

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

THE LEBANESE NATIONAL MOVEMENT (LNM)
POLITICAL REFORM PROGRAM:
AN ASSESSMENT

By
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submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
to the Department of Political Studies and Public Administration
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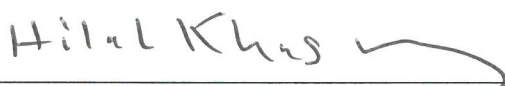
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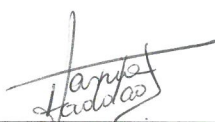
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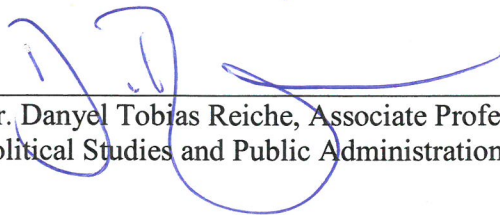
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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Rami Hassib Rayess for Master of Arts
Major: Political Studies

Title: The Lebanese National Movement (LNM) Political Reform Program: An Assessment.

The Lebanese National Movement (LNM) has been a key player in Lebanese politics, especially during the 1970s. Its power reached its climax in 1975- 1976 when it controlled almost 80 percent of Lebanese territories. It aimed to introduce reform to the confessional political system through the National Reform Plan that it announced in August 1975.

The aim of this thesis is to assess the program in detail, how it affected the course of events, how the assassination of LNM's leader, Kamal Joumblatt, in 1977 was detrimental and how his heir, Walid Joumblatt has turned the course of events in light of geopolitical developments and changes. It is also compared to the Taif Accord of 1989 that put an end to war with analysis of the regional and international contexts between the two plans and one was doomed to fail and the other succeeded.

To this end, the research question was as follows: Why did the LNM Reform Plan fail and what were the ramifications of this failure on the course of events and on LNM itself?

The research question is answered through analysis of literature review of that era along with conclusions drawn from rereading the flow of events in the time of study.

The basic conclusion that the thesis has reached is that reform in a confessional country that is continuously penetrated by foreign powers is indeed a very difficult endeavor. The political plan that was schemed by LNM still applies today, after more than forty years of its announcement, which proves that the system is inherently handicapped.

PREFACE

The thesis aims to examine how LNM envisioned reform in the Lebanese political system and how it comprehended the solutions needed to overcome and develop entrenched political sectarianism in the country. It will elaborate on the circumstances that led to this aggravated segregation among the Lebanese people, especially the power sharing process that was built on inequality among the different sects.

The ‘Transitional Political Reform Program’ which was announced by LNM on the 18th of August in 1975 was a landmark attempt in enhancing political reform in the country with the aim of increasing power sharing among the Lebanese and proposing schemes that would introduce abolishing political sectarianism and develop laws and mechanisms that would democratically reform popular representation in addition to several other issues.

The thesis examines the complex circumstances surrounding the birth and work of the movement, and, simultaneously, explores its visions vis-à-vis the reform of the Lebanese political system that is heterogeneous, sectarian and divided. Its intertwined relationship with the powerful stakeholders of the Lebanese crisis in the mid-seventies will be examined with special emphasis on its confrontation with the “Lebanese Front” (LF) that represented the counter camp in the Lebanese divided society.

Chapter I is entitled “Lebanon: A Country Divided”. It provides an overview of the events that took place after independence in 1943 and how regional powers affected its regional politics. It explains the political context and historical background of Lebanon in the aim of situating the challenges that this country has faced and the divisions that have hindered its capacity to become a unified nation.

Chapter II is entitled “Managing Pluralism in Divided Societies: The Case of Lebanon Revisited”. It highlights the challenges and difficulties that divided societies encounter. Consociational democracies can be an efficient method for running the state of affairs in a way that allows collective participation in governance. Yet, those mechanisms might form impediments if not all the political players are equally convinced of the importance of this regime. Those are the main ideas that the chapter revolves around.

Chapter III entitled “LNM’s Political Reform Program of 1975”, explains the major circumstances in the mid-seventies that led to announcement of the “Transitional Program for National Reform” that was announced by the Lebanese National Movement in August 1975 in an attempt to avoid military clash. It examines, in detail, the different aspects of the program as a means of reform.

Chapter IV, “LNM and the Syrian Regime”, tackles the deteriorating relationships between LNM’s leader Kamal Joumblatt and the Syrian regime headed by Hafez al Assad. It draws the regional and local context in which developments were

unfolding and concludes with the Syrian military intervention in Lebanon, which was disapproved by Joumblatt. It also sheds light on his assassination in 1977, the details of which will be revealed in full in Chapter V.

Chapter V is devoted in full to the assassination of Kamal Joumblatt. It explains in detail how it all happened in the town of Deir Dourit in the Chouf district, which has traditionally been the major sphere of influence of the Joumblatts and the Progressive Socialist Party that he established in 1949. The chapter also reveals how the Syrian regime has plotted and executed the crime especially after the deterioration of its relations with Joumblatt who refused the Syrian military intervention in Lebanon and confronted it almost solely.

Chapter VI, entitled “Walid Joumblatt’s Relations with the Syrian regime”, looks further into the developments that unfolded after the assassination of Kamal Joumblatt and the new phase that commenced with his son and only heir, Walid Joumblatt, assuming leadership of the Progressive Socialist Party and the Lebanese National Movement. How the young Joumblatt tackled the political relationship with the Syrian regime that plotted and executed the killing of his father is further scrutinized in full in this chapter.

Chapter VII is under the title “The Taif Agreement and Future Prospects”. It explores the circumstances that yielded the Taif Accord in 1989 and explains the general content of the agreement in comparison to what the Lebanese National Movement had proposed back in 1975.

The accord that has successfully put an end to the civil war that erupted in 1975 was reached at a suitable international and regional political moment, contrary to LNM’s program that was proposed at a time when the regional and internal context was reaching the highest levels of complexity.

A final chapter that concludes the thesis draws on future projections and highlights the reasons behind the failure of reform in Lebanon despite the numerous attempts to achieve that, LNM’s proposal being one of the most important attempts in modern history.

My interest in this topic stems from my political position as senior media officer at the Progressive Socialist Party and editor-in-chief of its newspaper Al Anbaa that was established back in 1951. In 2012, we stopped producing the print edition and launched the online edition (anbaaonline.com).

My work as a practicing politician and journalist has allowed me to deepen my knowledge in the era that the Party has been involved in, most specifically, the LNM era when PSP was the leading player in its organization and work in general.

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CHAPTER I

LEBANON: A DIVIDED SOCIETY

The objective of Chapter I is to explain the political context and historical background of Lebanon with the aim of situating the challenges that this country has faced and the divisions that have hindered its capacity to become a unified nation.

It includes the most important political developments that Lebanon has faced since its independence in 1943 and describes how regional powers have affected its local politics. It contributes to the thesis objective by portraying the complexities of the Lebanese confessional system and how it is inherently difficult to introduce reform. Despite that, LNM has tried to reform the system.

A. Introduction

Despite its small geographical size, Lebanon has traditionally attracted attention at academic, political and military levels. This country has been viewed by some as a battleground for other regional powers to the extent that it was primarily established to serve this purpose (Hirst 2010, 2-3). Others claim that Lebanon is a “historic nation” on the basis of the fact that its name was mentioned seventy times in the Bible (the Old and the New Testament), and the cedar of Lebanon seventy five times, Tyre fifty nine times, and Sidon fifty times (Deeb 2013, 26).

The “New Phoenicians Club” was established by a group of Beirut’s cultural elites “from commercial families such as Albert Naccashe and Fouad el- Khoury (Bchara’s brother) who worked on developing the Lebanese idea as a belonging to “our Phoenician ancestors” and Lebanon’s economic role as a Phoenician continuity to the

commercial and service activity and relationship with the sea” (Deeb 2013, 90).

The “fragmented political culture” that Lebanon has lived throughout its contemporary history, especially after the country gained its national independence in 1943, has left its marks. Not only on the daily workings of political life but also on the overall trends that have earmarked political divisions in the late fifties and sixties of the twentieth century in the context of the rise of Nasserism and Arab nationalism (Khalaf 2002, 2). “(...), observers described Lebanon as a powder keg” (Traboulsi 2007, 134).

The deep divisions between the sectarian Lebanese constituencies and the varying, rather contradictory, viewpoints political parties have developed regarding power sharing, the nation’s geopolitical regional role and position, and the issue of identity, have practically led to a crisis of confidence among political elites. In this context, a wide range of major issues is left unresolved, such as secularizing the political system that is now determined by power-sharing agreements on the basis of religion. “Though the Lebanese political system proved flexible in allowing for anarchy and free enterprise in several areas, it proved rigid in its resistance to political reform, to circulation of leadership, and to representation of emerging powers” (Barakat in Haley and Snider 1979, 13).

B. The National Pact of 1943

The 1943 National Covenant is a political formula reached by two prominent Lebanese politicians at the time, Bchara el Khoury and Riad el Solh. The National Covenant aimed at setting a “temporary” power sharing arrangement based on proportional representation between Christians and Muslims at a ratio of six to five respectively. This arrangement was basically a Maronite- Sunni agreement and failed to be inclusive of other sects, some of whom had aspirations that transgressed the borders

of Greater Lebanon that was announced by General Henri Gouraud under the French mandate. “(...) it emerged in a national vacuum. It was torn between traditional pluralistic loyalties on the one hand and modern national Lebanese, Syrian and Arab loyalties on the other” (Saab in Binder 1966, 273).

Article 95 (clause b) of the Lebanese Constitution stipulated the following: “The principles of confessional representation in public service jobs, in the judiciary, in the military and security institutions, and in public and mixed agencies shall be cancelled in accordance with the requirements of national reconciliation, they shall be replaced by expertise and competence. However, Grade One posts and their equivalents shall be excepted from this rule, and the posts shall be distributed between Christians and Muslims without reserving any particular job for any sect but rather applying the principles of expertise and competence”.

However, the newly born political system of 1943 yielded inequality on several levels. The new social system was based on an overlap between sectarian affiliations and social class. As Barakat described it: “(...) poverty areas were overwhelmingly inhabited by Muslims (...), while Mount Lebanon is overwhelmingly inhabited by Christians. Thus, social class and religion overlap, a situation which blurs the nature of the slip in the Lebanese society” (Barakat 1979, 11).

C. Lebanon’s Strengths and Weaknesses

Despite all the structural, political and social difficulties that Lebanon has encountered, relative prosperity has developed in the country in light of several factors:

- Although its democracy was fragile, Lebanon has been capable of maintaining a considerable margin of public liberties including freedom of expression, free press, and ability of organizing demonstrations. This stands in stark contrast with

surrounding countries that were gradually descending into military regimes that were confiscating freedoms and turning societies into groups of powerless people lacking the minimum standards of human rights.

- With the first Arab- Israeli War in 1948, and the fall of Palestine under Israeli occupation, Lebanon's economy profited from the Arab boycott of Haifa's port. The oil industry, rapidly developing in the Arab Gulf states, needed the Lebanese ports on the Mediterranean and the pipelines that connected it to Europe. The Trans Arabian Pipeline, famous as TAPLINE, connected the North Eastern province of one of the world's most powerful oil producers, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with the port of Sidon on the Southern coast of Lebanon.

- The diversity of the Lebanese communities and their co-existence, despite their political inequality, has yielded a hybrid civil society. The unregulated capitalist economic system that prevailed with a minimal role of the state has aggravated inequality and uneven development among the Lebanese regions. At the same time, the lack of state intervention in the economy has paved the way for private enterprises to develop the services and tourism sectors. However, several sectors of the market were controlled by monopolies: "it was estimated that not more than five such families of houses (AbouAdal, Chiha, Faroun, Fattal, Kettaneh) had virtual monopoly over two-thirds of all foreign imports" (Labaki 1971, 12).

John K. Cooley described the situation by saying: "From 1948 on Lebanon, after all, had been a country of asylum, a hospitable haven for the oppressed of all its neighboring lands, during the time of all the Crusades, as during the long centuries of Ottoman Turkish occupation that followed" (Cooleyin Haley and Snider 1979, 22).

1. Superficial Success

Therefore, the Lebanese political system was only superficially successful. Meanwhile, Lebanon had to deal with increasing divisions vis-à-vis regional issues, recurring Arab- Israeli wars accompanied with debates about whether Lebanon should be a state of confrontation or a state of support, accumulating feelings of inequality among Lebanese sects, and imbalance between the Lebanese regions whereby a vibrant society developed in the urban areas in contrast to underprivileged communities in more rural areas that suffer from marginalization and poverty. (Takeddine 2013, 15). All of these factors have been conducive to rising tension in the country at several points in history.

“Politically, the central government is very weak because confessionalism makes it hard for political parties to reach agreements. Political parties are generally along confessional lines which exacerbates the issue of reaching agreement” (Kisthardt 2013, 2).

2. Civil Strife of 1958

The year 1958 was an exceptional year for Lebanon. The country faced one of its most severe crises since reaching independence in 1943. The National Covenant understandings seemed to be at stake. The first president of the republic, Bchara el Khoury was ousted in what was known as the ‘white rebellion’ of 1952. He resigned after enormous demonstrations broke out to protest increasing corruption and attempts at controlling the press and public freedoms in general.

The National Socialist Front led the opposition movement against el-Khoury. It was headed by Kamal Joumblatt but also included several other prominent leaders, such as Camille Chamoun, Ghassan Tueini, Emile Boustany, Anwar el Khatib. Joumblatt

announced that the Nationalist Socialist Front had put together a paper with several points for the next presidential candidate to comply to, such as:

- Preserving Lebanon's independence, guaranteeing its neutrality vis-à-vis all foreign countries and maintaining its friendly ties with the big powers.
- Freeing oneself from nepotism and from the influence of the Presidential office and freeing oneself from any abuse of power or money.
- Shutting down the private law firm of the candidate.
- Implementing the NSF plan (especially the one that the call for strike was based on).
- Dissolving the parliament and amending the electoral law.
- Eliminating the secret money accounts for all the state departments except the Ministries of Interior, Finance and Foreign Affairs.
- Recruitment and promotion would be strictly based on competence and examinations.
- The President refrains from receiving any of the employees without the presence of the concerned minister.
- The president refrains from agreeing on appointing any corrupt persons for any posts, whether ministerial or otherwise.
- Strictly adhere to the NSF principles and refrain from taking any action that contradicts its positions (Joumblatt1987, 34-35).

However, Chamoun's presidential term, which commenced on the 23rd of September in 1952, was the beginning of a series of events that were aimed at reducing the power and influence of several leaders at the local level, while attempting to 'annex' Lebanon's support for the Western camp in the Cold War at the international level. The Eisenhower doctrine, which was announced in January 1957, declared the willingness of

the United States of America to provide financial and military aid to any country that would seek help in protecting itself against Soviet aggression, as part of a broader US policy that aimed at containing the spread of communism globally. Lebanon qualified for US support on the basis of this doctrine after President Chamoun requested help.

This was definitely considered by the NSF as a deep violation of the paper approved by Chamoun himself before his election, especially Article 1 (Joumblatt 1987, 34). It was preceded by several steps that were planned and executed by Chamoun in an attempt to undermine the influence and political presence of several political leaders - including the ones who were part of his alliance within the NSF.

D. Regional Turmoil and its Effect on Lebanon

At the regional level, with the Suez war erupting after the Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser nationalized the Canal in 1956 and American political pressure, Israel was forced to retreat with its foreign supporters France and England. A wave of support for Nasser arose among the Arab peoples. There were public sentiments that this 'victory' could be the beginning of regaining Palestine that was lost in the first Arab-Israeli war of 1948.

As this regional setting was prevailing, the 'infamous' 1957 parliamentary elections occurred in Lebanon. Though former president Bchara el Khoury was ousted with what was known as the "white revolution" of 1952, this brought Chamoun to power. Chamoun was planning to renew his mandate but this required a "friendly" parliament. These elections were accompanied with extensive gerrymandering executed by the President and several complaints from different political leaders that the elections were a forgery in the aim of controlling all the different aspects of political life (Joumblatt 1987, 48).

Furthermore, confessional division was increasingly rising in the country. Chamoun pursued policies that aimed at raising the sentiments of fear amongst Christians to keep control of the Christian community. At the same time, he forged divisions and separation among Muslim communities (Joumblatt 1987, 71-72).

Therefore, in a context of increasing national divisions regarding local and regional policies, several rebellious groups took to the street in the aim of changing the situation and reinstating a new system which they thought should be based on equality and social justice. After months of instability, the “compromise was based on two pillars: paralleling the foreign policy of Gamal Abdul Nasser and reform steps that aimed at organically incorporating Muslims in the Lebanese entity by increasing their loyalty to Lebanon by bridging the social gap and increasing their participation in power” (Takieddine 2013, 13-14).

Nevertheless, the American military intervention based on the request of President Chamoun happened on July 15, 1958, when the “first marines disembarked on the coast of Khaldeh” with approximately 15,000 troops (Traboulsi 2007, 136). This contributed to a political settlement that changed General Chehab- who pursued an active role during the 1958 civil strife-into a position of “active neutrality” towards the Presidency on July 31, 1958. He was the President elected to resolve the crisis.

E. Chehab’s Presidency: Neutrality and State Construction

With the election of General Chehab who joined the political scene from outside the traditional “political club”, a new era for Lebanon has begun. American troops completed their military withdrawal from Lebanon by the end of October 1958. The President elect called on one of the Opposition leaders, Rashid Karami, to preside over the new cabinet in an attempt to reconcile the contending factions in the country.

He initiated the widest reform plans in the Lebanese public administration where he established several new institutions, in addition to the economy, education, social security and other projects as well.

As for foreign policy, Fouad Chehab aimed at reinstating Lebanon's neutrality that was damaged by Chamoun's policies by joining the Baghdad Pact and calling for direct American military intervention. He held a summit with the President of Egypt, Nasser, in a tent on the Lebanese- UAR border on March 25, 1959 for that purpose. "Under him, the equilibrium of the sectarian state was restored, and 'no victor, no vanquished' became the hallowed maxim that should henceforth guide it. On the one hand, Lebanon remained a plausibly independent, essentially pro-Western, Maronite dominated state, determined to keep itself out of any conflict with Israel. On the other hand, to please the Muslims- it observed all the rites and pieties of pan-Arabism (...)" (Hirst 2010, 71).

The failed coup attempt by the Syrian Nationalist Social Party (SNSP) on New Year's Eve in 1961 led to increasing security control in Lebanon in what was known as the "Second Bureau" or Deuxieme Bureau. The work of this bureau has earmarked the second half of Chehab's presidency especially in its fierce intervention of political life from the different aspects. "The SNSP coup gave the security agencies a golden opportunity to entrench themselves even more in Lebanese politics" (Traboulsi 2007, 139).

F. Helou's Presidency: Regional Wars and Local Turbulence

With Chehab refraining from amending the constitution to renew his mandate even though he enjoyed a secure parliamentary majority (79 deputies at the time) ready to do that, he insisted on leaving his tenure on time. He was followed by Charles Helou

who was elected on August 18, 1964. His term was characterized by three significantly important events and trends:

- The growing power of the security agencies reached unprecedented levels in their intervention in political life. “Helou did not possess wide popular support that is why he relied on the support of the Chehabi movement until he became prisoner of the political position of the Deuxieme Bureau” (el-Khazen 2002, 208). This was one major factor why three Maronite leaders, Raymond Edde, Pierre Gemayel and Camille Chamoun, joined efforts in 1968 to create what was known as the Tripartite Alliance against “Nasserism, Communism and Zionism” (Traboulsi 2007, 153). Though the three leaders aimed at the Presidency, the parliament elected Suleiman Franjeh on September 23, 1970 with one vote difference from his competitor Elias Sarkis (el- Khazen 2002, 80). The Tripartite Alliance was a factor that accelerated the formation of the Lebanese National Movement (LNM).

- The Intra Bank Crash that occurred on October 14, 1966, when the bank was declared insolvent. “(...) the Bank’s solvency crisis resulted from (...): the contradiction between its mainly short-term deposits and its long-term investments especially in property” (Traboulsi 2007, 149-150). Some 19,000 depositors were severely affected by this crisis that had negative influence on the Lebanese economy as a whole.

- Most importantly was the Six-Day war that erupted on June 5, 1967, when Israel launched what it considered pre-emptive strikes. The war resulted in the seizure of the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan by the Israelis and the Syrian Golan Heights. It ended on June 10 with sweeping and devastating sentiments among Arabs due to the humiliating defeat as was described by several commentators at the time. The UN Security Council adopted Resolution 242 in November 1967 to call for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from occupied territories. Amongst other factors, the

terminology of the resolution sparked prolonged controversy, kept the case unresolved and the lands occupied in 1967 remained under Israeli control until 2016.

G. The Palestinian Rise and Israeli Aggressions

Internal political divisions among the Lebanese mounted and aggravated as the Palestinian factions increased their attacks and military operations from Lebanese territories that led to fierce retaliation from the Israelis. This happened with Operation Gift on the evening of December 28, 1968, with Israeli raids on Beirut's International Airport. The operation was in response to an attack on an Israeli 'El Al' passenger plane in Athens two days earlier by the Palestinian Lebanon-based militant organization Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP).

The attack led to the destruction of twelve passenger airplanes belonging to Middle East Airlines (MEA) and Lebanese International Airways (LIA), and two cargo planes belonging to Trans Mediterranean Airways (TMA).

The Cairo Accord that was reached on November 2, 1969 between the Lebanese government and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in an attempt to "regulate" the mobility and activity of Palestinian factions proved to be incapable of containing the divergent agendas of the Lebanese state and the resistance movements. After the events of what was known as the "Black September" of 1970 in Jordan when King Hussein crushed the Palestinians, and with the majority of Palestinian political and military leadership moving into Lebanon, the situation became even harder to control. Clashes between some Lebanese factions and the Lebanese army, on one side; and, Palestinian factions, on the other side, became more frequent.

It was during that period that the Lebanese National Movement was taking shape as a grand coalition of leftist parties which called for democratization and social

justice. The coalition included: the Progressive Socialist Party, the Lebanese Communist Party, the Communist Organization, the Syrian Nationalist Social Party, the two branches of the Baath Party (affiliated with the Syrian and Iraqi regimes), Amal Movement, the Popular Nasserist Organization and the Independent Nasserist Movement.

It was evident that Lebanon had entered a phase of instability as local divisions were becoming increasingly intertwined with external players. The gradual disintegration of the state, the inadequacy of the political system to introduce reform, and the regional and international circumstances that were prevalent at the time paved the way for an American- Soviet agreement to allow Syrian troops into Lebanon after the aggravation of violence at several fronts.

Kamal Joumblatt unveiled the content of a letter received by Syrian President Hafez Assad from the Americans on October 15, 1975 revealing its concern about the situation of Christians in Lebanon. According to Joumblatt, the United States was trying to make maximum use from the Lebanese situation in order to undermine the Palestinian resistance and squeeze the LNM. He further unveiled the content of a telephone conversation between American Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and Israel's Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin including the request from Israel not to oppose the Syrian intervention in Lebanon. From Israel's point of view, the Syrian intervention would be an opportunity to witness Arabs themselves execute the role that Israeli and American policy makers have always dreamt of (Joumblatt 1987, 67-68).

Differences among the Lebanese National Movement (LNM) and Syria commenced when its mediation turned out to be mere tutelage over the Lebanese scene. Meanwhile, the Syrians succeeded in gaining Christian support, from the Maronites in particular, for their protection in their confrontation with the Palestinian resistance,

LNM and the forces of Political Islam (Takieddine 2013, 113).

The efforts of Kamal Joumlatt to cease violence and revive political momentum reached their peak with the announcement of the Transitional National Reform Program on August 18, 1975. The program consisted of a comprehensive overview that aimed at increasing equality and power sharing, fostering social justice and strengthening the constitutional institutions in the country.

H. Summary

In Chapter I, we highlighted the major difficulties that Lebanon has faced since it gained independence in 1943. The confessional system, the division over foreign policy and the weak central government failed to address the mounting difficulties that posed existential threats at certain points in time.

In Chapter II, an overview will be given of the means of managing pluralism in diversified societies, linked to the Lebanese context. The so-called consociational democracy that has been adopted has certain rules and customs. Next chapter will examine whether they are respected in Lebanon or not.

CHAPTER II

MANAGING PLURALISM IN DIVIDED SOCIETIES: THE CASE OF LEBANON REVISITED

In this chapter, the challenges and difficulties that encounter divided societies are highlighted. Consociational democracies can be an efficient method for running the state of affairs in a way that allows collective participation in governance. Yet, this system does not fully function if not all of the political players are equally convinced in the importance of this regime.

The chapter also includes a literature review of the basic theories about democracy in divided societies.

It contributes to the thesis objective from the perspective of assessing the Lebanese experience in managing its differences and how the failure to do so has led to the eruption of civil strife in different period of time. It reveals that reform was an utmost necessity, and this is where LNM's program was proposed.

A. Literature Review

Literature pertaining to divided societies is quite extensive especially regarding conflict resolution and types of democracy in those societies. Lebanon is a politically divided country in terms of ethno-religious groups in society and political actors that are active on the wide range of the political spectrum. It has failed to organize itself and sustain peace and stability on several occasions. There are several theorists who discuss divided societies and explain political, constitutional and institutional difficulties that complicate the running of affairs in those societies.

Arend Lijphart concentrated on this issue quite extensively. In an article

published in the Journal of Democracy under the title “Constitutional Design for Divided Societies” said: “Most experts on divided societies and constitutional engineering broadly agree that deep societal divisions pose a grave problem for democracy, and that it is therefore generally more difficult to establish and maintain democratic government in divided than in homogeneous countries” (Lijphart 2004, 96).

Benjamin Reilly has argued that the “question of whether, and how, democracy can survive in divided societies has long been a source of controversy in political science. Some of the greatest political thinkers have argued that stable democracy is possible only in relatively homogeneous societies” (Reilly 2001, 1).

He further discussed the theory of centripetalism which “envisages democracy as a continual process of conflict management, a recurring cycle of dispute resolution in which contentious issues must ultimately be solved via negotiation and reciprocal cooperation, rather than simple majority rule” (Reilly 2001, 7).

Stefan Wolff discussed the concept of territorial self-governance as a form of state construction and conflict management. He said: “Self- governance claims made by territorially concentrated groups can range from demands for independent statehood, unification with another state, territorial self- governance within an existing state, and non- territorial self- governance (or cultural autonomy)” (Wolff2013, 3). He also mentioned “five distinct governance arrangements: confederation, federation, autonomy, devolution and decentralization” (Wolff 2013, 5).

Choudhry said: “A lot is at stake in how divided societies respond to the challenges raised by the equation of ethno-cultural identity and political interest. The extreme consequences of the failure to address those challenges adequately are well-known: discrimination and exclusion, forced assimilation, civil war, ethnic cleansing, and even genocide” (Choudhry 2008, 5).

“Democracy is about inclusion and exclusion, about access to power, about the privileges that go with inclusion and the penalties that accompany exclusion. In severely divided societies, ethnic identity provides clear lines to determine who will be included and who will be excluded”, says Horowitz.

In his book entitled: “Deliberative Democracy and Divided Societies”, Ian O’Flynn said; “Consociational democracy, therefore, is an empirical theory that aims to show how stable democratic government can be forged through power sharing between elites representing competing groups” (O’Flynn 2006, 16).

Guelke discussed in his book: “Politics in Deeply Divided Societies” the challenges for democracy by saying: “In particular, the identification of deeply divided societies as presenting a special challenge to the establishment of democratic governance in comparatively new, especially insofar as the assumptions both of the superiority of democracy over the forms of government and its near universal feasibility, are themselves relatively recent” (Guelke 2012, 2).

Lerner considered that there is little theoretical attention to the cases of constitutional make-up in divided societies by saying: “Despite these increasing challenges, the puzzle of crafting a formal constitution under conditions of deep internal disagreement over the character of the state has received little theoretical and comparative attention”(Lerner 2011, 2).

Sid emphasized the role of the institutions in divided societies by saying: “The guiding principle, explicit or implicit, is that power sharing is essential for the building of sustainable peace and democratic governance in ethnically divided societies” (Sid 2005, x). He added: “While theoretically power may be shared under certain conditions through non-democratic means if peace is the only goal (...), the modern reality is that, to be legitimate, it must be shared through functioning democratic institutions” (Sid

2005, x).

B. The Confessional System in Lebanon

Lebanon's pluralism has been the core of conflicts and the core of solutions. The small nation that suffered enormously from its geo-political position in the heart of the Middle East and the Arab region, was characterized by its diversity, vibrant political life and democratic institutions. Though fragile and lacking sufficient immunity, Lebanon's democracy stood uniquely in a region where states were run and controlled by authoritarian regimes that confiscated public freedoms and held rigged elections in which they won 99.99 percent of the votes in an attempt to legitimize their regimes and secure their continuity.

“The consociational model of constitutionalism is witnessing the lowest ebb in the Arab world”, says Hanna Ziadeh (2007, 115). The region has been marked with dictatorships for decades, as Ali Khan wrote: “The dictators of the Middle East have a morbid love affair with power; they are prepared to do any harm to maintain power; they do not easily relinquish power” (Ali Khan 2013).

Military officers have controlled power in several Arab states in the post-World War II era. After struggling for independence from Western colonial powers, Arab states gradually fell into the hands of dictators. Military coups started in Syria in March 1949 (it had gained its independence from the French mandate in 1943 along with Lebanon), then Egypt in 1952, Iraq in 1958, Yemen in 1962, Libya in 1969, and later on in other Arab countries as well.

In Syria alone, eleven coups or coup attempts happened between 1949 and 1970. Sometimes multiple coups happened in the same years with a short span of a few months between one another. In 1970, Hafez Assad took over and ran the country with

an iron fist. His son, Bashar, seized power, though by sham elections, after his death in 2000.

As described by Dr. Halia Diyab: “By 1970, Syria was exhausted by political unrest and the continuous chain of military coups which erupted almost every two years. Hafez al-Assad had the cold-blooded ruthlessness of a military man and the intelligence of a sharp politician and started a new decade of nationalist socialism. Syria, meanwhile, lay waiting to be controlled” (Diyab2014).

Authoritarian regimes are an inadequate form of governance, according to Paul Salem: “Non- democratic regimes are not suitable for the long term and they end up collapsing or imploding dragging along the way the short- sighted politicians that have constructed them (...)” (Salem 1998, 512).

The turbulent developments that unfolded in the Middle East highly affected Lebanon as its fragile political system failed to guarantee stability. “In fact, we in Lebanon never approached democracy except from its backdoor. It is not possible to say that democracy had an important place in the Lebanese political culture before mid-nineteenth century”, Salem said (1998, 513). Clashes among Lebanese factions, whether military or political, were recurrent in the last few decades. The longest conflict that commenced in 1975 was only resolved in 1990 with the signing of the Taif Accord.

The Accord redistributed political power among the constitutional institutions and aimed at reconciliation, which was considered incomplete according to some observers: “The Taif Accord did not note any mechanism for national reconciliation, rather called for pursuing policies aiming at a national unification direction on the basis of conforming to the constitution and building the state of law” (el Khazen 2007, 52).

Another point to consider: “The first reconciliation should be a national reconciliation with the accord itself, which is the most difficult. The responsibility of

this reconciliation lies on both the supporters of the Accord and its antagonists”(el Khazen 2007, 53).

The confessional political system in Lebanon proved troublesome on all levels. Sectarianism has practically intervened in every account of personal and not only political life. Ahmad Beydoun said: “The system has proved incapable of resolving the state of affairs or introducing sustainable national peace (...). Compromises it has succeeded to introduce, since the country’s inception, were restricted to trivial matters, which were also resolved with difficulty that made solutions delayed and come at a high cost. However, big issues awaited big clashes” (Beydoun 2005, 32).

Sociologist Adeb Nehme considered that in “the case of Lebanon where sects are active social associations, including the political sphere, they are prior to the formation of the Lebanese state under the Mandate in 1920, which is also known as political confessionalism” (Nehme 2014, 99).

The absence of one dominating or hegemonic power in the context of a wide diversity of political actors, the penetration of regional and international players into the internal Lebanese arena in the form of relations between local parties and international actors and the overall weakness of the system have made a political system based on consociational democracy inevitable.

Harb approached confessionalism, in general, and its application in Lebanon in particular, by saying: “In political science terminology, confessionalism is a system of government that proportionally allocates political power among a country's communities—whether religious or ethnic—according to their percentage of the population. It derives from another more academic term called “consociationalism”, which incorporates the following four elements:

- Proportional allocation of political posts among communities according to

their numerical representation in the population;

- A grand coalition between community leaders on common policies that serve all;
- Communal autonomy whereby each community is free to determine its own affairs such as personal status laws; and
- Mutual veto power, so that any decisions deemed detrimental by any community can be voted down” (Harb 2006).

Nelson considered that Lebanon’s make-up is unique in comparison to its surrounding and wrote: Lebanon poses a unique dilemma to policy-makers and democracy engineers. While most of its neighbors are made up of clear Sunni or Shia majorities, Lebanon is essentially a mosaic of minorities. With the roots of sectarianism driven so deep into Lebanese soil, it seems difficult to conceive of a political system that does not take religion into account” (Neslon 2013).

The complexities that the Lebanese confessional system encounters are not peculiar for confessional systems: “The Lebanese confessional system contains intrinsic dilemmas that are almost inevitable in all confessional systems. Rigid allocations among religious factions for the purpose of power sharing crystallize divisions and set battle lines. They are particularly dangerous in a society such as Lebanon, where the power sharing groups have significantly different birthrates and emigration rates” (Choucair 2006, 5).

Salamey examined how the confessional system reproduced a weak government. He said: “The confessional predetermination of state power among many sects, each having veto power over public decisions, undermined the realization of a functional and strong government system. Instead, a deeply divided and a weak confessional state was established” (Salamey 2009, 2).

Suleiman researched the role of political parties in a confessional democracy and wrote: “(...) confessionalism on the governmental level is to a great extent a reflection of the breakdown of society into numerous self-conscious religious communities to maintain their identity and separate status”, considering that “(...) it exists, permeates every governmental agency, and envelopes every social structure in the country, including political parties” (Suleiman 1967, 682).

David Hirst, the *Guardian* correspondent for several years, wrote a book entitled “Beware of Small States: Lebanon, Battleground of the Middle East”. He mentioned the following regarding the Lebanese confessional system: “For an amalgam of religious communities and their myriad sub-divisions, with a constitutional and political order to match, Lebanon is the sectarian state *par excellence*. The condition from which it suffers is chronic, or, at the very least, it is surely bound to endure as long as the whole Middle East also remains what it is: the more endemically unstable region in the world” (Hirst 2010, 2).

“In several circumstances and in various countries, adoption of consociational democracy- i.e. proportional representation of primordial identity segments, government by grand coalition and minority veto- appeared an indisputable and efficient formula to defuse antagonism”, said Elizabeth Picard(2007, 97).

Lijphart specified the principles of consociational democracy. He “believes that stable, democratic government is possible in multi-ethnic societies, but argues that for this to happen elites should reject majoritarian principles and adopt four key consociational ideas. These are:

- *The grand coalition*: Governments should be composed of representatives from all the major ethnic groups. Lijphart argues that this is the most important of the four principles.

- *Proportionality*: A certain number of seats in Parliament and public office should be allocated to minority ethnic groups on the basis of their population numbers.
- *The mutual veto*: All major ethnic groups should be able to stop or delay legislation that they believe will seriously affect their interests.
- *Segmental autonomy*: Wherever possible power should be devolved so that those regions of a state where an ethnic minority is in fact the majority can have considerable local autonomy. This would include federal arrangements” Lijphart 1977, http://wikisum.com/w/Lijphart:_Democracy_in_plural_societies#Chapter_2:_Four_Main_Characteristics_of_Consociational_Democracy.

Despite the fact that Lijphart concentrated on ethnic diversity, which is not the case in Lebanon, yet, his thoughts on consociational democracy are similar to this country’s case. There is diversity that needs to be managed in one way or another without descending into chaos or civil strife. He said: “Plurality combined with guaranteed representation for specified minorities (as in India and Lebanon) necessarily entails the potentially invidious determination of which groups are entitled to guaranteed representation and which are not” (Lijphart 2004, 100).

Yet, there are contradictory viewpoints regarding consociational democracy and its effects on society. “The problem with the consociational formula is that it bears self-fulfilling effects on the institutionalization process, locking up people in communal categories, submitting political negotiation to supposed immutable rules, instilling primordial values in the political culture and dividing governmental decision in the name of power sharing”, Picard said (2007, 99).

A striking contradiction stems from her point of view communalism and its relationship with democracy, she says: “(...), political communalism cannot be a protection against authoritarianism, be it colonial imperialism or a local leader’s

dictatorial rule. On the contrary, authoritarianism takes advantage of social segmentation and encourages political segmentation in order to ‘counterbalance’ rival social segments, as observed in Syria and Iraq since 1960” (Picard 2007, 99-100).

As Picard considered that “contrary to common belief, the so-called ‘primordial identities’ are no more natural, inevitable and unchanging than ‘acquired identities’ like profession or political party membership”, (Picard 2007, 101), Makdisi considered that sectarianism is a modern political phenomenon and not a regression to parochial tribalism, and he finds a strong “relation between sectarianism as an idea draws meaning only within the nationalist paradigm and hence that it belongs to our modern world” (Makdisi 2000, 13).

Lijphart (1977) says that “there are three ways to solve the political problems of a divided society without destroying democracy. The first is assimilation--which is likely to happen if one large group forms the majority in a majoritarian (e.g. Westminster/British) system. The second is consociational democracy. The third, if the first two don't work favorably, is partition into homogeneous states. The problem is that people aren't usually neatly divided into two distinct regions, making partition difficult (consider the former Yugoslavia, particularly Bosnia-Herzegovina)” (Lijphart 1977, http://wikisum.com/w/Lijphart:_Democracy_in_plural_societies).

Whether consociational democracy can be a sustainable and enduring political system, or a final objective by itself, especially in the case of Lebanon was refuted by Dr. Hasan Krayem. According to Dr. Krayem, the ruling elite in Lebanon did not view consociational democracy as a means to avoid and resolve conflicts but rather as a final and solid objective by itself. Instead of using this system to preserve political stability, the system was used to preserve the current situation from changes and holding on to power (Krayem 2007, 20).

Despite the fact that he admitted that “one of the most important benefits of consociational democracy remains protecting minorities and forbidding the majority from despotism and allowing groups to preserve their identities in divided societies where minorities feel that their identities are jeopardized; however, the consociational democratic pattern cannot be a final objective (...), rather it should be flexible, temporary and open towards developing the system towards civil democracy based on equality among all citizens” (Krayem 2007, 22-23).

Helou considered that “Lebanon’s 1943 consociational formula was based on the following factors: communal federation of groups that gives each community the right to run its internal affairs (...), the principle of representing sects in the three presidencies (...), the principle of Lebanon’s neutrality between East and West (...)”. (Helou 2007, 36-37).

Helou further specified five different reasons for the failure of consociational democracy in Lebanon, as such: reduction of the formula and disregarding its major components (especially pertaining to the relations between the sects and the state), citizenship restricted to sectarianism (despite the fact that the Lebanese constitution is civil and not religious), absence of proper representation within the sects, the weakness of parties and civil society, administrative centralization and corruption (Helou 2007, 39-45).

Ziadeh mentions that “consociational systems usually cross their expiry date once the power- sharing formula is contested by a major party that previously endorsed the compromise and not because the individual citizens feel systematically discriminated against or because the central state is devaluated into a gate-keeper to communal interests” (Ziadeh 2007, 130).

The Taif Accord that has revived the consociational approach in running the

state of affairs in Lebanon also included provisions that called for abolishing sectarianism. It stipulated that a national committee headed by the President of the Republic had to be created to study the means of abolishing sectarianism (Part II under the title 'Political Reforms', article G). The committee was never created in light of severe political divisions at the local level.

Article 95 of the constitution mentioned the following: "The Chamber of Deputies that is elected on the basis of equality between Muslims and Christians shall take the appropriate measures to bring about the abolition of political confessionality according to a transitional plan. A National Committee shall be formed, headed by the President of the Republic, it includes, in addition to the President of the Chamber of Deputies and the Prime Minister, leading political, intellectual, and social figures. The tasks of this Committee shall be to study and propose the means to ensure the abolition of confessionality, propose them to the Chamber of Deputies and to the Ministers council of ministers, and to follow up the execution of the transitional plan" (The Lebanese Constitution 1926).

Throughout Lebanon's modern history, every time Muslims requested the abolishment of sectarianism, Christians retaliated by calling for full secularization which was in turn refused by Muslims. As such, the country has been hostage to the current political system that does not give equal rights to all of its citizens, and that has transformed what was temporary to permanent, especially article 95 that specified the terms of the transitional period as such:

- The sectarian groups shall be represented in a just and equitable manner in the formation of the Cabinet.
- The principle of confessionality representation in public service jobs, in the judiciary, in the military and security institutions, and in public and mixed agencies

shall be cancelled in accordance with the requirements of national reconciliation; they shall be replaced by the principle of expertise and competence (The Lebanese Constitution 1926).

The Lebanese National Movement (LNM) has attempted to change the Lebanese confessional system. The movement proposed the National Reform Plan in August 1975 with the aim of increasing equality among citizens by developing political institutions and mechanisms to become more accountable and transparent. The plan emphasized the necessity of erecting an independent judiciary and proposed several suggestions that would increase political representation and participation in the system.

C. Summary

In this chapter, we highlighted the difficulties and challenges that divided societies encounter by firstly presenting a comprehensive literature review about theories of dealing with pluralism or division in heterogeneous societies and secondly, by moving to Lebanon in particular as being one prominent example. We also explained the basic features, advantages and disadvantages of consociational democracy according to several scholars and its applicability on Lebanon. The chapter also dealt with constitutional handicaps that hinder development and the resentment of the Lebanese political society to introduce change.

The next chapter will include a detailed and thorough assessment of LNM's reform plan explaining its vision to a modern pluralistic Lebanon.

CHAPTER III

LNМ'S POLITICAL REFORM PROGRAM OF 1975

In Chapter III, we will explain the major circumstances in the mid-seventies that led to announcement of the “Transitional Program for National Reform” by the Lebanese National Movement in August 1975 in an attempt to avoid military clash. We will examine, in detail, the different aspects of the program as a means of reform.

A. Introduction

In the mid-seventies, Lebanon was gradually descending into civil war. The regional and local contexts were set for this to happen, while Lebanon merely served as a space where all regional tensions could be released. “Henry Kissinger’s disengagement policy toward Lebanon”, as Fawaz Gerges has argued, was “informed not only by his perception of inherent precariousness of the country but also by the strategic need for a safety valve where Arab- Israeli tensions could be released without the threat of a major Arab- Israeli confrontation” (Gerges 1997, 78).

Gradually, Lebanon’s fragile political system and its lack of immunity caused by severe divisions have aggravated the situation and led to the explosion of war in 1975 with regional and international patronage. “More important, most of these internal wars are sustained with outside assistance and patronage, thereby reconfirming the complexities of interplay among local, national, regional and international rivalries. It is also them that they degenerate into “Dirty Wars”; i.e., the proxy battlegrounds for other peoples’ wars and the surrogate victims of unresolved regional and global tensions” (Khalaf 2002, 42).

Scholars have always studied closely this intertwined complex relationship between Lebanon's divided society and its penetration by regional and foreign powers. The regional context has always affected the workings of politics inside the country. "Any aggravation of the state of affairs in the Middle East and any quickening of Pan-Arabist sensitivity would shake the Lebanese equilibrium; and any shaking of the equilibrium would turn at least some of those shaken towards ideological politics, extremist Lebanese nationalism and extremist Pan-Arabism" (Shilsin Binder 1966, 10).

B. Polarization of Politics in Lebanon

In this context, the local Lebanese arena was witnessing increasing polarization. On the one hand, the Lebanese Christian right, and, on the other, the Lebanese National Movement (LNM) and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) were gradually in confrontation. The Christian Lebanese right, according to Takieddine, refused all the requests of their partners in the country and raised the flag of defending Christian presence in Lebanon. Training and military arms provided by Western powers as well as the support of the state apparatus would facilitate this mission (Takieddine 2013, 40).

The Lebanese Front was established on January 31, 1976 and included the following parties: "Phalangist (or Kataeb) Party: led by Pierre Gemayel and its militia led by his son, Bashir Gemayel, the National Liberal Party: led by former President of the Republic Camille Chamoun, its militia, al-Numur (Tigers) was led by his son Dany Chamoun (later killed in 1990 along with his wife and children), Al Tanzim by Fouad Chemali, Guardians of the Cedars led by Etienne Saqr, Zghartan Liberation Army (Marada Brigade led by Tony Franjiya (later assassinated along with his family members in 1978), the Permanent Congress of the Lebanese Order of Monks led by

Sharbel Qassis” (Deeb 1980, xiii).

The Lebanese National Movement included the following parties: Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) (led by Kamal Joumblatt); Independent Nasirites’ Movement (led by Ibrahim Qulaylat with its militia *al- Murabitun*); The Lebanese Communist Party (led by Nicqula al-Shawi); The Arab Socialist Ba’ath Party (led by ‘Abd al-Majid al-Rafi’I); The Organization of Communist Action (led by Mohsen Ibrahim); Arab Socialist Action Party (led by George Habash); Syrian Social Nationalist Party (led by In’amRa’d); Arab Socialist Union in Lebanon (led by Khaled Shihab and Kamal Younis); Union of the Forces of Arab Working People- Corrective Movement (led by ‘Isam al-‘Arab; its militia was *Quwwat Nasir*); The 24th of October Democratic Socialist Movement (led by Faruq al-Muqaddam); National Christians Front; Populist Nasserist Organization (led by Mustafa Sa’ad). Allied to LNM was Lebanon’s Arab Army, led by Ahmad al-Khatib (Deeb 1980, xiii). The LNM also counted a number of independent members, such as: Issam Naaman, Albert Mansour, Fouad Chbaklo, to mention but a few.

Karim Mroueh, a veteran Communist leader, considered that the “Lebanese Nationalist Movement in its first shape was established under the name: “The Front of Parties and National Lebanese Figures” including three parties: Progressive Socialist Party, Communist Party, and the Arab Nationalist Movement, in addition to three independent figures who were MP Ma’arouf Saad, MP General Jamil Lahoud and Mrs. Nouhad Said” (Mroueh 2015, 54).

The Front played an instrumental role in local politics, especially in regard to social and economic issues. It was represented in a cabinet in 1966 during the presidency of Charles Helou by General Jamil Lahoud who became Minister of Labor and Social Affairs. He activated social security and licensed the Public Union of Labor

and other institutions that articulated the interests of the working class.

Eventually, several parties joined the Front which became known as the Lebanese National Movement. “Its name was linked during the first four years of the seventies with its leadership of several political and social battles which included protecting workers and farmers, in addition to battles led by its students in defense of the Lebanese University and education in its various stages, both private and public, women were also part of this struggle in defense of these rights, in addition to a special role for intellectuals” (Mroueh 2015, 55).

Kamal Joumblatt realized that the rising influence of the LNM with its clear objectives and rational planning turned out to be an actual threat for the Arab world that was largely suffering from stagnation caused by political regimes with dogmatic frameworks. Joumblatt considered the Arab world to be a huge prison for mankind that hinders the path to development (Joumblatt 1987, 54).

Though Joumblatt fully comprehended that political circumstances were revealing how Lebanon was the new arena of regional and international conflict, he considered that the capacity of introducing reform to the political system was indispensable in an attempt to avoid armed conflict. This is why the LNM drafted the “Transitional Program for Political Reform” and announced it on August 18, 1975. The effects of the April 13 incident when the Kataeb Party attacked a bus in Ain el Remmaneh with Palestinians on board killing 23 of them were severe.

While fishermen organized a demonstration in February 1975 to protest the creation of “Protein”, a company aiming at fishing in Lebanese waters headed by former President Camille Chamoun, tensions escalated in the city of Sidon in the South of Lebanon. During the demonstration, prominent Lebanese leftist figure Maarouf Saad was shot amidst the tension. He died on March 6, 1975 (Malek 2016, 36).

C. The Lebanese National Movement (LNM): The Beginnings

Starting 1972, Kamal Joumblatt and several party representatives gathered into a grand political coalition which they called the Lebanese National Movement. He was the “spinal cord of the Progressive Socialist Party and the spinal cord of the Lebanese National Movement” (Debian 1977, 131). The movement comprised of several leftist parties that unified powers in the aim of introducing change and reform in the Lebanese political system.

Albert Mansour, a former minister and active member of LNM, wrote in commemoration of Kamal Joumblatt that LNM is “a popular movement a national progressive movement and a democratic movement” (Unanimous 2004, 304) قالوا في كمال جنبلاط الدار التقديمية

He considered that LNM represented the climax of Kamal Joumblatt’s intellectual contribution because it was built on the characteristics mentioned afore. Mansour said that LNM exemplified the unity between the Lebanese genuine democratic progressive struggle and the national struggle for the liberation of Palestine and achieving Arab unity in addition to emancipating the Arab on all scales” (Unanimous 2004, 305).

The role and aims of LNM and its deep relation with Kamal Joumbalitt were explained by Dr. Massoud Daher who wrote: “(...) Kamal Joumblatt was capable of leading LNM to the level of becoming the national democratic non- sectarian alternative that clung to Lebanon’s unity and Arabic identity, and to protect the revolutionary Palestinian presence in Lebanon. His works were an exemplification of the movement’s capacities in hard times of its development, as he was the symbol of its unity representing the ambitions of the vast majority of Lebanese in the building of an Arab secular unified democratic Lebanon” (Unanimous 2004, 275-276).

D. LNM's Political Reform Plan: Factors and Circumstances

The LNM Program included an introduction and seven points, namely: Abolishing political sectarianism, democratic reform for popular representation, reforming and balancing public authorities, reforming the public administration, reorganizing the army, strengthening democratic and public freedoms and calling for the creation of an establishing body (Al Anbaa supplement issue 1905, 2005, 8- 16).

The LNM mentioned four factors in its program that required immediate action starting with reform and then continuing into development of the political system. The first factor was what LNM considered to be dangerous isolationist discourse on the national level that aimed at attempting to separate Lebanon from the Arab region and “from the comprehensive fight against the Zionist enemy and its allies” (Al Anbaa 2005, 3).

A second important element was the economy. The LNM considered Lebanon's capitalist economic system to be unmatched globally. Lebanon's economic system was a source of chaos and continued crises under the pretext of preserving the “free economy”. LNM refused the growth of monopolies and its role in distorting the Lebanese economy at the expense of productive sectors (Al Anbaa 2005, 3).

The third factor, according to LNM, concerned the social level. While the national treasures were concentrated in the hands of a few number of people, the majority of the Lebanese people were suffering from unemployment and deteriorating life conditions. This leads to increased immigration and destructs the middle class.

The fourth factor was the political element. While Lebanon lives behind the façade of a bright democracy, its political system is based on different sorts of undemocratic discrimination and inherited political structures from the eras of feudalism and the French mandate that do not meet the minimum requirements to modernize its

institutions (Al Anbaa 2005, 3).

Based on all of the above, LNM proposed its transitional program divided in two phases. In its first phase, political reforms would be proposed that would further the process of democratization. This would be followed by another phase that would deal with other issues concerning national defense, the economy and socio-cultural issues.

LNM was clear in this program that the proposed amendments do not erect the comprehensive democratic system that requires a deep-rooted change in the nature of the economic- social system and political authority itself; however, this program provides the minimum level of the needed democratic development that targets political feudalism (Al Anbaa 2005, 8).

LNM was deeply convinced of the necessity of abolishing political sectarianism. The alternative for sectarianism would be the development of a new national democratic system. "Abolishing sectarianism from the constitutional and legislative texts is one of the major primary goals of its struggle during this period of Lebanon's development in the aim of reaching the full secularization of the political system and removing all the effects of the confessional formula on the different fronts of the Lebanese scene" (Al Anbaa 2005, 8). The program focused particularly on abolishing sectarianism in popular representation, public administration, the judiciary, and the army.

LNM deeply emphasized the importance of the electoral law. It proposed introducing several reforms to improve popular representation. Here are some of those reforms: Abolishing political sectarianism, making Lebanon one national electoral district, implementing proportional representation, one deputy for every ten thousand voters, reducing voting age to 18 years old, adopting electoral card, allowing voting in the region of residence, equal and free use of public media in electoral campaign,

considering bribery a felony, amending the internal statute to increase the principle of parliamentary blocs, creating a judiciary committee to supervise elections and deciding on appeals, cancelling the financial guarantee, subjugating the deputy to the supervision of the bureau of accounts and the illegal wealth court, and finally introducing a retirement age for deputies at 64 (Al Anbaa 2005, 9).

E. A Comprehensive Plan

LNM did not only request such a revolutionary change in the electoral system, rather it emphasized in parallel the importance of local popular representation as well as the need to introduce a new administrative organization for the state. Its program called for installing a new administrative organization for the state, establishing regional representative councils that would be elected for four years, restudying the municipal situation in the direction of introducing a new municipal law that would be based on proportional representation and amending the tutelage system in a way that would allow it to be independent in its role as local representative bodies (Al Anbaa 2005, 9-10).

Furthermore, LNM dedicated a full section of its comprehensive program for public authorities, their balance and reform. It reiterated its commitment to keeping the people as the source of power, the necessity of returning to the democratic parliamentary principles in designating prerogatives and in the relationship between the legislative and executive authorities to maintain balance amongst them.

The program called for restricting the prerogative of legislation for the parliament, establishing an elected Constitutional Council that would include representatives of the different activities (economic, social, cultural) which would be called the “Lebanese Activities Council”. It also called for separating ministerial portfolios from parliament membership in addition to several other reforms (Al Anbaa

2005, 10-11).

F. Reforms in the Executive Authority

As for the executive authority, the program proposed that “the president and the prime minister jointly sign the decrees related to decisions taken in the cabinet (...)”, and it dedicated a special section to the Judiciary authority emphasizing the “total independence of the judicial authority from the other authorities and granting the “Higher Judicial Council” would be the sole authority to appoint, transfer, promote or end the services of judges (...). Establishing a Higher Court to monitor the constitutionality of laws and creating a special court to try ministers and deputies and introducing a new optional civil law for personal status affairs” (Al Anbaa 2005, 12-13).

G. Reforming the Public Administration

LNM was concerned with reforming the public administration, it proposed several ideas in this regard, most importantly to diminish political interference in appointments by entrusting the appointment of all employees in the public administration and corporations in the Civil Service Board (...). (Al Anbaa 2005, 13).

H. Reforming the Lebanese Army: An Essential Step

On a different front, LNM was looking forward to developing the Lebanese Army, both from a political and logistical perspective. It identified the necessity to review the military institution and propose fundamental amendments to its organization in order to strengthen democracy and national defense. Therefore, it included several reforms for the army in its program: the army’s mission should be restricted to defending Lebanon’s borders and its national independence, the army should be

submissive to the political authority, and sectarianism should be abolished in the internal organization of the army (Al Anbaa 2005, 13-14). In addition to that, the program called for the preservation of public liberties.

I. Summary

In Chapter III, we highlighted the most important pillars of the “Transitional Program for Political Reform” that was announced by the Lebanese National Movement in August 1975. The different aspects of the program aimed at alleviating the political system and discharging it from its confessional structure.

In the next chapter, LNM’s relations with the Syrian Regime headed by Hafez Assad will be analyzed. The reasons behind its fast deterioration will be explained. It is related to the research question from the angle that the foreign intervention has been an impediment to political reform.

CHAPTER IV

LNM AND THE SYRIAN REGIME

This chapter tackles the deteriorating relationship between LNM's leader Kamal Joumlatt and the Syrian regime headed by Hafez al Assad. It outlines the regional and local context, in which developments were unfolding and concludes by the Syrian military intervention in Lebanon which was disapproved by Joumlatt. It also sheds light on his assassination in 1977, the details of which will be revealed in full in Chapter five.

A. Introduction

“Differences between LNM and Syria commenced when its mediation was an entry towards tutelage on the Lebanese scene. Syrians succeeded in earning a Christian, and specifically Maronite, request for protection in the face of the Palestinian resistance, the National Movement and the forces of political Islam”, as described by Sleiman Takieddine (Takieddine 2013,113).

Kamal Joumlatt traditionally despised totalitarian regimes and dictatorships. He was highly sensitive to the rule of the military all over the Arab world that was devastated by recurrent military coups, which suppressed the people and confiscated their basic rights of democracy and freedom. He considered that the “Arab world was actually today a huge prison for the human ideas and the trends of developments” (Joumlatt 1987, 54).

B. The Rise of Syrian Regional Power

The way regional developments were unfolding revealed that the rise of Syrian power was materializing. The weakest location to extend the sphere of influence to was Lebanon in light of the severe internal political divisions. Three developments helped in that: “(1) the emergence of a stable and effective regime in Syria, which, under the leadership of Hafez al-Assad, conducted a successful foreign policy; (2) the progressive weakening of the Lebanese state and apparent inability of the Lebanese political system to cope with crisis which finally led to the outbreak of the civil war; and (3) the decline of Egypt’s position as a regional power” (Rabinovich in Haley and Snider 1979, 57).

The October War of 1973, described by Israelis as Yom Kippur War because it happened on a Holy day for Jews, had been an enormous transformation for the whole region. In the first three days, the joint Egyptian- Syrian attack accomplished military victories and succeeded in regaining the territories that had been occupied by the Israelis in the six-day war of 1967 in the Golan and Sinai. The counter Israeli offensive and international intervention reshaped the course of events on the ground until a cease fire was reached on October 25th.

C. The Sinai Agreements: Altering the Course of Events

The two Sinai agreements between Egypt and Israel (January 18, 1974 and September 1, 1975), which called for disengagement between Israeli and Egyptian forces, have tremendously altered the regional situation. Relations between Egypt and Syria were gradually being strained, especially when Egyptian President Anwar Sadat reinvented Egypt’s foreign policy by approaching an alliance with Washington and departing from the strategic alliance with Moscow that was adopted by his predecessor Gamal Abdul Nasser.

The Syrian regime called for a joint Syrian-Jordanian-PLO military command to confront the challenges in the region, such as the regional aspirations of Iraq and Egypt. “Only after Sinai II was concluded does it appear that Syria transformed its proposal for a joint military command into an actual defensive military strategy for the entire Eastern Front. Implementing that strategy, however, created a compelling need for the exertion of Syrian influence in Lebanon”, according to Snider (Snider in Haley and Snider 1979, 186).

In this context, Kamal Joumlatt understood the deep divisions in the Arab region. The deterioration of Syrian- Egyptian relations worried him. He considered the Egyptian policy shifts comprehensible in light of the full absence of Arab financial support, especially Gulf, for Egypt’s military and development project as it faces a “battle of destiny” (Timofiev 2009, 400).

The Riyadh Summit that was held on October 16, 1976 was attended by five states (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Egypt, Syria and Lebanon) and the PLO. It called for a total cease fire on all Lebanese territories and strengthening the Arab security forces to become Arab Deterrent Forces. Almost a month later, on November 25, 1976, another fourteen- state Arab summit was held in Cairo. It reiterated the decisions of the Riyadh Summit, especially regarding the Arab Deterrent Forces.

This has poured into the benefit of the Syrian regime, as described by Rabinovich: “An Arab consensus came to recognize Syria’s paramount position in Lebanon. Its military presence in Lebanon was legitimized by the creation of a largely fictitious Arab Deterrent Force, the bulk of which was Syrian” (Rabinovich in Haley and Snider 1979, 70). On the other hand, “since January 1976, the US administration had lauded the positive political role of Syria in Lebanon and supported the constitutional document signed in Damascus (...)” (Traboulsi 2007, 195).

D. Syrian Tutelage over Lebanon: International and Regional Cover

This has shown how the international atmosphere was developing into a context conducive for Syrian tutelage over Lebanon. When Dean Brown, the American envoy to Lebanon, met Kamal Joumlatt in April 1976, he received a translated English copy of LNM's political reform program. Brown clearly stipulated that the United States would not allow Lebanon to be another Czechoslovakia, nor a protectorate under Syrian influence, nor a state of confrontation against Israel (Timofiev 2009, 449).

Therefore, Joumlatt's concerns regarding the true ambitions of the Syrian regime and its attempt to occupy and control Lebanon were comprehensible at the time. In a speech delivered on July 20, 1976, Syrian President Hafez Assad clearly stated: "(...), through history, Syria and Lebanon have been one country and one people. The people in Syria and Lebanon have been one throughout history" (Assad 1976, 5).

In this speech, Assad underlined the basic policies his regime was planning to execute in Lebanon and explained that his military intervention had happened without the consent of the local Lebanese parties. He frankly said: "We did not consult them, nor did we consult the nationalist parties. As a matter of fact, none of them was prepared to argue with us regarding any measure" (Assad 1976, 11). Furthermore, he said: "We exerted political efforts. We gave arms and ammunition. All this was happening and yet it was not enough to save the situation. Hence, we had no choice but to intervene directly" (Assad 1976, 10).

The Syrian President was keen on enforcing a monopoly of power and making sure his regime would be the sole player in the Lebanese arena. Some of the points he proposed for the problems in Lebanon:

- "(...) To reject the American plans and solutions in Lebanon.
- To adhere to the continuation of the Syrian initiative.

- To reject the internationalization or the entry of any international forces into Lebanon.

- To reject the Arabization of the crisis in Lebanon” (Assad 1976, 23).

If there were any conclusions to be made from these points, it is that Assad refused any political solutions to the Lebanese crisis had it not earned his consent. International and Arab initiatives were refused, international peacekeeping forces were not accepted by the Syrians, and Arab political efforts were not welcomed by Assad. This exemplifies how they planned to exercise tutelage on Lebanon through direct military intervention, reducing the roles of other regional players to the least possible level, and directly intimidating some internal Lebanese factions, such as the Lebanese National Movement and the Palestinian groups. “Amman and Damascus saw a “radical” Lebanon as a real possibility, and one that argued ill for their own interests” (Juraidini and McLaurin in Haley and Snider 1979, 157).

This is what Joumblatt described by saying: “The Syrian Ba’athist regime (...) allowed itself to slip from political arbitration to military intervention” (Joumblatt 1982, 9). He further added: “The Syrians wanted to impose themselves and their point of view, their interests, ideas, tutelage, upon everybody. They only appeared to be seeking an equilibrium between the belligerents in order to be able to interfere freely and make the most of the situation for themselves. The Syrian military intervention, following the partial failure of their political arbitration, revealed the Damascus regime’s real intentions” (Joumblatt 1982, 67).

E. Assad-Joumblatt: Deterioration of Relations

Joumblatt’s relationship with the Syrian Regime took a dramatic turn after his meeting with the Syrian President Hafez Al Assad in Damascus on March 26, 1976.

“He visited the Syrian capital in the aim of reaching a final settlement for the Lebanese crisis based on specific conditions that would help Lebanon be based on a relatively developed political system through constitutional amendments that would resolve the accumulating differences over time (...)” (Safi 2006, 491-492).

According to Safi, differences and tensions between Assad and Joumlatt during this meeting mostly concerned the final phase of fighting between the Lebanese factions. The latter called for a short and final battle that would enhance peace prospects on principles of equality among all Lebanese and preserving freedom and democracy. Assad refused this in total and informed Joumlatt that the Christians in Lebanon would call for a Christian state under the protection of Europe and the United States (Safi 2006, 492).

The negative ramifications of this meeting soon became realized. Assad called PLO’s Yasser Arafat to Damascus and requested him to stop fighting Kamal Joumlatt. The ports of Sidon, Tyre and Tripoli were besieged by the Syrian navy, the “Saiqaa” (a Syrian sponsored militia) took control of Beirut’s Airport, and a twelve-million-dollar shipment of arms for the common forces was confiscated (Timofiev 2009, 427).

Theodore Hanf considered that “Syria’s first step was to impose an arms embargo on the Joumlatt- PLO condition. It then sought assurances from the USA and- through American intermediaries- Israel that they would not oppose another Syrian intervention in Lebanon. (...) Israel informed the USA that it would not resist the deployment of Syrian troops” (Hanf 2015, 218).

F. The Syrian Military Invasion of Lebanon

The Syrian military invasion commenced on June 1, 1976 from three different places: the Damascus- Beirut road from Beqaa, Akkar in the North of Lebanon and the

third from Jezzine towards the city of Sidon in the South of Lebanon. The Lebanese National Movement and the National and Progressive Socialist Parties refused the “Syrian occupation” after holding a meeting headed by Joumblatt (Malik 2016, 27-275).

This military intervention was biased as events gradually unfolded. “The Syrians entered the mountain and help the Kataeb forces commit massacres in Kfarselwn, Salima and Arsoun under their sight. Tens were killed, inhabitants were displaced, and houses were burned, it was the first signal towards civil war in the mountain between Christians and Druze”, as Takieddine notes (2013, 96).

“Kamal Joumblatt, in particular, was disappointed beyond measure. He had thought the leadership of s new republic was within his grasp, and now appeared to have been put in his place as leader of a small community- with at best the power of one minister among many”, as Hanf described Joumblatt’s disappointment (Hanf 2015, 213).

“As Syria pretended that if its army had not entered Lebanon, the Israeli army would have; Kamal Joumblatt categorically refused this approach considering that the opposite is correct. The more Syria moves far away from Lebanon, the more will Israel move far away as well”, wrote Safi (2006, 509).

G. Secluding the LNM

The political atmosphere that followed the Syrian military intervention in Lebanon, altered the situation drastically. The consent of this intervention was publicly announced by the Lebanese left and Christian parties. The Palestinian Liberation Organization and other active Palestinian factions which were active on the Lebanese scene were requested by Damascus to cut off all ties with Kamal Joumblatt and the Lebanese National Movement. The aim was to block Joumblatt’s eminent military

victory in the country and regain balance with the losing Left.

With the attempt assassination of Raymond Edde, a prominent Lebanese politician and Presidency candidate who refused military intervention, on May 25, 1976, it was clear that the country had entered a new political phase. Egyptian President Anwar Sadat invited both Edde and Joumlatt to Cairo. The former postponed the visit, while the latter headed there on September 26, 1976 via a boat to Larnaca, Cyprus, as Beirut's International Airport was closed.

The second day, "Sadat frankly informed Joumlatt about the truth, unveiling the information he had known, including that he is on top of the list of assassinations by the Syrian regime, welcoming him to stay in Cairo (...)", according to Safi who wrote that "Joumlatt was not surprised, he thanked Sadat for his initiative and announced that he knew what Damascus' regime was planning, refusing to become a refugee in Cairo or any other Arab or foreign capital, insisting to return to Lebanon and stay with the people (...)" (Safi 2006, 511-512).

On March 16, 1977, Kamal Jomblatt was assassinated in the Chouf area while he was heading to a Party meeting in Aley. "It was Joumlatt's defense of an independent Lebanon that probably ended his life. He was murdered (...) by assassins widely believed to have been either inspired by loyalty to Syria or dispatched by Syrian President Hafez Assad" (Mackey 2006, 66).

The ramifications of the assassination on the course of events in Lebanon were enormous. "Most of Lebanese politicians, especially Muslims, interpreted this killing as a warning not to take an open stance against the Syrian position. Jumblatt's vehement opponents in the Christian Front were also horrified" (Hanf 2015, 231).

Mackey wrote: "With the death of Kamal Joumlatt in 1977, the leftist front that originally had entered the war against the Maronites faded. From the Syrian

intervention in 1976 to the Israeli invasion of 1982, the foreign elements of the war- Syria, Israel and the Palestinians- dominated the action, carrying along a changing array of Lebanese allies” (Mackey 2006,186).

One of the effects of this assassination was the aggravation of violence on different occasions. Not only were almost two hundred innocent civilians killed after the news spread, but there was also escalation elsewhere. “Everything indicated that Lebanon was finally moving toward peace. It was but the beginning of a new phase of war” (Traboulsi 2007, 204).

H. Summary

In Chapter IV, we explained how the relationship between the Syrian regime headed by Hafez al Assad and the Lebanese National Movement led by Kamal Joumblatt deteriorated at both political and personal level. We also shed light on the complex local and regional circumstances that prevailed at the time and led to the assassination of Joumblatt.

In Chapter V, the plot and actual assassination of Kamal Joumblatt will be explained in detail.

CHAPTER V

THE ASSASSINATION OF KAMAL JOUMBLATT

In Chapter Five, we will explain in detail how the assassination of Kamal Joumblatt happened in the town of Deir Dourit in the Chouf district, which has traditionally been the major sphere of influence of the Joumblatts and the Progressive Socialist Party that he established in 1949.

The chapter will show how the Syrian regime has plotted and executed the crime after the deterioration of its relations with Joumblatt who refused the Syrian military intervention in Lebanon and confronted it almost solely. The chapter contributes to the thesis question by examining to what extent the assassination had a detrimental effect on the LNM and the reform plan in particular.

A. Introduction

After Kamal Joumblatt returned from his long unsuccessful meeting with Hafez Assad in March 1976, all indicators revealed that his relationship with the Syrian regime had reached an irrevocable point. With the ongoing military operations in Lebanon between the fighting factions, tensions aggravated, and the Syrian regime was waiting for the appropriate circumstances to intervene militarily and prove that it is the only party capable of resolving differences among the Lebanese divided players.

Joumblatt became the only voice refusing Syrian intervention, after the “Lebanese Front” considered that this intervention could counter-balance the success of LNM and its Palestinian allies. The assassination happened on March 16, 1977.

“As a power seeking to establish its hegemony over Lebanon and the PLO,

Syria could view the civil war as a welcome development”, wrote a commentator (Rabinovich in Haley and Snider 59, 1979). Kamal Joumblatt had written: “The Syrian Ba’athist regime (...) allowed itself to slip from political arbitration to military intervention” (Joumblatt 1982, 9).

Furthermore, a CIA report approved for release in 2004 mentioned clearly that “the authors feel that a foreign security force, therefore, will be needed in the initial one-to-two-year period to assist the new president in the task of restoring order, and must remain in Lebanon until a Lebanese security force can be created to assume the tasks performed by this foreign contingent” (CIA: 2004).

This was the overall political scene that was building up during the 1976-77 period that created the atmosphere conducive for the Syrians to assassinate Joumblatt. They had the international cover to enter Lebanon, and so they did.

B. The Plot

General Issam Abou-Zaki, who was a lieutenant at the time, tracked along with Judge Hasan Kawas, all the details pertaining to the crime. He described in detail how this has happened.

He wrote: “The plot to assassinate Kamal Joumblatt commenced on the Syrian checkpoints, when Syrian officers objected how could his bodyguards be in a car different of his own, and when he emphasized that he had a license for sixteen bodyguards, he was told: “They should be with you!”. He used to answer: “How can I put them all in my car?” until he was bored of this issue and decided to be joined by only two men, a driver and a bodyguard (Abou-Zaki 2015, 186-187).

C. The Details: How It All Happened

Abou-Zaki narrated the details as follows: “On that day, March 16, 1977, I was heading from Beirut to Baakline (a town in Chouf) around 2:30 pm, and as I reached Deir Dourit, I saw a Pontiac Firebird with an Iraqi plate number on the roadside with its doors opened. The car’s situation was unusual, but what was more unusual was that it carried an Iraqi plate (which was proven fake) with the word Baghdad on it. What drew my attention further was the idea of an Iraqi car roaming around freely during those circumstances and on Syrian checkpoints taking into consideration the severe antagonism between the Baathist regimes in Damascus and Baghdad” (Abou-Zaki 2015, 188-189).

He added: “I continued my way upwards and was surprised to see two bodies on the ground, the first in military outfit, the second in regular civil clothing. I did not know them in the beginning but I correlated them with the Pontiac. As I continued my way, I was further surprised to see Kamal Joumlatt’s car which was a Mercedes with 5888 as its plate number, and standing next to it was Gharifeh’s mayor Nadim Harb crying and slamming his head in the car’s door, and close to him was Moeen Abou Chacra, a Lebanese Army officer. When he saw me, he screamed: “Come see who is in the car”. What I saw I will never forget as long as I lived” (Abou-Zaki 2015, 189).

He continued: “Mouallem Kamal Joumlatt was inside the car, his body leaning towards the left, bleeding from his head until his necktie, close to him was his book: “To Be Or Not To Be”. It was scary and a sad scenery. Since I was an officer delegated to work with Criminal Detectives, and since there was no police station in the region and no security forces in the mountains, I commenced immediately preserving the crime scene because it will provide the only evidences to discover the criminals especially that the criminal always leaves evidence behind. Thus, I collected the empty

bullets, and I sent after a photographer who shot photos for the martyr and his comrades, then I searched the Pontiac car and I found inside recording tapes, sharp and pointed knives and Incendiary material” (Abou-Zaki 2015, 189)

Abou-Zaki said: “As some cars were passing by, its passengers became angry and shouting with fury, some left their cars and walked towards the scene and soon a wave of anger invaded the whole place. A Syrian officer, responsible for the Baakline area, intervened when he heard someone from Harfoush family accusing the Syrian regime of the crime, threatening to shoot him immediately if he does not remain silent. This was impudence only Syrian officers can do with no respect towards the great loss of the Druze and Lebanese and the people of the region, and he cared less that a national leader, rather an Arab leader as Kamal Joumblatt was a dead body in his car seat, all he cared for was to impose the sway of his forces, not by law, but what seemed an open authorization of killing whoever he doesn’t like from the people” (Abou-Zaki 2015, 190).

D. Tension in the Crime Scene

As tension grew on the ground, quick measures were needed. Abou-Zaki continued: “The atmosphere became more perplexing, and Syrian intelligence officers were between us. We lacked at the time mobile phones so we sent after CheikhAbou Mohammed Jawad Walieddine, who was the chief of the Druze Higher Spiritual Committee, so he arrived to help restraint the feelings and cool down anger. I remember him saying upon his arrival and inspection of the details: “Thank God it is not bigger”. I contemplated his words (...) though I did not comprehend what he meant as I questioned myself what could be worse than killing Kamal Joumblatt? Later on, I realized that many stuff was left in the Pontiac such as two daggers and gasoline (...)”

(Abou-Zaki 2015, 190).

Abou-Zaki unveiled the plot, he said: “The plan was not to kill him in the Chouf area, rather kidnap and probably kill him in a Christian area as Kesrwan or Metn, and throwing the body there, which was sufficient to ignite strife among Christians and Druze (...). Due to the failure of this plot, the Syrians decided to quickly amend it in an attempt to accomplish the political objectives of the assassination (which is the civil strife among Druze and Christians) by executing massacres in places such as Mazraat el Chouf, Barouk and Maaser which were mixed and Christian families stayed there; however, the sad incidents that were planned and led to the loss of tens of innocent civilians remained limited and failed to accomplish the goals of the conspiracy” (Abou-Zaki 2015, 190-191).

In his narration of how developments unfolded, Abou-Zaki continued to say: “We were in a situation of loss and shock when the Druze Cheikh el Akl Mohammed Abou Chacra showed up, and he shouted: “Issam! Kamal Joumblatt was killed in the car and you left him on the road”, requesting me to transport the car and the martyr to Mukhtara. The car which was driven by someone from Harfouch family stopped functioning the moment it arrived to Mukhtara and all attempts to make it work again failed. Walid Joumblatt left the car as is since the moment of the crime” (Abou-Zaki 2015, 191).

Abou-Zaki further described the crime scene upon the arrival of Walid Joumblatt and afterwards, he went to Mukhtara where supporters gathered. When he saw his late father’s car, he hit it angrily. He was extremely disrupted from the news he heard about the killing of innocents in the Chouf villages, giving instructions to stop them immediately.

Investigation commenced and a number of facts that occurred helped

investigators unveil all the details of the plot and how it took place. Abou-Zaki said: “There were four armed men in the Pontiac, two in military outfit. The car was tracing the Mercedes from a close distance and when Joumblatt’s car reached the curve, it was passed by the Pontiac and blocked its road. At that moment, the armed men took to the street and went to Joumblatt’s car when a civil car passed by, its driver was immediately asked to keep going. The driver said in his testimony that he heard Joumblatt’s voice, asking the armored men: “who are you”?” (Abou-Zaki 2015, 193-194)

Investigations revealed that the two bodyguards of Kamal Joumblatt descended from the car, probably with the aim of protecting their leader. This surprised the killers who were planning to kidnap and kill them somewhere faraway and simultaneously kidnap Kamal Joumblatt alone. The two bodyguards were shot immediately and their bodies lay on the street. This led to the bewilderment of the killers, and their attempts to control his car was not an easy task as Joumblatt resisted but they finally shot him in his head and body, and he passed away immediately.

This approach was reiterated by a veteran PSP official, Mahmoud Safi, who explained similar details of how the crime took place. He further explained how Walid Joumblatt was accompanied by Cheikh Mohamed AbouChacra and how they toured around the Chouf region to stop the killings that took place as an act of revenge. As a result, several Christian victims were killed in different villages, such as: “Kfarnabrakh (4), Barouk (39), Maaser el Chouf (9), Boutmeh (9), Mazraat el Chouf (56), (...), Baadaran (1) and Rmeileh (1)(Safi 123, 2017).

“As panic spread in the villages as a result of those massacres, few Druze militants took the initiative in the evening of March 16 to protect Christians, some even hosted families in their homes”, Safi said. “On Saturday March 19, 1977, Archbishops George Haddad and Ibrahim el- Helou accompanied with Reverends Michel Habib,

Hanna Khashan, Salim Ghazal and Issa Moussa visited the Chouf to check on the villages which witnessed massacres after the assassination of al-Mouallem. They also visited Mukhtara to present condolences to Walid Joumlatt in the name of Patriarch Khreish, and Joumlatt said that those sad events were a bad omen for common living” (Safi 2017, 123-124).

E. The Ramifications

Walid Joumlatt issued a statement mourning his father: “Kamal Joumlatt passed away for the sake of what he was preaching and spent his life for, he was big and modest, and died as a great martyr. He felt with people, all people, their pains and sorrows, he loved them and lived their ambitions, for those people Kamal Joumlatt died. My father died. He preferred simplicity. In his life, he was for the people, all the people, without discrimination. I reach out to all those who stood by him in his struggles, to all those who knew him or opposed him to mourn the this great man, and to call upon all our brothers to keep calm and exercise self-restraint to dismantle the opportunity for all the wicked conspirators from their objective in targeting the unity of this country, and to prove that Kamal Joumlatt remains alive in his principles and that we remain loyal to him after his death in what he worked for during his life (...).” He announced that the funeral day decided on Thursday March 17, 1977 at 1 pm is “to be a day of national unity” (An undated document from Dar al Takadoumiah, Mukhtara).

During the funeral exercises, Walid Joumlatt was wearing the cloak of leadership amidst anger and tension for the loss of the father. A new page in the history of Mukhtara, Druze and Lebanon was turned. Years later, Joumlatt described those moments in a lecture he delivered in the Arab World Institute in Paris, saying: “In that day, March 16, 1977, before prayers that precede burying, as traditions and fate

determine, my grandparents cloak was put on my shoulders, a cloak stained with blood: Kamal Joumlatt's blood and the blood of innocent Christians who were killed as a reaction that day. Then, a new chapter began for Mukhtara, the Joumlatt's, the Druze and Lebanon" (Al Anbaa May 17, 2016).

Joumbalatt explained his comprehension of the reasons behind the killing of his father in an interview with Al Jazeera (September 27, 2005). He said: "Kamal Joumlatt was assassinated because he held a plan for political change for a secular Lebanon. The Arab world, and up till now, does not accept such a drastic change. He was assassinated because he was an obstacle at a certain stage in a grand international Arab equation that wanted to subjugate the Palestinians, and hit the Lebanese left that was powerful. Some Arab regimes feared the spread of Communism or the progressive ideas (...). At the time, based on the Lebanese equation, I had the option of immigration or remain to defend the mountain and the Druze, to defend the Arab national choice, the National Movement. Then, based on conviction, and a personal and political decision, I went to Damascus, shook hands with Hafez Asaad, and left aside the personal dimension for the sake of the political dimension" (Kleb 2005).

Joumlatt described the details of the visit he paid to Damascus forty days after the assassination of Kamal Joumlatt, saying: "As geopolitics defines inescapable alternatives, I took the road to Damascus after forty days. I went up the stairs to the presidential palace, which was a modest building at the time on the shoulder of Kassioun Mountain, up to the first floor, where a door was opened in front of me towards a simple saloon where the heir of cheikh el jabal was standing amidst it. As I was approaching to salute him, he was staring at me with his black eyes, in which I saw the shades of a terrifying past, and he said with surprise: how you resemble Kamal Joumlatt!" (Al Anbaa 2016)

On March 21, 1977, the Lebanese council of ministers issued a decision to transfer the case to the Judiciary council, a body that rarely completed the investigation and judgment of any political assassination in light of political intervention. It is a council that deals with cases of terrorism and other cases that jeopardize the state's security. Its provisions are irrevocable and contradict the principle of three-degree judgment procedures, where the defendant has the right to appeal in front of a higher court. The assignment mechanism in itself is a means of subjugating justice to political agendas, as the council of ministers is the sole authority capable of referring cases to it, according to Elham Berjes (2015). This in itself indicated that seeking the truth in the case of the assassination of Joumblatt was a hard task to accomplish.

Karim Mroueh, a veteran leftist thinker, considered that “assassinating Kamal Joumblatt during that early period (of the war) was the true beginning of targeting the National Movement by killing its historical leader, and by eliminating all that was linked to its efforts to present a national and democratic program for the future of Lebanon (...)” (Al Modon 2014).

The Lebanese National Movement suspended its work after the assassination of Joumblatt: “(..., the Syrians established the “National Front” including the parties affiliated to them. Despite the reconciliation of Walid Joumblatt with them, he did not head the National Movement until 1978 and the dialogue between the movement and the Syrians concerning a new project” (Takieddine 2013, 88).

However, the increasing Arab-Arab differences and the policy shift adopted by Egyptian President Anwar Sadat by signing the peace treaty with the Israelis (Camp David) in 1978 in addition to the rise of Syrian- Iraqi differences, created a new political reality, in which the “National Movement chose to stand by the Syrians at the expense of the Iraqi role, and entered again in the inter- Arab differences”, according to

Takieddine (Takeddine 2013, 88). “The situation also changed after the uprising of the Lebanese Front against the Syrians in Achrafieh and Zahle”, he added (Takieddine 2013, 98).

F. Summary

In Chapter Five, we explained in detail the events of the day that Kamal Joumblatt was murdered: what happened on the crime scene and how events later unfolded on the day of the burial as well as the transfer of his leadership to his son, Walid, the very next day of the assassination.

In the next chapter, developments are summarized that took place after this turning point in the life of Lebanon, LNM and the Joumblatt family. It also shows how the new leader tackled political issues.

CHAPTER VI

WALID JOUMBLATT'S RELATIONS WITH THE SYRIAN REGIME

In Chapter VI, we will explore further the developments that unfolded after the assassination of Kamal Joumblatt and the new phase that commenced with his son and only heir, Walid Joumblatt, assuming leadership of the Progressive Socialist Party and the Lebanese National Movement.

How the young Joumblatt tackled the political relationship with the Syrian regime that plotted and executed the killing of his father will be further scrutinized.

This chapter relates to the research question from the perspective of appraising the reform opportunities that were lost, and the strategies of political survival that were adopted by the new young leader. It will provide additional proof of Lebanon's lack of ability to reform.

A. Walid Joumblatt: A Brief History

Walid Joumblatt was born on August 7, 1949. He was the only child of Kamal Joumblatt and May Chakib Arslan. He studied in the International College and continued his higher education at the American University of Beirut (AUB), from which he earned a bachelor's degree in Political Sciences. He is famous for his passion for the environment and fascination for books about history and politics.

After his father's assassination, he was elected as new president of the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) on April 29, 1977. He was re-elected for this post for several times. On June 20, 1980, he was elected as President of the Lebanese National Movement, and on April 11, 1983 he was elected as vice-president of Socialist

International, a post for which he was re-elected again on June 22, 1989.

Joumlatt who was partially disconnected from politics while his father was alive and followed a free and open lifestyle, soon became deeply involved in all political affairs after his father's assassination. "I didn't ask for this role, and, in any case, never believed I should have to take it over so soon. But I regard it as an honor to be able to do so", he said (Hanf 2015, 408).

According to many, he was slowly proving to be capable of becoming the strong leader of the PSP and the Druze community and indulged in both the political and military ventures that were taking place in the country.

"After Kamal Joumlatt's death, Druze leadership fell to Joumlatt's only son, Walid. No one expected much of the owl-eyed Walid. Rumored to have a "weak character", a mercurial personality, and an alcohol addiction, he further shocked the establishment by dressing in faded blue jeans and a worn leather jacket and riding a motorcycle. But Walid, displaying surprising political savvy and aided by the strength of the Druze militia, succeeded in keeping all- the Syrians, the Phalangists, and the Palestinians- out of the Druze's historic lands in the Shuf (...)" (Mackey 1989, 186-187)

Mohsen Ibrahim, a veteran leftist thinker, said about him: "We consider that he showed, in what concerned him, an enormous ability to adjust this battle under the ceiling of the National Lebanese position, and the comprehensive Lebanese interest, which caused huge sacrifices most recently the assassination attempt that aimed at targeting the national path in its last most powerful capacity in political and operational confrontation with the dominance movement and who stands behind it" (Ibrahim 1983, 215-216).

Before the assassination, "Walid Joumlatt had stood in the shadow of his

father; his abilities were widely underestimated, he quickly became an influential leader in his own right. (...) The younger Jumblatt is given to irony and self-irony, and carefully and soberly weighs all facts. Yet, he is through and through a power-conscious political leader of his community, his party, his militia and also the conglomerate of the National Movement” (Hanf 2015, 189).

“Jumblatt, whose philosophy combined socialism and Indian mysticism, was the only Lebanese leader of any national stature and his death leaves a vacuum in the political spectrum. His son, Walid, 26, succeeds him as leader of the Druze, but he is unlikely to be able to fill his father's shoes as a national political leader”, wrote Stuart Auerbach in The Washington Post on the day of Kamal Jumblatt’s funeral (Auerbach1977).

B. How the Media Portrayed Him

The ways in which Walid Jumblatt deals with politics have always been a source of news for the media. This remained as such in the years following taking responsibility of the Progressive Socialist Party and the Druze community. Lamis Andoni wrote in Al Jazeera under the title “Walid Jumblatt: King Maker” the following: “Even after he succeeded his father as leader of the Druze community and the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) in 1977, the younger Jumblatt did not change his carefree lifestyle and rather impulsive press statements. In the throes of the Lebanese civil war, Jumblatt's political statements made headlines, but it was his personal adventures that were a favorite topic for gossip columns in newspapers from Beirut to Rome and numerous places beyond” (Andoni 2011).

In its January- February 2001 report, the “Washington Report on the Middle East” described Walid Jumblatt by saying: “In accordance with Arab, Druze, and rural

customs, Kamal's son, Walid Joumblatt, succeeded his father as Druze leader. A student of political science at the American University of Beirut, and husband of Syria's former Defense Minister Ahmad Al-Sharabati, in his early years Walid Joumblatt had been renowned as a playboy, a successful businessman, and a popular social figure—everything but an ambitious politician. In every sense, then, the position of *zai'im*, or leader in Arabic, was imposed on him", as Sami Moubayed wrote (Moubayed2001, 35-36).

C. New Tasks Ahead

The new leader had difficult tasks awaiting him. The toughest ones were the political choices he had to make after the assassination. With Syrian troops stationed in Lebanon with regional and international consent, and Israel being the only other influential player, Joumblatt had no choice but to head to Damascus and reconcile with Hafez Assad.

This policy shift was indispensable for the sake of preserving Lebanon's political existence and to confront challenges imposed by geopolitics. With Syrian troops on Lebanese territories and Israel at the Southern front, Joumblatt did not have many alternatives in front of him.

Being the sole heir of Kamal Joumblatt who was a staunch supporter of the rights of the Palestinian people (he was also elected as Secretary General of the Arab Front to Support the Palestinian Revolution), the young Joumblatt remained adhesive to the initial principles of the Progressive Socialist Party that were fully biased to the Palestinian cause. Dealing with Israel was not an alternative, since this would contradict the overall policy that his father had built over decades. Therefore, there was only Syria to communicate with.

D. New Political Agenda

On June 28, 1977, the Political Council of the Lebanese National Movement issued a memorandum regarding the “pillars of organizing a unified confrontation plan for the divisional sectarian project” considering that the latter aimed at:

- Pulling out Lebanon’s Arabism and stripping it from the Arab world.
- Repudiating the nationalist cause and totally withdrawing from the circle of common national fate of Arab countries by ending the Lebanese- Israeli contradictions and opening up the first gap of its kind in the Arab confrontation to the Zionist enemy.
- Eliminating Palestinian presence in Lebanon as one of the episodes in the Imperialist Zionist aiming at dissolving the Palestinian cause from its entirety.
- Transforming Lebanon into a sectarian racist entity through disintegrating the Lebanese unity and rebuilding it in a manner that guarantees the superiority of a sectarian minority over all the Lebanese people (...).
- Overthrowing all the constituents of the Lebanese democratic development and subjugating the country to the grip of a fascist regime that would implant the sectarian oppression of the popular majority and protect the economic, social and cultural privileges that would press the industrious Lebanese population (Unanimous 1981, 25-26).

The Memorandum further outlined the pillars of coordination amongst the parties of the National camp, along the following lines:

- Regaining Lebanon’s political and administrative unity through proposing the following measures among others: eliminating all the divisional aspects and tools of the Lebanese authorities in most of the Lebanese areas, confronting the calls for political decentralization (...) and any kind sort of announced or masked division (...), resolving the displaced issue, reviving the functionality of the constitutional institutions

including the resumption of legislative work of the parliament, commencing the construction of a nationally balanced Lebanese Army, unifying the Lebanese University, ...

- Preserving Lebanon's Arabism and its national independence through: official commitment to the requisites of the unified Arab confrontation of the Zionist enemy, dissolving the groups collaborating with the Israeli enemy in some Southern areas, and granting the Lebanese Army, under the supervision of legitimate authority, the responsibility of the preserving the security of the Southern borders.
- Establishing balanced democratic governance which requires: adopting a platform that secures a balanced democratic participation in the governing institutions and popular representation for all the Lebanese people, and securing a necessary balance between the legislative, executive and judicial authorities and within the executive authority itself.
- Reconstructing Lebanon economically and socially.
- Reinstalling democratic freedom.
- Consolidating Lebanese- Palestinian relations by recognizing the right of the Palestinian resistance to function in the Lebanese arena which also allows it to help Lebanon defend itself against the Zionist enemy.
- Towards achieving democratic reform whereby the Lebanese president calls for a national political dialogue among all Lebanese forces to reach agreement on the minimum needed political reform which paves the way for further horizons of political and economic development(Unanimous 1981, 35-38).

E. Political Margin

Walid Joumblatt, despite his alliance with the Syrians, aimed at maintaining

Lebanon's independence. In a speech he delivered in Aley city in a grand political festival organized by the Progressive Socialist Party and the Lebanese National Movement commemorating the third anniversary of Kamal Joumlatt's assassination, he called "other Lebanese political parties to accept democratic conflict, announce its conviction in Lebanese identity based on its location within the Arab community, take into consideration the special relations with Syria with preserving mutual respect within the context of sovereignty and independence" (Joumlatt 1980, 33)

Joumlatt had been asked in an interview about the refusal of some Lebanese groups for Syrian presence in Lebanon and whether this situation would be similar to a mandate, he responded: "If we approve this logic, then what is the alternative? The alternative is civil war, and the alternative is collaborating with Israel?" (Joumlatt 1980, 52)

Yet, Joumlatt was keen on sending continuous signals for the Syrians not to dissolve the identity or presence of the National Movement and Palestinian factions. He said: "I previously mentioned that there is an alliance between us and the Palestinian resistance, and I also mentioned in the meetings held in Damascus in the presence of the higher Syrian- Lebanese leadership, especially Minister Khaddam, that there is particularity for the Lebanese national action, and there is particularity for the Palestinian national action which must be taken into consideration, they cannot be neglected under the slogan of cohesion (...). We are in harmony, yet this particularity must be taken into consideration" (Joumlatt 1980, 60).

Joumlatt, as President of the Lebanese National Movement, attempted to present ideas conducive to resolving the Lebanese crisis and putting an end to the civil war on different occasions. In a press conference in February 1980, he announced a new project for a "Comprehensive Political Solution in Lebanon" revolving around the

following basic concepts: Regaining Lebanon's political and administrative unity, emphasizing Lebanon's Arabism and its national independence, confirming Lebanon's commitment to the Palestinian cause, organizing the special relations between Lebanon and Syria, installing balanced participatory democratic governance, reconstructing the army and all other institutions on balanced national pillars, rebuilding Lebanon economically and socially, and achieving democratic reform.

Joumblatt's relations with Syria remained steady for several years with few exceptions. Most prominent was the camps war that occurred between 1985 and 1988. In this war, the Syrian Army in Lebanon sided with the Amal Movement (headed by Nabih Berri) and some Palestinian factions allied to the Syrian regime against the Palestinian Liberation Organization headed by Yasser Arafat and some of its supporting factions.

Joumblatt refused the Syrian request and considered that it targeted the independent Palestinian decision and matches, in one way or another, the Israeli targets in weakening the PLO. Along with him stood the Lebanese Communist Party (led then by George Hawi) and the Independent Nasserite Movement, "Al Mourabitoun", (led by Ibrahim Koleilat) in addition to the Popular Nasserite Organization (led by Mustapha Saad) as well as others.

Ahmad Mouharam wrote an article about the conflict, calling it "the forgotten chapter in the Palestinian Struggle". He added: "Despite the fact that those Lebanese factions did not directly fight with the PLO, and did not participate in the forces defending the camps; however, it resisted enormous Syrian pressures and sanctions as a price to its position which refused to indulge in the Syria-Amal axis and be part of the massacres that took place" (Mouharem 2017).

F. Joubalatt and the Tripartite Agreement

The Tripartite Agreement was signed in Damascus between Walid Joumblatt, Nabih Berri (leader of Amal Movement and later Speaker of Parliament) and Elie Hobeika (head of Lebanese Forces) on December 28, 1985. It was an attempt to put an end to war and launch a new political era, in which the Syrian regime would have an upper hand. Samir Geagea, later to assume leadership of Lebanese Forces, refused the agreement and allied with the Lebanese President at the time, Amin Gemayel, to overturn the course of events.

A military “coup” against Hobeika ousted him from the Christian areas that were controlled by Geagea. The agreement lived for 19 days only and on January 16, 1986, field developments gave an upper hand to Geagea.

Joubalatt considered that “PSP has responded to the political requests to resolve the Lebanese crisis, and did not delay signing an agreement among fighting parties after it was discussed in the Party’s central committee on November 2, 1985” (Rihana 2007, 150).

Despite the fact that Joumblatt considered the agreement positive in the parts that dealt with rebuilding the national army, yet, he viewed political reforms incomplete if not paralleled with social and economic reforms that could reduce its confessional feature (Rihana 2007, 151).

G. Joumblatt and the Taif Accord

In 1988, after the failure of electing a new President for Lebanon as Amin Gemayel’s presidency came to a closure, the latter appointed in the last few minutes head of the Military Council and Army Commander General Michel Aoun as interim Prime Minister to hold power and organize presidential elections as soon as possible.

An American- Syrian agreement to elect a Lebanese MP, Mikhael Daher, in previous months was doomed to fail after all Christian parties along with the President of the Republic refused this external deal that was to be imposed on the Lebanese people. The Lebanese Forces paralyzed the electoral parliamentary session.

The American deputy foreign minister at the time, Richard Murphy, had met with Syrian President Hafez Assad and they nominated Daher for Presidency. After a prolonged meeting with Christian Deputies in Bkerki, Murphy said a statement that became famous in Lebanon's contemporary history in which he gave the option to the Lebanese between Daher and chaos.

With power in the hands of Aoun, Syria and its allies refused recognizing the new military cabinet that had lost three of its Muslim members by resignation. The Hoss government in West Beirut was reinstated. Practically, the country was split into two governments, each of them claiming legitimacy.

On March 14, 1989, Aoun launched what he called a "war of liberation" against the Syrian troops. He bombarded West Beirut and other Syrian- controlled areas leaving high numbers of casualties. A long protracted strife commenced and continued for months.

On May 23, 1989 an Arab summit was held in Casablanca, Morocco to discuss the protracted Lebanese war and the developments that unfolded. A higher tripartite committee was created including King Hasan II of Morocco, Algerian President Shazli Ben-Jadid, and King Fahed ben Abdul-Aziz of Saudi Arabia.

On September 25, 1989, the Lebanese parliament speaker Hussein el Hussein called the Lebanese parliamentarians to a meeting in Taif, Saudi Arabia. The parliament that was elected back in 1972, with its mandate prolonged every four years because of the failure to hold elections due to continued warfare, included 99 members. Seventy-

three were invited (others passed away), out of which 62 attended the meeting. On October 22, 1989, the agreement was reached including several amendments to the prerogatives of the presidency by basically transferring most of them to the council of ministers collectively. Furthermore, the accord preserved equal representation between Muslims and Christians and resolved the historical conflict regarding Lebanon's Arab identity.

Joumblatt had been supportive of the accord from the onset. International and regional support was necessary for the success of the Taif Accord in putting an end to violence of the protracted civil conflict. It was clear that the international decision to put an end to Lebanon's war that erupted in 1975 had reached the point of no return.

Yet, the international consensus regarding Lebanon soon boiled down to granting the Syrian regime hegemony over Lebanon. Assad's support for the international coalition created by the United States of America for the liberation of Kuwait in 1991 against Saddam Hussein, was paid-off in Lebanon. Slowly, Syrian control of Lebanon reached unprecedented influence on all aspects of political life. Syrian intelligence officers received Lebanese politicians and issued orders for them.

Syria appointed ministers, gerrymandered electoral laws according to its interests, and basically intervened in the daily running of affairs of the country. Yet, starting the year 2000, changes were slowly taking place. "The timing and scope of the revolt against Syrian hegemony was set in motion primarily by three events outside Lebanon: the demise of American-brokered peace talks between Israel and Syria, the death of Syrian president Hafiz al-Assad, and the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon", wrote Gary C. Gambill in the "Middle East Forum" in 2001.

The whole political atmosphere was changing in the year 2000. Despite all efforts by the Syrians to diminish the powers of Rafic Hariri and Walid Joumblatt,

elections gave them unprecedented victory. The latter stood in the parliament and touched for the first time in public on an extremely sensitive issue that had been a taboo in the local political discourse for a long time: Syrian military presence in Lebanon.

He said: “In the context of the delicate and dangerous equations of the Arab-Israeli conflict which is open to all possibilities, I understand the necessities of concentrating some Syrian units for strategic purposes in defense of Syria’s side in Lebanon, but I hope that the Syrian leadership will revise the case of certain points which, in my opinion, have nothing to do with those necessities. I was surprised to see that the ministerial declaration has not mentioned the Taif Accord at least once to implement, amend or explain the military section” (Parliament Speech 2000).

He also said: “As I understand the necessities of the Syrian national security in Lebanon, and not returning back to the past, but I refuse secondary or side interferences that has nothing to do with those necessities. I therefore suggest that the Lebanese-Syrian security relations be restricted to a trustworthy Lebanese apparatus headed by a trustworthy political side that possesses the minimum standards of stoutness, democratic spirit and confidence from both parties” (Parliament Speech 2000).

This was a turning point in Joubblatt’s relations with the Syrians since the assassination of his father, Kamal Joubblatt, in 1977. This statement, along with a statement of Maronite bishops that called for Syrian withdrawal (after the Israeli troops withdrew in May 25, 2000), created a new balance in the country and a new atmosphere that made the Syrian presence refused by a larger number of Lebanese people and political parties.

A new political phase commenced with the assassination attempt on Marwan Hamade, a close assistant to Joubblatt, who was on good terms with Hariri, that happened October 1, 2004. Joubblatt and his parliamentary bloc, including Hamade,

had refused the unconstitutional three- year extension of the term of the incumbent President Emile Lahoud, a close ally to Syria. His bloc was the only bloc that refused to vote for him in the first place in 1998, depriving him of a unanimous election.

There were clear signals pointing to the plan to kill Hamade in the form of letters of intimidation for both Hariri and Jomblatt. In an interview with BBC one day after the killing of Hariri, Jomblatt said: “He (Hariri) told me in a meeting recently, if they (Syrians) want to hit the opposition, either you will be the target or me. Destiny chose him, he went before me” (Abdul Samad 2005).

On March 14, 2005, hundreds of thousands of Lebanese took to the streets requesting an international investigation committee in the Hariri assassination, the resignation of senior security officials, and the full Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon. While the international community gradually started supporting the Lebanese people, demands to Syrian President Bashar Assad from world leaders to withdraw his troops from the country became daily rhetoric.

“You get your troops and your secret services out of Lebanon so that good democracy has a chance to flourish”, president Bush said, adding that the world was "speaking with one voice when it comes to making sure that democracy has a chance to flourish in Lebanon" (The New York Times 2005).

By April 26, 2005, Syrian President Assad had withdrawn all its forces from Lebanon after 29 years of occupation. "We will withdraw our forces stationed in Lebanon fully to the Bekaa region (in the east) and later to the Lebanese-Syrian border areas," he said in a speech to parliament, drawing cheers from legislators in the chamber and the thousands of Syrian supporters listening outside the building (The Guardian 2005).

Despite the fact that the Syrian regime still stretched its influence to the local

arena in light of its continued alliance with several Lebanese political powers, yet, it was the first time that Lebanese people felt independence.

Commemorating the 14th of March became an annual political ritual whereby mass protests would be organized in Beirut's downtown meters away from Hariri's tomb, and the anti-Syrian camp comprising a variety of parties including Jomblatt's PSP, became known as March 14th.

In 2007, Jomblatt delivered a harsh speech against Bashar Assad comparing him to wild animals, and in a week's time he issued a statement saying: "I Apologize to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals for Comparing Snakes, Whales and Wild Beasts to Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad" (Wikiquote 2007).

H. Short Temporary Reconciliation

However, regional circumstances were changing. Syrian- Saudi rapprochement imposed on all local Lebanese players especially Saad Hariri (son of the late Rafic Hariri who became Prime minister later on) and Walid Jomblatt new political positioning. Hariri visited Damascus and met Assad several times. Jomblatt was asked to reconcile with all of Syria's allies in Lebanon and participate in a talk show on Al-Jazeera to apologize to Assad and the Syrian people.

On March 31, 2010, Jomblatt visited Damascus and met with Syrian President Bashar Assad in a step that reshuffled the local Lebanese cards. Yet, this reconciliation was temporary. As the revolution erupted in Syria, Jomblatt gradually took the side of the Syrian people vis-à-vis the regime. Contacts were cut one more time, and Syria descended into civil strife and chaos.

I. Joumblatt-Syria: How did it last that long?

Despite the fact that Joumblatt was in general on good terms with the Syrian regime, he only pursued this policy in light of the prevalent circumstances at the time. Years later, he confessed in a televised interview with the Iranian Press TV, he said that he was lying to the Syrians for twenty five years. "I am not a real ally to Syrians and I am lying to them," said Joumblatt in an interview with Press TV. He added: "I decided to fix a pact with the devil and to shake hand the one who killed my father" (Alahed News 2008).

This statement, shocking as it seems, reflected the extent to which Joumblatt dealt realistically with the circumstances that were imposed on him. He was attacked by his opponents at the time as being an opportunistic leader who did not give any consideration to political principles, while he was viewed by his supporters as a leader who pursued all the necessary policies needed for political survival.

In a grand popular ceremony commemorating the 40th anniversary of his father's death, Joumblatt handed in the symbolic Palestinian scarf to his heir, Teymour, in front of tens of thousands of participants and supporters. In a comprehensive speech stipulating the basic pillars of his policies throughout three decades, Joumblatt reiterated his commitment to Palestine and Arabism, to an independent and democratic Lebanon based on diversification and coexistence.

J. Summary

In this chapter, we highlighted the different phases of Joumblatt's complicated relation with Syria: how it all started after the assassination of his late father Kamal Joumblatt, and how it deteriorated years later, reaching a point of full boycott and mutual hostility.

In the next chapter, the Taif accord that was reached in 1989 and put an end to fifteen years of civil war, is thoroughly examined. Future prospects are projected after comparing the political circumstances that surrounded both LNM's plan and the Taif accord.

CHAPTER VII

THE TAIF AGREEMENT AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

In this chapter, we explore the circumstances that yielded the Taif Accord in 1989 and will explain the basic contents of the agreement in comparison to what the Lebanese National Movement had proposed back in 1975.

The accord that has successfully put an end to the civil war that erupted in 1975 was reached at a conducive international and regional political moment, contrary to LNM's program that was proposed at a time when the regional and international context was reaching the highest levels of complexity.

It is related to the research question from the perspective of the needed reform and whether the Taif completed, replaced or contradicted the LNM program and whether it succeeded in introducing the aspired reform to the country.

After the failure to elect a new President of the Republic when Amin Gemayel's term expired on September 23, 1988, Gemayel requested Army Commander General Michel Aoun to preside over a military cabinet (including the military cabinet members) that would run the affairs of the country in a transitory period to elect a new President.

The three Muslim members of the cabinet resigned immediately, leaving Aoun with two Christian members, thus missing the legal quorum needed for the cabinet to convene. Yet, this has not stood in the way of Aoun to remain seated in the Presidential Palace in Baabda and commenced governing the divided country, the other half being controlled by the cabinet of Salim el Hoss who had resigned earlier but his resignation was not adopted by President Gemayel at the time.

The Arab Ministerial Council including Foreign ministers convened in Tunisia on January 12, 1989 and established a six-member committee presided by Kuwait including Jordan, Algeria, Sudan, Tunisia and United Arab Emirates. It invited both Hoss and Aoun, along with Speaker Hussein el Hussein. However, no agreement was reached. Later on, the committee invited the heads of the religious community to Kuwait, yet this was more of a ceremonial occasion rather than an actual political step towards reconciliation.

A. The War of Liberation

Aoun launched a ‘War of Liberation’ of Lebanon against Syrian troops; he shelled West Beirut, which was under Syrian control, on March 14, 1989. It was a devastating war that lasted for months, amidst an enormous disequilibrium of powers.

On May 23, 1989, an extraordinary Arab summit was held in Casablanca in Morocco in order to discuss the on-going Lebanese crisis. A Higher Tripartite committee was created including the Moroccan King Al Hasan II, the Saudi King Fahed Ben Abdul-Aziz, and the Algerian President Al Shazli Ben Jadid. The three leaders were represented by their foreign ministers: Abdul Latif el Filaly, Prince Saud el Faisal and Sayed Ahmad Ghazali respectively.

The committee was entrusted to impose peace in Lebanon with all possible means, to conduct all the necessary contacts to create an atmosphere conducive to inviting the Lebanese parliamentarians to meet, even if outside Lebanon, to draft a new national covenant, and then elect a new president who will create a new national unity government.

The Committee issued a press release from Jeddah stating that “there is no military solution for the Lebanese crisis” and called for the following solutions. First,

the establishment of immediate and comprehensive cease-fire in all the Lebanese territories. Second, the establishment of a Lebanese Security Committee headed by Mr. Lakhdar Ibrahim (the Tripartite Committee special envoy) entitled the prerogative of supervising cease-fire. This committee would also be in charge of monitoring ships arriving to Lebanon and observing the armaments of Lebanese parties. Third, the maritime blockade should be ended and Beirut's International Airport should be reopened at the moment the Security Committee commences its work. Fourth, all Lebanese parties have to refrain from using weapons and cease their media campaigns. Fifth, all collaborating countries should work together in trying to convince others to stop all weapon supply to any party in Lebanon. Sixth, Lebanese parliamentarians would be invited to meet on September 30, 1989 to discuss the National Accord Document. (...)" (Salman 1990, 20-21).

B. Election of Mawad as President

On September 30, 1989, 62 deputies out of the 73 that were still alive (the whole parliament included 99 members) arrived in the city of Taif in Saudi Arabia to try to put an end to the war. After 23 days of difficult discussions, a national covenant was reached. On November 11, 1989, MP Rene Mawad was elected as President. In his inaugural speech, the President Elect expressed his commitment to reconcile the Lebanese amongst each other, activate paralyzed constitutional institutions, and restore security and stability.

Aoun refused the election and considered it illegitimate and unconstitutional. His supporters took to the streets and assaulted on the Patriarch who approved the election. He did not allow the Christian deputies who attended and approved the Taif Accord to return to their homes in Eastern Beirut areas which he controlled.

Mawad was assassinated on Independence Day, November 22, only seventeen days after he was elected. Two days later, on November 24, Elias Hrawi was elected in the Beqaa where he stayed for months as the Presidential Palace was still under the control of General Aoun.

C. The War of Elimination

In January 1990, the so-called “War of Elimination” commenced between General Aoun as leader of some of the units in the Lebanese Army and the Lebanese Forces led by Samir Geagea. The war resulted in enormous casualties in the Christian areas that were destroyed and divided.

On October 13, 1990, the Syrian military airplanes and army invaded the Christian area, occupied the Presidential Palace and Aoun fled to the French Embassy where he stayed for several months until he was granted political asylum in France for five years.

The road was paved to unify the country and cease all military operations. Formerly combating militias were dissolved, most of their members grasped into the state apparatus. Slowly, Lebanon regained stability, yet, its infrastructure was destroyed, and its economy crippled.

With the coming of Rafic Hariri as Prime Minister for the first time in 1992, he planned a grand reconstruction project that was launched to revive the country’s wrecked economy. He embarked on huge infrastructure projects and rebuilt the devastated downtown of the capital. His economic policies were criticized but rarely contested.

D. The Taif and LNM Program: Similarities and Differences

There were several attempts before and during the Lebanese civil war to reach agreements that aimed at putting an end to the war, yet, the only accord that succeeded in this regard was the Taif accord because of the political momentum: there was an international and regional consensus on ending the war.

The LNM program was a serious attempt to avert war and introduce constitutional amendments capable of grasping the different aspirations regarding equality and power sharing. The Taif accord increased the latter by transferring several presidential prerogatives to the collective authority of the council of ministers.

The circumstances surrounding the two political proposals deeply vary with a time span of twenty five years. While LNM proposed its program before the Syrian military intervention in Lebanon in 1976, the Taif accord was born with Syrian consent and paved the way, in light of the regional developments such as the second Gulf war that resulted from the Iraqi invasion to Kuwait in August 1990, for full Syrian tutelage that lasted until 2005 when the Syrian Army was ousted after the assassination of Prime Minister Rafic Hariri.

The LNM program was announced at times of deep political polarization when the country was divided between two contending groups: the right (mainly dominated by Christian parties and political figures) and left (basically headed by Kamal Joumblatt, the LNM and its wide spectrum of national parties and secular figures in addition to its alliance with the Palestinian Liberation Organization and its factions).

The Syrian military intervention in Lebanon, the assassination of Kamal Joumblatt and the regional circumstances that gradually unveiled leading to the Arab and Western consent for Syria's control over Lebanon, were all factors that led to the reshuffling of local alliances and positions.

While PSP leader Walid Joumblatt sided with the Syrian regime, several Christian parties broke their alliance with the Syrians and became their opponents to the extent that Bashir Gemayel, the young leader of a Christian militia allied with Israel against the Syrians. The Shiite militia headed by Nabih Berri became close to Damascus, and Hezbollah that was born with direct Iranian patronage gradually gained power and influence.

Furthermore, the Israeli factor was also a point of difference in both circumstances. While Israeli aggression on Lebanon had happened on several occasions before 1975 (especially the occupation of Shebaa farms in 1967 and the attack on Beirut's International Airport in December 1968 that destroyed 13 civilian aircrafts of the Lebanese national carrier Middle East Airlines), the 1978 and the 1982 invasions of Lebanon were devastating.

Not only did the 1982 invasion reach the capital Beirut (as the first Arab capital occupied by the Israelis since the first Arab- Israeli war in 1948) and oust the PLO to Tunisia, but Israel also remained occupying a zone in the South of Lebanon until full liberation happened in May 2000. The pretext was preserving Israel's northern areas from any attack from the Lebanese territories.

Therefore, any comparison of the circumstances surrounding both political plans must take into account the varied local political scene between the two plans and the role of influential regional stakeholders. The Syrians almost had full control of the country at the time of reaching the Taif Accord and the Israelis were still occupying the land in the South.

Furthermore, the economic elements which were important in drafting the LNM program, especially the debate that was led by Kamal Joumblatt regarding equality and social justice, were not included in the late 1980s and early 1990s at the

time of writing the Taif accord text. Because of the devastating war, and the deterioration of the economy, the slogans that LNM fought for were no longer present in the political life.

With the exception of a grand workers demonstration in 1987 led by the National Workers Union and several unorganized protests, war crippled the economy and pulled down the attention once paid to socio-economic issues to the bottom of priorities, whereas the 1960s and early 1970s were the golden age of popular demonstrations for both political and economic issues.

This is why the LNM program devoted attention to socio-economic issues, whereas the Taif only mentioned it implicitly with a few statements highlighting the necessity of even development and applying administrative decentralization. The former was concerned with restructuring the socio-economic system to make it more just; the latter was concerned with putting an end to the fifteen-year civil war.

Furthermore, the LNM program highly emphasized the necessity of reforming the political system to increase equality among Lebanese citizens; whereas, the Taif focused on the issue of sectarianism by proposing a mechanism that remains unimplemented until nowadays.

It stipulated that “abolishing political confessionism is a fundamental national objective. To achieve it, it is required that efforts be made in accordance with a phased plan. The Chamber of Deputies elected on the basis of equal sharing by Christians and Muslims shall adopt the proper measures to achieve this objective and to form a national council headed by the President of the Republic and which includes, in addition to the Speaker of the Parliament and Prime Minister, political, intellectual and social figures. The council’s task is to examine and propose the means capable of abolishing sectarianism, to present to the Chamber of Deputies and the Cabinet, and to follow up

the implementation of the phased plan” (The Taif Accord, section II, article G).

Though the accord proposed a “phased plan”, the ambiguity of the propositions, and the absence of the political will to leap into the process of abolishing sectarianism, have kept this text without implementation for almost twenty-five years.

Rather, the country was gradually descending into additional confessional discourse and practices. Electoral laws were proposed strictly along confessional lines, public appointments in second, third, fourth and even fifth degrees were paralyzed if they were not “balanced” among the sects though this contradicts what was mentioned in the constitution (that only first degree employees must be appointed equally between Christians and Muslims in a temporary manner).

At the level of the judiciary, the LNM program commenced from the principle of achieving total independence of the judiciary authority from other authorities. It requested that the Higher Judiciary Council becomes the sole authority capable of appointing, transferring and promoting judges with the aim of decreasing potential political influence. Furthermore, the program called for limiting the prerogatives of the Minister of Justice and for granting the Higher Council to propose draft laws pertaining to raising the standards of the judiciary in addition to granting it the right to appeal to the Higher Court the constitutionality of laws (Al Anbaa 2005, 12).

In contrast, the Taif Accord called for the creation of the Constitutional Council “to interpret the Constitution, to observe the constitutionality of laws, and settle disputes arising from Presidential and Parliamentary elections” (Section III, Other Reforms, Article B).

E. A Projection towards the Future

Though the Taif Accord successfully ended the long civil war and introduced

stability at both political and economic level, yet, the form of collective governance that it introduced slowed down political decision-making processes. By allocating most of the executive prerogatives to the collective authority of the Council of Ministers, unanimity amongst ministers is required for all important decisions to be taken.

Gradually, the system has become slow as the contradictory benefits for different stakeholders lead to failures in the decision-making process at several levels. The right of participation that was granted to political parties to participate in the governing process has been misused and become a right of veto power that each constituent can use to paralyze decisions that do not match its point of view.

The situation was aggravated further when this right was abused in the presidential elections: 43 consecutive parliamentary sessions were not convened because some parties refused to guarantee the quorum before making sure that their candidate was elected. When the political circumstances were conducive for such an election to take place, quorum was guaranteed.

Amidst the state of institutional paralysis that have happened in the country, and amidst the rising regional complex circumstances and deteriorating local economic situation, questions regarding the future of Lebanon arise once more. With the influx of more than 1.5 million Syrian refugees since 2011, the presence of more than 500 thousand Palestinian refugees, increasing corruption, rising public debt; the economic challenge is on the rise again.

Various international conferences that have convened in Europe (especially CEDAR I Conference in Paris in April 2018) have clarified to Lebanese officials that a road map towards fighting corruption is mandatory in order to be eligible for any aid.

“The objective of the CEDRE conference for the international community was to support the development and the strengthening of the Lebanese economy as part of a

comprehensive plan for reform and for infrastructure investments as prepared by the Lebanese authorities and presented during the conference”, as the French diplomacy described the conference objectives (France Diplomatie 2018b).

“Fundamentally the economic recovery and long term development of Lebanon are hindered by structural problems: high fiscal deficit (around 10 % of GDP) and high level of public debt (around 150 % of GDP), resulting in a major drop in capital expenditures to less than 1 percent of GDP per year. The GDP growth rate remains low”, is how the final statement pointed to the most severe economic and fiscal issues (France Diplomatie 2018a).

Article 8 of the final resolution of the conference stipulated the exact steps needed from Lebanon after the end of the conference, as such: “Recognizing that sound fiscal management is central to improving the confidence of international investors, both private and public, the Lebanese Government, supported by the donor community, commits to a challenging fiscal consolidation target of five percentage points of GDP over the next five years, through a combination of revenue measures (including improved collection of taxes) and expenditure measures, such as a reduction of transfers to Electricité du Liban (EdL), allowing a primary surplus. These are crucial steps to support macroeconomic stability, to gradually reduce public debt, and to generate the best outcomes of the CIP, including a sustainable stimulation of growth” (France Diplomatie 2018a).

Therefore, challenges are mounting enormously on Lebanon, and the ability to confront those challenges seems to diminish while political divisions are increasing. Future prospects for the country seem dim as long as local players are affiliated with external parties or states.

F. Summary

In this chapter, we ran a comparison between LNM's program and the Taif Accord, and we projected lessons learned from these reform projects and Lebanon's ability to deal with reform to the future.

In the next and final chapter, we will state the conclusions reached in this thesis.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we will state the conclusions reached in this thesis taking into account the overall approach that has dealt with LNM's reform plan, and the overall experience of this movement.

The rise and demise of the Lebanese National Movement was indeed an untold story. This thesis is an attempt to fill this gap by not only describing and analyzing how the movement came into existence and formed its actual plans but also by showing how its focus evolved from calling for peaceful democratic change into conducting military operations and controlling almost eighty percent of Lebanon.

The plan was ambitious at a timing that was not right to introduce change. The power that LNM gained was seen as a threat by several Arab regimes that were well aware of what was plotted against its leader Kamal Joumblatt. Yet, he was left alone to meet his fate. Despite warnings from Arab leaders such as Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, Joumblatt insisted on returning to Lebanon announcing that he would rather die with his people.

The research question of this thesis was as follows: Why did the LNM Reform Plan fail and what were the ramifications of this failure on the course of events and on LNM itself?

Research has revealed that the plan was over-ambitious vis-à-vis the political context in Lebanon and the rest of the Middle East. The LNM Reform Plan that emphasized the necessity of abolishing confessionalism to promote equality among Lebanese citizens was refused by the forces that aimed at preserving the status quo

fearing change would diminish their powers.

The interference of Palestinian, Syrian and Israeli players complicated and contributed to the crisis that led to the grand explosion in 1975. The reform plan that was announced in August 1975, only a few months after the formal eruption of war in April 1975, aimed at providing a political solution for long-standing problems.

The failure of the program aggravated warfare and closed the door for any potential political solution for the crisis. In the second half of 1975, events unfolded in a dramatic way and stopping the war seemed to be a difficult task. The Syrian military intervention in 1976, which happened under the pretext of putting an end to violence, further complicated the course of events with the refusal of LNM and Kamal Joumlatt of this intervention.

The assassination of Joumlatt on March 16, 1977 was a turning point in the livelihood of the movement and in the political discourse that it promoted. LNM was highly affected and its continuity as a unified leftist political and organizational body soon diffused.

The appraisal of LNM's experience is an important mission as this movement was one of the few democratic leftist pan-Arab movements that called for change, reform, democracy and equality in an Arab world that was largely controlled by authoritarian regimes that refused to grant their peoples their inalienable rights of freedom, dignity and change.

In commemoration of Lebanese Communist leader Georges Hawi after forty days of his assassination, Mohsen Ibrahim, his life time mate and LNM prominent figure, delivered a rare speech appraising the LNM experience and criticizing its journey in two particular aspects: "first, was when we overwhelmed Lebanon with the military burden of our support to the Palestinian cause; second, when we jumped into

the civil war boat with ease thinking that this would be a short cut to democratic change” (<https://almustaqbal.com/article/133691/>)

In a prolonged article in the Lebanese Al Akhbar newspaper on the failure of the LNM, Asaad Abu Khalil mentioned twelve points, most importantly were: the mal-preparation for the confrontation, raising the ceiling of demands, non-violent commitment whereas the authorities were violent, decisions were made by players outside the LNM such as the Yasser Arafat or the Syrian regime or the Libyans or the Soviet Ambassador... He also mentioned several numerous other reasons. (Al Akhbar, Issue number 2684, September 5, 2015).

Several decades later, in 2010, revolutions erupted in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen. People were calling for a better life, economic welfare and decent living. Long ruling autocrats were ousted from office, some peacefully, others with violence. In Syria, for example, protests were confronted with violence, which turned the conflict into an on-going civil war.

Lebanon remained stable, yet it failed to reform its political system, neither on the lines of the LNM program nor on the lines of the Taif Accord. The LNM story thus remains unfinished!

Finally, I believe my thesis has shed light on the LNM experience and its role in Lebanese politics during the 1970s. It has filled the gap in literature by showing the pivotal role that this movement has played in extremely difficult and complicated circumstances.

Future research could focus further on the effects that the LNM experience has inflicted on Arab leftist secular movements, especially in light of the rise of Islamic and religious movements in the Arab and Islamic world.

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