

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

NEUTRALITY COUPLED WITH DECENTRALIZATION AS
A STRATEGY TO COUNTER INSTABILITY AND
INTERVENTION: THE CASE OF SWITZERLAND AND
ITS APPLICABILITY TO LEBANON

by
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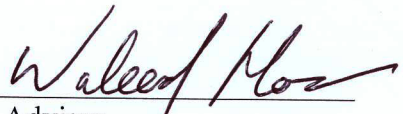
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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Title: Neutrality Coupled with Decentralization as a Strategy to Counter Instability and Intervention: The Case of Switzerland and its Applicability to Lebanon.

This paper addresses neutrality coupled with decentralization as a strategy to counter instability and intervention for the case of Switzerland and its applicability to Lebanon.

Switzerland is ethnically, religiously and linguistically diverse and it has in the past experienced internal strife, civil and regional war and foreign occupation. In the context of it being a confederation earlier on in its history and then finally a “loose” federation in recent centuries, Switzerland strove to implement neutrality as a strategy against instability and intervention. This coupling of neutrality with a decentralized structure enabled it to stay unified, stable and indeed prosper despite the surrounding conflicts including two world wars in the last century.

In many respects Lebanon resembles historical Switzerland in terms of its internal diversity, its geographic size and location within a tense and turbulent geo-political system. Lebanon, a highly penetrated and religiously and politically fragmented country, has been, apart from intermittent periods of relative calm, in a state of ongoing instability and insecurity since its establishment in 1920. Over the course of almost 100 years Pacts, Agreements and their modifications, within the context of a centralized consociational, or more specifically confessional, political system have failed to achieve the desired result of enduring stability and security.

Given these ongoing failures, a proposed solution for Lebanon to achieve internal stability and security and to minimize regional and international intervention is neutrality coupled with decentralization with the case of Switzerland providing a supporting argument.

Though neutrality and decentralization have been previously addressed and recommended as solutions independent of each other, what is new here is the argument that for Lebanon as an internally divided country within the context of a turbulent and polarized geo-political environment, success in achieving stability and security is best achieved by the application of both neutrality and decentralization as a complementary solution - neutrality to shield the country from external threats and decentralization to attenuate internal tensions that would otherwise lead to external intervention.

CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
ABSTRACT	vi
LIST OF TABLES	ix
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
A. Background.....	1
B. Research Question	3
C. Hypotheses.....	3
D. Thesis Organization	4
II. LEBANON AND REGION.....	6
III. NEUTRALITY AND DECENTRALIZATION	12
A. Neutrality	12
1. Definition.....	12
2. Evolution.....	14
3. Lebanon and Neutrality	16
B. Decentralization.....	16
1. Description.....	17
2. What type of decentralization for Lebanon?	19
IV. INSTABILITY AND INTERVENTION.....	21
A. Relation between Instability and Intervention.....	21
B. General Parameters of instability	24

V.	SWITZERLAND CASE.....	28
	A. Switzerland’s Stability, Independence and Neutrality–A Historical Perspective.....	28
	B. Instability/Intervention-Decentralization/Neutrality Relation for Switzerland.....	37
VI.	LEBANON CASE.....	39
	A. Root Cause of Instability in Lebanon.....	39
	B. Recommendation.....	43
	1. Decentralization.....	44
	2. Neutrality.....	45
	C. Challenges.....	47
	1. Internally.....	48
	2. Externally.....	48
	D. Favourable Outcomes.....	49
VII.	CONCLUSION.....	51
	BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	54

TABLES

Table	Page
1. Excerpt from Political Stability Composite Index	24

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A house divided against itself cannot stand.

- **Abraham Lincoln**

A. Background

Given Lebanon's internal "mosaic" and associated confessional political system coupled with its geopolitical context whenever there are regional turbulences more often than not the country is directly negatively impacted. This reality is due to Lebanon being a small and fragmented country which is highly penetrated by both regional and international actors. Furthermore the internal divisions as Salem points out have resulted in, and have been a result of, the ongoing establishment of opposing external alliances, be they regional or international.¹

Ever since Lebanon's establishment in 1920, problems - either homegrown or regional - have led to crisis and war on Lebanese soil. Leading up to the creation of Lebanon, the King Crane Commission Report² in 1919 highlighted the dissatisfaction of a large percentage of the population, mainly Muslim, were it to be separated from Syria. The 1958 crisis and the 1975 civil war highlighted the shortcomings of the National

¹ Paul Salem. (1994). "Reflections on Lebanon's Foreign Policy". In: Dierdre Collings, ed. *Peace for Lebanon? From War to Construction*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 69.

² Henry C. King and Charles R. Crane, (1919). The King-Crane Commission Report, 28 August; available from <http://www.atour.com/government/un/20040205g.html>; Internet; accessed 20 September, 2015.

Pact³. The 2005 Hariri assassination, the 2006 war and the Syrian war which started in 2011 all highlighted the local and regional Sunni-Shia divide.

The latest crisis is the war in neighboring Syria which started in 2011 and is still ongoing. This conflict in Syria has resulted in Lebanon once again being polarized with increased tensions leading to further destabilization of the country and the ongoing risk of a spillover from the neighboring country's conflict.

With Lebanese sub-state actor involvement directly in the Syrian war calls are renewed for a position of neutrality from the conflict. Indeed prior to the official announcement by sub-state actors of involvement on the ground in Syria, the President of Lebanon gathered together all the diverse political actors, as represented in the National Dialogue Committee, who with unanimity signed an agreement known as the "Baabda Declaration"⁴, for Lebanon to be neutral from regional conflicts generally and the Syrian civil war specifically.

The close linkages between the different internal actors and the regional players as regional geo-politics plays out has arguably led to a near complete breakdown of the country's institutions with the Presidency vacant for almost two years as of the writing of this paper and with the Parliament inactive and the Council of Ministers paralyzed.

³ The National Pact was a compromise agreement between the Lebanese sects which served as the basis for independence. It established political power on the basis of a confessional system whereby the President is Maronite, the Prime Minister is Sunni and the Speaker of the House is Shi'aa. Part of the agreement was that the Christians would not look to the west for support and the Moslems would abandon ambitions of joining a Syrian or an Arab state. Parliament was divided between Christians and Moslems on the basis of 6/5.

⁴ Lebanese National Dialogue Committee. (2012). "Baabda Declaration". Beirut, 11 June, articles 12 and 13; available from <http://www.presidency.gov.lb/Arabic/News/Pages/Details.aspx?nid=14483>; Internet; accessed 11 October, 2015.

Clearly the internal divisions in the country coupled with regional cleavages keep the country in an unstable state and highlights that maintaining the status quo internally and vis-à-vis the region will only lead to further tensions in the country, adversely impacting on not only security and politics but also the economic situation.

B. Research Question

The central question to this paper is what action can to be taken to address the instability and insecurity in a country like Lebanon, a fragmented and highly penetrated country within a turbulent geo-political system, without compromising its democratic nature?

Addressing a country problematic like Lebanon is consciously framed within the context of it retaining its democratic identity and as a consequence achieving harmonious multi-sectarian coexistence otherwise possibilities are opened up for external power control and occupation and/or internal sub-state actor domination – scenarios that Lebanon is not unfamiliar with throughout its almost 100 year history.

C. Hypotheses

It is the argument of this paper that for a fragmented and polarized country like Lebanon in an equally polarized and turbulent geo-political environment, neutrality coupled with decentralization offers a solution for mitigating internal instability and external intervention. In the geo-political context in question neutrality addresses the threat from without and decentralization addresses the threat from within. It is further argued that there is a causal relation between internal instability and external intervention and that by addressing in the first instance internal instability then external intervention is mitigated.

It is therefore the argument that neutrality and decentralization offer a complementary solution for a country like Lebanon given the geo-political cleavages exacerbated by their mirroring internally and given the internal fragmentation predisposing the country to indigenous sectarian political struggles for control of the centralized political and institutional system. Historical Switzerland, given its heterogeneous and decentralized makeup within the context of a once turbulent geo-political system, presents as the most relevant and successful example of a country that applied neutrality as a strategy to reach stability and security.

Though neutrality and decentralization have been independently suggested as solutions, what is new in this argument is that both elements need to be a part of a tightly coupled solution - one element cannot succeed without the other – for a case like Lebanon.

D. Thesis Organization

In Chapter II, background is provided on Lebanon with associated political actors in the context of its geo-political system with its associated cleavages.

In Chapter III, neutrality is introduced highlighting its flexibility and adaptability followed by an introduction of decentralization and the different forms that it takes in order to link them in with instability and intervention for cases like Switzerland and Lebanon in the following Chapter.

Chapter IV establishes a relation between instability and intervention for Lebanon and includes factors that lead to instability.

Chapter V investigates Switzerland's instability and intervention within the context of an historic narrative and how its strategy of neutrality coupled with decentralization was able to address it.

Chapter VI investigates Lebanon's instability and intervention and its root causes as a precursor to applying neutrality and decentralization as a solution with the Switzerland case used as a supporting argument.

Chapter VI, in concluding neutrality and decentralization are suggested as a solution to mitigate instability, insecurity and intervention for a state like the Lebanon. Though neutrality and decentralization have been recommended independently in the past for Lebanon what this new here is that neutrality and decentralization are suggested as a coupled solution.

CHAPTER II

LEBANON AND REGION

This chapter highlights Lebanon, a fragmented and unstable country, in its turbulent geo-political context. The internal and external cleavages are identified and the relations between them are put into perspective.

On 11 June 2012 and under the patronage of President of Lebanon the Baabda Declaration was agreed upon and signed by the National Dialogue Committee. Importantly articles 12 and 13⁵ of the Declaration stressed the need to keep Lebanon neutral from regional conflicts generally and the ongoing Syrian conflict specifically. The Syrian conflict which has deteriorated into a bloody civil war had its beginnings in the southern city of Deraa when school children were arrested in March 2011⁶ and reportedly tortured after writing on a wall the slogan “The people want the downfall of the regime”. This slogan came on the back of events in Tunisia where the self-immolation of a street vendor named Mohamed Bouazizi⁷ in a rural town on 17 December 2010 sparked a wave of protests that within a month brought down the Tunisian President Ben Ali and ignited a wave of pro-democracy/anti-regime protests throughout the Middle East and over time exacerbated the polarization of the region. The arrival of ISIS on the geo-political scene with their desires for a caliphate and arguably their exploitation by regional actors to serve geo-political ends would further

⁵ Lebanese National Dialogue Committee, 2012.

⁶ BBC News Middle East. (2012). Guide: Syria Crisis, 9 April; available from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-13855203>; Internet; accessed 20 November, 2015.

⁷ Mohamed Bouazizi. Encyclopedia Britannica; available from <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1753077/Mohamed-Bouazizi>; Internet; accessed 14 November, 2015.

complicate the situation and drag in international powers.

In that context, the call for neutrality as reflected in the Baabda declaration underscored the risks associated with specifically the Syrian and generally the regional polarization spilling over into Lebanon given a local political divide which dates back to the time of the assassination of Prime Minister Rafic El Hariri in February 2005. At the time of the assassination Lebanon was polarized in its sentiments towards Syria leading for the main part into a Sunni/Christian March 14 labeling (reference to anti-Syrian demonstrations that took place on 14 March 2005) and a predominantly Shi'aa March 8 labeling (reference to pro-Syrian demonstrations that took place on 8 March 2005).

With Syrian tutelage no longer present national cleavages began to resurface and sub-state actors re-utilized previously suppressed freedoms spontaneously and sometimes without consideration for State positions or concerns – July 2006 war being a case in point – and competed to put their mark on Lebanese foreign policy⁸. Despite the national unification around Hezbollah during the July 2006 war this predominantly Sunni/Shi'aa divide – or as Valbjorn and bank argue a divide of a “pro- and anti-US orientation”⁹ would continue till the present day with increased polarization in tandem with the increased polarization in the geo-political system as a result of unfolding regional events and especially the neighboring Syria conflict.

The Middle East geopolitical system consists of on the one hand the western backed “moderates” and on the other hand the “resistance”. The “moderates” included the United States, Saudi Arabia, the GCC, Jordan, Israel, and the March 14 alliance in

⁸ Bahgat Korany and Ali Dessouki. (2008). *The Art of the impossible: The Foreign Policy of Lebanon. The Foreign Policies of Arab States*. Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 308.

⁹ Valbjorn and Bank. (2007). *Signs of a New Arab Cold War*. Middle East Report 242, 7.

Lebanon. Importantly with the exception of March 14 all the Arab states in the grouping were autocratic regimes, Sunni and not explicitly anti-Israel. Of note also March 14 included the Sunni element of Lebanon as mentioned previously. These Sunni Arab states were marked, amongst other domestic factors, by a schism between the regimes and their populations' vis-à-vis the Israel-Palestinian issue and by extension vis-à-vis the United States government for its bias towards Israel and its actions in the region.

The “resistance” included state actors Iran, Syria, Shi’aa Iraq and non-state actors Hezbollah and Hamas. Amongst other agendas their ideological struggle in support of Palestinian rights and Palestinian statehood formed the basis of an anti-US/Israel front. Of note is the fact that Iran is a non-Arab Shi’aa state. The Syrian regime by contrast is Alawite, an offshoot of Shi’aa, forming approximately 10% of the population with the overwhelming majority being Sunni with more than 70% of the population. The non-state actor Hezbollah is Shi’aa with close ties to Iran and by contrast the non-state actor Hamas is Sunni. The “resistance” is marked by an alignment between the regimes/leaders and their populations' in that they are pro-Palestinian in the Israel-Palestinian conflict and anti US for its biased position in favor of Israel against the Palestinians and for its role generally in the region. At the international level the “resistance” axis counts on Russia, and to lesser China, for support especially in relation to the ongoing Syrian crisis.

The deepening crisis in Syria, with its political polarization reflecting that of the region, continues to feed and amplify the polarization and subsequent instability in Lebanon. Furthermore Lebanese sub-state actors have acted independently with their rhetoric and with their action on the ground both inside Lebanon and inside Syria with disregard for the Baabda Declaration - Hezbollah publicly confirming its presence in

Syria and direct involvement in the conflict¹⁰. The lack of unity around the Baabda Declaration and the disregard for the State's position by sub-state actors in times of heightened tensions arguably highlights the shortcomings in the Lebanese political system rendering it arguably as a weak state.

The current Lebanese political system has its roots in an unwritten agreement known as the National Pact which was the precursor for independence in 1943. The National Pact itself perpetuated a confessional system, which had its origins in the Mutasarrifiate of Mount Lebanon, by dividing power on the basis of confessional proportionality. The National Pact gave priority at the time to the Maronites, the demographically dominant group on the basis of a 1932 consensus and the driving force behind the creation of Greater Lebanon "by the French colonial power in 1920"¹¹, but never factored in the changing dynamics. As importantly an integral part of the Pact, which was drawn up primarily between the Maronite and Sunni elite, was that the Christians would not look to the west and specifically France for aid and support and in return the Moslems would lay to rest any ambitions of unification with a Syrian or Arab state. This double negation suggested "some form of nonalignment or neutrality" as Paul Salem puts and which he argued "was a principal theme of Lebanese foreign policy over the decades"¹².

The questionable and unstable basis for the National Pact meant that when the

¹⁰ Wassim Mroueh and Thomas El-Basha. (2013). Hezbollah confirms heavily involved in Syria conflict. *The Daily Star*, 25 May; available from <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Politics/2013/May-25/218352-hezbollah-says-fighting-in-syria-opposes-importing-crisis-to-lebanon.ashx#axzz2qYWYLuZq>; Internet; accessed 20 October, 2015.

¹¹ Oren Barak. (2003). "Lebanon: Failure Collapse and Resuscitation". *Robert I. Rotberg's State Failure and State Weakness in a Time of Terror*. Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 305.

¹² Salem, 1994, 72.

country was exposed to regional turbulence coupled with internal dissatisfaction emanating arguably from the confessional system it inevitably led to crisis and war. This was the case in 1958 when the conflict exposed the internal divisions and fragilities as a result of the diametrically opposed “pro-West and pro-Arab nationalist”¹³ positions and the external realpolitik in the context of the cold war being played out between the US and the Soviet Union. This was also the case in 1975 when an all-out civil war broke out dragging in internal, regional and international actors and turning the country into a battleground for regional geo-politics¹⁴.

Salibi by the end of the 1975-1990 Civil War argues that though “The two sides remain in strong disagreement on how the Lebanese Republic ought to be generally interpreted and run; both sides, certainly at the level of the hard core, appear to have become equally convinced that there can be no viable alternative to Lebanon as territorially constituted.”¹⁵ In light of the failures, in Khazen’s analysis of the National Pact the open question was and still is: “how to bring stability to Lebanon, satisfy all parties to the conflict, attenuate destabilizing regional influences, and find a new equilibrium in a revised National Pact?”¹⁶

Importantly the Taif agreement, which was signed in November 1989 and which ended the Civil War in Lebanon, attempted to address the shortcomings in the

¹³ Erika Alin. (1996). US Policy and Military Intervention in the 1958 Lebanon Crisis. *The Middle East and the United States*. David W. Lesch. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 123.

¹⁴ David Hirst. (2010). *Beware of Small States: Lebanon, Battleground of the Middle East*. New York: Persus Books Group, 103.

¹⁵ Kamal S. Salibi. (1988). *House of Many Mansions*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 220.

¹⁶ Farid El-Khazen. (1991). *The Communal Pact of National Identities: The Making and Politics of the 1943 National Pact*. Oxford: Center for Lebanese Studies, 66.

National Pact and the grievances raised by the Lebanese National Movement at the start of the 1975 war by redistributing power in favor of the Moslems. The ratio in parliament was now on the basis of 50/50 instead of 6/5 between the Christians and the Moslems and certain powers were taken away from the President and vested in the Council of Ministers. However with continually changing demographics in the country and a lack of progress in fully implementing the Taif there continues to be political unrest.

As the present set of circumstances reflect the status quo is not sustainable. The vacuum in the presidency which has been ongoing for almost two years, an inactive parliament that has twice illegally extended for itself, and a paralyzed council of ministers is leading the country to an economic collapse if not a security one. In the meantime major actors in the country arguably wait for developments and outcomes in the region which is polarized by a Saudi-Iranian balance of power axis.

In conclusion a fragmented Lebanon with cleavages and alliances reflecting those of the region magnifies the internal instability and the external intervention which leads to the investigation of these two aspects and their relation to neutrality and decentralization in the following two chapters.

CHAPTER III

NEUTRALITY AND DECENTRALIZATION

As there are different variations of neutrality and decentralization this chapter serves to provide an overview of the concepts and options leading to the application of the relevant options to the cases in this paper. The chapter commences with an overview of neutrality and then proceeds to decentralization before wrapping up with a conclusion.

A. Neutrality

As a key element in the paper and in the mitigation of external intervention this section starts off by defining neutrality and follows by introducing the different forms that it takes. It argues that there is still currency for neutrality generally despite the fact that this is an age of collective security and international institutions. The section rounds off with a discussion of the different forms of neutrality suited to cases like Lebanon.

1. Definition

Nicolas Politis in *Neutrality and Peace* designates Neutrality as “*the condition of that State which, while war is being carried on between two or more States, remains outside of the struggle and strives to preserve with each of the belligerents, so far as is possible, the normal relations which it maintained with them before.*”¹⁷

Roderick Ogley in *The Theory and Practice of Neutrality in the Twentieth*

¹⁷ Nicolas Politis. (1935). *Neutrality and Peace*. Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 3.

Century makes reference to four different types of neutrality¹⁸ – Neutralization, Traditional/Permanent Neutral, Ad-hoc Neutral and non-Aligned. Neutralization implies that neutrality has been imposed on a state by international agreement – Austria is the classical example of a neutralized state. Traditional or Permanent Neutral implies the country out of choice, typically out of tradition, is neutral – the obvious example here is Switzerland which is the oldest neutral state. An Ad-hoc neutral is a state that chooses to be neutral for a particular war. Finally Non-Aligned is about working to avert a war as opposed to keeping out of one.

Hence for neutrality to have any meaning in the classical sense a country maintaining a position of neutrality must be in the midst of at least two other warring countries. Furthermore a balance of power geo-political system provides the most typical environment that a neutral state historically was immersed in. Historically is emphasized here because neutrality in contemporary times is often analyzed or scrutinized through a western lens and the argument put forward is that since there is collective security and the United Nations and since there is no longer a balance-of-power Europe then neutrality is void of meaning. By contrast looking through a Middle East lens for example, the same rationalization does not hold and a balance of power reality within an anarchic Middle East system provides the classic context for the viability of a neutral state - especially a weak state like Lebanon whose cleavages mirror those of the region.

¹⁸ Roderick Ogley. (1970). *The Theory and Practice of Neutrality in the Twentieth Century*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 2.

2. Evolution

Neutrality has its legal roots in Hugo Grotius' "The Law of War and Peace in Three Books (1625) [De Jure Belli ac Pacis Libris Tres]" in the section "On Those Who Are of Neither Side in War"¹⁹. Approximately three centuries later neutrality was given legal status through codification at the Hague Conference in 1907 which remains to this present day the key reference point for State neutrality. Of note Hague V²⁰ spelled out the Rights and Duties of Neutral Powers and Persons in Case of War on Land and Hague XIII²¹ defined the Rights and Duties of Neutral Powers in Naval War. Importantly Hague V (Articles 6 and 14) imply that a neutral State is protected from independent actions by its citizens that are unsanctioned by the State itself.

Balance of Power Europe in the 19th and early 20th century provided an environment conducive to the establishment of neutral States just as a balance of power Middle East of present day provides justification for neutrality especially for weak and fragmented States.

On the down side apart from the pressures of international institutions neutrality by itself presents its own problems. A state that announces its neutrality is still at the mercy of the belligerents. If belligerents see it in their interest to invade and

¹⁹ Hugo Grotius. (1625). *The Law of War and Peace in Three Books*. De Jure Belli ac Pacis Libris Tres. Translated 1925, Book 3, Chapter 17, Section 1; available from <http://lonang.com/library/reference/grotius-law-war-and-peace/gro-317/>; Internet; accessed 2 July, 2015.

²⁰ Hague Conference of 1907. (1907a). *Laws of War: Rights and Duties of Neutral Powers and Persons in Case of War on Land (Hague V)*. Avalon Law, Yale University, 18 October; available from http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hague05.asp/; Internet; accessed 2 July, 2015.

²¹ Hague Conference of 1907. (1907b). *Laws of War: Rights and Duties of Neutral Powers in Naval War (Hague XIII)*[available from http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hague13.asp/; Internet; accessed 2 July, 2015.

there is no balance-of-power configuration then no international agreement will be able to defend a neutral state. This was the case with Belgium amongst other countries in World War II and was also the case with Swiss confederacy during the Napoleonic wars. Hence realities on the ground require a more pragmatic approach as a neutral state with the acknowledgement that there will be encroachments on the strict ruling of neutrality. Neutral states such as Switzerland accept that reality and adapt with the circumstances.

In summary the international system has evolved from one of a European balance of power configuration and the right to wage war to one of international institutions and the resolution of conflicts by peaceful means. With that evolution and despite problematic issues, state neutrality far from being made obsolete has shown resilience and continues to take its place in the presence of international institutions. Arguably this is a reflection of the reality that the world is still an anarchic system despite the presence of international institutions. Examples such as Switzerland, which despite having joined the UN and despite being under international obligation, remain permanently neutral and make the case that the law of neutrality still has currency. The concept of neutrality furthermore is not a case of one size fits all. Neutral states exhibit flexibility in dealing with realities on the ground. An ad-hoc neutral may be neutral in one case and an active partisan in another. As Ogely points out, *“States –politicians that is – see questions of neutrality and partisanship not in terms of a theory of neutrality, but in terms of the merits (as they see them) of the issue in question; or more cynically in terms of their own interests”*²²

²² Ogley 1970, 8.

3. Lebanon and Neutrality

In the case of Lebanon, a polarized country, which is situated in a turbulent and cleavaged geo-political environment it is proposed that a road map be laid out towards permanent neutrality. A starting point would be a position of ad-hoc neutrality especially in the face of a divided country like a Syria which is engulfed in war and more generally a divided Middle East with cleavages mirrored in Lebanon itself. Furthermore, Lebanon's extensive and international links would make it an ideal location as the regional holder of good offices - were it to acquire permanent neutrality. Even before it were to start off on the road to international legal recognition as a permanently neutral state there is nothing to prevent it from functioning in a neutral manner and acquire credibility gradually for its stances and actions. Lebanon's starting point in this direction is the Baabda declaration²³ which has been signed by all concerned parties but is in anticipation of unanimity in execution.

B. Decentralization

In the mitigation of internal instability our second critical component presented in no order of priority is decentralization. Decentralization takes many different forms and this section will start by defining decentralization and describing the different forms and then follow up with an identification of the form of decentralization suited to cases like Lebanon.

²³ Lebanese National Dialogue Committee, 2012.

1. Description

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines decentralization as *“the dispersion or distribution of functions and powers; specifically: the delegation of power from a central authority to regional and local authorities”*²⁴

In the context of this paper, government decentralization can have both a political dimension and also an administrative dimension. It can relate to moving authority down a functional hierarchy or it can be geographical in nature redistributing power away from a central location to the regions of the entity in question.

Whereas political decentralization is about *“the transfer of political authority to the local level through the establishment of elected local government”*²⁵, administrative decentralization is about *“the transfer of responsibility for planning, financing and management of public functions from the centre to subordinate units of government agencies, semi-autonomous public authorities, corporations or regional authorities.”*²⁶

Whether it be political or administrative decentralization the form that it takes can be dilute or it can have a high degree of autonomy for the regions. The weakest form is known as deconcentration and in this case the central government “disperses

²⁴ Definition of decentralization; available from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/decentralization>; Internet; accessed 9 April, 2016.

²⁵ Noha El-Mikawy and Claudia Melim-McLeod. (2010). “Lebanon: Local Governance in Complex Environments Project Assessment.” UNDP, 12; available from <http://www.undp.org/content/dam/aplaws/publication/en/publications/democratic-governance/dgttf-/lebanon-promotion-of-decentralization-and-local-governance-an-assessment/DGTTTF%20Lebanon.pdf>; Internet; accessed 9 April, 2016.

²⁶ Ibid., 12.

responsibilities... [without the]... transfer of authority”²⁷ to the districts. An intermediate form is known as delegation and in this case the central government “*transfers decision making responsibility while retaining supervisory powers at the center*”²⁸. Finally there is devolution in which case the central government “*transfers authority for decision-making... to elected bodies with some degree of local autonomy ...[and where] ...local governments have legally recognized geographical boundaries over which they exercise authority*”²⁹.

In transferring from a centralized to decentralized form of governance Dillinger and Fay argue that decentralization is able to “foster political stability and economic development” and that “strategies aimed at stopping decentralization are unlikely to succeed...[as]...pressures to decentralize are beyond government control”³⁰. In the case of heterogeneous countries, in addition to increased efficiency, transparency and productivity the purpose of decentralization is to mitigate some form of prejudice inherent in the centralized political system. This prejudice can be ethnic based or religious based or it can be some form of monopolization and exploitation of the centralized political system by a political oligarchy, sectarian or otherwise, effectively marginalizing all that are not a part of the political elite. Such prejudices in the system in heterogeneous countries can result in cleavages along religious or ethnic lines,

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ El-Mikawy and Melim-McLeod, 2010, 12.

³⁰ William Dillinger and Marianne Fay. (1999). “From Centralized to Decentralized Governance”. *Finance and Development-IMF* 36(4)(December); available from <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/1999/12/dillinger.htm>; Internet; accessed 12 April, 2016.

amongst others, and potentially lead to “religious...[or]...ethno-political conflict”.³¹

2. What type of decentralization for Lebanon?

In the case of Lebanon, the centralized confessional political system with its inbuilt sectarian prejudices has on the one hand resulted in an ongoing power struggle between the different sectarian groups³² contributing to the destabilization of the country. On the other hand it has led to a monopolization of the centralized system by sectarian Zu'aama resulting in the undermining of the institutions and propagating a political elite self-interest service through clientalism ultimately leading to civil discontent and unrest. It is these forms of internal destabilization that decentralization can play a part in mitigating.

In this case administrative decentralization based on devolution at a district level which is large enough to minimize the complexities associated with a large number of districts at the national level but small enough so as not to dilute the specificities of the region. For example for the case of Lebanon the Mohafaza might be considered too large an area and hence the specificities will be drowned out here and the sub-Qada area might result in an unmanageable number of districts leading to the Qada being an optimal choice as a first approximation. The optimal decentralization structure is a matter of greater investigation and delving into greater detail here is beyond the

³¹ Bruce Russett, Harvey Starr and David Kinsella. (2010). “Ethnic Conflict-World Politics, the Menu for Choice. Wadsworth, 212.

³² Though the confessional system originally served the interests of the Maronites who dominated it, the end of the 1975-1990 civil war and Taif brought with it a Sunni prominence until the assassination of Rafic El Hariri following which the Shi'aa sect raised to prominence primarily through Hezbollah.

scope of this paper but in all cases a draft law³³ has already been submitted³⁴ though not yet passed³⁵, focuses on the Qada as the district size.

Suffice to say that by administratively empowering the regions of countries like Lebanon through decentralization the citizens of the respective regions will have greater control over their destiny on the one hand and the struggle by sub-state actors for domination at the national level will be diluted on the other. Such an approach contributes to the stabilization of the country politically and economically and enables creativity and diversity of approaches at the regional level. Empowerment at the regional level also reduces real or perceived inequities associated with a centralized government especially in the context of a heterogeneous society.

This chapter provided an overview of neutrality and decentralization as two key components that contribute to the stability and security of the heterogeneous state. It delved into their different variations and their currency in the current era. It also identified the key forms of both that have relevance for this paper and specifically that will be linked with instability and intervention in the following chapter.

³³ Draft administrative decentralization law for Lebanon law submitted in April 2014; available from <http://www.decentralization-lb.org/PDF/MACHROU3%20ALKANOUN.pdf>; Internet; accessed 12 February, 2016.

³⁴ Draft decentralization law submitted in April 2014 during President Michel Suleiman's mandate; available from <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Apr-03/252126-sleiman-launches-long-awaited-bill-to-decentralize-government.ashx>; Internet; accessed 11 February, 2016.

³⁵ Renewed push for decentralization bills; available from <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Jul-17/264142-renewed-push-for-decentralization-bills-passage.ashx>; Internet; accessed 11 February, 2016.

CHAPTER IV

INSTABILITY AND INTERVENTION

This Chapter starts with a theoretical look at instability and intervention and looks for a causal relation between the two. It then investigates parameters of instability and intervention with a view to identifying fundamental underlying causes.

A. Relation between Instability and Intervention

From a theoretical perspective if the minimum starting point for a State to be stable is one where, as Weber puts it, the State possesses a “monopoly on the legitimate use of force” and where, as Waltz points out, it is demarcated from the anarchical structure of the international system, then the state of Lebanon has failed on both accounts. Neither does the government have monopoly on the use of force nor is there a clear demarcation from the anarchical system within which it resides. On the basis of these basic requirements, or lack thereof, Lebanon is currently arguably unstable.

Indeed the porous boundaries, be they political or physical, freely allowing external intervention and the sub-state actor struggle for centralized power and domination makes Lebanon more like a miniature Waltzian anarchic system semi-fused in the larger “Middle East anarchic subsystem”³⁶ than an insulated Weberian state. The possession of arms by sub-state actor Hezbollah, the involvement of opposing sub-state actors directly or indirectly in the current Syrian War and indeed even the waiting for a green light from external powers for the election of a President are symptoms of this reality. With the virtual erosion of the state there is an internal balance of power

³⁶ Raymond Hinnebusch. (2002). “Introduction: The Analytical Framework”. In: Hinnebusch and Ehteshami’s *The Foreign Policies of the Middle East*. Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1.

configuration between the sub-state actors contending for domination of state power and foreign policy influence.

Given then this instability of Lebanon within the context of the regional turbulence, there is an ongoing debate as to whether it is a country's internal instability that leads to external intervention or alternatively it is external intervention arguably driven by ambitions for regional influence that leads to internal instability.

In the case of Lebanon, many a Lebanese would like to argue that Lebanon is the victim of its geographical circumstances in a rough regional neighbourhood with external powers constantly having hegemonic designs on Lebanon which frequently triggers external interference leading to internal instability. This is reflected amongst others by Ghassan Tuani who in the midst of the Lebanese 1970-1990 civil war argued "A War of the Others"³⁷ on Lebanese soil. Adam Saouli also argues that it is the external environment which leads to internal instability claiming that there is a "*causal relation between intensity of regional conflict and stability in Lebanon*"³⁸ and that as the regional or external conflict increases in instability regional powers with the aim of shifting the regional balance in their favour "*sought to tilt the domestic balance in Lebanon ... [which] usually led to internal instability*".³⁹

By contrast Gregory Gause III argues that the interaction between the Middle East geo-political region and Lebanon is a bottom-up dynamic in that the "*weakness or breakdown of state authority creates domestic political vacuums into which outsiders*

³⁷ Ghassan Tuani. (1985). *Une Guerre Pour les Autres (A War of Others)*.

³⁸ Adham Saouli. (2006). "Stability under Late State Formation: the Case of Lebanon". *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 19(4)(December), 707.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 708.

are drawn”⁴⁰. Oren Barak also looks to “internal explanations for situations of extreme political disorder”⁴¹. Along the same lines Marie Joelle Zahar argues that it is the internal failings that make the Lebanese state vulnerable to insecurity and “*not simply a passive matter of fate, determined outside its borders*”⁴², that is to say it is internal insecurity that leads to external intervention and not the other way around. She speculates that the Lebanese state was perhaps designed weak to protect the strength and autonomy of the Lebanese confessional communities making it a source of vulnerability and stresses the need to build a strong state to protect it from the external environment. The question of course is how does one build a strong Lebanese state given the current political structure and the communal politics that monopolizes the State’s affairs? Indeed it is a catch 22, in that in order to build a strong state it is arguably necessary to overhaul the political structure but by the same token those assigned with that responsibility have no interest but to maintain a weak state in order to hold on to their position of privilege within the context of a system of confessional clientelism.

As a general rule, it is the argument of this paper that for countries like Lebanon it is the internal instability that leads to external intervention and not the other way round and hence any solution must start with addressing the internal factors before turning one’s attention to the external factors. The 1958 civil war and the 1975 civil war, which led to the revision of the national pact in what came to be known as the Taif

⁴⁰ F. Gregory Gause III. (2014). “Beyond Sectarianism: The New Middle East Cold War.” Brookings Doha Center Analysis Paper No.11, July, 8.

⁴¹ Barak, 2003, 307.

⁴² Marie-Joëlle Zahar. (2012). “Foreign Interventions, Power Sharing and the Dynamics of Conflict and Coexistence in Lebanon.” In: *Michael Kerr and Are Knudsen* (eds.), *Lebanon: After the Cedar Revolution*. London: Hurst, 63.

Agreement, bear testimony to this fact.

B. General Parameters of instability

To identify sources of instability we can draw on the Political Stability composite index⁴³ provided by the World Bank and the Global Economy for an initial indication. An extract from the composite index for year 2014 is presented in the following table.

Table 1. Excerpt from Political Stability Composite Index

Country	Ranking
Switzerland	12
Belgium	54
...	...
Lebanon	178
Iraq	187
Yemen	189
Syria	191

Source: The World Bank and the Global Economy (2014). The GlobalEconomy.com, The World Bank; available from http://www.theglobaleconomy.com/rankings/wb_political_stability/; Internet; accessed 15 April, 2016.

From the table, the higher the ranking there more unstable the country is. The index was compiled for 191 countries and Syria not surprisingly is the most unstable country in the list.

⁴³ The index is a composite measure as it is based on several other indexes from multiple sources including the Economist Intelligence Unit, the World Economic Forum, and the Political Risk Services, among others. The underlying indexes reflect the likelihood of a disorderly transfer of government power, armed conflict, violent demonstrations, social unrest, international tensions, terrorism, as well as ethnic, religious or regional conflicts. The methodology of the overall index is kept consistent so the numbers are comparable over time (The GlobalEconomy.com, The World Bank, 2014).

The underlying indexes as per the Political Stability composite index authors reflect the likelihood of:

- a disorderly transfer of government power
- violent demonstrations
- social unrest
- ethnic conflicts
- religious conflicts
- armed conflict
- terrorism
- regional conflicts
- international tensions

These indexes, it is argued in this paper, are symptoms which speak to fundamental underlying causes attributed to the makeup of the country and the external environment.

What is apparent is that all the Middle East countries that are listed in the table above, which rank at the bottom of the political stability table, have amongst other issues ethnic and religious components. Naturally these countries also suffer from a turbulent Middle East region especially in the wake of the “Arab Uprisings”

In the context of democratic countries, it is the contention of this paper that heterogeneous countries with large minorities are predisposed to ongoing instability to a significantly higher degree than homogeneous countries or indeed even countries with small minorities. Heterogeneity in this case pertains to ethnicity, language, sectarian makeup, etc. Though this is an important criterion for instability, it is not a sufficient one as the ranking of the heterogeneous countries Switzerland and Belgium highlight in the list above.

In assessing whether a democratic country with a heterogeneous population will gravitate towards stability or instability it is also important to factor other parameters including whether there is an imbalanced political structure and whether the country is situated in a turbulent and polarized geo-political environment. In addition to the factors listed above, when assessing current instability it is argued here that it is also important to consider the history of the country as events that have taken place to shape it may also feed into the stability, or lack thereof, of the country. For the two countries in question Lebanon and Switzerland the following internal parameters are argued as relevant in the historical context:

- History prior to formation: (A) Was there cooperation between the different groups or
(B) Segregation and isolation?
- How the country was created? (A) Was there consensus by all the groups or
(B) Dissension by some?
- Demographics: (A) Is it relatively static over time for different groups or
(B) Changing and if so to what degree?
- Ideology/Culture: (A) Is it shared amongst the groups or
(B) Is there divergence?
- Political System: (A) Is the political structure decentralized or
(B) Is it centralized?

In addition to the presence of destabilizing power dynamic factors in the internal system of a state, these abovementioned parameters can also play an important part in the stability or instability of a state.

In addition to internal factors there are also external factors that can contribute to the destabilization of a heterogeneously democratic state including the following:

- Linkages between internal groups and outside actors
- Invitation by internal actors of external actors to support or intervene internally

- Geopolitical cleavages mirroring internal cleavages
- Turbulent Geopolitical system
- External powers with regional ambitions

Hence in assessing the underlying instability of a state, in addition to destabilizing power dynamic factors it is also important to look at historical and heterogeneous factors and their association to the structure of the political system of the state.

As a reference point for the next Chapter we shall argue that internal instability as a result of heterogeneous factors coupled with a centralized political system in a state, especially a heterogeneously prejudiced one, is best mitigated with decentralization. Following on from our argument that there is a causal relation between internal instability and external intervention, then for a heterogeneous state, especially one that mirrors its regional environment, by coupling neutrality for the state with internal decentralization one is able to mitigate both internal instability and external intervention. In the investigation of Switzerland through a historical lens in the next chapter we shall see how well this relation applies.

CHAPTER V

SWITZERLAND CASE

Switzerland resembles Lebanon in many ways. It is a small country with a diverse population once located in the midst of a turbulent geo-political system. So what path did it take and what strategy did it apply to make it one of the most politically stable and most prosperous countries in the world whilst Lebanon by contrast continues to be a politically unstable country and constantly under economic threat.

Switzerland's success in achieving internal stability and preventing intervention was not the result of an abrupt creation but rather a long drawn out process over centuries which places importance on its historical evolution. The historical account presented here provides insight into key milestones that led to its stability, independence and ultimately its neutrality.

A. Switzerland's Stability, Independence and Neutrality—A Historical Perspective

Switzerland officially gained its independence in 1648 at the Peace of Westphalia⁴⁴ and was officially declared a neutral country under International Law at the Vienna Congress in 1815. Arriving at these significant milestones however were hundreds of years in the making, underpinned by patience, an ability to learn from its mistakes and the unwavering solidarity of three core cantons, around which others coalesced, as they strove to become independent and hold onto that independence in the face of surrounding hegemonic empires.

First official recording of the Swiss confederation dates back to the beginning

⁴⁴ Treaty of Westphalia - Peace Treaty between the Holy Roman Emperor and the King of France and their respective Allies - 1648, Article LXIII.

of the 2nd millennium at a time when the geographical area of present day Switzerland⁴⁵ was wholly within the boundaries of the Holy Roman Empire. At an early stage the roots of the Swiss confederation were well entrenched in the relatively autonomous self-governing valley communities about lake Lucerne, in present day central Switzerland, known as Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden. Worth highlighting that all of these three cantons⁴⁶ were of German culture and language - so at its beginnings the core of “Switzerland” was marked by the homogeneity of these neighbouring communities.

With Rudolf of Hapsburg, who originally hailed from the canton of Aargu of present day Switzerland, ascending the German throne in the late 1200’s the valley communities feared that their old freedoms would be threatened by a Hapsburg ‘state’ and in “reaction to this danger of various communities with traditions of independence are to be found the origins of the Swiss confederation”⁴⁷. The first documentary evidence of a permanent alliance between Uri, Schwyz and Nidwalden⁴⁸ is in the form of treaty dated August 1291 within which the three valleys pledge:

- “1. ... to assist each other by every means possible against one and all who may inflict on them violence or injustice within their valleys and without.
2. ... to uphold this agreement in confirmation and renewal of a more ancient accord.
4. [That] the office of judge may not be obtained for any price and may only be exercised by those who are natives or resident with us.

⁴⁵ For an historical account of Switzerland refer to the text by Bonjour, Offler and Potter (1952) which was the main reference for the historical overview in this Chapter.

⁴⁶ The term “canton” to denote a member of the confederation was imported from France in the mid-15th Century.

⁴⁷ Bonjour, Offler and Potter, 1952, 70.

⁴⁸ Obwalden joins the confederation after the August 1291 treaty and comes together with Nidwalden to become Unterwalden.

12. [That] war or discord amongst the Confederates shall be settled by an arbiter and if any party fails to accept the decision or fails to make good the damage, the Confederates are bound to defend the other party.

13. These rules for the common good shall endure forever.”⁴⁹

This document is commonly regarded as the foundation charter of the confederation, and it is from 1291 that Switzerland marks her anniversaries as a state. Of importance the treaty reflects the renewal of an earlier understanding committing the confederates to: mutual assistance against all enemies; an autonomous functioning free from external interference; and the peaceful settlement by arbitration of disagreements between themselves. The agreement also ensured peace on the important mountain trade routes which reflected the commercial and mutual interests of these communities.

With the geo-political environment in a constant state of flux including Papacy and Empire rivalries, the confederation established from an early date an alliance of “collective security” if you will against foreign provocation. Towards each other, the cantons functioned with some degree of “neutrality”, taking on a mediating role when the other cantons came into confrontation. In many ways this early and miniature construction was a precursor to such collective security institutions as the League of Nations and the United Nations. What is striking however is that whereas collective security institutions in the post balance-of-power Europe deemed neutrality to be incompatible with collective security, at the root of the Swiss Confederation they were considered complementary defense strategy mechanisms ensuring stability and security - neutrality initially to maintain internal cohesion and collective security to fend off external threats.

⁴⁹ The Federal Charter of 1291; available from <https://www.admin.ch/gov/en/start/federal-council/history-of-the-federal-council/federal-charter-of-1291.html>; Internet; accessed 5 January 2016.

So importantly despite the overwhelming threats from the hegemonic Holy Roman Empire and specifically the Hapsburgs early on, the strong bond and the mutual understanding and equality between the three valley communities resulted in a stable nucleus around which the confederation would expand. Additionally, despite the presence of feudal lordships at the time the valley “contained a considerable element of free peasantry [and] co-operation had early promoted in the valleys the fusion of all the inhabitants into communities”⁵⁰ At its outset the confederation was already addressing internal instability through co-operation and external intervention through solidarity all the while retaining canton autonomy.

Following the victory by the Swiss in their first battle against the Hapsburgs in Morgarten in 1315 a new treaty known as the Pact of Brunnen (9 December 1315) was signed between the three valley cantons stressing military co-operation and “*that none of the members of the confederation should take an oath or make an agreement with any outside power except after consulting the other members*”⁵¹

Overlapping interests between on the one hand the vulnerable three valley cantons in need of expansion to increase security and on the other hand adjacent cantons that saw the value of independence from the Holy Roman Empire by joining the confederation resulted in the addition to the confederation of a further five cantons by the a mid-14th century to become what was known as the Old Confederacy⁵². With the addition of these new cantons a federal structure started to emerge with the tradeoff being a dilution of the canton sovereignty. As with independence and with neutrality the

⁵⁰ Bonjour, Offler and Potter, 1952, 71.

⁵¹ Clause from the Pact of Brunnen taken from Daniel Waley. “Later Medieval Europe: 1250-1520”, 79.

⁵² Old Confederacy: Original Cantons - Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden. “Additional rural cantons - Glarus and Zug, urban cantons: Bern, Lucerne and Zurich”.

road to a federation was a slowly evolving process. It would be approximately half a millennium before Switzerland would officially become a Federation in 1848.

Despite the early signs of a Federal structure the maintaining of a high degree of autonomy by the cantons would work to internally stabilize the confederation whilst the consolidation with five new cantons would strengthen it in the face of external threats and interferences of which no adversary was more prominent than the Hapsburg Empire. In 1499, in another war against the Hapsburg Empire known as the Swabian war the Confederation would be victorious and in the process achieve de-facto independence from the Holy Roman Empire in the Peace of Basel⁵³ on 22 September 1499. Officially recognized independence would come approximately one hundred and fifty years later at the Peace of Westphalia in 1648.

The de-facto independence from the Holy Roman Empire attracted additional cantons and by 1513 another four⁵⁴ were included in the confederation to bring the total to thirteen cantons which would remain stable until the late 1700's when the French Revolution impacted on redefining the confederation. The addition of the ten cantons in total neighbouring and surrounding the three original cantons provided "fortresses" of defense to the stable Swiss core and in the process the neighbouring cantons were liberated. Furthermore the canton autonomy meant that there were diverse systems for running the cantons. For example Berne was a semi-feudal aristocracy, Zurich was based on Commercial Oligarchy and the independent peasantry of the three original cantons (Uri, Schwyz, Unterwalden) had in place a democratic form of governance. Though the cantons had diverging interests they were all united in being independent

⁵³ Danielle Mead Skjelver. *Maximilian I – Holy Roman Emperor*. Encyclopaedia Britannica; available from <http://www.britannica.com/biography/Maximilian-I-Holy-Roman-emperor#ref237100>; Internet; accessed 8 April, 2016.

⁵⁴ Appenzell, Basel, Fribourg and Schaffhausen.

from any external threat.

Internal diversity through canton autonomy coupled with unity against external threats was a guarantor for stability and security. This unity would however be undermined when in the Battle of Marignano – Northern Italy in 1515 the Swiss lost to the French and Venetians following a split between Swiss Cantons that wanted to sign a Peace Treaty with France and receive associated financial incentives in the process and other Cantons that rejected the initiative and preferred to go to battle. This period was also marked by Swiss mercenaries fighting on the same side as the French and also against them during different campaigns. This major Swiss defeat put an end to its territorial expansion ambitions, resulted in an eventual peace treaty⁵⁵ – known as the “perpetual peace” - with France committing never to wage war against it again, and marked the starting point of the transition to a permanent and internationally recognized neutrality status. To put this date into context, this came more than two centuries after the officially recorded establishment of the initial Swiss Confederation in 1291 made up of the three valley cantons at the time and came slightly more than 15 years after achieving de-facto independence from the Holy Roman Empire following the defeat of the Hapsburgs in the Swabian war of 1499.

Five years after the Battle of Marignano the impact of the Protestant Reformation reached Switzerland in 1520. As a consequence the cantons split along a Protestant-Roman Catholic cleavage leading to inter-cantonal wars in 1531. This would herald the first major internal division which adversely impacted on internal politics and crippled a united foreign policy for centuries to come.

The Protestant reformation led to religion based European wars which

⁵⁵ Treaty of Freiburg, 29 November, 1516; available from <https://www.litencyc.com/php/stopics.php?rec=true&UID=14237>; Internet; accessed 9 April, 2016.

culminated in the thirty year's war from 1618 until 1648. What started as Protestant - Roman Catholic confrontation within the Holy Roman Empire turned into a battle for supremacy in Europe between France and the Hapsburg Empire, both adherents of Roman Catholicism, and involved all major European powers and included Protestant – Roman Catholic alliances. Under the circumstances and with the confederation still suffering from a sectarian cleavage the thirteen cantons of the confederation maintained a position of neutrality throughout the war and given its strategic location foreign powers were also keen that it maintains its neutrality.

The thirty years war represents a key milestone for the confederation. By adopting a policy of neutrality Switzerland preserved internal stability especially given the national sectarian cleavages and prevented external intervention given that all of Europe was embroiled in Empire confrontations. At the end of the Thirty Years War at the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 the Swiss Confederacy was finally given legal independence from the Holy Roman Empire after a persistent struggle for more than 350 years after the initial establishment in 1291.

From the Peace of Westphalia until the French Revolution Protestant-Roman Catholic cleavages continued to exacerbate the tensions between the different communities leading to clashes and minor civil wars. Also, tensions between the peasants and the ruling class continued to be fueled by the developments in France leading to minor clashes and rebellion until the full impact of the French revolution played its part.

Following on from the French Revolution, pro- and anti-French Revolution divisions made the country susceptible to foreign intervention and even though an attempt was made to stay neutral the confederation eventually fell to the revolutionary French Government in 1798. The occupier imposed what was known as the Helvetic

Republic which was based on a centralized government system effectively undermining the autonomous canton structure, a tradition developed over centuries. As a consequence and as Bonjour put it “The variety of political outlook and local autonomy were suddenly replaced by a uniform administrative machinery...A country varying so widely in natural conditions, religion, customs, language could not, in the long run, endure an imposed bureaucratic conformity”⁵⁶. This centralized system imposed on the confederation was promptly rejected by the Swiss and even though it lasted for five years the chaos that it brought with it resulted in Napoleon reversing it in 1803 through the Act of Mediation⁵⁷. The Act restored the thirteen cantons and added another six cantons⁵⁸ resulting in a confederation of nineteen cantons with a balancing between canton tradition of self-rule and a central government. Switzerland however was bound to France by a defensive alliance during the Napoleonic wars undermining its neutrality.

Worth highlighting that internal divisions made Switzerland susceptible to foreign intervention, this time in the form of the revolutionary Government, and given the tradition of canton autonomy the replacement of the decentralized confederation structure by a centralized system led to chaos and a complete breakdown of the state.

Following the demise of Napoleon at the end of the Napoleonic wars, the Congress of Vienna 1815 redefined the European geo-political system based on a balance of power configuration. In that context the Congress re-established Swiss independence with the European powers agreeing to permanently recognize Swiss

⁵⁶ Bonjour, Offler and Potter, 1952, 223.

⁵⁷ Daniel Wachter. *The Helvetic Republic*. Encyclopaedia Britannica; available from <http://www.britannica.com/place/Switzerland/The-Helvetic-Republic#ref423884>; Internet; accessed 10 April, 2016.

⁵⁸ The six new cantons: Sant Gallen, the Graubünden, Aargau, Thurgau, Ticino and Vaud.

neutrality. Three additional cantons were added giving a total of twenty two cantons with the borders except for minor adjustments not changing since that date.

Finally after more than five hundred years of struggle for independence and along the route the recognition of the importance of neutrality in safeguarding the confederation from external intervention Switzerland now had both internationally recognized independence and neutrality. This achievement could not have been made without perseverance and without the unity and stability of the core of original three cantons around which the rest coalesced over the five hundred year period.

Following a one month civil war in 1847 the Swiss were once again convinced of the need for unity and as the rest of Europe saw revolutionary uprisings the Swiss in 1848 drew up a federal constitution - inspired by the American constitution – upon which the modern federal state was founded. Due to the lack of homogeneity in the country Langer points out that *“a Swiss sense of nationality had to be constructed...In an age when the modern nation States were built and based on the idea of an ethnically and linguistically uniform people, Switzerland was clearly an anomaly.”*⁵⁹

World War I was the culmination of the failure of the balance of power Europe and in its aftermath the League of Nations was established in 1920 based on collective security. Switzerland joined on the basis that it would not be asked to be involved militarily and exercised what came to known as differential neutrality.

Leading up to World War II and with the failure of the League of Nations Switzerland dropped differential neutrality and returned to integral neutrality which it maintained throughout World War II, the Cold war up until the present day. Though the United Nations was established immediately after the War in 1945, after the failed experience of the League of Nations, Switzerland resisted joining until 2002.

⁵⁹ Wachter, 2016, 5.

In 2002 Switzerland became a member of the United Nations and yet despite this reality it has still been able to maintain its neutrality to the present day. Importantly Switzerland is not a member of NATO as engagement in a military alliance would legally be a violation of its neutrality status.

Despite the changing times in Europe and Internationally Switzerland adopts a flexible and pragmatic approach to the “*implementation of its neutrality policy*” which “*is not governed by rules of law*” but “*rather it depends on analysis of the international situation at any given moment.*”⁶⁰ Given Switzerland’s heterogeneous society, its centuries struggle for neutrality and federalism “*...arose from the need to ensure union amongst the Confederates and then the unity of the country, one of the essential components of this unity being respect for dissimilarities...*”⁶¹

B. Instability/Intervention-Decentralization/Neutrality Relation for Switzerland

Switzerland was at risk of internal instability due to its heterogeneous makeup. This heterogeneity could be sub-classified as religious, linguistic and ethnic amongst others. Any structure would need to factor in these particularities. The Swiss confederation and later on the loose federation successfully strove to maintain unity by accommodating this diversity through the canton autonomy. As Switzerland evolved and expanded organically over the centuries, dissension was minimized between the different cantons as there was a conscious decision to be a part of the union and despite fluctuations on the periphery of the confederation from time to time the core of three

⁶⁰ Swiss Foreign Policy Strategy 2012–2015, March 2012; available from <http://www.eda.admin.ch/etc/medialib/downloads/edazen/doc/publi/aussen.Par.0028.File.tmp/Aussenpolitische%20Strategie%2020122015%20FR%20lowres.pdf>; Internet; accessed 11 March 2015.

⁶¹ Ogley 1970, 175.

original cantons remained solidly unified thereby radiating stability throughout the confederation. It is this internal cohesion attributed to Switzerland being a decentralized state which was a guarantor of internal stability and which strengthened the state against external intervention.

The one time that a centralized form of government was forced upon the autonomous communities from outside the country broke down into chaos and confrontation resulting in a relatively quick reversal to a decentralized structure.

With Switzerland benefitting internally from decentralization, neutrality served to protect Switzerland from external intervention both when there were internal cleavages especially during the thirty years war and when there were external threats. From the thirty years war, through to balance of power Europe, then World Wars I and II and finally the Cold War it was neutrality that kept a heterogeneous but importantly internally stable Switzerland together in the midst of the upheavals of a divided Europe with hegemonic seeking powers.

This chapter took a historical perspective to highlight the relation between internal instability/external intervention and decentralization/neutrality. The historical perspective highlighted that, as a general rule, decentralization stabilized the state internally and neutrality acted against external intervention.

In the following Chapter we shall apply this relation between internal instability/external intervention and decentralization/neutrality for the case of Lebanon and look to the case of Switzerland for supporting arguments.

CHAPTER VI

LEBANON CASE

In this chapter and in a parallel fashion to the Switzerland case we apply for Lebanon neutrality coupled with decentralization as a solution to mitigate internal instability and external intervention. We identify the root instability factors which justify our claim and we make recommendations accordingly. We round off by addressing some of the challenges and the role and the position of internal and external parties.

A. Root Cause of Instability in Lebanon

Our initial argument for countries like Switzerland and Lebanon was that neutrality coupled with decentralization as a strategy mitigates internal instability and external intervention. In Chapter IV we asserted that there is a causal relation between internal stability and external intervention and we identified certain parameters that lead to instability specifically in a heterogeneous country. These included parameters relating to an imbalanced political structure, a polarized geo-political system as well as parameters of a historical context.

Lebanon is a heterogeneous country in a turbulent geo-political system which has been and continues to be internally unstable and susceptible to external intervention. The underlying reasons for its instability have as much to do with its initial formation and history as it does with its current set of circumstances.

If we go back to its formation we can expect to find answers to its current instability. Greater Lebanon was established in 1920 primarily with the motivation of the Maronites and supported by the then mandate power France. As the Maronites were

located in the predominantly Christian Mutasarrifiye of Mount Lebanon, when Greater Lebanon was created the surrounding coastal areas and the Beqaa, with the help of the French, were annexed to Mount Lebanon.

This was a primarily Maronite/French initiative without the consent of the influential Sunni sect which was against the separation of Lebanon from Greater Syria. Additionally the impoverished Shiaa community was marginalized in the process. Suffice to say Greater Lebanon was an abrupt and involuntary creation with approximately half of the population having no real say in the matter apart from voicing their objection. Hence a source of internal instability was inherent in the initial establishment of the country and what muzzled this internal instability was the presence on the ground of the occupying forces of the French mandate. By contrast the establishment of the Swiss confederation in 1291 was a result of a united decision by the three cantons to come together followed by the voluntary accession, as a general rule, of neighbouring cantons over an extended period of time without any external interference.

The French in 1926 would contribute to the creation of a Lebanese constitution based on the French constitution which would be built around a centralized government. The creation of this centralized government in Lebanon would also be another source of instability as it did not factor in sectarian specificities. In a similar fashion the French imposition of a centralized government in Switzerland in 1798 led to instability and chaos.

On the eve of independence in 1943 a compromise was made between the Maronites and the Sunnis in the form of the National Pact which in principle was to resolve the situation and guarantee the existence of the State of Lebanon. The compromise came in the form of the Christians no longer being West leaning and the

Moslems doing away with any ambitions to be a part of a Greater Syria or an Arab state. In addition a confessional system was agreed upon with the Presidency of the Republic reserved for the Maronites, the Prime Ministership reserved for the Sunnis and the Speaker of the House for the Shiaa and finally the parliament would be 6/5 in favour of the Christians.

This supposedly balanced equation would continue to breakdown whenever there was a crisis and hence contribute to the instability of the state. To aggravate matters further the Pact was a duality agreement between the Maronites and Sunni with the Shiaa and the Druze effectively not involved in the process.

The National Pact's first major test was in 1958 when a wave of Nasserism spread through the region. Latent internal dissatisfaction with the status quo by revisionist sub-state actors saw the event as an opportunity to readdress the internal imbalances. The crisis highlighted the ever present internal instability and the receptivity by the dissatisfied to exploit any event, internal or external, to reach their objectives.

In similar fashion the 1975-1990 civil war highlighted the shortcomings of the National Pact and the underlying internal instability. The presence of Palestinians on Lebanese soil presented an opportunity to settle old scores. The internal political conflagration and conflict quickly led to external intervention and resulted in Lebanon becoming a theater of war during this period.

With the end of the 1975-1990 civil war, the Taif accord attempted to address the shortcomings of the National Pact in order to mitigate the internal instability and though the confessional system was left intact with some changes it was the recommendation for decentralization that underlined the flaws in a centralized system for a country with a makeup like Lebanon.

The Taef also heralded the rise to prominence of the Sunni sect in the Political system and was personified by Prime Minister Rafic El Hariri. With his assassination in 2005 and shortly followed by the July 2006 war the baton of political prominence was now passed to the Shiaa sect and specifically Hezbollah.

With the onset of the Arab spring and more specifically the Syrian war calls were made for neutrality and this was best reflected by the Baabda declaration which all major internal actors signed. With Hezbollah officially announcing that it was involved on the ground after signing the Baabda declaration it was clear that the state could no longer stop sub-state actors from acting as they please –whether it be on Lebanese soil or outside it- with virtual immunity.

The State had come to a virtual halt and this is no better exemplified than by the fact that the country is without a President for two years, the Council of Ministers is paralyzed and the Parliament is inactive.

In essence over the course of almost 100 years and building on a faulty establishment the State rather than being gradually strengthened, as was the case with Switzerland, was gradually being eroded until the present day where the country represents a miniature anarchic system. Within it, and without an equitable or stabilizing formula or indeed even a higher authority, it has become a self-help system for sub-state actors where internal clout and external support is the political lingua franca.

If we narrow the focus, the 1958 civil war, the 1975 civil and the subsequent Taif agreement, and the current impasse and paralysis in the government all lead to the conclusion that the centralized confessional political system is a root cause of the instability in Lebanon and from which arguably all other instabilities flow. Furthermore as per our causal relation the instability resulting from the centralized confessional

political system also leads to external intervention which is especially heightened during times of internal and/or external crisis.

Additionally, the centralized confessional political system has in and of itself created a paradox of sorts in relation to the political elites. On the one hand the imbalanced distribution of power amongst the sects is a continual source of contention and instability especially in light of the changing demographics. On the other hand it is this same confessional system which gives the sectarian Zu'aama a free reign in propagating their brand of clientelism without any accountability. Furthermore, the sectarian Zu'aama have exhibited no interest to date in a strong state apart from paying it lip service given that they stand to benefit as long as arguably the state remains weak.

The imbalance in the system also feeds historical inclinations, dating back to the establishment of the state, such as to associate more with ideologies or sectarian groups in the region than to pledge allegiance to the state itself. This has manifested itself throughout Lebanon's history with pro-Syrian unification or pro-Arab unification or pro-West alignment or pro-Sunni alignment, primarily Saudi Arabia, or pro-Shiaa alignment with the case of Iran.

B. Recommendation

To mitigate the internal instability resulting from the centralized confessional system we have argued that power needs to be devolved away from the center through the process of administrative decentralization. This addresses one half of the equation and for the mitigation of external instability we have argued for neutrality. Switzerland provides as a good reference with its application of decentralization and neutrality through which it has successfully achieved internal stability and prevented external intervention for centuries and additionally provided good offices as a result of its

positioning as a “mediatory society”⁶² as Andrew Williams puts it.

The task is made easier by the fact that the implementation of decentralization does not require any constitutional modifications given that the Taif Accord spells it out and the Baabda declaration, which has officially been signed by all concerned internal parties, speaks to neutrality.

1. Decentralization

The objective of decentralization would be to empower the Lebanese districts by giving them responsibility over matters directly affecting the local citizen and in doing so giving less importance to central government on such matters. This would help to deflate the power struggle for the centralized confessional system and also dilute the sectarian based clientelism. The district would be based on the Qada as recommended by the draft decentralization bill and with a diversity of Qada makeup an element of autonomy through decentralization would lead to differing approaches to Qada management bringing about creative management ideas and healthy competition. The draft decentralization law previously mentioned in this paper already makes reference to the Qada as the district unit and as a result of the law a “representative council would be elected directly by the people as to opposed to having the central government appointing a Qaimmaqam”⁶³. This act will help to improve citizen representation for matters that concern them and at the same time help to remove political bickering by the

⁶² Andrew Williams. (2000). Finding a New Role in International Conflict Resolution: Switzerland after the End of the Cold War. In: Butler, Pender and Charnley, ed. *The Making of Modern Switzerland, 1848-1998*. Hampshire: Palgrave, 111.

⁶³ Sami Atallah. (2014). “Decentralization Draft Law Anchors Political Accountability at the Core of Development.” The Lebanese Center for Political Studies (LCPS), June; available from <http://www.lcps-lebanon.org/featuredArticle.php?id=23>; Internet; accessed 5 January, 2016.

central government over regional appointments.

This approach would go a long way to compensating for the shortcomings in the confessionally based national system. At the same time the central government would retain control over national issues including foreign policy but with more say given to the districts that now have a vested interest in the stability of the country and therefore any attempted biases from the central government especially in foreign policy would be attenuated.

As a point of clarification, whilst decentralization is recommended as a solution for internal instability for Lebanon that decentralization is contained within the bounds of the constitution and the Taif Agreement. What is not implied here is decentralization to the degree of arriving at a Federal structure as is the case with Switzerland and the United States of America for example.

2. Neutrality

The Baabda declaration brings Lebanon a step closer to neutrality. Given the regional power interest in the region and Israel in the south the country should work towards armed neutrality. Naturally acquiring recognition of neutrality would be a gradual step by step process initiated from within and would require internal consent and ultimately external, primarily regional, consent as a result of proactive lobbying from within. A win-win formula would need to be put in place to bring all stakeholders on board.

Internally, the primary obstacle would be Hezbollah as it is the only major sub-state actor that has violated the Baabda Declaration as a consequence of its involvement primarily in Syria. Nonetheless Hezbollah as a militia would play an important role

alongside the army in the defense of the country where in an age of asymmetrical warfare the weak state is strengthened in its capacity as a deterrent by State and sub-State actor cooperation in the context of what Sergose refers to as “hybrid sovereignty”.⁶⁴ Formalizing such a role by the state would allay fears by Hezbollah that it and its weapons are targeted and additionally the state can benefit from a battle hardened entity able, in the interest of the country, to build on its campaigns leading to the 2000 Israeli withdrawal, the July 2006 war with Israel and the current involvement in Syria.

Externally, negotiations with the Saudi and Iranian axes would convey the Lebanese position that a status of neutrality for Lebanon is in the interest of all, noting that neither of these axes want to lose Lebanon to their adversary. Regarding the subject of Hezbollah in those negotiations a compromise situation could be arrived at as part of a broader regional solution whereby Hezbollah recedes to within the Lebanese borders and stops targeting Saudi Arabia rhetorically and in return Saudi Arabia reconsiders its position towards Hezbollah. Iran would be satisfied that it would not be disbanded in the immediate future and that it would retain its position within the country as a deterrent to Israeli threats and radical terrorists such as ISIS and Al Qaeda. Young argues along the same lines stating if “Iran opens up more to the West, it will want to maintain the presence of a strong Hizbullah in Lebanon, as a deterrent against Israeli or Western aggression, and will consider negotiations on this topic a red line”⁶⁵.

⁶⁴ Sara Fregonese. (2012). “Beyond the ‘weak state’: hybrid sovereignties in Beirut”. Department of Geography, Royal Holloway University of London, England, 8 June 2012, 656.

⁶⁵ Michael Young. (2013). “Lebanon: More Instability on the Horizon”. The Lebanese Center for Policy Studies (LCPS), 20 December; available from <http://www.lcps-lebanon.org/agendaArticle.php?id=29>; Internet; accessed 23 September, 2015.

Resolution 1701⁶⁶, which includes the deployment of the Lebanese Army on the border with Israel with additional troop support on the ground from UNIFIL, would complement Lebanon's regional position of neutrality in reference to Israel and military activity in Shebbaa Farms would come under the right to resist even as a neutral state as reflected in the 1907 Hague Conference on neutrality and in the United Nations charter⁶⁷

As a consequence of neutrality the tensions from the Sunni-Shiaa cleavage in Lebanon which mirrors the regional Sunni-Shiaa cleavage would be defused. Adverse effects from any future cleavages, such as East-West or Christian-Muslim, would be mitigated. This would open up the door for Lebanon to capitalize on regional and international relations, enabling it to bridge the gap between East and West, Christian-Moslem, Sunni-Shiaa, etc. effectively transforming Lebanon from what was once a theater for war into a theater for peace and what would be a natural role in the region given its diversity.

The ultimate goal for Lebanon is to reach a position of permanent and armed neutrality and take its place as a regional center for good offices. Switzerland provides a good reference model in that respect.

C. Challenges

The recommendation of neutrality coupled with decentralization as a possible solution to overcome the persistent instabilities and interventions is made with the full

⁶⁶ Security Council Resolution 1701. Adopted by the Security Council at its 5511th meeting, on 11 August 2006; available from <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N06/465/03/PDF/N0646503.pdf?OpenElement>; Internet; accessed 9 September, 2015.

⁶⁷ Charter of the United Nations; available from <http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/index.shtml>; Internet; accessed 9 September, 2015.

knowledge that there are challenges. But this is a recommendation based in light of a currently unsustainable situation.

1. Internally

The traditional Zu'aama is likely to object to decentralization on the basis that it will erode their power base. To a large degree that position is consistent with the fact that the draft bill on decentralization which was submitted in April 2014 is yet to be passed, despite the fact that the Taif Agreement explicitly called for it to be implemented more than 25 years ago. But the fact that the Bill has been drafted and submitted at all is a success in itself putting pressure on those not willing to opt in. Certainly those in political circles but outside the Zu'aama elite would be for the initiative as they are pro-reform and the current system excludes them from participating in a meaningful way.

As for neutrality all concerned parties have signed the Baabda declaration but Hezbollah is the only party to have violated the agreement. Neutrality would certainly limit Hezbollah's freedom especially outside the country but it coming on board would be part of a broader agreement where it would stand to gain in the form of retention of its weapons and the maintaining of its deterrence against external threats but from within the Lebanese borders.

2. Externally

The two major regional powers Iran and Saudi Arabia historically have tried to bring Lebanon into their spheres of influence and just as there is a balance of power in

the region along the Saudi-Iranian axis there is also one in Lebanon with the main protagonists being their proxies – the Sunni and Shiaa respectively and primarily. These regional powers approval of primarily neutrality, given that decentralization is a domestic issue, would in all likelihood come as part of a broader regional deal but importantly a deal on neutrality for each of these players would mean that Lebanon does not gravitate into the sphere of influence of the other – remaining equidistant from both. In the context of a broader deal it is worth highlighting as Young points out that with Iran in rapprochement mode with the West following the Nuclear deal then Saudi Arabia’s willingness to renegotiate Hezbollah’s role in Lebanon is dependent on the situation in Syria but if the Assad regime is victorious then “the Saudis will have no choice but to ... bandwagon on the Iranian deal”⁶⁸.

D. Favourable Outcomes

If the challenges were overcome and neutrality coupled with decentralization were achieved it would arguably lead to less intervention as it would be accomplished as part of an internal/external deal. It would also imply that internally the various actors had agreed to the deal on the basis of a win/win and would therefore have no motivation in inviting external patrons to intervene. The decentralization aspect would result in greater internal equity and give a greater say in foreign policy to all the regions of Lebanon attenuating the narrow interests of the old regime.

Were external actors to try to intervene there would be less destabilization as internally the country has more stability as a result of the decentralization aspect. If internal unity is guaranteed then any aggressive action by external actors would be met with armed neutrality. Just as with Switzerland success hinges on having a posture of

⁶⁸ Young, 2013.

deterrence.

In this chapter we have identified the root cause of instability which is the centralized confessional political system, a historic construction lacking full consensus, and as a recommendation we applied our claim that the combination of neutrality and decentralization when implemented will counter internal instability and external intervention. We rounded off with some of the challenges associated with the recommendation.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

This paper argued that for the case of Lebanon, where there exists an imbalanced and centralized political system and where internal polarization mirrors that of a polarized and turbulent geo-political system, the application of neutrality coupled with decentralization offers a solution to mitigate internal stability and external intervention. The case of Switzerland provided a supporting argument in this direction in that it highlighted that the application of neutrality when internal stability was preserved mitigated external intervention – the thirty years’ war, balance of power Europe and two world wars bear testimony to this fact. Furthermore the decentralized canton structure was a key element in preserving Switzerland’s internal stability highlighting its importance with the failure of the centralized Helvetic Republic which led to a relatively quick reversal back to the decentralized canton structure through the Act of Mediation.

The paper also argued that there is a causal relation between internal instability and external intervention for Lebanon – the 1958 civil war and the 1975-1990 civil war being two prime examples where internal tensions led to external intervention. As it was concluded that the key factor leading to instability for the case of Lebanon was the imbalanced centralized confessional system then it was important to achieve decentralization as a stepping stone for internal stability in order to maximize the success of the application of neutrality in preventing external intervention. While decentralization was recommended for Lebanon it did not imply that had to be along the same lines as Switzerland’s Federal structure but rather administrative decentralization which results in the devolution of power from the centralized political system and in the

process diluting Zu'aama power and empowering the regions and their citizens.

Though neutrality and decentralization have been independently recommended for Lebanon's problems, what is new in this paper is that it is argued that a coupled solution is necessary - one element cannot function without the other in the insulation of Lebanon from internal instability and external intervention.

While the paper recognizes that there are challenges, including potential resistance from internal and external actors, associated with a recommendation of neutrality coupled with decentralization for the Lebanon case this should not detract from the advantages of such a solution, in search of the right circumstances, for the resolution of the country's seemingly intractable problems. Indeed as has been highlighted progress has been made with the signing of the Baabda declaration and with the submission of a draft bill for decentralization. Though the Baabda declaration has been violated and though the draft bill on decentralization is yet to pass their official presence puts pressure on moving the process forward and indeed supports this paper's recommendation in a tangible way.

The counter argument may well be that the challenges are overwhelming but by comparison try to have explained that to three small Swiss cantons in Europe facing the might of the Holy Roman Empire, the Hapsburgs, The French, The Reformation, The Thirty Years War, A Balance of Power Europe and Two World Wars. The odds may well appear overwhelming but the reality is if there is unity of purpose and determination then there is a basis for working to overcome the seemingly insurmountable odds.

The relation that neutrality coupled with decentralization counters instability and intervention was put forward here primarily for the cases of Switzerland and Lebanon. Though outside the scope of this paper, proposing this as a general relation for

countries with imbalanced centralized political systems and which have ethnic and/or religious polarization that mirrors the polarization of the geo-political system within which they are located is worthy of further investigation.

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