LEBANON DURING THE SHĀRIL ḤULW PRESIDENCY, 1964 – 1970*

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The relative calm of the regime of Fu'ād Shihāb (Fouad Chehab) began to wither away during the presidential term of his successor Shāril Ḥulw (Charles Ḥelou). In many respects the new regime was supposed to be a continuation of the former one. Political, social and economic reforms were to be carried out as specified under the regime of Fu'ād Shihāb. More important, the role of the army and its *Deuxième Bureau* in decision-making remained intact and a hard-liner *Shihābist*, Ilyās Sarkīs, wielded great power as the head of the presidential bureau. The new regime provided a convincing argument that not even *Shihābist* policies were capable of ameliorating Lebanon's inherent problems. These problems were structural and could not be solved by reforms. Furthermore, these reforms interfered with the confessional arrangements in the political system and were not easy to implement at a time of relative calm in the region. When major disturbances such as the June 1967 war, began to occur in the area, even these innocuous reforms became unacceptable to the traditional and sectarian forces in the country.

Key words: the Arab Cold War, the period of Arab summits, the *Shihābist nahj*, the PLO's activities in Lebanon, the Cairo Agreement

By 1963, when rumours had begun to circulate that President Fu'ād Shihāb (Fouad Chehab) intended to have the constitution amended by parliament to allow him a second term of office, a powerful coalition of his opponents was beginning to take form. However, while Fu'ād Shihāb still had enough of a majority in parliament to secure an amendment of the Constitution to permit him to stand for a second term, he refused to seek re-election.[1] The *anti-Shihābist* front had little hope of securing the election of one of its own *Maronite* members to succeed Fu'ād Shihāb as President when his term came to

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[1] KHALIDI, Walid. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon: Confrontation in the Middle East*, p. 40.

an end in September. Fu'ād Shihāb commanded a clear majority in the new parliament which was to elect his successor. The only way out was to find a compromise candidate who would be elected with Fu'ād Shihāb's blessing and without obstruction from the opposition. After a long search, such a candidate was finally found in Shāril Ḥulw (Charles Ḥelou),[2] who was duly elected president by an overwhelming majority.

Shāril Ḥulw had started his career as the editor of Lebanese French daily *Le Jour*; he had subsequently served as ambassador to the Vatican during the presidency of Bishāra al-Khūrī, and later held a cabinet position for a while under Kamīl Shamᶜūn (Camille Chamoun). Politically, Shāril Ḥulw was affiliated to the *Constitutional Bloc* (al-Kutla ad-dustūrīya) – the party of former president Bishāra al-Khūrī, which had ceased to be effective after 1952,[3] and whose policy of upholding the principles of the *National Covenant* had been inherited and developed by the *Shihābists*. The only problem with Shāril Ḥulw was that he was politically weak, with no personal following and with only the *Shihābist* team to lean upon.[4]

The new president was determined to proceed in his policy in the same way as his predecessor, the way known as the *nahj* (method) of Fu'ād Shihāb.[5] The fact was, however, that while Shāril Ḥulw vowed to follow the *Shihābist nahj*, the leadership of this *nahj* remained in other hands – those of the *Deuxième Bureau* and their civilian associates who had managed affairs under the former president,[6] who remained in close touch with him, and who were determined to hold on to power under his politically weak successor. The *anti-Shihābist* coalition lost no time by repeatedly portraying Shāril Ḥulw as a helpless puppet of the *Shihābists*, whose chief representative at the official level was now Ilyās Sarkīs (Elias Sarkis), the head of the Presidential Bureau. President Shāril Ḥulw, unable to escape the tight *Shihābist* grip, resorted to political stratagems by playing the *Shihābists* and anti-*Shihābists* off against one another. Infuriated by the president's tactics, and also by the growing strength of the *anti-Shihābist* opposition, the masters of the *nahj* resorted to tactics of obstruction, losing no opportunity to raise difficulties in the face of the president that would force him to return to them for support.[7]

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[2] JOHNSON, M. *Class and Client in Beirut. The Sunni Muslim Community and the Lebanese State 1840 – 1985*, p. 138.
[3] Al-ᶜAQQĀD, Ṣalāḥ. *Al-mashriq al-ᶜarabī al-muᶜāṣir* [The Contemporary Arab East], p. 138.
[4] GORDON, D. C. *The Republic of Lebanon. Nation in Jeopardy*, p. 68.
[5] The term *nahj* (short for *an-Nahj ash-Shihābī*) was thus brought into use as a synonym for *Shihābism*, and before long a *Shihābist* came to be known as a *Nahjist* (Nahjī).
[6] The military intelligence apparatus in Lebanon was known under the name *Deuxième Bureau*.
[7] SALIBI, Kamal S. *Crossroads to Civil War. Lebanon 1958 – 1976*, p. 23.

Although the *Shihābist* planners distanced themselves from the political representatives of the dominant classes in parliament, and even managed to effect a significant redistribution of resources from Beirut to the peripheries of Lebanon, they were unable to withstand the economic power and continuing political influence of the commercial-financial bourgeoisie.[8] Many technocrats believed that some form of industrialization was the only way to deal with the problems of unemployment, but they were elitists who preferred to manipulate the political economy rather than use a mass base to bring about radical change. Most of them did not want to establish a *Shihābist* political party, and the closest they came to any form of organization was the *November 22 Club*. Named after Lebanon's Independence Day, the club was founded by a number of technocrats who had been part of President Fu'ād Shihāb's regime.[9] But this was not an official *Shihābist* organization and was never a significant force in Lebanese politics.

As it happened, the last year of Fu'ād Shihāb's presidential term coincided with new and serious developments on the Middle Eastern scene. In 1959 Israel began to build the National Water Carrier to convey water from Lake Tiberias to the Negev, and this project was completed in 1964. As it is clear that no Israeli water diversion plans had ever won Arab acceptance, various Arab leaders had declared that it constituted an act of Israeli aggression against Arab rights and threatened to meet it with force.[10] The Arab states, with Syria at their head, resolved to frustrate Israel's plans by diverting the headwaters of the River Jordan, and the result was a series of violent clashes in which Israel gained the upper hand.[11] During the last two years of the Fu'ād Shihāb regime, the determination of Israel to divert the waters of the Jordan River for irrigation ushered in a new stage in the development of the Arab-Israeli conflict and brought about a major political crisis in the country.[12] The headwaters of the Jordan sprang in Lebanon, and its principal tributaries sprang in Syria and Jordan.

Lebanon was once more put before the mirror, revealing her schizophrenic character: Lebanon was unable to survive economically without the Arab world.

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[8] JOHNSON, M. *Class and Client in Beirut. The Sunni Muslim Community and the Lebanese State 1840 – 1985*, p. 148.

[9] The members of the *November 22 Club* included government employees and other high-ranking civil servants, engineers, doctors, lawyers, and other professionals. Most of these members were eminent and successful people in their fields. Later a splinter group felt the need for a "progressive" *Shihābist* party, and out of this the *Democratic Party* (al-Ḥizb ad-dīmuqrāṭī) developed, founded by Bāsim al-Jisr and Yūsuf Mughayzil in 1969.

[10] KERR, M. H. *The Arab Cold War. Gamal Abd al-Nasir and His Rivals, 1958 – 1970*, p. 98.

[11] SHLAIM, Avi. *The Iron Wall. Israel and the Arab World*, p. 228.

[12] ODEH, B. J. *Lebanon: Dynamics of Conflict. A Modern Political History*, p. 106.

The dominant class was able to maintain a relatively high standard of living for the middle class because of the profitable economic arrangement with the Arab world. While over half of Lebanon's population identified with the Arab world on various levels, the dominant class did not feel obliged to share in the problems that affected the area. Specifically, the crisis manifested itself in Lebanon's unwillingness to assume her responsibilities as a part of the Arab League, of which it was a member, to defend the common interest of the Arabs *vis-à-vis* Israel in protecting the waters of the Jordan River.[13] Lebanon offered its traditional answer: it wished to remain "neutral" in the dispute lest Israel attack. When the Arabs offered Egyptian and Syrian troops to defend Lebanon's southern border, Lebanon emphatically rejected the offer on the grounds that such military presence on her territory would compromise her sovereignty.[14] On the ideological level, the crisis manifested itself between "Lebanese particularism" and "pan-Arabism". These two categories assumed clear religious overtones in the presentation of the question by the main representatives of the *Maronite* bourgeoisie and the *Maronite* church as well.[15]

But now that the time of decision had approached, commitments to go to war were seen to be very dangerous. As a counter-measure to the Israeli diversion of the main course of the Jordan River, the Arab League under the leadership of Egypt threatened to divert the Lebanese headwaters of the river and its Syrian and Jordanian tributaries.[16] The Lebanese government hesitated to associate itself with the Arab diversion scheme on the grounds that any diversion of the Lebanese headwaters of the Jordan River was bound to expose Lebanon to invasion by Israel. When Syria and Egypt volunteered to have troops of their own stationed in Lebanon to help defend the country against Israel in case of attack, the Lebanese government under Fu'ād Shihāb categorically refused the suggestion, insisting that only Lebanese troops could be stationed on Lebanese territory without the formal request of the Lebanese government.[17] The Lebanese counterproposal to the Syrian and Egyptian offers was that the Arab League should provide Lebanon with the material means to develop its own defence force so that it would be able to defend itself on its own if necessary.

The second Arab summit, which was held in Alexandria on 5 September 1964, was intended to follow up plans for the diversion of the Jordan waters. The conference presented Lebanon with many difficulties, both in form and

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[13] TIBAWI, A. L. *A Modern History of Syria Including Lebanon and Palestine*, pp. 412 – 413.
[14] SALIBI, Kamal S. *Crossroads to Civil War. Lebanon 1958 – 1976*, p. 24.
[15] ENTELIS, J. P. *Pluralism and Party Transformation in Lebanon: Al-Kata'ib, 1936 − 1970*, pp. 159 – 173.
[16] Al-MUWĀFĪ, ᶜAbdalḥamīd Muḥammad. *Miṣr fī džāmiᶜat ad-duwal al-ᶜarabīja, 1945 – 1970* [Egypt in the League of Arab States, 1945 – 1970], p. 242.
[17] SALIBI, Kamal S. *Crossroads to Civil War. Lebanon 1958 – 1976*, p. 24.

substance.[18] President Fu'ād Shihāb declined to participate in this summit since his term was due to expire on 23 September 1964, and opted instead to send his successor, Shāril Ḥulw, to represent the Lebanese government as the president's representative. The compromise meant that while avoiding giving offence to Jamāl ʿAbdannāṣir personally, it was also a short-term tactic – the Lebanese delegate avoided the need to take important decisions.[19] The important factor in Muḥammad Ḥasanayn Haykal's story is not only its substance, but also its agreement with the account of Shāril Ḥulw that Fu'ād Shihāb wished at all costs to avoid visiting Cairo.

This Arab summit meeting was a turning point in the history of the Lebanese involvement in Arab affairs. The way the Christian Lebanese and the national authorities in Lebanon saw it, the Arab states (mainly Egypt and Syria) were not serious about the Arab diversion of the Jordan waters. It was feared, and with good reason, that any stationing of Arab troops in Lebanon, which was bound to include Syrian and Egyptian troops, would not only serve to increase the danger of an Israeli invasion of Lebanon, but was also more likely to be used for intervention in Lebanese domestic affairs to the detriment of Lebanese sovereignty than for effective defence against Israel.[20] At the Arab summit meeting Shāril Ḥulw had no choice in the end but to yield and agreed to an Arab defence proposal which envisaged the establishment of a *United Arab Command* (Qiyāda ʿarabīya muwaḥḥada) for the Arab countries surrounding Israel (Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon). No Egyptian, Jordanian or Syrian troops, however, were to enter Lebanon without the formal request of the Lebanese government.[21] Once the Lebanese and Egyptian governments had made their positions clear to one another at the Alexandria summit, both countries pursued different tactics to further their interests. The Egyptian government, for instance, adopted both diplomatic and confrontational methods to bend Lebanese objections, ranging from economic concessions to sustained media attacks. Lebanon unintentionally satisfied Cairo's thirst for propaganda with the high profile character of President Shāril Ḥulw and other Lebanese officials who shuttled to and from Cairo – though without making any substantial concessions. All this occurred at a time when the PLO, now in its militant phase, sought to carve out a place of its own on the regional and international political map. In such a power struggle, the state in Lebanon

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[18] HAYKAL, Muḥammad Ḥasanayn. *Ḥarb ath-thalāthīna sana. Sanawāt al-ghalayān* [The Thirty-Year War. The Years of Boiling], pp. 770 – 771.
[19] ḤULW, Shāril. *Mudhakkirātī, 1964 – 1965* [My Memoirs, 1964 – 1965], p. 46; *Al-Ḥayāt*, Beirut, 27 August 1964.
[20] GORDON, D. C. *Lebanon. The Fragmented Nation*, p. 61; ODEH, B. J. *Lebanon: Dynamics of Conflict*, p. 106.
[21] SALIBI, Kamal S. *Crossroads to Civil War. Lebanon 1958 – 1976*, p. 25.

was not in a position to draw on those instruments of control that were at the disposal of other Arab states.[22]

Apart from deciding on the establishment of the *United Arab Command*, the Arab summit meeting took another decision of serious consequence. Since the emergence of Israel on the former territory of Palestine in 1948, the handling of all matters relating to the Palestine question had been the preserve of the Arab League, in which the Palestinians were not directly represented. In 1964, the Arab League decided to sponsor the establishment of a *Palestinian Liberation Organization* (Munaẓẓamat at-taḥrīr al-filasṭīnīya) to serve as the official representative of Palestinian national interests.[23] Under the PLO, a *Palestinian Liberation Army* was to be organized to provide Palestinians with the opportunity to share in the Arab effort aimed at the ultimate liberation of their homeland. While Lebanon agreed to the establishment of the PLO, the Lebanese government insisted that the *Palestinian Liberation Army* would have no bases in Lebanon, and that any Palestinian resident in Lebanon who wished to join this army was free to leave Lebanon for the purpose, but not to return. From the point of view of the Lebanese authorities, it was dangerous enough to have the Palestinian refugees in the country (now forming approximately ten per cent of the resident population) politically organized under their own leadership; but to have armed and trained Palestinian troops stationed on Lebanese territory was completely unacceptable considering the pan-Arab sentiments of the Palestinians and the active role they had already played in the events of 1958.[24]

Fu'ād Shihāb's reluctance to establish a political party and organize his supporters properly can be explained in terms of his assessment of the Lebanese political system and his somewhat conspiratorial view of politics.[25] He apparently felt that Lebanon was controlled by traditional politicians and their foreign backers who interfered in elections and in crises such as 1958, and therefore felt constrained to accept the clientelist system and seek to influence it to his own advantage. He attempted to control the state bureaucracy through his "new men" and curb the politicians through the *Deuxième Bureau*. After Shāril Ḥulw's election in 1964, the *November 22 Club* worked as a "shadow

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[22] El-KHAZEN, Farid. *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon, 1967 – 1976*, p. 120.
[23] SMITH, P. A. *Palestine and the Palestinians, 1876 – 1983*, p. 191.
[24] SHEMESH, Moshe. *The Palestinian Entity, 1959 – 1974 Arab Politics and the PLO*, pp. 37 – 94.
[25] It was widely believed in Lebanon that Kamīl Shamᶜūn, for example, was an agent in the pay of the British and later the Americans, that Kamāl Junbulāṭ was financed by the Soviets, and that Ṣā'ib Salām was a client first of Egypt and then after the mid-1960s, of Saudi Arabia.

organization" to support him in the bureaucracy, while the *Deuxième Bureau* worked assiduously to ensure a *Shihābist* majority in the parliament. There was no attempt to establish an organized mass base or any radical attempt to change the socio-economic and political structures of Lebanon. The response to growing unemployment in Beirut was not to promote significant industrialization, but rather to use the *Deuxième Bureau* to control the *zaʿīms*, *qabadays*,[26] and criminal networks amongst the working masses. In addition, new leaders were promoted to "clientelize" the recent immigrants to the city.

At the Lebanese level, the decisions of the summit meetings of 1964 were the beginning of Lebanon's active involvement in the thorny Palestine question. It was indeed inevitable that Lebanon would become involved in this question. The PLO and its organizations became the main guerrilla movement which was concentrated on a strictly nationalist and non-ideological approach to the liberation of Palestine.[27] Quite apart from the large Palestinian presence in Lebanon, which was bound sooner or later to assert itself in a forceful manner, there were two other vital considerations which the Lebanese authorities could not safely ignore: one was the persistent manoeuvres on the part of the Muslim Lebanese, and particularly the radical groups among them, to commit their country more completely to the pan-Arab line; the other was the simple fact that Lebanon, as an Arab country, could not indefinitely dissociate itself from Arab nationalist issues on which the whole Arab world was ostensibly in accord without placing itself in an uncomfortable political isolation and bringing upon itself the general Arab wrath.[28] At the summit meeting, President Shāril Ḥulw carefully spelt out the limits envisaged by the Lebanese Republic for the involvement in the Palestine and Arab-Israeli question into which circumstances were forcing it to drift.

At the summit President-elect Shāril Ḥulw stated Lebanon's reservations over the Jordan waters plan presented to the *United Arab Command (UAC)* by its chairman, General ʿAlī ʿAlī ʿĀmir of Egypt.[29] The Lebanese delegation objected to Arab forces especially from Syria being stationed on Lebanese territory fearing that this would invite Israeli intervention. Furthermore, there was fear that any Arab force stationed in Lebanon might tilt the Christian-Muslim

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[26] The term *zaʿīm* in Lebanese political life is applied to political bosses, party or sectarian leaders, acting as "godfathers" to their clientele. In the Lebanese clientelist system the *qabadays* (lieutenants) had to organize and control of *zaʿīm's* clients. In JOHNSON, M. *Class and Client in Beirut*, pp. 47 − 48.

[27] GILMOUR, D. *Lebanon. The Fractured Country*, p. 91.

[28] SALIBI, Kamal S. *Crossroads to Civil War. Lebanon 1958 – 1976*, p. 26.

[29] The United Arab Command was established on the first Arab summit meeting in Cairo in January 1964. In HAYKAL, Muḥammad Ḥasanayn. *Ḥarb ath-thalāthīna sana. Sanawāt al-ghalayān* [The Thirty-Year War. The Years of Boiling], p. 732.

balance in favour of the Muslims.[30] Shāril Ḥulw held a long meeting with Jamāl ᶜAbdannāṣir before the start of the summit. He mentions that Jamāl ᶜAbdannāṣir was ready to compromise over the Lebanese objection to the entry of Syrian forces into Lebanon, but urged him first to accept the decision to start the Arab diversion project of the River Jordan immediately.[31]

The Lebanese refusal to allow the military presence of Arab forces on Lebanese territory opened the way for the other delegates to accuse Lebanon of opportunism. The charge was that Lebanon was ready to "support Arab measures from which it benefits, such as the boycott of Israel, while refusing to do anything from which it might suffer".[32] However, Shāril Ḥulw and Jamāl ᶜAbdannāṣir opted for a compromise after diplomatic tactics on both sides were exhausted. Jamāl ᶜAbdannāṣir offered Shāril Ḥulw a four-month period to prepare a plan to protect the water diversion project and to clear this issue constitutionally in Lebanon. Thus the Egyptian president succeeded in obtaining Lebanese public approval for the decisions taken at the summit and secured a consensus among Arab leaders over the outcome of the summit, although Lebanese arguments were shelved.[33]

The Egyptian government continued to repeat its offer to send Egyptian troops to Lebanon, despite the initial Lebanese refusal at the Alexandria summit. Throughout the Conference of Arab Prime Ministers held in Cairo on 9 January 1965 the Lebanese delegation sought to counter Egyptian pressure by arguing that all Arab fronts should be activated in case Israel decided to attack Lebanon.[34] The *UAC* did not obtain the right to deploy its forces in the country unless asked by the Lebanese military command and after resolutions taken by the Lebanese government and parliament.[35] This argument was supported by Jordan and Saudi Arabia, and was aimed at exposing Egyptian intentions.[36] Thus, Lebanese national interests were protected by this position which served, according to Shāril Ḥulw, to defend Lebanon "from Egyptian or Arab demagogy and Israeli aggression".[37]

Nevertheless, the Lebanese government could not afford to alienate Egypt completely since the latter possessed enough Arab credentials to protect

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[30] *The Economist*, London, Vol. 212, 12 September 1964, p. 1004.
[31] ḤULW, Shāril. *Mudhakkirātī, 1964 – 1965*, pp. 56 – 57.
[32] *The Economist*, London, Vol. 212, 12 September 1964, p. 1004.
[33] ḤULW, Shāril. *Mudhakkirātī, 1964 – 1965*, pp. 65 – 66.
[34] *Al-Ḥayāt*, Beirut, 10 January 1965.
[35] *Al-Ḥayāt*, Beirut, 16 January 1965.
[36] The Lebanese delegation was headed by Prime Minister Ḥusayn al-ᶜUwaynī, and included Foreign Minister Philip Taqlā, and the Chief of Staff, Brigadier Yūsuf Shumayt. In *Al-Ḥayāt*, Beirut, 13 and 23 January 1965.
[37] ḤULW, Shāril. *Mudhakkirātī, 1964 – 1965*, p. 95.

Lebanon from more radical states, namely Syria and Iraq. To this end, President Shāril Ḥulw accepted an offer to pay an official visit to Cairo on 1 May 1965 amid Egyptian-Tunisian polemics. These were caused by the initiative of Tunisian President al-Ḥabīb Burguiba (Abū Ruqayba), announced on 15 March 1965 during his visit to Jordan, calling on the Arab states to be realistic and make peace with Israel, saying that "the Palestine problem could only be solved by moderation and reason".[38] Shāril Ḥulw chose Cairo as the first capital to visit, followed directly by official visits to Paris and the Vatican on 5 and 10 May 1965 respectively. This was a clear move to symbolize Lebanon's "balanced" attachment to both the Arab world represented by Egypt and the West. Shāril Ḥulw says that his visit to Cairo was timed to begin on 2 May 1965, but Jamāl ʿAbdannāṣir wished the visit to begin on 1 May. The Lebanese newspapers suggested that Jamāl ʿAbdannāṣir wanted to exploit his presence during his 1 May speech, which was expected to focus on attacking the Tunisian president. Consequently, the joint communiqué was termed by Shāril Ḥulw as "classical", in that it mentioned all the common ground points, but the mooted invitation for Jamāl ʿAbdannāṣir to visit Lebanon was omitted under a request from Shāril Ḥulw who, in private, opposed such a visit in order to avoid protests from right-wing Christian leaders.[39]

Later, the Arab summit convened in Casablanca on 13 September 1965 and indicated a decrease in Egyptian pressure on Lebanon. The inter-Arab conflict took a new turn with differences emerging over the water diversion plan, Palestine and the Yemen. It was agreed that every country had the freedom to implement the diversion plan according to "its list of priorities".[40] According to Shāril Ḥulw, Jamāl ʿAbdannāṣir helped him in his capacity as the chairman of the session to allocate special time to discuss the military situation on the Lebanese front, thus not lumping it together with the Syrian front. This enabled Shāril Ḥulw to win the argument with the *AUC* commander and ward off any Syrian attempt to interfere in Lebanese affairs under the guise of "helping to defend Lebanon against Israel".[41] By 1965, Israel had finally succeeded in inaugurating its diversion plan, while attacking Syrian mechanical equipment working on the Arab diversion. This brought a complete cessation of the work in July 1966 despite Syrian protests of being left alone by Egypt. Lebanon took the hint that Egypt was not going to war "for the sake of few bulldozers" and

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[38] NUTTING, A. *Nasser*, p. 365.
[39] ḤULW, Shāril. *Mudhakkirātī, 1964 – 1965*, pp. 102 – 103.
[40] HAYKAL, Muḥammad Ḥasanajn. *Ḥarb ath-thalāthīna sana. Al-infijār 1967*. [The Thirty-Year War. The Explosion in 1967], pp. 202 – 210; *Al-Ḥayāt*, Beirut, 17 September 1965.
[41] ḤULW, Shāril. *Mudhakkirātī, 1964 – 1965*, pp. 193 – 194.

confined its work to its modest plan.[42] Lebanese-Egyptian relations had survived a serious test due to the fact that Jamāl ʿAbdannāṣir and Shāril Ḥulw were in fact not willing to go along with the radicals' agenda.

In late 1965 King Fayṣal of Saudi Arabia initiated a movement to challenge the regional leadership of Jamāl ʿAbdannāṣir and his brand of Arab nationalism. To this end, Saudi Arabia concluded a comprehensive understanding with Iran on 8 December 1965 to establish the Islamic Pact.[43] The Christian leaders of Lebanon shunned an Egyptian invitation to challenge the Islamic Pact project to avoid antagonizing Saudi Arabia in particular and the Lebanese government immediately declared a position of neutrality in this new phase of regional confrontation. Prime minister-designate ʿAbdallāh al-Yāfī stated on 6 April 1966 that because of the religious nature of its population, Lebanon could not join "any Islamic or Christian pact".[44] This professed neutrality was interpreted by the Islamic Pact states to be Lebanon's reluctance, once more, to adopt publicly a stance challenging Egyptian policies. Pierre al-Jumayyil, for instance, repeated on 6 May 1966 his statements of neutrality on inter-Arab conflicts and refused to join Jamāl ʿAbdannāṣir's crusade, since "we did not witness any Saudi interference in Lebanese affairs".[45] At the same time, former president Kamīl Shamʿūn and the Maronite Patriarch, Būlus Maʿūshī, were busy establishing political links with King Fayṣal of Saudi Arabia, which they ultimately wanted to use against *Nāṣirism* in Lebanon.[46]

Of the four Arab countries bordering Israel, Lebanon (after Jordan) had the largest Palestinian refugee population. It was therefore natural that the newly-formed PLO should have concentrated much of its activity in Lebanon. The *Deuxième Bureau* was hesitant to clash with the PLO and allowed Palestinian military training to continue in some areas in Lebanon. However, it kept the Palestinian refugee camps under close surveillance and sought to use a limited growth of armed Palestinian power in the country to frighten the Christian Lebanese into compliance with *Shihābist* policy, since the Lebanese army, with its staunchly *Shihābist* command, was the only instrument capable of keeping Palestinian power in check.[47] Moreover, it was whispered here and there that the presumed connivance between the *Deuxième Bureau* and PLO activity in Lebanon was also a *Shihābist* tactic to keep President Shāril Ḥulw in line with

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[42] MEDZINI, A. *The River Jordan: The Struggle for Frontiers and Water, 1920 – 1967*. London: University of London, 1998.
[43] NIBLOCK, T. *Saudi Arabia: Power, Legitimacy and Survival*, pp. 58 – 59.
[44] *The Egyptian Gazette*, Cairo, 7 April 1966.
[45] *Al-Jumhūrīya*, Beirut, 7 May 1966.
[46] KALAWOUN, Nasser M. *The Struggle for Lebanon. A Modern History of Lebanese-Egyptian Relations*, p. 118.
[47] ENTELIS, J. P. *Pluralism and Party Transformation in Lebanon: Al-Kata'ib, 1936 − 1970*, pp. 27 – 28.

the *Nahj*. In response to such whispered accusations, the *Shihābists* argued that to clamp down on Palestinian military activity while it remained restricted was bound to provoke a strong Muslim Lebanese reaction, and would thereby create for the country a problem far bigger than the small one at hand.[48]

In the summer of 1966, Jamāl ʿAbdannāṣir declared his departure from the policies of Arab collective action and Arab summits announcing at a mass rally that he would have no further meetings with the "reactionaries" until they mended their ways.[49] The Lebanese government at first paid lip service to Arab summits, and attempted to mediate between Egypt and Saudi Arabia. However, it towed the Egyptian line when Beirut supported a proposal to postpone the fourth Arab summit in Algiers scheduled for 5 September 1966. This happened in spite of Saudi Arabia's objection and its subsequent decision to freeze its commitments towards the Arab summit institutions. In return, the Egyptian government supported a conciliatory Lebanese suggestion made to the Arab League to hold the ordinary session of the Arab League Council and the *Arab Joint Defence Council* on 10 September 1966.[50]

The supreme symbol of the contribution of the Palestinian bourgeoisie to Lebanese national life was the *Intra Bank*,[51] which from its lowly beginnings as a small office of exchange had grown to become the leading bank in Beirut with branches in every major Arab city and in the principal capitals of finance in Western Europe and North and South America. Whatever its malpractices may have been, the *Intra Bank* was the pride and glory of the Palestinians in Lebanon, and a splendid monument to the achievement of the Palestinian bourgeoisie in the diaspora. As it happened, the success of *Intra Bank* aroused the envy and hostility of the older-established Lebanese political and financial bourgeoisie, who were alarmed by its growing power.[52] In October 1966, a conspiracy which appears to have involved the whole of the traditional Lebanese establishment brought about the sudden collapse of the *Intra Bank*. The crisis shook the Lebanese economy and was interpreted as a measure marking Saudi disapproval of Lebanon's pro-Egyptian stance under the government of ʿAbdallāh al-Yāfī. Moreover, the withdrawal of deposits by Saudi Arabian investors from Lebanon's biggest private bank was considered as an economic weapon, intended to bring about a change of policy or at least soften Lebanon's position concerning the Islamic Pact project and to tame the

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[48] SALIBI, Kamal S. *Crossroads to Civil War. Lebanon 1958 – 1976*, p. 26.
[49] KERR, M. H. *The Arab Cold War. Gamal Abd al-Nasir and His Rivals, 1958 – 1970*, p. 122.
[50] *The Egyptian Gazette*, Cairo, 4 August 1966.
[51] *Intra* – short for *International Traders*.
[52] SALIBI, Kamal S. *Crossroads to Civil War. Lebanon 1958 – 1976*, p. 29.

pro-*Nāṣirist* press in Beirut.[53] In Palestinian circles, the destruction of the *Intra Bank* aroused bitter feelings, especially among the Palestinians.

However, the Lebanese government did not find it politically prudent to change its policies despite the fact that Egypt was unable to offer any substantial economic assistance. The new Lebanese Prime Minister, Rashīd Karāmī, who was appointed to solve the economic crisis, took a vigorous line against the Islamic Pact. He launched a bitter attack on the pact when he stated on 14 January 1967 that "no Lebanese citizen could believe that such suspicious pacts are the only means of restoring Palestine".[54] This clear attack on Saudi Arabia caused a state of open crisis in Lebanese-Saudi relations. The Saudi-Egyptian conflict over Lebanese foreign policy intensified, which among other things gave rise to Muslim-Christian tension inside Lebanon. While some leaders of the Muslim community supported Egypt without question, Christian right-wing leaders stepped up their pressure on the government to cease its pro-Egyptian policies and ally itself with Saudi Arabia – for advantageous economic reasons.[55]

The Lebanese government had supported Egypt in its political confrontation with Israel and the West from the beginnings of the crisis in mid-May 1967. When Jamāl ʿAbdannāṣir dispatched his troops to Sinai on 17 May 1967, the Lebanese government announced precautionary defensive measures in concert with Egypt and other Arab states bordering Israel. Moreover, a planned visit by some warships from the US Sixth Fleet to Beirut was postponed in order to indicate support for the Arab cause and to avoid being seen as pro-Western just as regional tensions were intensifying.[56] The Lebanese Prime Minister, Rashīd Karāmī, gave unequivocal support to the Egyptian government's decision to close the Gulf of Aqaba to Israeli shipping on 24 May 1967, supporting President Jamāl ʿAbdannāṣir's stance and stressing the UAR's right and sovereignty over the Gulf of Aqaba.[57]

The 1967 Six-Day War in the Middle East was the product of a complex regional chain of events, coupled with the involvement of the USA and the Soviet Union, which has left many questions unanswered to this day.[58] A clear

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[53] *Daily Telegraph*, London, 19 October 1966.
[54] *The Egyptian Gazette*, Cairo, 15 January 1967.
[55] *Al-Ḥayāt*, Beirut, 23 February, 29 March and 30 April 1967.
[56] *Al-Ḥayāt*, Beirut, 18 May 1967.
[57] RIZQ, R. *Rashīd Karāmī as-siyāsī wa rajul ad-dawla* [Rashīd Karāmī Politician and Statesman], p. 101.
[58] WANNER, J. *Krvavý Jom Kippur. Čtvrtá a pátá arabsko-izraelská válka ve světové politice* [The Bloody Jom Kippur. The Fourth and Fifth Arab-Israeli War in World Politics], pp. 10 – 11; SORBY, Karol R. *Jún 1967. Šesť dní, ktoré zmenili Blízky východ* [June 1967. Six Days that Changed the Middle East], p. 455.

result of the war was the victory of pro-Western Israel and the defeat of pro-Soviet Egypt and Syria in addition to Jordan. It meant that Soviet credibility to defend its regional allies or to intervene in order to change the course of events suffered a severe setback.[59] It was argued that the Soviet leadership declined to offer military support to the Arabs on the grounds that the attack was carried out by Israel alone and that the USA was not involved as claimed by some Arab leaders. Instead, the Soviet leaders preferred to press for a ceasefire, which came into effect only after Israel had achieved its goals. This trend was not confined only to the Middle East region but also impinged on other Cold War battle arenas such as the Far East, where from 1966 America bombed North Vietnam, another Soviet ally, with impunity.[60]

The Israeli attack on Egypt on 5 June 1967 posed a deep dilemma for the Lebanese government, specifically as to whether or not to live up to its rhetoric and engage the Israeli army on the Lebanese front. The Prime Minister, Rashīd Karāmī, expressed his support for Egypt by declaring in parliament on the first day of the war that: "*What we expected has taken place. Israel began the battle by attacking the UAR this morning. It is natural for all Arab fronts to move, since there is only one armistice line and the battle is supposed to be joint and decisive. ... Lebanon is united with the Arab states and is committed to fulfilling its pledges. Lebanon should prove in these difficult days that it is capable of playing an effective role in the decisive battle.*"[61] However, President Shāril Ḥulw and the commander of the Lebanese army, General Imīl Bustānī, objected to any military activity against Israel, especially after it became clear that Tel Aviv had already won the war. In fact, the enormity of the Arab defeat made it unfeasible for Egypt or any other frontline state to question Lebanon for its absence from the war, since any Lebanese involvement would not have altered the outcome.[62]

In order to avoid alienating either the West or Egypt and other Arab states, Lebanon made cautious policy decisions in an attempt to balance these competing forces. The Lebanese government opted to follow Egypt into taking political action against the West for its alleged direct military support of Israel during the June war. The British and US ambassadors were asked to leave Beirut on 8 June 1967. However, the Lebanese government stopped short of

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[59] GOLAN, G. *Soviet Policies in the Middle East. From World War II to Gorbachev*, pp. 58 – 67.
[60] ERAN, O. *Soviet Middle East Policy 1967 – 1973*. In RABINOVICH, I., SHAKED, H. (eds.) *From June to October. The Middle East between 1967 and 1973*, p. 30; DAWISHA, K. *Soviet Foreign Policy towards Egypt*, pp. 42 – 43.
[61] Summary of World Broadcast, ME/A7, 7 June 1967.
[62] KALAWOUN, Nasser M. *The Struggle for Lebanon. A Modern History of Lebanese-Egyptian Relations*, p. 139.

severing Lebanon's diplomatic relations with these two states.[63] Furthermore, Shāril Ḥulw and Prime Minister Rashīd Karāmī showed their solidarity with Jamāl ᶜAbdannāṣir following Egypt's defeat by requesting that the Egyptian leader withdraw his resignation from the UAR presidency and return "to assume the leadership of the Arab march".[64]

The Arab summit at Khartoum which begun on 29 August 1967 was aimed at dealing with the problem of Israel's supremacy in the Middle East.[65] It made a number of important resolutions. First, the ending of the "Arab Cold War", as it was termed by Malcolm Kerr, was achieved between the regimes of "revolutionaries" and "reactionaries", since both camps now joined forces to wipe out the after-effects of the June war. As a result, Egypt agreed to withdraw its forces from North Yemen in a move calculated to appease Saudi Arabia. Secondly, the oil-rich Arab states of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Libya undertook to support the economies of Egypt and Jordan in order to compensate them for their war losses in economic and military terms. Thirdly, while adopting the radical principle towards Israel of "no peace, no negotiation, and no recognition", the summit endorsed the use of political and diplomatic means to regain Arab occupied territory.[66]

The Lebanese government did not, in fact, take any unilateral diplomatic steps to disengage from the implications of the Arab-Israeli conflict until Egypt itself adopted a pragmatic approach at the Khartoum summit on 31 August 1967. The Egyptian foreign minister, Maḥmūd Riyāḍ, said at a later stage that: *Although Egypt had severed relations with the US and maintained this policy, Jamāl ᶜAbdannāṣir did not ask the other Arab states to take the same step, especially those countries which enjoyed a traditional friendship with the US, Jamāl ᶜAbdannāṣir's aim was to keep an Arab door open for dialogue with the US.*[67] The Lebanese government acted immediately and returned its ambassadors to London and Washington in order to "serve the Arab cause in the diplomatic and information fields".[68] Moreover, a "sympathetic" tone was maintained towards Egypt's terms concerning the UN-sponsored political settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Egyptian defeat in the June war affected its relations with the various Lebanese groups. Despite its resignation from the "Arab Cold War" and its total absorption in the Arab-Israeli conflict, Egypt retained a strong

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[63] *Al-Ḥayāt*, Beirut, 10 June 1967.
[64] *Al-Ḥayāt*, Beirut, 11 June 1967.
[65] RIYĀḌ, Maḥmūd. *Mudhakkirāt Maḥmūd Riyāḍ, 1948 − 1978.* [The Memoirs of Maḥmūd Riyāḍ, 1948 − 1978]. Vol. I., p. 130.
[66] KERR, M. H. *The Arab Cold War. Gamal Abd al-Nasir and His Rivals, 1958 – 1970*, p. 129.
[67] RIAD, Mahmoud. *The Struggle for Peace in the Middle East*, p. 56.
[68] *Al-Ḥayāt*, Beirut, 7 and 8 September 1967.

presence in the Lebanese domestic political arena, at least until the death of Jamāl ʿAbdannāṣir on 28 September 1970.

In the course of 1968, the commando bases in South Lebanon were already being used for operations against Israel Lebanese security forces often intercepted them. The brave resistance of Palestinian units in March 1968 in cooperation with the Jordanian army at Karāma in Jordan to an Israeli ground attack inspired a fresh wave of recruitment to the Palestinian resistance movement and aroused a fresh burst of enthusiasm for the Palestinian cause among Lebanese radicals.[69] There were demonstrations led by the radical parties in Lebanon, which called for unrestricted freedom of activity for the Palestinian commando movement on Lebanese territory. Addressing one such demonstration, the Lebanese prime minister ʿAbdallāh al-Yāfī publicly pronounced himself in favour of removing all restrictions on the freedom of Palestinian commando activity (al-ʿamal al-fidā'ī) in the country, and thereby committed his successors in the *sunnī* premiership in Lebanon to uphold this position, to the serious embarrassment of President Shāril Ḥulw, the army command, and the whole Christian sector of the Lebanese establishment.[70]

It was while the Lebanese Republic was having its first experiences with the Palestinian commando movement on its territory that the parliamentary elections of 1968 took place. In preparation for these elections, the three Christian parties which were gravely concerned about the rapid growth of the commando movement in the country – Kamīl Shamʿūn's *Party of Liberal Patriots* (Ḥizb al-waṭanīyīn al-aḥrār), Raymond Iddah's *National Bloc*, and Pierre al-Jumayyil's *Phalangist Party* (Ḥizb al- Katā'ib) – came together to form a common Christian front which was called the *Triple Alliance* (al-Ḥilf ath-thulāthī), or more simply the *Alliance* (al-Ḥilf).[71] They promoted "Lebanese particularism" against pan-Arabism and rejected many compromises with those demands which *Shihābism* had been willing to accommodate. To the three leaders of the *Alliance*, and to Patriarch Būlus al-Maʿūshī who openly backed them, the activity of the Palestinian commando militias in Lebanon seriously threatened national security and stability.[72] At the external level, it exposed Lebanon to the danger of Israeli retaliation and possible Israeli occupation of parts of South Lebanon, which, apart from anything else, would alter the status of the Lebanese-Israeli border, turning it from a regular frontier to a mere armistice line. At the domestic level, the Muslim Lebanese seemed to be giving it their enthusiastic backing in the hope that it would serve as an instrument for

[69] GORDON, D. C. *The Republic of Lebanon. Nation in Jeopardy*, p. 92.

[70] SALIBI, Kamal S. *Crossroads to Civil War. Lebanon 1958 – 1976*, p. 35.

[71] ENTELIS, J. P. *Pluralism and Party Transformation in Lebanon: Al-Kata'ib, 1936 – 1970*, pp. 161 – 162.

[72] DAWISHA, A. *Syria and the Lebanese Crisis*, p. 21.

the promotion of Muslim power in the country at the expense of the traditionally established Christian prerogatives.[73] While no Muslim leader could openly support the Christian *Alliance* where its position on the Palestinian commando issue was concerned, a number of Muslim leaders, most notably Ṣā'ib Salām, backed the *Alliance* in its anti-*Shihābist* position without attempting to join its membership.

The electoral success of the *Alliance* in 1968, and the general approval with which this success was met among conservative Arab regimes, encouraged the Christian Lebanese to harden their position with respect to the activities of the Palestinian commando movement in the country.[74] At the end of 1968, Lebanon suffered the first large-scale Israeli retaliation in connection with the commando operations which had been launched from Lebanese territory. A band of Israeli commandos, arriving by helicopter from the direction of the sea, landed at the Beirut International Airport at night and blew up thirteen Lebanese civilian airliners which they found there on the runways.[75] In the wake of the Israeli attack on Beirut Airport, a general student strike was organized in Beirut and in other Lebanese cities, accompanied by popular demonstrations which backed the position taken by the radical parties. The radical leaders of the strike took advantage of the embarrassment caused to the Lebanese system by the airport affair to wage an all-out attack on this system, which they fully blamed for the demonstrated helplessness of Lebanon in the face of Israel's military might. The outcry raised by the strike and the accompanying demonstrations in Beirut had the immediate effect of prompting the resignation of the government of ᶜAbdallāh al-Yāfī;[76] and the strike and demonstrations continued until the end of January 1969.

Like ᶜAbdallāh al-Yāfī and other *sunnī* leaders, Rashīd Karāmī as prime minister could not dissociate himself from general Muslim sympathy and support for the Palestinian commando movement. In his ministerial address before parliament, he committed his government, in terms which were somewhat vague, to recognize "the legitimate right of the Palestinian people to struggle for the liberation of their homeland". At the same time, his government promised to study the question of introducing compulsory military service, and to take other measures to strengthen the Lebanese army for purposes of defence.[77] Rashīd Karāmī had barely completed two months in office, however, when his government began to face serious difficulties. In early April 1969,

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[73] SALIBI, Kamal S. *Crossroads to Civil War. Lebanon 1958 – 1976*, pp. 35 – 36.
[74] GILMOUR, D. *Lebanon. The Fractured Country*, p. 92.
[75] ODEH, B. J. *Lebanon: Dynamics of Conflict*, p. 109.
[76] SALIBI, Kamal S. *Crossroads to Civil War. Lebanon 1958 – 1976*, p. 39.
[77] RIZQ, Rizq. *Rashīd Karāmī as-siyāsī wa rajul ad-dawla* [Rashīd Karāmī Politician and Statesman], pp. 108 – 109.

most of the Palestinian commando organizations operating from Lebanon, Syria and Jordan were brought under a united *Armed Struggle Command* (Qiyādat al-kifāḥ al-musallaḥ) by the PLO. The emergence of this new Palestinian command was followed by a noted acceleration in the development of the commando movement in Lebanon, which resulted in a number of armed clashes between the Palestinian militias and the Lebanese army in South Lebanon. On 23 April 1969, trouble broke out in Sidon where the local Muslims and the Palestinians, backed by Kamāl Junbulāṭ and the radical parties, demonstrated in protest against the action which the Lebanese army was taking against the Palestinians' Armed Struggle.[78] The Lebanese security forces clashed with the demonstrators, among whom there were armed militiamen, and a number of the demonstrators were killed. Immediately, a curfew was imposed in Beirut and its suburbs to prevent repercussions there and the army was entrusted with the maintenance of order. The indignation of Muslim and radical opinion mounted ominously.[79]

The Palestinian resistance in Lebanon was perceived as a threat to the Lebanese *loyalists*, especially by the *Maronites*. Not only did the resistance provide a model for the oppressed Lebanese to follow, it was their only natural ally in the face of the state. These long neglected Lebanese masses in the south believed the state should protect their villages from Israeli raids and give support to the resistance in its struggle against the Zionist enemy. The state and the army, however, saw things differently. They proceeded to prepare to end the PLO threat. The polarization of Lebanon assumed dangerous proportions. Under pressure from the Christian leaders of the *Alliance*, from Patriarch Būlus al-Maᶜūshī, and from various Christian power groups, including the heads of the *Maronite* monastic orders who now made their first public appearance in a political role, President Shāril Ḥulw chose the occasion of the Lebanese Martyrs' Day (May 6)[80] to make a televised address to the Lebanese people in which he plainly stated that Lebanon could only support the rightful cause of Palestinian liberation within limits that guaranteed the continued sovereignty and security of the Lebanese Republic.[81] Rashīd Karāmī could not be expected to associate himself with such a policy, which reflected the Christian but not the Muslim position in the country over the issue involved. He therefore came forth with the thesis that the Palestinian commando activity on the territory of Lebanon could easily be made compatible with the sovereignty and security of

[78] ODEH, B. J. *Lebanon: Dynamics of Conflict*, p. 112.
[79] KHALIDI, Walid. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon: Confrontation in the Middle East*, p. 41.
[80] In Lebanon, Martyrs' Day commemorates the execution in Beirut of a group of local patriots by the Turkish military authorities in 1916.
[81] SALIBI, Kamal S. *Crossroads to Civil War. Lebanon 1958 – 1976*, p. 40.

the country, by introducing what he called *tansīq* (co-ordination) between the Lebanese army and the *Palestinian Armed Struggle Command*.[82]

The forces of the *Alliance* (mainly the Phalangist militia) instigated clashes with the Palestinian resistance forces which lasted until 29 March 1970. The clashes stopped on 31 March after mediation by the Libyan foreign minister. The March attack had another important cause: the *Phalangist Party* was eyeing the presidency in the August 1970 elections. These clashes rendered Pierre al-Jumayyil more attractive as a presidential candidate to most bourgeois sectors and fractions than either Raymond Iddah or Kamīl Shamᶜūn. However, as early as 1969, another *Maronite* personality had been working with the presidency in mind.[83] Sulaymān Franjīya did not join the *Alliance*, possibly because he did not consider it politically advantageous to associate himself with the distinctly Christian character which that tripartite political coalition had. Instead, he joined Ṣā'ib Salām, the *sunnī* leader of Beirut, and Kāmil al-Asᶜad, the foremost *shīᶜī* leader of South Lebanon, in another anti-*Shihābist* coalition which called itself the *Central Bloc* (Takattul al-wasaṭ). From the moment of its formation in 1969, this *Central Bloc* announced its opposition to the militarism of the *Nahj* and appeared to be a natural ally of the *Alliance*. Little wonder, then, that the *Alliance* leaders considered Sulaymān Franjīya, the *Maronite* member of the *Central Bloc*, as one of the five strong *Maronites* (Fu'ād Shihāb, Kamīl Shamᶜūn, Raymond Iddah and Pierre al-Jumayyil being the four others) acceptable for the presidency in 1970.[84]

When the elections were finally held, the race was between the *Shihābist* Ilyās Sarkīs and Sulaymān Franjīya. On 17 August 1970 the latter was elected by parliament with a majority of one.[85] The election results were good news for the Arab conservative regimes, who had begun to grow more wary of the Palestinian resistance and its influence on the Arab masses, and who welcomed a tough president they thought capable of dealing with the issue. The USA was also pleased by the defeat of the *Shihābists* because of their traditional closeness to France and Egypt.

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[82] RIZQ, Rizq. *Rashīd Karāmī as-siyāsī wa rajul ad-dawla*, pp. 109 – 112.
[83] ODEH, B. J. *Lebanon: Dynamics of Conflict*, p. 112.
[84] SALIBI, Kamal S. *Crossroads to Civil War. Lebanon 1958 – 1976*, p. 49.
[85] ODEH, B. J. *Lebanon: Dynamics of Conflict*, p. 114.

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