AMERICA'S SECTARIAN WAR: REACTIONS TO MARONITE NARRATIVES DURING THE LEBANESE CIVIL WAR

by

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Introduction

The Lebanese Civil War was understood by the world as a classic example of interreligious conflict, characterized by its sectarian violence between the nation's relatively equal populations of Maronite Christians and Sunni Muslims. The Western media tended to present the conflict as a violent representation of the competing religious values of the two largest religious groups in the country. The reality was more complex. The war was indeed brutally violent, with an estimated 150,000 fatalities (Wenger), and many alliances broke down along sectarian lines, in part because Lebanese politics had been organized that way since the French mandate period. But the Lebanese Civil War was about many things and involved a number of foreign countries. This included the United States, which was particularly engaged during the second and third phases of the war from the late 1970s to the early 1980s, largely due to its Cold War interests and relationship with Israel. Yet the version of the war Americans received was skewed. Even as many Lebanese observers pointed out that the war was not really about religion, it was for America a sectarian war.

Much of this perception can be credited to the narratives presented by the charismatic Lebanese Forces leader, and later president-elect of Lebanon, Bashir Gemayel, and the aftermath of his 1982 assassination. Bashir Gemayel regularly interacted with foreign media to assert the struggles of Lebanese Christians, and his message of the oppression of Lebanese Christians at the hands of an influx of foreign Arab Muslim forces in Lebanon became the dominant narrative in American media. One exemplary piece of American journalism at the time was a documentary titled "The Unholy War," which premiered as an episode on ABC's 20/20 program. "[The Unholy War] stated that the Christians of Lebanon backed by Israel are in the vanguard of a

crusade to stop the unholy alliance [between the Palestinian Liberation Organization, Syria, and the Soviet Union, responsible for the outbreak of international terrorism]" (Peretz 5). ABC also linked the Lebanese Civil War to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, proclaiming that, in Beirut, "the fight… is basically between Palestinians and Christians, not Palestinians and Jews; but the parallels are so striking we [ABC] thought it was all part of the same story… relentless warfare in the Middle East between Soviet trained terrorists and the world's toughest intelligence forces," referring to the Israeli counter intelligence forces (Peretz 6). This narrative of the villainization of the Palestinian Liberation Organization and Palestinians more generally against Lebanese Christian and Israeli forces remained the prominent Western understanding of the nearly 15 year-long Lebanese Civil War, even following the violent massacres at Sabra and Shatila. The Lebanese Maronite militia called the Phalangists killed up to 1800 people in the Palestinian refugee camps of West Beirut, as their Israeli allies stood by.

The sectarian lens oversimplified the various motivations of the many groups at play in the Lebanese Civil War, implying that religion was the major force that led to the intense violence that plagued Lebanon. In reality, the war was the result of decades of tensions regarding political representation, colonialism, economic disparity, and Lebanese national identity, all of which contributed to religious sectarian division in the country. In order to more fully understand how this narrative became dominant, we must examine how Lebanese Christians like Bashir Gemayel became the storytellers of the war to Western media, including the rhetoric they used to persuade both their Lebanese followers and international media, the validity of connection between leftist Lebanese groups and the doctrine of Islam and conservative groups and the doctrine of Christianity, the shared values of Western nations and Lebanese Christians, and the

political power that the Lebanese Forces stood to gain or maintain from having major Western powers at their aid.

Background of the Lebanese Civil War

The Lebanese Civil War is difficult to summarize, as it is characterized by ongoing shifting alliances, continuous foreign influence, and complexities of group interests. The war consisted of dozens of groups with various interests including religious, political, economic, and national, but is typically understood as a sectarian war between Maronite Christians that made up the Lebanese Forces and leftist groups of the Lebanese National Movement.

The Lebanese Forces was headed by the predominantly Maronite Kataeb Party and Bashir Gemayel, the charismatic Maronite president-elect. Bashir came from a prominent family, and was the son of Pierre Gemayel who founded the Kataeb party nearly four decades prior to the Lebanese Civil War, also known as the Phalangists. The Kataeb party had values rooted in Christianity and the opposition of pan-Arabism. Along with the Kataeb party, the Lebanese Forces were a collection of several like-minded smaller Maronite groups. Throughout the war, the Lebanese Forces found alliances with foreign nations whose interests aligned with the mission of the party, most notably the United States and Israel (Makdisi and Sadaka 65).

The Lebanese National Movement, although largely consisting of Sunni Muslims, was not strictly defined by religious faith. It consisted of several parties including the Progressive Socialist Party, Lebanese Communist Party, Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party, and various Nasserist groups. As the names of the groups suggest, the Lebanese National Movement had strong ties to both secular Arab nationalism and Arab Marxism. The movement supported the Palestine Liberation Organization, and sometimes received support from Syria during the war, although Syria's role in the war was characterized by shifting alliances (Makdisi and Sadaka 65).

The Lebanese Civil War is traditionally periodized in three major phases. The first phase of the war took place between 1975 to 1977. In the early stages of the war, Lebanese Christians allied with the Lebanese government against the rise of the Palestine Liberation Organization following an influx of Palestinian refugees as a result of the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This conflict separated the Lebanese capital of Beirut into East and West, where East Beirut housed Maronite Christians and West Beirut was the headquarters of the PLO in Lebanon and its Lebanese allies. Syria entered Lebanon in 1976, initially to assist the Lebanese government and Maronite Christians with the escalation of violence (Makdisi and Sadaka 66).

The second phase of the war lasted from approximately 1978 until 1983, characterized by increased foreign involvement in the war. Israel invaded Lebanon during this time in an attempt eliminate the PLO. The Lebanese Forces were officially established by Bashir Gemayel, and they continued to fight the PLO and pan-Arabist allies, leading Syria to shift alliances towards the Lebanese National Movement and its leftist subgroups. During this period, the United States was an ally to the Lebanese Forces.

The final phase of the war began in 1983 and lasted until 1990. The PLO evacuated Lebanon and relocated to Tunis in 1982. During the third phase, Shi'ite militias, Amal and Hezbollah, the latter supported by Iran, rose to prominence and clashed during the last years of the war. The representational government was challenged through many years of reconciliatory discussions in an attempt to make peace among the sectarian groups, and the war officially ended with the Taif Agreement, which led to the exit of Syrian and Israeli forces from the country and created a cabinet with equal representation of Muslims and Christians (Makdisi and Sadaka 67).

For the purposes of this thesis, I will be focusing primarily on the second phase of the war, as the involvement of the United States is mostly contained to this brief period, in an attempt to analyze Lebanese interactions with the American media and the alliance between the United States and the Lebanese Forces.

Methodology and Critique of Sectarianism

For the purposes of this paper, I will be examining narratives of the Lebanese Civil War as recorded in contemporary American media. This includes interviews, articles, and programs published by prominent American news sources during the late 1970s and early 1980s, including ABC News, the New York Times, and the Washington Post. I also examine narratives of American foreign policy via the Reagan administration, as this is directly relevant to the United States political perspectives at the time. To contrast American perspectives of the Lebanese Civil War, I include notable perspectives represented by Middle Eastern sources including interactions between Lebanese Forces leaders with Lebanese Christians, as well as Israeli media sources, in an attempt to illustrate the lack of objectivity and starkly competing narratives displayed in different contexts.

A critique of the sectarian framing of the Lebanese Civil War was unfolding even as it occurred, beginning with the Lebanese leftists whose Arab nationalist and Marxist leanings put them at odds with the Lebanese Forces and their predominantly Maronite Christian supporters. Mahdi Amel, a Lebanese communist activist who was assassinated during the war, asserted that the Lebanese sectarian system was a product of colonialism. Amel argued that the sectarian system was defined through Lebanon's relationship with the west under the French mandate, which ruled Lebanon from 1920 to 1943.

Amel argued that "sectarianism is the particular historical form of the political system through which the Lebanese colonial bourgeoisie exercises its class dominance within a relation of structural dependency on imperialism," (Amel 84), and that this system was entirely unique under the colonial social structure of dependent capitalism. He went on to say that "perhaps it

was the year 1926, when the Lebanese constitution was promulgated during the [French] mandate, that marks the historical beginning of this political system as a sectarian system for bourgeois domination. Perhaps this signpost was the year 1943, when Lebanon became politically independent under the leadership of this bourgeoisie," (Amel 86). He continues to clarify the importance of the active participation of Lebanese elites in the sectarian system, saying "I want to emphasize the following, namely that if the French Mandate, thanks to the 1926 constitution, laid the foundation of this system, then the Lebanese bourgeoisie subsequently completed this system's construction and strengthened it. It did so over at least the quarter of a century that followed independence- from 1943 to 1967- by establishing institutions for sects that connected the latter to the state in a manner that would guarantee the sects' independence. This means that the sects' institutional existence, which is in effect their existence in a dependent relation to the state, is what guarantees them independence from the state. In this institutional existence and by virtue of it, they appear to be self-sustaining," (Amel 86).

Scholars such as Mahdi Amel and Ussama Makdisi have affirmed that the sectarian system was intertwined with the history of Lebanon's incorporation into the capitalist world economy from the 19th century onward. Amel contended that "the system arose and was constituted as a sectarian order within this structure and its own formation. The movement of this formation is complex. It is the [twin] movement of the dismantling of the previous social structure- let us call it the feudal structure- and the building-up of the new capitalist structure. These two connected movements comprise a single, complex movement in which each of the two defines and is defined by the other," (Amel 88).

The particular social system of sectarianism as present in Lebanon functions through the presence of hegemony, or the dominance of a particular sect over others. Amel wrote that "a

sectarian state balance occurs only through hegemony, not participation. A sectarian state cannot arise except under such a hegemonic balance. This is not born out of [some] sectarian necessity, or some divine wisdom that confers hegemony on a particular sect, namely the Maronite sect … We should not read the Kataeb project and its failure in light of the previous analysis. Its sectarian character is not determined by its affiliation with a particular sect, namely the Maronite sect (despite the Kataeb's Maronite character and real ambitions to turn a racially pure Maronite sect into the backbone of its dreamt-up Christian nationalist state). Rather, this sectarian character is determined by the Kataeb's affiliation with the sectarian system, insofar as it is the system of bourgeois domination. In other words, this project is determined, due to its very class character, by its affiliation with this dominant bourgeoisie. In political practice, the Kataeb project thus embodies the attempt by the bourgeoisie, particularly its financial oligarchy, to salvage the bourgeoisie's sectarian system by seeking a fascist solution to this system's intractable crisis" (Amel 92-94).

Historians of Lebanon have come to see sectarianism in a similar manner to Mahdi Amel. Ussama Makdisi argues that sectarianism results from the transition of power from the Ottoman Empire to an independent Lebanon (Makdisi 3). Hicham Safieddine elaborates on Amel's critique of sectarianism, explaining that the maintenance of bourgeois hegemony "required particular forms of sectarian and class representation that were expressed as a power arrangement between the mercantile/financial class on one hand, and the traditional sectarian political leaders, or zu'ama, on the other. These power arrangements resulted in a sectarian balance, which did not mean equality between the sects. Quite the contrary, it was based on the hegemony of a single sect, the Maronite," (Safieddine 43). Fears of losing status as a hegemonic group led to a reliance on the reinforcement of sectarian divides. This power struggle was rooted

in the hegemonic dominance of Maronite Christians in Lebanon contributed to the differentiation between the rising popularity of Arab nationalism, based in socialist and anti-colonial ideologies, and Lebanese nationalism. According to Safieddine, “to justify its sectarian form of rule, Lebanese bourgeois thought emphasized principles of sectarian coexistence, conservative pluralism, and cultural exceptionalism,” (Safieddine 47). When this sectarian system was challenged, as it was by leftist groups in the years leading up to the civil war, hegemonic groups of Maronite Christians framed the challenges as a threat to the nation of Lebanon, rather than a critique of the representational failings of the sectarian system.

American Orientalism

Sectarian discourses in Lebanon arose from the historical conditions of the country's founding over the course of the 20th century, culminating in the Lebanese Civil War. Meanwhile, American perceptions of the Lebanese Civil War were rooted in the politics of the Cold War and the deeper history of America's fascination with the Biblical Holy Land. In order to understand why the narratives of the Lebanese Forces were effective in influencing American public opinion of the Lebanese Civil War, we must look at the factors that primed the United States to view Middle Eastern conflict more generally, and the implications this had for the view of the sectarian nature of the Lebanese Civil War.

The relationship between the United States and the Israeli state is an important factor in understanding the rise of Maronite Christian narratives in American media. Hilton Oberzinger writes extensively about the fascination of American Christians with the Holy Land, beginning as early as the late 19th century. In 1841, the American Mormon church sent officials to Jerusalem to "commemorate the imminent restoration of the Jews to the old Holy Land," and parallels were drawn between Israel and the United States as a contemporary Holy Land (Oberzinger 243). American evangelicals supported the notion of Jewish restoration of Jerusalem, claiming that the cause of the Jews was a fulfillment of biblical prophecy. American Christians hosted evangelical missions to Palestine, aimed at Christian conversion but with maintenance of Jewish ethnic identity. These missions influenced modern Zionist thought and popularity among American evangelicals, but also contributed to the rise of Arab nationalism in Palestine rooted in settler-colonial dynamics.

For decades before the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, conservative American Christians were advocates for the cause of Zionism, the notion that Jewish people held a religious claim to the biblical land of Israel. Walker Robbins explains that, "Already between the 1920s and 1940s, increasing numbers of Baptists were adopting premillennialist interpretations of the Bible that affirmed the Jewish people's covenantal rights to the land of Israel and anticipated their restoration in concert with the Second Coming of Christ (premillennialists believe that Christ will return to establish a thousand-year reign on earth). Many—though not all—of these premillennialists were supportive of the Zionist cause. Some, like Southern Baptist missionary Jacob Gartenhaus, even argued 'to oppose it is to oppose God's plan'" (Robins). Southern Baptists broadly viewed Palestine through orientalist eyes, associating the Zionist movement with Western civilization, modernity, and progress over and against Palestine's Arabs, whom they viewed as uncivilized, premodern, and backward. This view was shared by Baptist travelers, by missionaries, by premillennialists and by their opponents. It was shared by those who supported the Zionist movement on prophetic grounds and those who decried it on humanitarian grounds. This orientalist framing of the conflict did not necessarily point to political support for Zionism, but it did provide Southern Baptist supporters of the movement a second, orientalist "language"—supplementing the language of the Bible—that they could draw on in making their appeals to other Baptists" (Robins).

The rise of Zionist attitudes in the United States coincided with orientalist attitudes against Arabs, making the Israel-Palestine conflict a perfect archetype of good and evil, one side that reflected the plan of a Judeo-Christian God and another that fundamentally opposed the values of a liberal society. Meanwhile, in the years leading up to American involvement in the Lebanese Civil War, the United States became embroiled in the political turmoil of the Iranian

Revolution. Despite popular support in Iran for the removal of the Iranian shah, the United States worked towards the maintenance of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi as the Iranian monarch and assisted in a coup to overthrow his democratically nominated opponent. The United States associated Pahlavi with modern attitudes that were compatible with American liberalism, including women's rights and democracy, and inserted themselves into Iranian politics despite the strong negative reaction from Iranian citizens to the police state that Pahlavi enforced against his political opponents. In 1979, an Islamic Revolution, led by Ayatollah Khomeini, effectively removed Pahlavi from power and enforced an Islamic State in Iran. Through the course of the revolution, leaders of the Iranian Revolution began to express a blatant anti-western stance (Pesarean 695). This essentially placed the motives of the United States at odds with the motives of the greater Muslim population of Iran, and indicated that American values were incompatible with those of Islam.

By the late 1970s, many Americans held views concerning Muslims, Arabs, and of Palestinians specifically, that were highly unfavorable. Palestinians rated very low on an opinion survey of American perspectives of the Middle East. American conservatives became advocates for the Zionism, which became synonymous with support for Israel and anti-Semitism following the second world war, but also stood to benefit personally from the existence of the Israeli state. With Israel as an ally, the United States could maintain a hand in Middle Eastern politics, and potentially prevent the mission of the unification of Middle Eastern countries through Arab nationalism. Naseer H. Aruri writes that "the United States military presence in Lebanon was intended, above all, to shore up a right wing minority regime that owed its very existence to the Israeli invasion. In his defense of the military presence, Reagan spoke of an 'opportunity' that the Israeli invasion had supposedly created- the chance to build on the Israeli-Egyptian peace

treaty under American auspices," (Aruri 60). This relationship between the United States and Israel led to the American support of the Lebanese Forces, as the alliance between Lebanese Christians and Israel presented the existence of the narrative of a common enemy through the Palestinian population, a population that the United States had already established as an unlikeable one.

The election of Ronald Reagan into the presidential office in the United States was a reflection of the increasingly conservative, traditional, and religious tendencies of the American public in the early 1980s. Reagan marketed himself as a born-again evangelical, and expressed openly that Christian voters were very important to him. President Reagan was also an advocate for Zionism and Israel. In a letter to the Zionist Organization of American, he called Zionism "a fundamental aspiration of the Jewish people… I decry those who would equate the beauty of Zionism with the ugliness of racism. Yours is an organization very close to my heart, for since 1948, Israel's well-being has been of tremendous importance to me." ("Reagan Praises Zionism as Aspiration of Jews"). Reagan's self-proclaimed commitment to Christianity and his personal commitment to Zionism and the existence of the Israeli state were indicative of the general attitude of the majority of American citizens at this time, so naturally these attitudes would be reflected in the country's foreign policy and media.

American participation in the Lebanese Civil War also served another purpose. The Middle East had become one of many sites of proxy conflict with the Soviet Union. In depictions of the war, American media emphasized the involvement of the Soviet Union in supporting international terrorism, particularly through their relationship with Syria and Palestine. This was echoed in the claims from the ABC 20/20 program "The Unholy War" and reflected the unresolved tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union following the Cold War. CQ

Almanac explains in an article from 1983 that, “the president laid much of the responsibility for Lebanon’s woes on Soviet-backed Syria, which he said had reneged on promises to withdraw it troops from Lebanon and had ‘become a home for 7,000 Soviet advisers and technicians who man a massive amount of Soviet weaponry, including SS-21 ground-to-ground missiles capable of reaching vital areas of Israel.’ Reagan suggested that a U.S. abandonment of Lebanon might lead to a Middle East ‘incorporated into the Soviet bloc’” (“A Reluctant Congress Adopts Lebanon Policy”).

American interests in Lebanon were multiple and largely concerned geopolitics, but sectarianism had become a legible form of representing the conflict to the American public. With these historical tensions that related directly to American involvement in the Middle East, the stage for U.S. sympathy for Lebanese Maronite Christians was perfectly set, and the narratives that the Lebanese Forces presented were already well-aligned with existing American attitudes about particular groups that were involved in the conflict.

Building Western Sympathy for Lebanese Christians

The motivations of the Maronite leadership of the Lebanese Forces were driven largely because of the existing ties between the sectarian and capitalist systems of Lebanon. Under the French mandate, western powers were active in Lebanese political and economic systems, leading to the 1926 Lebanese constitution, a leading factor between sectarian groups in Lebanon because of its sectarian distribution of power that indicated a bias towards Lebanese Christians over other large sects, including Sunni and Shi'a Muslims. Despite an attempt at equal representation based on the size of the sect, the constitution maintained the political dominance of Lebanese Christians over other religious populations in Lebanon that was present during the French mandate. Tensions that rose over the unequal distribution of sectarian power led to resentment and violent confrontations between groups.

This unequal political power translated into economic power. Under the French mandate, Lebanon became a center of international trade, establishing fruitful business relationships with European capitalists and connecting western and Middle Eastern trade. This continued a tradition of trade that originated from the Ottoman Empire in Lebanon. During the Ottoman Empire, the Lebanese families who dominated the trade industry were largely historically wealthy Maronite Christians, able to forge connections with European traders based on common religious and cultural experiences. In the 1950s, these close relationships with the western trade industry allowed Lebanon to become a major player in the booming oil business from the Persian Gulf. Major oil-producing countries were drawn to Lebanon's close ties to the western world, and in particular the western banking system, and European powers shared an interest in the growing oil industry. With the rise of the oil industry, Lebanon began a shift from a trade economy to one largely focused on the banking sector in the 1960s.

Because of Lebanon's pre-existing bourgeois families and the participation of wealthy foreigners in the banking industry, banking was extremely exclusive. Regulations prevented middle class citizens from forming new banks, and control of banks was held entirely in the hands of the Lebanese oligarchical structure. The banking industry, despite the material benefits that it permitted in the growth of Lebanon, contributed to even more sectarian strife and division. However, the banking industry was exclusive, with an immense amount of overlap between those who benefitted from the banking sector and the Lebanese bourgeois class even prior to the establishment of Lebanese banks. In fact, the families that remained at the peak of the Lebanese bourgeoisie all belonged to the same few Maronite Christian family groups. There was a remarkable amount of overlap between the wealthy Lebanese citizens and the politically powerful Lebanese citizens, largely because of the mutually beneficial relationships that these exclusive family groups were able to form with the colonizing western powers, and prior to that, the local Ottoman administration. Scholars identify the Lebanese "banking sector and the public and private institutions that governed it and protected its interests, as the apex of power in Lebanon" (Hourani 4). Self interest lay in the preservation of the colonial mode of production that presented itself through the western participation in the investment of oil capital. The fact that Christian families were able to prosper in the banking sector could be attributed to two major factors, the preexisting relationships between Lebanese Christians and western powers established during the Ottoman Empire and French mandate, as well as the limitations associated with Islamic banking that prevented Muslim participation and investment in western banks.

This overlap between political and economic power, otherwise known as the hegemony of Maronites, led to widespread discontent with the sectarian system. This discontent and the solidarities it encouraged in turn threatened the existence of the system that directly benefited

Maronite elites. Framing the conflict as strictly sectarian, with the conflict being singularly rooted in religious difference, benefitted Lebanese Forces leaders as it protected their hegemonic status. Even during reconciliation conversations in the early 1980s, the war was largely framed as a strictly religious issue. The goal of reconciliation talks, led by Amin Gemayel, was to gather delegates from each of the prominent Lebanese religious sects and discuss the distribution of power via religious affiliation.

Lebanese Christians opposed the popular ideology that presented an alternative for the sectarian division of power. As Arab Nationalism spread through leftist groups because of their influences from Nasserism, it served as a potential alternative to the status quo. Instead of grouping Lebanese citizens into religious sects, their shared identity as Arabs could potentially prevent the erupting sectarian violence. Arab nationalism was able to rise because of the clear shortcomings of the sectarian system in Lebanon (Rondot 51), and it served to benefit two major communities in Lebanon, the Lebanese Muslims who were chronically underrepresented in the government, and the Palestinians who, with a united Arab identity, could have international assistance in challenging the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land from the rest of the Arab world.

This ideology was problematic to conservative groups of Lebanese Christians, including the Kataeb and the Lebanese Forces, for various reasons. Notably, they already acknowledged a distinct Lebanese identity, which set them apart from the rest of the Arab world and dated as far back as the Ottoman Empire (Rondot 39). According to Kais Firro, Lebanese Christians were also hesitant of Arab nationalism because they viewed it as historically Islamized (Firro 23). While Lebanese Muslims desired to celebrate the Arab identity of Lebanon and establish a state of equality based on a single shared identity, Lebanese Christians believed that the Lebanese

national interest was more important than Arab interest, particularly because they had long resisted forces that often defined other Arab countries, including the rise of Islam (Rondot 49). Resistance to Islamic political power as well as shared Christian belief served as a tie between Lebanese Christians and western powers, and elicited sympathy for the Lebanese Forces from prominent foreign powers such as the United States.

Lebanese Forces leaders were able to appeal to the United States based on their shared religious and cultural values, which promoted American sympathy for Lebanese Christians. In an interview with ABC News on July 9, 1982, Bashir Gemayel discussed the role of religion in the ongoing Lebanese Civil War. He called attention specifically to the shared values of the Lebanese Forces and the United States government. Ronald Reagan's election to the American presidency in 1980 demonstrated a growing Christian conservative movement in the United States, offering a unique opportunity for this connection to form. Bashir Gemayel cites the shared Christian values of the Lebanese Forces and Americans as the reason for the American foreign assistance to Lebanese Christians against Palestinians and Syrians. He said that "until now, the U.S. public opinion didn't know that we are fighting the same combat and the same fight, for the same values and the same interests as the United States," further expressing that the lack of earlier American support was the reason for earlier defeats of Lebanese Christians ("Interview with Bashir Gemayel on ABC television-9 July 1982"). He also expressed that he had "confidence in the American initiative," and at another point he said he considered President Reagan to be "a great champion of the values in which I believe" ("Interview with Bashir Gemayel on ABC Television- 27 June 1982").

This religious connection, rooted in shared Christian faith, also contributed to the anti-Arab rhetoric of the United States. Don Peretz explains that "because many Americans consider

their country to be Christian, their perceptions of Arabs is that they are anti-American," (Peretz 7), because Islam and Arab Nationalism represented direct contradictions to American religious faith, particularly with the narratives of Christian oppression in Lebanon by Bashir Gemayel. Leaders of the Lebanese Forces were given disproportionate voice in American media. This voice was a result of and simultaneously played into two factors; the perceived commonalities between a "Christian" America and the plight of Lebanese Christians, as well as the existing conceptions of Middle Eastern conflict and Muslims that were held in American popular opinion. The Gemayel family, who were devout Christians and incredibly influential Lebanese politicians, utilized these beliefs to perpetuate the existing political order of sectarian division, which was a result of the forms of religious representation outlined in the Lebanese Constitution. Under the Lebanese Constitution written in 1926 under the French mandate, the Lebanese President would also be a Maronite Christian, and the next most populous group of Sunni Muslims would have a representative in the form of a prime minister. Shi'a Muslims, a smaller subset of Muslims in Lebanon, would be represented by the speaker of the chamber. Each of these appointments was decided through elections, with the most populous group of Maronite Christians holding the highest executive position of president. Despite the alleged attempt at equal representation based on population size, the separation of powers still maintained the political dominance of Maronites over the Muslim population.

The Gemayel family benefited from the status of the Lebanese constitution and its sectarian division, and held personal stake in the maintenance of the existing state of sectarian representation because of their political aspirations and achievements. Bashir Gemayel was president-elect of Lebanon, but never took official office before his 1982 assassination. His brother, Amin Gemayel, took the office following Bashir's death. Their father, Pierre Gemayel,

ran for the position of president twice, and although he was never elected to this position, he served in the Lebanese parliament. The Gemayels were able to appeal to the sensibilities of both Lebanese and American Christians. The narratives of the Lebanese Forces were often the only kind to be included in American media, and much of the western media coverage of the Lebanese Civil War was based on speeches and interviews made by Bashir Gemayel himself. Bashir used his platform to appeal to issues of foreign influence in Lebanon, where his commentary on each country he addressed carefully played into the existing popular opinion of United States citizens, called for American assistance for the Lebanese Forces, and influenced the American public to villainize the enemies of the Lebanese Forces.

In theory, Bashir's opinion on any and all foreign influence in Lebanon was a negative one. He regularly, both in American media and to his own Maronite followers, called for the removal of all foreign forces from Lebanon. In an interview with ABC News on July 9, 1982, Gemayel said that "as far as we are concerned, we are looking for the liberation of our country- we are looking that all the foreigners get out- Syrians, Palestinians and Israelis and even UNIFIL- we don't need any foreign, armed presence in this country. As Lebanese, as a strong central government, as a strong central army, as once again the nation reunited, we will take care of the security of our own country; we don't need anybody in this country- and Arafat should understand that," (Friedman 283). He refers here to Yasser Arafat, the leader of the Palestinian Liberation Organization. He often expressed these same sentiments in speeches to his Lebanese Maronite followers, and in a speech addressed to a Maronite audience on February 23, 1979, he stated that, "just as we reject the Syrian presence, we also reject the Palestinian presence, which is unbearable for us… and any foreign presence which is unbearable for us… this foreign presence, we can no longer tolerate," (Jumayyil and Geha 26). These same ideas are echoed

through the words of Amin Gemayel, the brother of Bashir and his successor as Lebanese president. In a New York Times article by Flora Lewis, titled "Gemayel Terms Factional Talks 'A Camouflage'", Lewis writes that "President Amin Gemayel said today that Lebanon's main problem was to get foreign troops out of the country." She quotes him as having said, "Will they get the Syrians or the Israelis out? There are five foreign forces in Lebanon- Syria, Israel, the Palestine Liberation Organization, Libyans and Iranians, and nobody is talking about the base of the problem" (Lewis).

It is an oversimplification, however, to take these statements at face value and assume that the Lebanese Forces follow a blanket rule against any and all foreign presence in Lebanon, and the complexities of the opinion of foreign influence is evident through American media coverage of the war. Despite the overarching themes that would suggest otherwise in the words of Bashir and his brother, his relationships to certain foreign forces, namely, the United States and Israel, were mutually beneficial. American media, too, though, often veered towards oversimplification of the war in a different direction. Don Peretz critiqued American coverage of the Lebanese Civil War, and stated that "much of the media simplistically described the crisis as a conflict between the Lebanese Christians, supported by Israel, and the Palestinian guerrillas with their Muslim allies backed by the intruding Syrians. This oversimplification completely missed the origins and real issues, often making it appear as just another battle by Israel and the West again international Soviet instigated terrorism. It was not that most of the media overtly linked the Syrians, Palestinians and Lebanese National Movement with the forces of evil and the Israelis and Christians with the struggle against terrorism, but the tendency was to feature "news" that inevitably led to that conclusion" (Peretz 5). The truth, then, lay somewhere in the middle of these two simplified narratives, both of which contained half-truths about the Lebanese

Forces and their motives, neither of which demonstrated the complexities of the role of foreign powers in the Lebanese Civil War and their relationship to the Lebanese Forces. In addition to the commentary provided by Lebanese Forces leaders about foreign powers in Lebanon, they also used their platform to define the nature of the Lebanese Civil War as being inherently religious and based in the sectarian struggle of Lebanese Christians. While not necessarily villainizing Muslims in general, Bashir based his motivations on the narrative that life in Lebanon as a Christian necessitated a kind of second-class citizenship, and framed these Christians as martyrs for the Lebanese cause.

Pierre Gemayel, like his sons, emphasized the importance of a Lebanon that existed independently of the influence of any foreign force, and also highlighted the struggles of Lebanese Christians and the fear of potential danger that accompanied the Muslim population of Lebanon. He was an outspoken advocate for the end of the French Mandate, and was wary of the growing force of Arab Nationalism, which he viewed as a potential threat to Maronite Christians. He once said that "the Christian psychosis of fear is internalized, visceral, and tenacious. We can do nothing about it. It is the Moslems' task to reassure us" (Pace). Eric Pace noted that "a mainspring of Mr. Gemayel's own deeply conservative thinking was the view that his fellow Lebanese Christians were vulnerable, embedded as they were in the mainly Moslem Arab world-although much of the power in independent Lebanon remained in Christian hands," in an article about Pierre titled "Pierre Gemayel, A Courtly Chieftain of Christians." Pace went on to claim that Pierre was an opponent of Arab nationalism, largely due to his perspective of the movement as a threat to Christianity. He wrote that, "in later years, Mr. Gemayel used to emphasize disadvantages that he said Lebanese Christians had suffered at Muslim hands in the past. His grandfather, he used to recall, was obliged to travel by donkey, not by horse, to Beirut and was

forbidden to garb himself in silk" (Pace). This oppression of Christians could neatly be chalked up to the presence of predominantly Muslim foreign powers, whether in the form of neighboring Arab nation-state or centuries of Ottoman rule.

Foreign Influence

The conversation about foreign influence, as addressed by Lebanese Forces founder Bashir Gemayel and other prominent Lebanese Maronite leaders, was certainly more complex than the American media portrayal. Some of the most prominent countries in discussion by the Lebanese Forces were the United States, Israel, Palestine, and Syria, but there are also notable references to Saudi Arabia, who possessed an interesting dynamic with Lebanon due to Lebanon's participation in the oil industry of the Gulf through banking, as well as the Soviet Union and its alleged ties with Palestinian terrorism in both Lebanon and Israel.

The United States is the only country that is portrayed as a definitive ally of the Lebanese Forces in interviews between American news sources and Lebanese Forces leader Bashir Gemayel, and therefore portrayed as a definitive ally of Lebanon as a whole. Lebanese Forces leaders regularly complimented the shared values of the United States under the Reagan administration and themselves. On July 9, 1982, Bashir Gemayel states that "under President Reagan, under the new administration, I feel absolutely secure and I'm sure that the Americans, and later on, the West, have started to realize that by stabilizing Lebanon, we are stabilizing the whole area," ("Interview with Bashir Gemayel on ABC television-9 July 1982"). He praised American officials for their interest in the Lebanese Civil War, newfound as of the early 1980s. In the first years of the war, the United States turned a blind eye to the sectarian violence that overtook Lebanese society. When discussing this with an interviewer in 1982, Bashir explained that "I must say that, to be fair, that when we started to be more organized, the U.S. started to understand us more and more. And the more united and the more organized we were, the more the U.S. was giving us a more responsible ear, and they were listening more and more to what we had to say. You are right to say that a few months ago they would not even return my calls; I

must say that today it's basically a different situation" ("Interview with Bashir Gemayel on ABC Television- 27 June 1982").

However, despite his outward respect and thankfulness for the participation of the United States on the side of the Lebanese Forces, Gemayel was also critical of certain aspects of American involvement that were not beneficial for Lebanese Christians. At the same time that he acknowledged the benefits of American support, he called attention to the fact that it came too late, stating that, "until now, the U.S. public opinion didn't know that we are fighting the same combat and the same fight, for the same values and the same interests … as the United States. And I think that is why we were destroyed," ("Interview with Bashir Gemayel on ABC television-9 July 1982"). This simultaneously showed appreciation for the American support of the Lebanese Forces, while also calling attention to the power that the United States withheld from Lebanese Christians for years and urging the United States to continue to step up. The interviewer concluded the interview by questioning if Lebanon will ever be free from foreign power, and conceded that "it's ironic, but the answer to that question, in all likelihood, will be decided by still another foreign power, the United States."

After Bashir's death in 1982, his brother and successor Amin was tasked with peace talks between all of the various Lebanese sectarian groups. Amin Gemayel, too, relied heavily on the role of the United States in reconciliation efforts to end the war. Despite the fact that the Reagan administration expressed outward support for Lebanese national reconciliation, Amin was critical of the methods utilized by the American government and skeptical of their effectiveness. The aforementioned Flora Lewis observed that, "the Lebanese leader expressed some irritation and doubt over the usefulness of the current American-backed approach to his country's problems in a 90-minute interview in his office in the presidential palace at suburban Baabda.

But he made it clear that he felt American diplomacy was avoiding the central question of the Middle East conflict and focusing on side issues that, in his view, would not bring a settlement. Asked what approach he would prefer to such an internal meeting, perhaps an international conference or an offer to Syria, he said: 'The Americans have the means. Lebanon controls only 10 to 15 percent of its territory. They can't ask us to handle this. All kinds of initiatives are possible… The Americans are the godfather of May 17; it is up to them to propose any alternative,' alluding to the accord reached on that day by Israel and his Government for the withdrawal of Israeli soldiers from Lebanon provided that Syrian and Palestinian forces leave as well," (Lewis). He references here the May 17 Agreement, a peace settlement between Lebanon and Israel following Israel's invasion of Lebanon. In this same interview, Amin Gemayel also criticized the predictions and judgements made by the United States on Syria in this 1983 agreement.

The United States judged Syria to be hostile towards Lebanese peacemaking accords, and that this decision of the United States government to refuse to set up a meeting between Mr. Gemayel and the Syrian President has negatively impacted the reconciliation efforts between Lebanon and Syria. "Mr. Gemayel said the United State had misjudged the Syrian attitude during the Lebanese negotiations with Israel on a withdrawal accord. "We're paying for it now," he said. "The Syrian position was much more flexible at that time. It changed afterward" (Lewis). The President said that he had been apprehensive over the lack of talks at the time with Syria as well as with Israel and that he had asked Philip C. Habib, then President Reagan's special envoy, to let him arrange a meeting with the Syrian President, Hafez al-Assad. But Mr. Gemayel quoted Mr. Habib as having said, "No, no, don't worry, we can resolve it." Mr. Gemayel said that he

had expressed uneasiness as well to Mr. Shultz but that the Secretary had repeated Mr. Habib's words." (Lewis).

The American government officials who organized the May 17 Agreement with Israel disputed Gemayel's claims, and Lewis stated that "the Gemayel account differed with one by American officials, who said Mr. Shultz had told the Lebanese leader that the United States had helped arrange the accord with Israel and that it was up to Lebanon to make a parallel arrangement with Syria. Informed of this, Mr. Gemayel said: "That's not true, not true. I sent an emissary to Assad to propose a meeting Habib, but Habib ignored it, putting it off for later,'" (Lewis).

A later article in UPI was intended to recall this story and make corrections on Gemayel's quotes and representation in this article. This article quoted the correcting statements by the embassy of Lebanon, which once again praised the efforts of the American government in assisting with reconciliatory talks between Lebanese sectarian groups. The embassy explained that "it is important to note that President Gemayel officially and publicly asked for a national dialogue months before the latest round of fighting took place. We note with gratitude that the president's call for national reconciliation was achieved by intensive American and Saudi efforts. The president welcomed these efforts and moved ahead to set dates for the convening of the dialogue meeting," (UPI Archives).

Unlike the more blatant acknowledgement of the United States as an ally, the role of Israel in the Lebanese Civil War, and the attitudes of the Lebanese Forces about the role of Israeli military occupation of West Beirut, were often discussed in cryptic terms due to the controversial nature of the alliance within Lebanon and the Arab world. Although Lebanese

leaders such as Bashir and Amin Gemayel were blatant in their distaste for Palestinian and Syrian presence and the importance of American aid in addressing the sectarian issues, they sent mixed messages about their opinion on Israeli presence. Claiming Israel openly as an ally held the potential to alienate much of the rest of the Arab world following the 1967 Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories, a driving force in the high influx of Palestinian refugees in neighboring Arab states, including Lebanon.

Bashir Gemayel, in an interview with ABC News television on July 9, 1982, was hesitant to claim Israel as an ally. When directly asked whether Israel was an ally of the Lebanese Forces, Bashir Gemayel responded that, "in politics, there is nothing permanent; you don't have permanent allies and permanent enemies. We are taking the maximum advantage and benefit of the changing of the balance of power and equilibrium of power in Lebanon" ("Interview with Bashir Gemayel on ABC television-9 July 1982"). He went on to say that "as far as we are concerned, we are looking for the liberation of our country- we are looking that all the foreigners get out- Syrians, Palestinians and Israelis and even UNIFIL- we don't need any foreign, armed presence in this country. As Lebanese, as a strong central government, as a strong central army, as once again the nation reunited, we will take care of the security of our own country; we don't need anybody in this country- and Arafat should understand that." Despite Gemayel's claim about the need for independence for Lebanon, absent of any and all foreign presence, he did credit the presence of Israeli militia for the rising unity of Lebanon, saying that, "a lot of people are coming to the south because the Israelis are here. Today a lot of people are coming to all the villages where the Israelis are entering and the situation- I'm not going to say that it's becoming normal; but since then, this country is being reunited every day more and more."

The ABC interviewer, Geraldo Rivera, presented his own depiction of the role of Israeli presence in Lebanon. He acknowledged that Gemayel refused to claim Israel as a direct ally of the Lebanese Forces, but noted the role that the Israeli military played in arming Lebanese Christian militia. He explained that, "despite the fact that his army has in part been trained and equipped by the Israelis, by not fighting alongside them, Gemayel is trying to demonstrate his independence" ("Interview with Bashir Gemayel on ABC television-9 July 1982"). Geraldo Rivera went on to confirm the positive narrative of Israeli allyship with Lebanese Christians, stating that "it must be pointed out that the Lebanese Christians, although not fighting alongside the Israelis, have certainly cooperated with them. For instance, it was the Lebanese Forces, under orders from the Israelis, who temporarily cut off food supplies to west Beirut," ("Interview with Bashir Gemayel on ABC television-9 July 1982"). It is apparent here that American media, in this case, is more ready to acknowledge the advice and assistance of the Israeli military than Lebanese Forces leaders themselves, because of the implications that this might have in the maintenance of the support of the Arab world for Lebanon.

Gemayel was willing to be critical of the Israeli military and their motives in the Lebanese Civil War, but is careful not to outright condemn Israel in interactions with the American media. When talking to Geraldo Rivera, he spoke candidly about the role of the Israeli presence on the ongoing sectarian violence in Lebanon, and its both positive and negative implications. Gemayel refused to say that Israel was an invited ally of the Lebanese Forces. When asked if Israel was an enemy of Gemayel or the Lebanese Forces, Gemayel explained that, "the Israelis reacted" to the assassination of Shlomo Argov in London, and that this was the driving force behind their decision to place troops in Lebanon. Gemayel continued, "I didn't ask them to come. I didn't- I was not responsible for their entry here. It was done- it was done not for

the advantage of the Lebanese, but definitely for us this was the only way to finish with all the problem," (25). This statement simultaneously presented a criticism of Israel and their intentions in Lebanon, and expressed that Gemayel believed that Israel was acting in their own interest rather than to assist the Lebanese Forces. However, he found their presence effective in dealing with the Palestinian population that presented a problem for the Lebanese Forces. This narrative differed, however, from a story reported by the *Near East Report* in May 1980, which said that "the crisis in Lebanon first arose when elements of the PLO began to infiltrate into the country in large numbers in 1968-69… Until then, for 20 years from Israel's independence in 1948 a happy peace had reigned between Lebanon and Israel. The Lebanese border was the only quiet one Israel shared with any Arab country," (Peretz 2). They later go on to state that Israel made its initial entry into Lebanon in 1978 "to defend Lebanon's Christians from devastation." In this version of events, Israel was a proactive ally of Lebanese Christians, and their motive was humanitarian rather than an operation of self interest that achieved benefits for the Lebanese Forces by coincidence.

Both narratives differed from a speech given by Bashir Gemayel in April of 1979, where he declared that "the Cairo agreement cost us the South, and until today, the Israeli is using the Cairo agreement as an excuse to bomb the South on a daily basis," (Jumayyil and Geha 63). Prior to Gemayel's attention from the American media, he appeared more ready to criticize Israel as an unwelcome and destructive foreign force that had entered the country based on their own personal interests.

Another Middle Eastern relationship that was favorable to the Lebanese Forces was with Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia was presented as a strong influence on the Lebanese Civil War, because of their interactions with the Lebanese economic system through the oil industry. The oil

industry interacted primarily with Lebanese Christians because of their oligarchical economic dominance, which suggested that Saudi Arabia would be more inclined to assist Lebanese Forces forces over other Arab groups. During reconciliation discussions hosted by Amin Gemayel, the Saudi government offered to host the discussion in Jidda. Western diplomats stated that "Syrians have rejected the Saudi city as a site because they feel it would give Saudi Arabia greater opportunity to blunt Syrian influence over the proceedings," referencing the Saudi-sponsored cease-fire that was intended to address the sectarian violence in Beirut.

On the other hand, Bashir Gemayel was also ready to condemn the influence of other foreign forces in Lebanon. Opponents of the Lebanese Forces viewed the Palestine Liberation Organization as integral to the project of Arab nationalism. Yet even as it collaborated with foreign actors like the United States, the leadership of the Lebanese forces cast Palestinians in Lebanon as an unwelcome foreign menace. In the most simple and straightforward way, both Bashir and the American media labeled Palestine, and more specifically, the leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization, Yasser Arafat, as a direct enemy. Palestinians were cited as the trigger for Lebanon's descent into sectarian violence. As ABC news explained, "it was the influx of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians expelled by King Hussein from Jordan in 1970 that really unhinged Lebanon's fragile balance. The pendulum skidded unstoppably toward violence in 1975. Since then, with less than two percent of America's population, Lebanon has already lost twice as many people as [the United States] did during the ten years war in Vietnam," ("Interview with Bashir Gemayel on ABC television-9 July 1982"). Palestinian refugees were represented as a burden to the Lebanese state, and one that was not shared among other Arab nations. In a speech from 1979, Bashir criticized the lack of efforts of the Arab world to shoulder the refugee burden, saying that "we no longer accept that 600,000 Palestinians stay

on our lands, and that the Arab world… which has much more land than we do… and which is also much richer than we are… and which has vast empty areas… for it to not even be carrying 1% of what Lebanon is carrying of the Palestinian burden…" (Jumayyil and Geha 25). Palestine then became not only a problem for the Lebanese state, but also a point of tension between Lebanon and the rest of the Arab world. Bashir was able to present Lebanon as a suffering host country, while simultaneously discrediting the real-life implications of Arab nationalism, arguing that solidarity between Arab countries did not translate into tangible assistance.

Not only did Gemayel introduce the Palestinian population as a burden that Lebanon was forced to bear alone, he also presented the Palestinian population as a dangerous and disruptive one, and the source of the sectarian violence in Lebanon. In an interview with ABC, Bashir Gemayel outrightly condemned Yasser Arafat, the leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization. Bashir seemed to conflate the population of Palestinian refugees with the active members of the Palestine Liberation Organization. ABC News correspondent Geraldo Rivera referred explicitly to Yasser Arafat as Gemayel's "arch enemy." When asked about a conversation that Gemayel had with Arafat, he stated that he "told [Arafat] that he destroyed the Lebanese army, he destroyed the Lebanese state, he destroyed the Syrian army, he destroyed to a certain extent the Syrian state. I told him that he makes fun of the Saudis, of the Kuwaitis, of the Arabs, of the West of everybody. It may work but now he is dealing with the Israelis and this will not work. And he will not be able to do with the Israelis what he has been doing with the Lebanese army and the Syrian army. He should understand all that and stop the whole zoo he is doing now in west Beirut, to save more than twenty or thirty or 40,000 Lebanese people who may be killed if he could continue to play his tricks and if he will continue to say with Habash and other people that Beirut will be a Stalingrad… The situation in west Beirut is really awful,

and it's because of the Palestinians, and it's a Palestinian responsibility, and he will have that on his conscience, in case he has any conscience, he will have all the responsibility for what is going on in west Beirut today," ("Interview with Bashir Gemayel on ABC Television- 27 June 1982").

Gemayel's rhetoric was striking and emotionally charged. He used extreme comparisons, between the Palestine Liberation Organization's tactics and a zoo, which dehumanized the Palestinian population. Arafat was presented as directly responsible for the murders of up to 40,000 Lebanese people, comparing the violence in Lebanon to the World War II Battle of Stalingrad and therefore making a comparison between Palestinians and Nazi Germany. He questioned openly if Arafat even had a conscience, therefore undermining any argument that might indicate that Arafat operated in favor of a cause, rather than just a desire for violent fighting. More than this, however, he claimed that this was a collective Palestinian responsibility, rather than the responsibility of a leader, and he leveled that Palestinians in general were an irrational and violent group.

Gemayel's tactic was to essentially dehumanize Palestinians and cast them as a monolithic group responsible for the terrorism and destruction of Lebanon and its capital city of Beirut. This portrayal fit easily into the constructed image of Palestinians in popular media and culture within the United States. Perhaps due to the United States' established relationship with Israel, many Americans held extremely negative views of Palestinians, as well as Arabs and Muslims more generally. Don Peretz referenced a poll on American attitudes towards Arabs, explaining that "it should be noted that terms such as Palestinians, Christians, Muslims, Syrians, and Arabs are already loaded with strong biases and emotional overtones. An article on "The Image of the Arab in America: Analysis of a Poll on American Attitudes," in the Spring 1981

issue of the Middle East Journal, published by the Middle East Institute in Washington D.C., asserted that "the American media have broadcast a predominantly negative picture of the Arab personality… the Arabs remain one of the few ethnic groups who can still be slandered with immunity in America." He continues, "Attitudes reflected in the poll towards individual Middle Eastern states and leaders were not monolithic- for example, there was a very high opinion of Sadat and Egypt, but a very low opinion of the Palestine Liberation Organization and Syria." The analysis shares that, "a large percentage of the respondents felt that the Arabs can be described as 'barbaric, cruel', 'treacherous, cunning," and 'warlike, bloodthirsty.' Furthermore, when asked how many Arabs are described by a long list of traits, a large percentage view 'most' of 'all' Arabs as 'anti-Christian', 'anti-Semitic', and 'Want to Destroy Israel and Drive the Israelis into the Sea," (Peretz 7).

Although, once again, this language is striking, it illustrates a perfect backdrop for the adoption of the Lebanese Forces narratives about the destructive nature of the presence of Palestinians in Lebanon. American media played into this conception as well, and presented Bashir Gemayel as an electric force, proclaimed as the major opponent of the Palestine Liberation Organization, comparable even to the forces of the entirety of Israel. In the 20/20 program about the war, he shined as a protagonist. He was labeled as "the commanding general of the Christian Lebanese Forces. Outside of Israel itself, this thirty-three year old man is the PLO's most formidable enemy… by political persuasion and by force of arms, he's united most of the country's Christians. He now commands twenty five percent of the country and over a million people. As such, he's much more powerful than Lebanon's central government," (Peretz 6). Bashir became somewhat of a mythical giant, his prowess amplified in the narratives of the American media he successfully engaged with. He was presented as the uniter of the Christian

population of Lebanon, making the intra-religious violence that existed within various Christian sects of Lebanon. The American media placed a high amount of trust in the words of Gemayel, contrasting with the skepticism of the American population concerning Palestinians in Lebanon.

Claire Sterling, an American journalist who focused on issues of international terrorism, wrote a book titled *The Terror Network*, in which she presented an argument about a connection between the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Soviet Union, in which the Soviet Union supported terrorist training bases for Palestinians in Lebanon (Sterling 112). ABC adopted this theory, claiming that the PLO was utilizing these bases to commit terrorist attacks in Lebanon against Israeli forces and Lebanese Christians. This reinforced the popular notion that the Palestine Liberation Organization was instigating violent attacks against Lebanese Christians and framed the Lebanese Christians as a group oppressed by foreign forces. Israel was also introduced into the narrative as a secondary victim of the violence of the Palestinians in Lebanon, which further reinforced the American perception of the Palestinian and Israeli relationship following the Israeli occupation of Palestine. Palestine was presented as an aggressor backed by powerful international allies in the form of the Soviet Union and their elaborate mission for international terrorism.

In a similar manner to the representation of Palestinians, Syria was often presented by the American media as untrustworthy, violent, and less civilized than Christian populations. Notably, they are referenced by Bashir Gemayel, along with Egypt, as countries that were responsible for the oppression of their Christian populations. This definitive notion of Syria as an opposing force to Lebanese Christians oversimplifies the complicated history of Syrian involvement in the Lebanese Civil War. Initially, Syrian forces were welcomed into Lebanon by Lebanese Christians and Israel, and were framed as allies to Lebanon. However, this dynamic

changed when the balance of power between Christian and Muslim population was revealed as unequal. “When the balance of forces in Lebanon changed to the advantage of the pro-status quo Maronites, Syria shifted its support to the Lebanese National Movement- Palestinian alliance, much to Israel’s chagrin,” (Peretz 9). Since this shift in Syrian attitudes that favored leftist groups in Lebanon, they were then framed as enemies to the cause of the Lebanese Forces, going so far as to imply that their motives are not to assist with reconciliation and peacekeeping, as Syrian forces claim, but rather that they are attempting to gain power in Lebanon. In ensuing sources, leaders would express doubt about the motives of Syrian participation in Lebanon, despite their initial support. Peretz explained that many Lebanese Christians doubted the Syrian encroachment into Lebanon, as it was perceived as “disguised as ‘peacekeeping’ and designed to dominate the country,” (Peretz 6). These doubtful attitudes about Syria were reinforced by American leaders. Secretary of State George P. Shultz “questioned whether Syria is interested in allowing the Lebanese to govern their own affairs,” (Lewis), implying that ultimately, Syria had ulterior motives of political domination of Lebanon.

The Soviet Union served as an example of a common opponent between the Lebanese Forces and the United States, and its relationship with Palestine was heavily criticized in the American media. The Soviet Union was alleged to be not only an ally to the Palestinian cause, but the mobilizing force that sustained it. This narrative served a double purpose, both to villainize Palestinian groups as a terrorist organization as well as to cater to American interests against the Soviet Union following the missile crisis and during Soviet involvement in Afghanistan. Following the missile crisis, “most of the media featured articles on international terrorism like Claire Sterling’s in the New York Times Magazine of March 1, 1981, which purported to show: ‘there is now extensive evidence… that for the last decade the Soviet Union

and its surrogates have provided support for terrorists around the world,'" (Peretz 5), the chief examples including Cuba and Palestine. The ABC 20/20 program, "The Unholy War" followed this same narrative, and attempted to demonstrate a link between the Palestine Liberation Organization, Syria, and camps devoted to international terrorism established by the Soviet Union.

Emphasis on Christian/Muslim Conflict

In addition to the utilization of American media in assessing the alliances and oppositions of the Lebanese Forces, leaders also used their influence to shape the story of the war as a product of religious difference. They created a narrative about the plight of Lebanese Christians at odds with Lebanon's Muslim population and their foreign Arab allies. The Lebanese Forces and its representatives expressed their motivations and political aims primarily through their Maronite identities. Christian religious belief was an essential aspect of their political actions and their desires for the future of Lebanon. Because of this tight connection between conservative groups in Lebanon and their Maronite Christian faith, leaders were able to represent the sectarian tensions in Lebanon as being primarily based on differences in religious belief, and therefore structuring the Lebanese Civil War as a conflict between Christians and Muslims. This led to an overlap between the perceived identities of Palestinians and Syrians and a Muslim identity, which was not explicitly expressed in the same way that conservative groups claimed a Christian identity. Instead of defining themselves by religion, leftist groups in Lebanon often defined themselves by certain political ideologies, which were most notably inspired by Arab Marxism. However, because of the presentations of the sectarian conflicts through western media, the average American would expect the civil war to be centered around the differences in values and beliefs between Muslims and Christians.

One would be hard-pressed to find a piece of American media that did not present the conflict in this light, and because of the preexisting negative perceptions of Arabs and Muslims in the United States, the content of the media overwhelmingly leaned in favor of the assistance of Lebanese Christians, who often labeled themselves as an oppressed group within the predominantly Islamic Middle Eastern society. Don Peretz wrote that "rarely has even the most

reliable media coverage described the conflict as other than a struggle between Christians and Muslims, leftists, Palestinians, or Syrians," (8). This was defended through historical references to past interreligious tensions in Lebanon, which unfortunately did not pay mind to the complex issues that contributed to the war and were not explicitly religious, including issues such as colonial control which involved the Lebanese history of the French mandate, as well as the very existence of the state of Israel and its implications for Palestinian people, and Marxist ideologies and international efforts to suppress movements that arose from these ideologies.

Both in Lebanese and American media, Bashir Gemayel would regularly appeal to the notion that the Lebanese Maronites were in danger of losing their rights, and that they were a target and victim of the terrorist efforts of the Palestine Liberation Organization under Yasser Arafat. He would use religious terms to describe the status of Lebanese Christians, including calling them martyrs or dhimmis, a term that refers to a non-Muslim member of a primarily Muslim state who is protected under a religious freedom law, but is not afforded the same rights and privileges of a Muslim member of the same state. Gemayel stated that the Lebanese Forces "don't want Lebanon to be a Christian national homeland and we will not accept that Lebanon be a country where we will be dhimmis in it," (Jumayyil and Geha 45). In one speech, Gemayel repeatedly rejects the prospect of the role of Christians in Lebanon to come to reflect the role of Christians in other Middle Eastern countries, referring specifically to Egypt and Syria, which he sees as being less privileged as in Lebanon. He says, "we in Lebanon reject that our existence as Christians be similar to the existence of the Christians of Egypt, or the Christians of Syria… a community that is tolerated… whose existence they approve of, some of them at least… but beyond that they don't have any rights," (Jumayyil and Geha 32). In another speech, he continues with this sentiment, stating that "we reject that our status in this particular area of the

world be similar to the status of the Copts in Egypt, or the status of the Christians in Syria. They eat and they drink and they sleep and they are living a normal and natural life, but without any rights for their community and without any distinguishing personality for their community," (Jumayyil and Geha 60). He continues this by denying the potential for Lebanese Christians to allow themselves to accept this fate, and says, "we have succeeded as Lebanese Forces combatants, to sabotage all plans that were laid out to make us live as refugees in another country," (Jumayyil and Geha 64). However, despite his warning about the potential of oppression or discrimination against Lebanese Christians, he remains adamant that he does not want a reversal of this, nor does he want to create a theocracy that is based on the Maronite majority. He still continues, though, to rely on religious imagery and language to emphasize the religious connection between Lebanese Christians, and that this connection is synonymous with the best interest of Lebanon, calling the Lebanese Forces "martyrs to the Lebanese cause," (Jumayyil and Geha 54) who are able to address the sectarian problems of the country "with the help of God," (Jumayyil and Geha 52).

He refers to Lebanon as "a Christian society" that "wants to be free," but warns against solutions that attempt to create interreligious peace through forced reconciliation efforts, explaining that, "we should not accept to join together again with the sheikh and the priest kissing each other… and the church and the mosque praying together… we should reject that these matters continue. We should join ranks based on our willingness to defend Lebanon, and die for the sake of Lebanon," ("Interview with Bashir Gemayel on ABC Television- 27 June 1982"). He consistently made remarks that reinforced the ties between Christian martyrdom and the cause of Lebanese Christians, called the mission of the Lebanese Forces their "road to Golgotha, from which Lebanon is still suffering today," (Jumayyil and Geha 51), and also

claimed that their purpose is given to them by God. He stated that “our cause is difficult because God has decided for us to live in this part of the world,” (Jumayyil and Geha 68).

Gemayel also tended to imply that the Lebanese Christian population was entirely, or at least mostly, united, sharing the same values and vision for the future of Lebanon, although intra-religious Christian violence was a recurring problem in the country, best illustrated through the assassination of Tony Franjieh in 1978. Tony Franjieh was the son of the Christian political leader Suleiman Franjieh who publicly opposed Bashir Gemayel. Phalangists, a sect of conservative Maronites, were responsible for the death of Tony, indicating the lack of political unity between different Christian groups, despite their shared religion. An article appeared in the Jerusalem Post by Patrick Worsnip, an influential journalist who worked as a chief correspondent for the United Nations and for Reuters, which explains that despite the popular belief that the entirety of the leftist groups which opposed the Lebanese Forces and Kataeb party were Muslim, but this was not entirely true. In fact, groups such as the Patriotic Christian Front and the Nationalist Social Party stood against the politics of Bashir Gemayel and the Lebanese Forces. Other prominent Christian figures spoke out against the politics of the Phalangists include Dany Chamoun, the son of former Lebanese president Camille Chamoun, who accused the Phalangists of “treachery” and said that “he was resigning his position as head of his party’s Tiger militia unit and quitting politics in disgust”. A few days later he vowed to wage an offensive against the victorious Phalangists “to save the Christians from these blood-thirsty madmen,” the Times reported on July 14, 1980,” (Peretz 6). Despite popular media representing the Phalangists and other followers of Gemayel as being an entirely representative group of Lebanese Christians this was not the case for the entire population, nor was it true of some of the most influential Maronite leaders. Even in 1984, Peretz refuted the claim that Lebanese Christian groups were

united or even represented under the power of Phalangist militia groups or the Lebanese Forces. He explains that "Time magazine occasionally described the battles between 'Christian Phalangist forces' and Syrians, or between 'Christian militias known as Phalangists' and 'mainly Muslim leftists', but the impression conveyed by most Time reporting and in the other weekly newsmagazines was that the Phalangists were THE Christians," (Peretz 8), despite the invalidity of this statement.

In this narrative, the Lebanese capital city of Beirut serves as the backdrop and imagery of the total separation between Christian and Muslim populations. West Beirut is full of Palestinians, Syrians, communists, and Muslims, who were all united under an umbrella of enemies of the Lebanese state. East Beirut was seemingly populated by the united Christian population. ABC news correspondent Geraldo Rivera, when describing the violence of Lebanon in 1982, said that "the beaches boom, although along the lines separating Christian east from Muslim west Beirut, gunfire does not. Even at the height of the Israeli attack, there was less fighting between the Christians and their Syrian and P.L.O. enemies than there was before last month's invasion," ("Interview with Bashir Gemayel on ABC television-9 July 1982"). This simultaneously confirms the depiction of Beirut as totally divided by a religious line, but also demonstrates support for the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and its positive impact on the city's peace, highlighting the Israeli invasion as a positive and necessary factor for Lebanon. Beirut's reputation for danger was also highlighted in the words of Walid Jumblat in the year following Bashir Gemayel's death, when the Druze leader explained that he did not feel comfortable to attend a reconciliation conference in Beirut because "he feels his life might be endangered if he travels to and from the Beirut area."

The Christian response to the presence of foreign, and notably non-majority Christian forces, was indicative of the power of the narrative of fear presented by the Gemayel family. "Describing Phalangist apprehensions about the large number of Palestinians in Lebanon, Entelis wrote: "The Christian response to Palestinian revolutionism has been drastic, indeed fanatical. Born of fear, disarray, and desperation, radical Christian nationalism, tinged with unmistakable isolationist tendencies, has reemerged among Lebanon's formerly most 'moderate' and 'progressive' Christian-dominated political organization." Fear of being drowned in a Muslim sea aroused the Phalange to abandon, in the early 1970s, its previous efforts at promoting reformist principles. Instead, it reverted to its fundamentalist origins and engaged in provocative attacks," (Peretz 8-9). Maronite Christians were motivated by the fear tactics of the Lebanese Forces leaders and their claims about the potential for the oppression of Christians and the natural suspicion by Christians of Muslims, presented as a theological truth by Pierre Gemayel.

Lebanese Christians were driven to intense dedication to their religious identity. "Yemma concludes: "It can be a stunning experience to hear a Maronite talk as reverently about Mt. Lebanon as a Jew does about Mt. Zion. Many Maronites wear fashionable gold crosses around their necks, just as many Israelis wear gold Stars of David. Some Phalangists even go so far as wearing the Star of David themselves," (Peretz 11).

Even during peace and reconciliation talks, those who were invited to negotiate the peace treaties after the war were hesitant to trust the potential for peace in Lebanon following the strongly held belief that conflict between Christians and Muslims was inevitable. "This fear, which the negotiators repeatedly expressed in public and which was surely known to the Israelis, was rooted in a series of mass killings and attacks- perpetrated by Lebanese Christian militiamen against Palestinians and Moslems, and by Moslems and Palestinians against Christians- that

dated from the Lebanese civil war of 1975-1976." This was evident in depictions of the war in popular culture as well. In *Sitt Marie Rose,* the main character describes the state of the nation, and notes, "now it's the Christian, modernized Lebanese who go wherever they like with their touristo-military gear. They bring their cameras to film their exploits, their puttees, their shoes, their shorts, their buttons and zippers, their open shirts and their black hair showing." (Sitt Marie Rose 3).

This narrative of Christian versus Muslim violence in Lebanon was not a new concept in 1975 at the onset of the Lebanese Civil War, however. In 1958, at the height of the United States' involvement with Iran, President Eisenhower sent Marines to Lebanon "to prevent an earlier war between Christians and Muslims," ("Interview with Bashir Gemayel on ABC Television- 27 June 1982").

In the early 1980s, Bashir Gemayel expressed hope for peace for Lebanon, while also reinforcing the idea that the conflict was essentially due to religious differences at its core. He stated that his goal "is that this country being free, we will establish a new political regime for both Christians and everybody- a real modern state, democratic state, liberal state, with a real democracy," ("Interview with Bashir Gemayel on ABC television-9 July 1982")

This narrative did not go uncontested, however. Peretz explained that, although there was a reality of sectarian violence, the religious beliefs of Christians and Muslims were not the primary motivating factor that led to this sectarian violence. He stated that "as the conflict was prolonged, there were frequent incidents of sectarian violence, although it still has not become a war between Christians and Muslims," (Peretz 9). He also noted that the popular depiction of religion as the sole reason for sectarian tensions was beneficial for the interests of Israel, saying

that “of course Israel benefits by calling the conflict Muslim versus Christian-Jew because many Westerners will automatically side with the latter,” (Peretz 11).

Other Narratives of the Lebanese Civil War in the Media

Although the narratives of the Lebanese Forces were popularized in American media during the war, there were some examples of competing narratives that challenged claims of Maronite leaders. Israeli leaders, in particular, contradicted Bashir Gemayel's denial of alliance between the Lebanese Forces and Israel. Although this contradiction undermined the claims of the Lebanese Forces, it also served to reinforce the existing perceptions of the American public in regards to the relationship between Lebanon and Israel.

Israel's narrative of the Lebanese Civil War stands in contrast to the narrative popularized by Bashir Gemayel. Gemayel would refuse to outwardly state any type of alliance between Israel and the Lebanese Forces. The Israeli Defense Minister, Ariel Sharon, was a controversial figure in the Lebanese Civil War due to his ties to the massacres at Sabra and Shatila. Sharon challenged the statements of Gemayel, and indicated that an alliance between the two nations was more fully-developed than Gemayel would admit. Notably, Sharon discussed publicly the potential for a peace treaty between Israel and Lebanon, and that he had engaged in discussion with Lebanese officials to begin this process.

In a *New York Times* article published on August 30, 1982 titled "Sharon Says Peace Pact With Lebanon is Likely," Philip Shabecoff writes that the Israeli Defense Minister shared about the collaboration between Lebanon and Israel and the implications that this might have for Middle Eastern politics. Shabecoff says that "Israel's plan to sign a peace treaty with Lebanon was aimed at forming the third leg of a 'triangle of peace' involving Egypt, Israel, and Lebanon." Sharon shared his hopes of the potential for the situation in the Middle East, and that a peace treaty between Israel and Lebanon was indicative of the prospect of peace. Sharon thought that

this could offer indication about the potential for a revision of talks between Israel and Palestinian Arabs in order to achieve a "peaceful coexistence." Shabecoff says of Sharon's statement that "the peace process could not begin until the Syrians leave Lebanon, and all "terrorists" have been removed from the northern part of that country. He asserted that Syrians still occupied 40 percent of Lebanon."

A Washington Post article from December of 1982 declared a similar stance from Sharon, reading that "Israeli Defense Minister Ariel Sharon said today that he has held secret negotiations with Lebanese officials that could lead to normal relations between Israel and Lebanon," (Walsh).

When Lebanese leaders were asked about the Israeli claims of a peace treaty between Lebanon and Israel, officials stated that this was untrue. Instead, they alleged that the Lebanese officials that engaged in discussion with Sharon were from the Lebanese Forces. Edward Walsh reports that "in Washington, sources speculated that the Israeli minister may have talked only with officials of the Lebanese Forces, a Christian militia armed by Israel and close to the Beirut government, Herbert H. Denton of The Washington Post reported." An Israeli newspaper based out of Jerusalem, Maariv, interviewed Sharon and declared that he had spoken with "representatives of the Lebanese regime," shedding little light on the specifics of the individuals involved in these peace talks. Another Israeli newspaper titled Haaretz reported that Sharon had been engaging in discussion with "Lebanese figures close to President Amin Gemayel… via Christian militia mediation," indicating that Maronite Christian groups, and the Lebanese Forces more specifically, were likely involved. Sharon himself did not explicitly report the individuals that he allegedly spoke with, but other Israeli officials reported that these discussions led to "agreement in principle on all the matters that we wanted," but did not explain whether plans

were definitive between the two countries. Sharon discussed his talks with Lebanese officials and claimed that they led to agreements “for an end to the state of war between Israel and Lebanon, an open border with the free flow of trade and tourism and ‘security arrangements’ in southern Lebanon to guarantee Israel’s northern communities against attack,” (Walsh). After the peace talks in question, “all that would then remain, according to the Israeli view, is for U.S. envoys Philip C. Habib and Morris Draper to win agreement for a Syrian and Palestinian troop withdrawal from Lebanon, upon which the Israeli Army would also leave,” (Walsh).

This announcement from Sharon was generally celebrated by American officials, “who had been pessimistic about the prospects of ending the deadlock over negotiations to withdraw foreign troops from Lebanon, were guardedly hopeful that Sharon's remarks could signal the beginning of a breakthrough.” In particular, this could help to normalize relationships between Israel and the rest of the Arabic world, which largely did not accept the existence of the Israeli state. However, the announcement was met with direct denial by Lebanese officials. The Lebanese foreign minister, Elie Salem, was reported by UPI to say that “this report is completely false,” in reference to Sharon’s claims about talks between Israel and Lebanon.

Sharon’s announcement of peace talks between Lebanon and Israel served his own interests, as well. Sharon was removed as defense minister shortly after Israeli participation in the massacres at Sabra and Shatila was revealed. The Israeli state, and Sharon more specifically, was criticized for the orchestration of the massacres of Palestinian refugees. Edward Walsh explains for the Washington Post that “Sharon came under sharp criticism after the massacre of Palestinian refugees in Israeli-occupied West Beirut and is considered one of the most vulnerable figures in the Israeli investigation of the massacre. In recent months he has been courting political support and would clearly benefit if credited with achieving Israel's goal of ‘normal

relations' with Lebanon," (Walsh) Sharon criticized the decision of the Israeli government to remove him from his Defense Minister position in an interview with the New York Daily News.

Sharon made it a personal mission to demonstrate the role that Lebanon played in the Israeli invasion of West Beirut. On the ABC News program called "This Week," "Mr. Sharon said that contrary to reports at the time, the Israeli Cabinet approved of an 11-hour aerial bombardment of Beirut on August 12. He said the Cabinet had approved all of his actions during the war. The Cabinet reportedly rebuked Mr. Sharon for that bombardment on the ground that he had exceeded his authority." He shared that he had received information from Lebanese officials that demonstrated the necessity of Israeli presence because of the intention of the Palestine Liberation Organization to reestablish itself following its defeat in the Lebanese Civil War. A documentary, by Ari Folman, an Israeli filmmaker and Lebanese Civil War veteran, titled *Waltz With Bashir* served as a way for the former soldier to rebuild his memory of the war and his involvement in it, gleaned through interviews and interactions with fellow veterans. The memories of Folman and his peers, however, contradicted the popular opinions about Israeli involvement in the Sabra and Shatila massacre. Their stories highlighted the role of Lebanese Christians in the massacres at Sabra and Shatila, contradicting popular narratives that Israeli soldiers were solely responsible for the violence against Palestinian refugees and demonstrating the direct involvement of Phalangist militia in these events.

Sharon also criticized the participation of the United States in the Lebanese Civil War, claiming that there were a series of serious mistakes committed by the United States government in their response to the conflict. Sharon said that "the problems of Lebanon have not been solved. They could have been solved but I would say there were mistakes on all sides. There were very severe American mistakes… I think the main American mistake was the attempt

to use Lebanon as leverage to solve other issues in the Middle East. For instance, an attempt to bring Syria to the American side… We made it very clear if the Syrians did not interfere we would not touch them. But they did interfere. The American administration did not understand how complicated was the Lebanese problem," (AP News)

Even at the tail end of United States involvement in the Lebanese Civil War, scholars recognized the lack of objectivity in the presentation of the war in American media, as it tended to oversimplify and misrepresent the various motivations of the dozens of subgroups within the war and apply orientalist images of the Middle East. These orientalist images have proven to leave a lasting impact on American perspectives of the Middle East and their ensuing involvement in Middle Eastern affairs, as well as served to shape the formation of Lebanese identity in the years following the Lebanese Civil War.

Conclusion and Implications of the Narratives of the Lebanese Civil War

In the years since the 1989 Taif Accord, Lebanon has wrestled with its understanding of the war. As a whole, the nation has aimed at reaching national reconciliation, but has ignored the root causes of the war and has ultimately failed at achieving reconciliation. Farid El Khazen believes that, although the military war ceased with the Taif Accord, the political and religious divides remain (Ghosn and Khoury 388). This is because attempts at national reconciliation have failed to rectify the root issue, that of the sectarian division of power that defines Lebanese political representation. Although "the Taif Accord redistributed power in a more equitable manner, it did so in a way that reinforced confessionalism and sectarianism in Lebanon," (Ghosn and Khoury 388), thus pushing sectarian loyalties above national loyalties in the Lebanese psyche and contributing to the continuous division of the Lebanese population on grounds of religious differences.

Lebanese film and literature engage in topics such as Lebanese identity and sectarian division. Etel Adnan's *Sitt Marie Rose* criticizes the sectarian consequences of the war as it tells the story of a Christian schoolteacher who defies sectarian divisions and collaborates with members of the Palestine Liberation Organization, and is ultimately destroyed by the sectarian system when she is executed by a childhood friend turned Christian militiaman. The 1998 film *West Beirut* also explores the absurdity of the sudden sectarian violence that erupted in Lebanon. However, the enforcers of sectarian boundaries are almost always demonstrated to be Palestinians, marked by their *keffiyeh* scarves. In many adaptations of the war, sectarian violence is not displayed as a result of longstanding tensions because of the sectarian system, but rather a sudden change that impacted a previously peaceful Lebanon, where sectarian groups coexisted. The sectarian system and its roots in colonialism are therefore not demonstrated as the major

causes of the war, which allows the nation to avoid addressing these issues directly and compromising the interests of the Lebanese elite.

In addition to the consequences within Lebanon, the civil war influenced the United States' role in Middle Eastern foreign policy to this day. The United States' involvement in the Lebanese Civil War served as a precursor for continued American foreign policy in the Middle East. The establishment of an alliance between the United States an oppressed Christian sect facing Muslim opponents demonstrates a basis of future American missions in the Middle East, including invasions of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria, as well as the United States' continuous ties to the Israeli state. Through the framing of the Lebanese Civil War in American media, common perceptions of Middle Eastern conflict were established as fact, including orientalist attitudes against Arab Muslims, ideas of Russian involvement in Middle Eastern terrorism, and the superiority of western values. Islam was viewed as responsible for any and all instances of corruption in the Middle East (Cherkaoui 112), and Podhoretz advised Americans towards "forcibly re-educating" Muslims in their future involvements in Middle Eastern conflict. These attitudes were amplified through post 9/11 Islamophobia, but they clearly have strong roots in the attitudes against Muslims generally, Arab Nationalists, and Syrians and Palestinians more specifically as presented in American media during the Lebanese Civil War.

The representation of the Lebanese Forces in American media demonstrated the complexity of American participation in the Lebanese Civil War. It spoke to the shared interests of the United States and Lebanese Christians, with appeals to common values and political interests with decades-long roots for both countries. Most importantly, it indicates the power of the media in shaping public opinion. These opinions were solidified in the representation of the

war as a primarily religious issue, but continue to leave lasting impacts both in modern-day Lebanon and current American foreign policy in the Middle East.

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