stand against England and France during the Anglo-French-Israeli attack on Egypt during 1956. By the time the UAR was formed in February 1958, Lebanon was divided into pro- and anti-Nasser camps.

Christian, especially Maronite, reaction to the increased intensity of Arab nationalism was also vehement. The near deification of Jamāl ʿAbdunnaṣir, the trend of Muslim opinion toward Arab unity, and the demands for equality seemed a threat to Lebanon's independence and, consequently, to the non-Muslim minorities. Identification with Jamāl ʿAbdunnaṣir might cost the country Western support and leave the Christians isolated during a crisis. For the Christians a new census (the last had been taken in 1932) was, of course, out of question, for it would reveal that Lebanon now had a Muslim majority, destroying the political fiction of a Christian majority. Altering the ratio of government posts in favour of the Muslims would be a step in that direction and, therefore, could not be countenanced. Precarious as it was, the only guarantee of Maronite security was continuation of the status quo.

After Jamāl ʿAbdunnaṣir's first visit to Damascus in 1958, it became impossible to contain Muslim enthusiasm, and hundreds of thousands flocked across the border to welcome him. The Shamūn government's reaction, however, wrote Muslim deputy Sheikh Nadim al-Jisr, "can best be described as lukewarm. This attitude implied a serious deviation towards Western imperialist policies". Each side now openly charged the other with violating the National Pact. Muslims felt that Kamil Shamūn's failure to break relations with Great Britain and France in 1956 had betrayed the Arab cause and implied support for the West against the Arab nationalists. Kamil Shamūn's backers saw in the enthusiastic support that Muslim politicians urged for Egypt an invitation to abandon Lebanon's neutral position between Arab nationalism and the West.

66 Ibid., pp. 396-399.
67 Ibid., pp. 399-401.
Lebanese objections were not directed at the president’s use of violence and bribery at the polls, but rather at the scale to which he used them as well as his inept administrative policies and abrupt personal attitudes. After his election in 1952, Kamîl Shamťûn failed to distribute the spoils of office among the politicians who supported him, as was the usual practice. When rumours then spread that Kamîl Shamťûn intended to have the constitution amended so that he could serve another term, the Muslims decided to rebel.69

The scene was thus set for a confrontation between the government and the opposition. The balance of power was clearly not in Kamîl Shamťûn’s favour because General Fu’âd Shihâb refused to commit the army on the president’s side. The general was opposed to involving the army in an internal struggle lest it be torn apart by the contradictions of Lebanese politics. In discussions with US representatives, Fu’âd Shihâb could not hide his “sincere disgust” with Kamîl Shamťûn and his collaborators. While the Lebanese army was perfectly capable of crushing the insurrection, Fu’âd Shihâb was reluctant to do so.70

The neutralization of the army was important in two respects. First, it exposed basic divisions within the Lebanese government and the precarious position of Kamîl Shamťûn himself. Second, a neutral army enabled the opposition, with material and political help from the UAR, to expand and consolidate its presence in large areas of the country. Kamîl Shamťûn was forced to rely on local militias and on the police for resistance. To him, this was not a viable option, since he was not interested in a stalemate. Kamîl Shamťûn needed to defeat his opponents and their regional sponsors, and for this he required the intervention of a superior Western force.

As tensions increased in the early months of 1958, Kamîl Shamťûn and his government tried to emphasize the external nature of the crisis and tried to impress the United States with the need for decisive action. They portrayed the conflict as a struggle between pro-Western Lebanon and radical Arab nationalism, which was allied with communism. In three separate statements in May, Kamîl Shamťûn, Sâmî ʻas-Šulh, and Charles Mâlîk accused the UAR of interfering in Lebanon’s internal affairs with the intention of overthrowing its democratically elected government.71

Beleaguered at home, Kamîl Shamťûn and Charles Mâlîk began looking for external support. In meetings with US officials, they argued that their ambition was not the cause of the crisis but Lebanon’s adherence to Eisenhower Doctrine. Dr. Mâlîk further lamented the inability of the West to deal with the communist threat. By emphasizing the foreign threat and by playing the Cold War card, Kamîl Shamťûn and Charles Mâlîk hoped to internationalize the dispute and to involve the United States on their side. In contrast, opposition figures were adamantly against the internationalization of the crisis since the configuration of internal

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70 Salibi, Kamal: The Modern History of Lebanon, p. 201.
71 Agwani, op. cit., p. 58.
forces was in their favour. They asserted that the roots of the conflict were internal and had nothing to do with the UAR. Nevertheless, they relied heavily on moral and physical support from the UAR.\textsuperscript{72}

Despite overwhelming dependence on outside forces, local actors were far from passive or pliant spectators. The polarization of world politics into two competing blocs enabled small states to advance their interests by manipulating the rivalry between Moscow and Washington. In the case of Lebanon, Kāmil Šamī‘īn and his adversaries tried to entice foreign patrons to intervene on their behalf. Their strategy was to use outside assistance to gain influence and power and to score political advantages against their rivals. However, small actors forgot that big powers could also use them as proxies to fight their own wars; they manipulated the superpowers and were in turn manipulated by them. The upshot was that the Middle East became a theatre of the Cold War.

Declassified US documents clearly show that, initially, US officials disagreed in their assessment of the Lebanese crisis. Three points of view can be discerned; the first, shared by Eisenhower and Dulles, argued that the problem in Lebanon was “communist in origin”. To them, US influence and presence in the Middle East were at a crucial point, since the Soviet Union was instigating instability throughout the region. Eisenhower wrote later: “Behind everything was our deep-seated conviction that the Communists were principally responsible for the trouble.”\textsuperscript{73}

A second view established a connection between radical Arab nationalism and communism, thus emphasizing the destabilizing role of the UAR. The “Communist incitement to revolt” was linked closely with Jamāl ‘Abdunnāsir’s effort to destabilize the pro-Western regimes in the Middle East, including Lebanon. US representatives in Beirut reported that Egyptian and Syrian aid to the Lebanese opposition was prolonging and aggravating the situation. According to this view, Jamāl ‘Abdunnāsir’s latest offensive was designed to inflict maximum damage on Western prestige in the area.\textsuperscript{74} In contrast, a third view held by other US officials contended that the crisis was political in nature. In their eyes, Lebanon was not threatened by external aggression, since the UAR, which had confined its activities to propaganda, was not a member of the socialist bloc. These officials saw largely domestic political causes at the heart of the conflict. To them questions of foreign policy were less important than questions of personalities.\textsuperscript{75} However, this was a minority opinion within the US administration.

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In this increasingly tense situation, on the night of 7-8 May, Nasīb al-Matnī, editor of the opposition, left-wing, pan-Arabist newspaper at-Tilīghrāf, was shot dead in Beirut. Whatever the truth of the matter, the cause for the murder has little historical importance; “it was only a pretext, an indifferent pretext”. The murder of Nasīb al-Matnī came at a very opportune moment for the National Front. The leaders of the Front, holding the Government to be responsible, called for a country-wide strike in protest. A sufficiently prolonged strike could keep Parliament from meeting to consider the amendment of the Constitution. Opposition leaders also hoped that, faced with terror, riots and street fightings, Kāmil Šamčūn would resign and leave the country within three or four days. They were well subsidized by Egypt and Syria to carry on with the terror-imposed strike; and, since the Suez crisis, Syrian arms had been smuggled into Lebanon and distributed among their followers.

So the assassination of Nasīb al-Matnī sparked an uprising which was followed by nation-wide sympathy demonstrations and a general strike. Individual incidents flared into violent clashes between the government and opposition, until each side had seized whole areas of the country, igniting the Lebanese civil war. Armed bands, opposed to the government, soon had the upper hand as a result of military supplies they received from Syria and the Lebanese army’s decision to remain neutral. Lebanese leaders such as Rashīd Karāmī and Kamāl Junbulāt asked for and received from the UAR arms, men, and financial support to defend their position. Egyptian media encouraged the opposition, called for the overthrow of Kāmil Šamčūn, and hoped for his replacement by a pro-Cairo president. To make things more difficult for Kāmil Šamčūn, the Lebanese army commander, General Fu’ād Shihāb, refused to back the president and his supporters and remained neutral.

On the day following the murder, the opposition called for a general strike, which their henchmen at Tripoli enforced on reluctant Christian shopkeepers. Supporters of “al-Ḥizb al-Qawmlī” — former opponents of Lebanese independence, but now supporting the Lebanese Government against their bitter enemies of the Ba’th — resisted with force, and sixteen deaths were officially reported in three days. On the evening of 11 May, frontier guards at Maṣnā‘a, on the main road from Damascus, searched the car of the Belgian Consul-General in Damascus (a fervent admirer of Jamāl ʿAbdunnāsir whose frequent crossings of the frontier in a heavily laden car had aroused suspicion) and discovered a considerable quantity of automatic rifles, pistols, and ammunition. During these same days, disorders broke out in the Muslim quarters of Beirut, which the insurgents barricaded off against the authorities, and in the Shūf Kamāl Junbulāt mobilized his

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77 Sālībī, op. cit., p. 201.
78 Sālībī, Kamal: The Lebanese Crisis in Perspective, p. 378.
Druze henchmen to attack the Presidential summer palace at Baytuddin but was opposed by the rival Druze faction, the Yazbakis led by the Minister of Defence, the conservative Amīr Majīd Arslān.80

To calm the situation, the Lebanese government declared in May that it would not support a second term for Kamīl Shamīrūn. But the anti-Shamīrūn forces demanded the resignation of the president. For pan-Arabism of Jamāl ʿAbdunnāṣir and his call for Arab unity had profoundly affected the pro-Cairo groups, and their enmity toward the pro-Western Kamīl Shamīrūn was gaining more support than had been expected from the Lebanese masses and leaders, including the influential family of Franjīyah and the patriarch of the Maronite Church, Būlus al-Muṣūshī (Paul Meouchi).81

On 11 May, the US Ambassador in Lebanon, Robert W. McClintock, called on the Lebanese Foreign Minister, the Commander-in-Chief, and the President, in that order. He found Dr. Charles Mālik “in a considerable state of agitation”. Mālik claimed that Syria ... had the night before dispatched a “horde” of soldiers across the frontiers to aid the rebels. Mālik urgently requested that the Sixth Fleet be ordered to stand by ready to land in case the Lebanese government troops were overwhelmed. The Commander-in-Chief, General Fuʿād Shihāb, a member of Lebanon’s most aristocratic family, was relaxing at his home fifteen miles from Beirut and “apparently taking a much less serious view of the situation ... anxious to keep himself and his Muslim and Christian subordinates aloof from internal political troubles”.82 He assured the Ambassador that the current trouble was nothing to worry about. However ... “it might be wise for the United States Government to speed up deliveries of certain weapons it had promised the Lebanese Army”.

President Kamīl Shamīrūn’s attitude “had changed markedly since dinner the evening before”. He charged that Jamāl ʿAbdunnāṣir was making a “massive” attempt to overthrow him and replace him with a man less tied to America and more friendly to Egypt. The United States ... must either promise to support him or else watch his and every other pro-Western regime in the Middle East, including Iraq and Jordan, fall like ninepins to the Egyptian. Back at his Embassy office the Ambassador quickly dictated telegrams reporting these views to Washington. To the reports he added his own comment that, while Charles Mālik and Kamīl Shamīrūn’s alarm was not fully justified, America’s prestige in the Lebanon was deeply involved and that the State Department should be prepared either to support the current regime in resisting subversion or to cut its losses and learn to live with a great Arab nation presided over by Jamāl ʿAbdunnāṣir.83

82 The army was about 40% Muslim. In the bloodless “Rose Water” revolution of 1952, General Shihab had carefully avoided taking sides and had left the matter to be settled by the civilian politicians.
83 Thayer, op. cit., p. 8.
Before the escalation of the crisis in early May, Eisenhower and Dulles were forthcoming in their commitment to Kamīl Shamfūn’s policies and even his quest for re-election. This represented a low risk strategy for them since political discontent had not yet erupted into an all-out rebellion against the Shamfūn regime. President Shamfūn had been assured of the support of both the American and British Governments so he was not inclined to compromise. As the situation deteriorated further following the assassination of leading opposition journalist Nasīb al-Matnī, the Eisenhower administration reconsidered its level of commitment to Lebanon. The intensity of the riots that broke out in the country sobered the president and the secretary of state. They recognized the inherent danger in getting entangled in internal Lebanese politics that would have pitted the United States against the forces of radical Arab nationalism.

It was within this context that McClintock advocated the adoption of a cautious US approach to the Lebanese crisis, unless “we desire to use Lebanon issue as a means for carrying out a conscious policy of enmity toward Jamāl ʿAbdunnāsir and the UAR with a view to splitting off Syria and trying a “neo-Suez” against Jamāl ʿAbdunnāsir”. But Eisenhower and Dulles were not prepared to risk a confrontation with the UAR over Lebanon. They did not see Lebanon as intrinsically important. To their dismay, Kamīl Shamfūn and Charles Mālik later discovered this painful truth, and it shattered their somewhat idealistic view of the West.

Accordingly, on 13 May, in response to a tentative request by Kamil Shamfūn for possible US intervention, McClintock was instructed to inform the Lebanese president that the US government considered the introduction of US forces into Lebanon to be a “grave” step that could have the most serious and far-reaching consequences. At this stage, the United States was uneasy about military intervention. The stakes were low and the potential political costs very high. Eisenhower and Dulles impressed on Kamil Shamfūn the need to rely on his own resources to resolve the conflict, hoping that he could deal with the evolving crisis by putting his political house in order. The consensus in Washington was that armed intervention could have regional repercussions that would be inimical to Western interests.

For example, during a National Security Council meeting, the director of the US Information Agency, George Allen, warned against sending in US troops because this would be regarded by the Muslim Arabs as an intervention on behalf of the Christian community. As he put it: “The Lebanese had for so many years tended too much to place reliance on the protection of outside powers – the Turks, the French, the British, and, lately, ourselves.” Instead, Allen concluded, the Leba-

84 Marlowe, op. cit., p. 171.

97
nese should depend on themselves for protection. In response to a lowering of tensions toward the end of May, Dulles stated publicly that the United States did not consider Lebanon to be threatened by international communism under present conditions. The US government airlifted police arms to Beirut, moved elements of the Sixth Fleet to the eastern Mediterranean, and resumed contingency planning with Britain. However, Eisenhower and Dulles were reluctant to take more decisive action such as sending in troops.

Meanwhile, the Kremlin leadership’s initial response to the Lebanese crisis was confined to rhetoric. An official Soviet statement protested against the dangerous attempts by foreign powers to interfere in Lebanon’s internal affairs. Western intervention, warned the statement, creates a dangerous situation in the Middle East and it could result in serious consequences not only for the destiny of the Lebanese state and its independence but also for the future of peace in the Middle East. The Soviets did not, however, undertake an active diplomatic offensive in Lebanon as they had done during the Syrian crisis the previous year.

Although internal opposition to the Sham′ūn regime was the strongest factor in the internal Lebanese conflict, evidence showed that the UAR, morally and materially, was aiding the opposition. The Lebanese government statement said that on 11 May Lebanese custom officials seized on the Syrian border “a large quantity of arms and ammunition” sent from Damascus “to the agents in Beirut”. The statement also noted that on 13 May an Egyptian boat was captured by the Lebanese coast guard. Aboard the boat “were 11 Egyptian and Palestinian agents of destruction and crime, as well as a large sum of money and arms and ammunition to be used by them and their colleagues in Lebanon for subversion, destruction and assassination”. On 16 May the government of Lebanon asserted “that investigations have shown beyond any doubt that a large number of Syrian mutineers and subversive elements had infiltrated into Lebanon”. Lebanese security, according to Lebanon, also “confiscated about 100 rifles with Egyptian army markings which had been sent to mutineers in Tripoli”. The statement also charged the UAR with responsibility for “official broadcasts and press campaigns against the regime in Lebanon” calling on the Lebanese people to “revolt against the government”.

The Lebanese civil war of 1958 sparked an international crisis that involved regional powers as well as major world powers. By mid-May Jamāl ʿAbdunnāṣir broke his silence and denied any responsibility for events in Lebanon. He accused

90 AGWANI, op. cit., pp. 65-70.

98
Kamil Sham‘ūn of trying to convert a purely internal affair into an external problem in order to “deceive the Big Powers and induce them to intervene”. In the meantime, the Voice of the Arabs radio station was attacking Kamil Sham‘ūn and calling on the Lebanese people to topple him.91

Lebanon accused the UAR of being the cause of its internal civil disorders. On the basis of Lebanese allegations and evidence, on 21 May the Lebanese government lodged its complaint against the UAR and resorted first to the Arab League to settle the crisis. Lebanon requested an urgent meeting of the Arab League council “to be convened either in the Sudan or in Libya to consider its complaint against the UAR in accordance with article 6 of the Pact, for the unfriendly acts of intervention in the internal affairs of Lebanon, which constitute a threat to its independence, territorial integrity and constitutional forms of government”.92

One day after this complaint to the League, Lebanon requested an urgent meeting of the UN Security Council to consider “a situation and a dispute, the continuance of which is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security” as a result of “the intervention of the UAR in the affairs of Lebanon”.93 Kamil Sham‘ūn and Charles Malik felt the Arab League was not equipped to resolve the crisis. Instead, they focused their efforts on the Security Council, which voted to send an observer team to Lebanon.

The secretary-general of the Arab League, strongly supported by Egypt, intervened and requested the Security Council to postpone consideration of the Lebanese question, in accordance with article 52 of the UN Charter, to allow the Arab League to settle the regional dispute between Lebanon and UAR, since the League was the regional organization that supervised the security of the region where the two disputing states were located.94 The Security Council met on 27 May and Fāḍil al-Jamāl of Iraq informed it that the League was expected to meet on 31 May to discuss the Lebanese situation and asked the council “to adjourn the discussion” of Lebanon until 2 June.95

The Arab League council agreed to meet in Benghazi, Libya, on 31 May and hold six sessions to consider the Lebanese government complaint. The Lebanese representative, Bashir al-‘Awar, explained to the council that Lebanon stood for Arab solidarity, that his country was attached to the League’s pact, and that its resort to the council was based on its belief in the settlement of the dispute by Arabs. Bashir al-‘Awar accused the UAR of interference in the internal affairs of Lebanon. UAR chief delegate, Sayyid Fahmi, rejected the Lebanese charges and restated what President Jamāl ‘Abdunnāṣir had said on 16 May that the UAR

94 Boutros-Ghali, op. cit., p. 70.
“supports Lebanon’s independence and respects its sovereignty”.

But when the League on 6 June passed an Egyptian-inspired resolution, Lebanon rejected it, reasoning that it failed to address the substance of the complaint – UAR intervention in Lebanon. When no action was taken by the Arab League, Lebanon resorted to the UN Security Council.

While the guerrilla warfare in Lebanon continued indecisively amidst a population still attracted by the pleasures of feuding and the opposition continued to demand the President’s immediate resignation as its condition for a cease-fire, Dr. Charles Malik appealed to the UN Security Council to pay attention to the threat to peace represented by the UAR intervention in Lebanon. The Council began its discussion of the Lebanese crisis on the day the League’s council meeting ended, 6 June 1958. The Lebanese Foreign Minister, Charles Malik, reiterated in a length speech his government’s charges against the UAR. Umar Lutfi, the Egyptian representative denied any UAR intervention, declaring that the Lebanese internal conflict was due mainly to President Kamil Shamoun’s intentions to amend the National Pact so he could run for re-election. He accused Lebanon of trying to internationalize “a problem which is exclusively one of domestic policy and thus the problem was not and could not be a threat to international peace”.

The Council decided on 11 June, with the Soviet delegate abstaining, to send a group of observers to investigate whether men and arms were being infiltrated across Lebanon’s borders. The secretary-general moved quickly and in three days he was able to form the United Nations Observation Group in Lebanon (UNOGIL). During the following week fifty-four neutral observers arrived in the country, and on 19 June the UN Secretary-General himself arrived in Beirut at the beginning of a tour of mediation among the Arab capitals. On 3 July UNOGIL submitted its first report to the Security Council through the secretary-general. The report concluded that there were substantial movements of armed men within the country and concentrations at various places. The report, however, did not confirm Lebanon’s assertion that there was UAR mass infiltration into Lebanon. The UAR considered the report as a vindication of its position that the upheaval in Lebanon was primarily an internal affair. Lebanon reacted to the report with criticism that the report was premature.

Lebanese Government newspapers were not alone in raising sharp questions about UNOGIL’s adequacy even as an observer force when, for instance, it did not operate at night and its members had no command of Arabic. United Nations sources pointed out, however, that although the observers were not running night patrols, they did stand 24-hour watches at their seven field bases, and they begin

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96 Minutes of League Council, Extraordinary Session at Benghazi, 2nd meeting, 1 June 1958, p. 15.
97 Minutes of League Council, Extraordinary Session at Benghazi, 6th meeting, 6 June 1958, p. 108.
patrols at dawn each day. They also expected their four reconnaissance aircraft to assist greatly in their coverage of the frontier – only 18 miles of which was still in Government control. They accused Mr. Hammarskjöld, the UN secretary-general, and his assistants that they had embarked on a deliberate plan of trying to freeze the situation as it was until 24 July, when it became possible to elect a new President. The belief was that this would give both sides time to cool off and encourage them to find a face-saving way out by eventually agreeing on a candidate. There is little doubt that this was also the desire of the US Government, which had been sharply questioned concerning Mr. Dulles’ statement on 20 May that the independence and integrity of Lebanon came within the Eisenhower Doctrine’s interpretation of what was vital to the security of the United States.

By mid-June the security situation in Lebanon took a turn for the worse. Accordingly, Kamīl Shamʿūn instructed Charles Mālik to reinquire whether the United States would be willing, if requested, to send troops to Beirut. Mālik impressed on US officials the urgency of the situation and put them on notice, that a request for intervention might be imminent. He emphasized the external dimension of the crisis by accusing Nasserism and communism of unleashing their fury on Lebanon by subversion. Charles Mālik told Dulles that the conflict transcended Lebanon’s boundaries to encompass the whole Middle East. It was a contest, he asserted, between Kamīl Shamʿūn and the West on the one side, and Jamāl ʿAbdunnāṣir and the Eastern bloc on the other; hence the real fight was between capitalism and communism. Western efforts to tackle the crisis, concluded Mālik, should not be restricted to Lebanon; they should be broad enough to resolve the underlying problems in the region.

In their drive to enlist the active support and involvement of the United States, Kamīl Shamʿūn and Charles Mālik tried once again to play the Cold War card. They were not dissuaded by Eisenhower and Dulles’s previous lukewarm attitude and noncommittal stand. This optimistic attitude was based on the dubious claim that Lebanon was strategically indispensable to the West. But Kamīl Shamʿūn and Charles Mālik had overestimated Lebanon’s importance in world politics. They took it for granted that the Western powers would preserve the security of Shamʿūn’s regime by confronting their internal and regional enemies. They did not fully appreciate the diversity of US interests and the key role that Egypt played in US strategy in the region. Kamīl Shamʿūn and Charles Mālik should have known that the United States would not risk its relationship with Egypt for the sake of Lebanon. Their failure to understand this key point cost them dearly.

In fact, US diplomats stationed in Cairo were secretly negotiating with Jamāl ʿAbdunnāṣir to find a solution to the Lebanese crisis. This amounted to an im-

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100 The Times, 1 July 1958.
102 COPELAND, op. cit., pp. 198-201.
plicit recognition by the Eisenhower administration of the Egyptian leader's transnational status and power in the Arab world. At the end of May Jamāl c-Abdunnāṣir approached the US government and offered to use his influence to help end the conflict. A series of meetings took place in Cairo between Jamāl c-Abdunnāṣir and Raymond Hare, the US ambassador. But when the State Department communicated the outline of Jamāl c-Abdunnāṣir’s proposal to Kamil Shamūn, he rejected it out of hand and refused to accept any compromise that might signal the end of his political career. What was puzzling was that US officials did not even attempt to convince Kamil Shamūn of the merits of Jamāl c-Abdunnāṣir’s plan as a starting point for negotiations. They dismissed the proposal as a ploy of Jamāl c-Abdunnāṣir to impose a solution “not desired by Lebanon”. Ironically, two months later the Eisenhower administration used the terms of the Egyptian plan as the basis for a settlement of the Lebanese crisis.

The Eisenhower administration held a series of meetings at the highest levels to discuss Kamil Shamūn’s latest overtures and to define a course of action toward Lebanon. The consensus in Washington still opposed intervention. Eisenhower doubted that intervention could be justified under the Eisenhower Doctrine, which was directed only against external aggression—an admission that the causes of the crisis were internal. He felt that the United States would be subjected to the same criticism that its European allies had faced during their invasion of Suez. Eisenhower lamented the lack of strong leadership and the deep divisions within the Lebanese ruling élite; thus “he had little, if any, enthusiasm for our intervening at this time”.

Dulles echoed Eisenhower’s opinion by noting that to intervene at this point would be catastrophic to US allies and interests in the Middle East. Such an action on the part of the United States, he added, should take into account the divisiveness of Lebanese politics and the general weakness of the pro-Western governments in the region. He was particularly worried about the unstable Hashimite monarchy in Baghdad. Dulles suggested that Washington must pressure the Lebanese to solve their own problems and induce Kamil Shamūn to make concessions. He was blunt with Charles Mālik: Kamil Shamūn should be under no illusion that he could win the battle against Jamāl c-Abdunnāṣir by inviting the United States to intervene: “on the contrary, he would lose it”. In other words, the United States was not prepared to fight Jamāl c-Abdunnāṣir and the forces of Arabism to please Shamūn.

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104 Eisenhower, op. cit., p. 268.
On 19 June Dulles requested McClintock to urge Kamil Shamūn to do every­thing in his power to avoid a situation that might require a request for interven­tion. Dulles believed that to intervene at this point would be catastrophic, since the United States might be accused of undermining UN efforts; the United States was unwilling to send troops before the exhaustion of the UN option. Accord­ingly, McClintock told Kamil Shamūn that sending Western troops to Beirut would not solve the present crisis; instead, it might have the opposite effect and arouse popular sentiment that could destabilize and possibly overthrow the moderate Arab regimes; it could even lead to “Lebanon’s ultimate territorial partition or truncation”, which in turn could weaken the Western position and increase Jamāl ʿAbdunnāsir’s prestige and influence.107 The US Ambassador, who “held strong personal views, not all of them in accord with Washington policies”, had been pressing “perhaps a little too enthusiastically for a compromise solution of the conflict” while Kamil Shamūn and Charles Mālik were perhaps too inclined to identify the independence and integrity of Lebanon with their personal retention of power.108

Kamil Shamūn was not convinced by these arguments. He believed a political solution was unattainable because the initiative was no longer in the hands of local leaders: Jamāl ʿAbdunnāsir was now the driving force behind the rebellion. This point of view was consistent with Shamūn’s strategy of overemphasizing the external aspect of the crisis. Kamil Shamūn left to his foreign minister, however, to articulate the regime’s position. Meeting with Dulles on 30 June, Mālik reiterated the view that the main cause of the conflict was not internal; it had a larger dimension. If Lebanese independence was undermined, he noted, other pro-Western governments would collapse: “Lebanon is holding the dike and this is a battle not for Lebanon alone but it is a battle of the West. If Lebanon goes, the West will go down too.”109 Mālik also argued that neither Jamāl ʿAbdunnāsir nor his Lebanese sympathizers were interested in a political compromise. Charles Mālik added Kamil Shamūn was not prepared to make concessions in any case because he believed that Jamāl ʿAbdunnāsir should not be permitted to have a say in Lebanon’s domestic and foreign affairs: “Shamūn will fight this battle until he wins or collapses because this is a battle for freedom and for stability and peace in the Middle East. It transcends Lebanese interests.”110 The apocalyptic language and the absolute terms in which Mālik portrayed the conflict reflected a desire on his part to entice the West to intervene militarily in the crisis. On a higher level, it also expressed an inflated conviction of the significance of Lebanon on the Western strategic chessboard.

107 Ibid., Secretary of State to Ambassador McClintock, No. 11077, 19 June 1958.
108 Copeland, op. cit., p. 197.
110 Ibid., p. 186.
Dulles, for one, was not impressed by Malik’s presentation. Military intervention would be disastrous, he told his Lebanese counterpart. By now, the White House and the State Department were beginning to see Kamîl Shamîn as the major obstacle to a peaceful settlement, since he was “stubbornly unwilling to take those last measures of personal sacrifice that might assure a political compromise averting his own defeat”. It was in this context that Dulles proposed to Malik the need to think seriously about a successor to Kamîl Shamîn. On 1 July Mr. Dulles said: “The presence of foreign troops, however justifiable – and it is thoroughly justifiable from a legal and international law standpoint – is not as good a solution as for the Lebanese to find a solution themselves. It would be a sort of measure of last resort.” In the final analysis, US policy toward Lebanon was shaped by broader regional and international considerations that have ultimately determined whether Washington would decide to intervene or not.

On 8 July Kamîl Shamîn again tried to calm the opposition and restated that he would not seek re-election. But the opposition demanded the President’s immediate resignation in order to end the crisis. The opposition leader, Šâ’ib Salâm, had just declared that he would not recognize the validity of any election as long as the President is still in power; and since President Kamîl Shamîn had repeatedly expressed his determination to continue in office to the end of his term in September, the chances were that Lebanon would still spend the rest of summer 1958 in a state of stubborn and costly anarchy.

In the opposition were several non-Muslims who, although not Arab nationalists, supported the struggle against Kamîl Shamîn for their own political reasons. They included the Druze chieftain Kamâl Junbulat and the Maronite patriarch Bûlus al-Maûshî, who believed that Kamîl Shamîn’s extreme pro-Westernism jeopardized the position of all Christians in the East. By July, the struggle had become truly partisan and threatened to throw Lebanon completely into the Nasser camp. The danger of a smashing victory for the UAR appeared imminent. The Lebanese Government was preparing to ask formally for armed support.

Soon, however, bloody developments in Iraq prompted US policy makers to question their initial reluctance to intervene in the Middle East and cause them to consider intervention after all. A military action by the United States was politically more difficult to undertake than before but the powerful spring of the US Sixth Fleet was being wound up to meet the possibility of a sudden emergency. Then, all of a sudden, it was triggered off by the Iraqi military coup d’état of 14 July 1958 and destruction of the Hashimite regime in Iraq. On the same day, the American Ambassador decided that the Lebanese President was entitled to United States military aid under the terms of the Eisenhower Doctrine. Kamîl Shamîn made the formal request. He asked the US Government for help, saying that if...
Lebanon did not receive American troops within days his pro-Western régime might be overthrown. The decision in Washington was promptly taken and Ambassador McClintock afterwards declared “we are determined to help this government to maintain internal security”.

He promised that assistance would arrive within forty-eight hours — not realizing that the fleet was only a day away.

While violent dispute raged for some weeks in the USA and elsewhere about the propriety of the intervention (followed by a British intervention in Jordan), the success of the Iraqi revolution undoubtedly came as an enormous encouragement to the radical opposition in both Lebanon and Jordan and a corresponding discouragement to the supporters of those two hard-pressed governments who had been appealing for Western help; so that, except on the very dubious hypothesis that it was in the Western interest to have the whole of Syria, Jordan and Lebanon (encircling Israel) dominated by Jamāl c Abdunnāsir still enthusiastically flirting with the USSR, there was everything which called for resolute action by the West if the whole Arab world was not to be submerged by the “Nasserist” and communist flood.

The Russians blustered, as at the time of Suez; but those Western judges proved right who averred that the Kremlin was not ready to make the Middle Eastern issue a casus belli nuclearis, if the West showed a united front.

The fleet arrived in less than twenty-four hours, and by the evening of 15 July warships and transports have landed the first batch of the Marines near Beirut.

The landing of the US Marines on the beaches just south of Beirut caused a peculiar situation. The Commander-in-Chief of the Lebanese army, General Fu‘ād Shihāb, had “dallied and procrastinated” since the beginning of the fighting, “refusing to come to grips with the rebels” — partly because his army was riddled by the same factions as were dividing the country, but also probably because he was widely regarded as the compromise candidate for the presidency who might restore internal peace. On the morning of 16 July 1958, Fu‘ād Shihāb informed the US Ambassador “in no uncertain terms” that if the commander of the American Marines carried out his orders to advance into the city, “Lebanese tanks, already deployed along the airport road, would open fire”; on the other hand, President Kāmil Shamūn declared “equally emphatically” that if they did not advance, he expected to be kidnapped by the rebels issuing from their Beirut stronghold (the Basta quarter), “leaving the USA in the embarrassing situation of maintaining troops in a foreign country to protect a government which did not exist”. The Ambassador devised a “truly desperate expedient” of suggesting that General Fu‘ād Shihāb and himself should “inject themselves personally between the opposing troops”, and this they did, finding “a dozen or more Lebanese tanks, recoilless rifles, and other weapons lining the road, their guns unlimbered and aimed at the

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116 COPELAND, op. cit., p. 203.
117 QUBAIN, op. cit., p. 113.
118 CAMPBELL, op. cit., p. 142.
spot where the Marine column was waiting”. As a further face-saver for the Lebanese Army, the US admiral in command agreed to divide the column into segments and place Lebanese jeeps in the intervals, “so that it doesn’t look quite so much like an invading army”; and after an hour’s delay (“General Fu‘ād Shihāb was clearly having difficulty persuading his staff to call off the resistance”), the cortège advanced to Beirut, led by the ambassadorial Cadillac.\(^{119}\)

The arrival of American forces in Lebanon did not put an end to the insurrection in the country but in the weeks that followed, the Lebanese Muslim rebellion, cut off from the outside world, lost much of its pan-Arab character and began to appear more as an internal movement. This it was, to a great extent, from the beginning. While the lower-class Muslim, envious of the superior lot of the lower class Christian, may have frequently confused his aspirations for a better life with the ever-present Muslim yearning for Arab union, leaders of the insurrection in Beirut, Tripoli and elsewhere were thinking more in terms of a change of government.\(^{120}\)

The next two weeks were spent in an attempt to obtain agreement on a compromise candidate for the presidency and a quorum for the Chamber of Deputies that would elect him. The government, which had issued warrants of arrest against several of the militant opposition deputies, announced a stay of execution for the period of the election. Šā‘īb Salām continued to declare the present Chamber unfit to hold the election because it had been elected under government pressure the year before and now existed “under the menace of foreign troops”; but on 31 July, 56 of the 66 deputies presented themselves, and on the second ballot General Fu‘ād Shihāb received 48 of their votes and was declared elected.\(^{121}\)

Clearly, this massive intervention was designed to contain the revolutionary situation in the area. Immediately the United States started assessing the damage to its position and attempted to salvage as much of its prestige and its interests as possible. President Eisenhower justified his action as the exercise of the right of collective self-defence under the UN Charter and as a response to the appeal of a freely elected government subjected to indirect aggression. He cited the need to protect American lives and also that clause of the Eisenhower Doctrine which called the independence and integrity of the nations of the Middle East vital to the American national interests and to world peace.\(^{122}\) The Soviet government denounced the US and British interventions as “open aggression” and sent warnings to numerous governments.\(^{123}\) Given the choice the large majority of Muslims in Leba-

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\(^{119}\) Thayer, op. cit., pp. 29-35.


\(^{122}\) Message to Congress and radio address to the American people, 15 July 1958, in: Documents on American Foreign Relations, 1958, pp. 304-311.

non would certainly have opted for union with Syria. But Lebanon as a whole, already shaken by internal strife and divided over the issue of American aid, was from May 1958 the scene of a domestic insurrection which the UAR was accused of fomenting by “massive intervention”.124

While American troops became involved in no military accidents in Lebanon, their presence helped to neutralize both sides and the civil war gradually began to subside. On 16 July, Eisenhower sent US Under-Secretary of State, Robert Murphy, to Beirut as his special emissary with instructions “to do everything possible to restore peace and tranquility to the Government and to assist President Shamā'un in so doing”.125 Jamāl cAbdunnāsir displayed considerable caution. In a hasty visit to Moscow he urged Khrushchev not to intervene in the Middle East with Soviet forces unless the Western forces invaded Iraq or the UAR itself.126 He refrained from pouring men and supplies into Lebanon. Indeed he had never committed himself beyond recall to a rebel victory or to the absorption of Lebanon into the UAR.

In the end the crisis faded out in lengthy negotiations and in inconclusive debate in the UN Security Council, where the Soviet delegate’s veto stopped all Western-inspired proposals for the transfer to the United Nations of the responsibilities which the Americans and the British assumed. The summoning of the UN General Assembly to examine the Middle Eastern situation, in an extraordinary session beginning on 12 August, could not find any middle ground between the Soviet demand for immediate withdrawal of US and British forces and the American insistence that there be some UN force or authority to replace the Western forces.127 This gave the opposition further occasion for resorting to violence in a protest against having Lebanon represented in the Assembly by Charles Mālik. Then, on 20 August, the representatives of the Arab states at the UN, who had been meeting in secret conclave, surprised the world and perhaps themselves by solemnly confirming their adherence to Article 8 of the Arab League Pact: “Each member state shall respect the systems of government established in the other member states and regard them as exclusive concerns of those states. Each shall pledge to abstain from any action calculated to change established systems of government.”128 It is apparent that the Western intervention and the danger of involvement in a war of the great powers had caused this sober decision. The resolution in the General Assembly asked the Secretary-General to facilitate the early withdrawal of foreign troops from Lebanon and Jordan. The United States

125 Miller, op. cit., p. 186.
127 Campbell, op. cit., p. 143.
had no real choice other than to vote for the resolution; neither did the Soviet Union. Its unanimous adoption ended the session and the crisis.

The president-elect, whose term of office would not begin until 24 September, prepared to negotiate a truce, but by 18 August, there was a renewal of terrorism, probably arising from the failure to reach a compromise on the composition of a new Cabinet. As Kamil Shamùn’s term of office entered its last days, there was much talk of a new Cabinet to be headed by Rashid Karâmi, who had been Premier once before and was now titular leader of the revolt in his native city of Tripoli; but this initiative was strongly opposed by the Phalangists, an organization made up mainly of Maronites who had been among the most effective militants on the government’s side.129

The Phalangists violently objected to Fu‘ād Shihāb’s choice of a cabinet headed by Rashid Karāmi, former opposition leader in Tripoli. This, they charged, was rewarding the ex-rebel, instead of punishing him. Fighting again flared up for several more weeks between the Phalangists (Katā‘ib), now assisted by former President Kamil Shamùn’s backers, and the pro-Nasserites. On 22 September, the Katā‘ib called its own general strike, representing the so-called “Christian counterrevolution”, which was so far effective that the US Ambassador felt constrained to mediate between the Katā‘ib leader, Pierre Jumayyil, and the Prime Minister-designate, who had meanwhile formed a Cabinet of opposition personalities drawn from the various religious communities. After “weeks of patient mediation, hopping in a helicopter”,130 the Ambassador succeeded in bringing the two men together on 10 October. Rashid Karāmi tendered his Cabinet’s resignation and announced the formation of a new one on 14 October, consisting of two Muslims and two Christians only; Jumayyil himself, hitherto regarded as too extreme to be acceptable as a minister on the compromise basis of the National Covenant, now became Deputy Prime Minister. The strike was called off on the following day, the last of the United States forces re-embarked during the next ten days, and Lebanon could begin her slow and painful convalescence. Some 3,000 people were stated to have been killed in the months of fighting, nearly one-third of them Syrians, and material damage had been heavy, but the commercial aptitude of the Lebanese brought about a remarkably quick economic recovery, and in the summer of 1960 it was possible to elect a new Chamber of Deputies with only the customary amount of brawling.

During the civil war, Lebanon’s economy was seriously affected. Beirut port was forced to close, almost all commerce, banking, industry, transport, the tourist trade, and other economic activities from which the country lived were halted. In the capital alone, there were nearly 30,000 unemployed. By mid-October, labour syndicates and businessmen had become desperate and pleaded with all factions to save the remnants of the country’s economic life.

130 Thayer, op. cit., p. 37.
Both sides were persuaded, in October, to form a “salvation cabinet” of four leaders representing the opposing groups. Rashid Karāmi and Ḥusayn al-Uwayni represented the Muslims, and Raymond Iddah (Eddé) and Phalange chief Pierre Jumayyil (Gemayel), the Christians. This was an unprecedented constitutional change since the cabinet now had an equal number of Muslims and Christians. Another innovation was the appointment of a Muslim, Ḥusayn al-Uwayni, as foreign minister. The “salvation” government was initially granted extraordinary powers by the Chamber of Deputies to rule by decree for six months. The cabinet’s powers were later enlarged and its powers gradually modified, but its half Muslim, half Christian composition was retained and it continued to include a wide range of political outlook from the moderate socialist left to the Christian right.

By the first week of November 1958, all American troops had been withdrawn and life returned to normal throughout the country. Transport to Syria was restored along the main artery, which had been in rebel hands, the 30,000 unemployed in Beirut began to filter back to their jobs, factories reopened, and the port renewed operations. No fundamental changes had resulted from the revolution. Religion continued to be the basis of political life. Parliamentary seats were still based on the ratio of six Christians for five Muslims. And the republic had devised no fundamentally new economic or social programmes to meet the country’s growing needs. Beneath the surface of compromise, raged intense passions. Extremists, both Muslim and Christian, persisted in the belief that only elimination of the other could bring permanent peace. Christian anxieties prevailed at the prospect of engulfment by Arab nationalism. Muslims continued their demand that Lebanon become more identified with the common Arab cause as represented by Jamāl ʿAbdunnāsir. Both Christian and Muslim youth have been attracted by the goals of Arab unity and socialism, although Christians were less amenable to Lebanon’s integration into the Arab East. The 1958 civil war, however, caused both Christians who favoured the country’s close association with the West and Muslims who desired Arab unity to pause in their pursuit of these goals. The slogan “no victor, no vanquished” earlier chosen to end the crisis, became the formula for peace in Lebanon.