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### **Palestinian Power in Lebanon: The Development of Palestinian Militancy and its Role in the Outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War**

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# **Palestinian Power in Lebanon**

The Development of Palestinian Militancy and its Role in the Outbreak of the  
Lebanese Civil War

A Senior Thesis Presented by Christine Ganley

Submitted to the International Studies Department, Trinity College

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May 1, 2012

## **Abstract**

The Lebanese Civil War was a violent, destructive conflict that plagued Lebanon for fifteen years and left the country, and its capital city of Beirut in particular, completely devastated. The outbreak of civil war in 1975 was the product of a combination of factors, both internal and external, that had been developing within Lebanon since the Ottoman period and even earlier. The country had long been fragmented as a result of sectarianism and was further divided by the unique political climate that developed in the aftermath of independence in 1943. However, sectarianism and internal political divide, although necessary, were not sufficient to trigger such a violent and long-lasting conflict, evidenced by the fact that smaller clashes between religious and political groups had occurred in the past, but never escalated to the degree and intensity of the civil war in 1975. Beginning in the 1960s and 70s, the growing nationalist activism of the Palestinian refugee population in Lebanon and the increasing political and military power of the PLO and other Palestinian organizations deeply affected religious and political groups at both ends of the political spectrum, intensifying sectarian strife and political discord. While some groups fought to maintain the current political and social system, others, motivated by the actions of the Palestinian organizations, used the Palestinian military presence in Lebanon as a means to alter a system that did not accurately represent their interests. The political and military activity of the PLO and other Palestinian organizations in Lebanon was the catalyst that set the war in motion, escalating tensions in an already divided society.

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## **Introduction**

During World War I, a series of letters were exchanged between Hussein Bin Ali, the Sharif of Mecca, and Sir Henry McMahon, the British High Commissioner in Egypt, concerning the future political status of the Arabs under Ottoman rule. The British High Commissioner promised that if the Arabs fought alongside the British against the Ottomans, thus debilitating their empire, the United Kingdom would recognize Arab independence and support the creation of an Arab nation in the Levant and Gulf regions. Yet in the aftermath of World War I, Arabs did not enjoy the right to self-determination as they were promised. Instead, the Arab world was divided into mandates, with the French exercising power over Lebanon and Syria, and the British controlling Palestine, Transjordan and Egypt. Although the mandate period was relatively short, lasting between twenty and thirty years, this period has had serious and far-reaching consequences for the Arab world. The most significant result of this period was the creation of the state of Israel, the Arab-Israeli War of 1948, and subsequently, the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, many of whom migrated to other Arab countries. In the aftermath of the mandate period, every Arab nation struggled with the lasting effects of colonialism and the right to self-determination. Yet it was the Palestinians, forced from their land and marginalized in their own society, who became the embodiment of the consequences of imperialism in the region. The nationalist activism of the Palestinian refugee population and the increasing military power of Palestinian guerilla organizations in the 1960s and 70s caused many other marginalized groups in the Arab world to address the lasting effects of colonialism in their own societies, and at the same time, threatened other groups whose power depended on lasting imperialist structures.

Like many other countries in the Middle East, Lebanon has struggled with the enduring effects of colonization, from both the Ottoman and French mandate periods. Since the Ottoman period and even earlier, Lebanon has been home to a variety of religious sects and religious communities. Under Ottoman rule, these communities had little to no contact with one another, as they were relatively isolated due to the geography and politics of the region. In addition, under the Ottoman millet system, religious communities governed themselves, further contributing to the lack of interaction between sects. Although contact and conflict between these communities occurred occasionally, it wasn't until the French mandate period that they were forced to interact with one another as part of the newly defined nation of Lebanon. It was during this period that certain sects gained privilege over others and deep-seated tensions developed. By the time of Lebanese independence in 1943, the Maronite Christians were well-established as the dominant religious group in Lebanon. Other sects such as the Sunni Muslims, the Druze and the Greek Orthodox Christians, although not nearly as powerful as the Maronites, had political power and status in Lebanese society as well. The Shiites, by far the most socio-economically disadvantaged community in Lebanon, remained politically inactive until the early 1960s, and had little status or power in Lebanese society. Out of this system of government and power developed a unique political climate in the years following independence. Lebanese society became politically divided, with the Maronite Christians dominating the political far right, interested in maintaining the current system, and the political far left, composed of a variety of religious groups, namely Sunnis, Druze and Greek Orthodox, interested in political and social change. The sectarianism and political polarization of Lebanon would be further exacerbated by the politicization of the Palestinian refugee population and the increasing militancy of the PLO and Palestinian guerilla organizations in the following decades.

The unique system of sectarianism and political divide that developed in Lebanon in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was immensely influenced by the development of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the politicization of the large Palestinian refugee population within its borders. During their initial resettlement in Lebanon, Palestinian refugees did not concern themselves with Lebanese politics, focusing more on their own plight and the goal of returning to their homeland. Yet, as time went on and they began to realize that recovery of their native Palestine was not easily or quickly achievable, Palestinians in Lebanon became more overtly involved in nationalist activism. Beginning in the early 1960s, with the creation of the Palestinian Liberation Organization and other Palestinian political organizations, Palestinians across the Arab world gained the means to fight for their right to nation and homeland. In Lebanon, the increasing power of the PLO and the emergence of militant Palestinian guerilla organizations had a divisive effect on an already fragmented society. Their devotion to their cause and their refusal to accept permanent refugee status ignited similarly radical sentiments in some sectors of Lebanese society, and fearful opposition to such sentiments in others.

The presence of the PLO and other militant Palestinian organizations in Lebanon beginning in the 1960s affected religious and political groups in different ways. For the Maronite Christians, these organizations and their increasing guerilla activity against the state of Israel posed a threat to the delicate political and social system that allowed for their privileged status and authority. Other groups, such as the political left and the Shiites, viewed Maronite hegemony in Lebanon as a significant and lasting effect of the French colonial period. They related easily to the goals of Palestinian nationalism because they too felt disadvantaged and under-represented in their own society. Palestinians' revolutionary dedication to their cause prompted leftist political parties to fight all the more zealously to achieve their own political objectives. The left also saw

the increasing political and military power of Palestinian organizations in Lebanon as a way to disrupt a system of government that had its foundations in the system established during the French mandate period. The Shiites were by far the most sympathetic to the Palestinian plight. Not only did they share close ties with Palestinians during the pre-mandate period, but in the years following their exodus from Palestine, the majority of Palestinian refugees settled in Shiite-dominated south Lebanon. The Shiites lived in close proximity to the Palestinians, developing compassion for them and empathizing with their poverty and lack of status in Lebanese society. In the 1960s and 70s, when Israeli clashes with Palestinian guerillas in the south increased in frequency, Shiite and Palestinian communities alike were disrupted by the violence. Additionally, as Shiites in Lebanon became increasingly politically inclined beginning in the 1960s, they too supported the PLO and the Palestinian guerilla organizations in the hopes that their increasing military activity in and from Lebanon would destabilize its fragile political system and allow for political and social change.

The politicization of the Palestinian refugee population and the rising political and military power of the PLO and Palestinian guerilla organizations in Lebanon in the 1960s and 70s increased tensions in a religiously and politically divided society. The political and military activity of the guerilla organizations prompted certain sectors of Lebanese society to work harder towards the eradication of lasting imperialist structures in their own society, while others fought to minimize Palestinian influence in Lebanon and maintain the existing system of government. The result was a conflict, the intensity of which had not before been reached by internal political strife and sectarian divisions alone. The Lebanese Civil War, which began on April 13, 1975, lasted for fifteen years and resulted in hundreds of thousands of fatalities. Hundreds of thousands more were internally displaced in Lebanon or fled the country altogether. The effects of the war



can still be seen in Lebanese society today, more than twenty years later. The country still has not completely recovered from the immense violence and destruction that it witnessed between 1975 and 1990. The essential role of the PLO and the Palestinian guerilla organizations in the outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War has demonstrated the far-reaching consequences, not only of imperialism in Palestine and the Palestinian struggle for self-determination, but of imperialism and the need for adequate political representation for all religious and political groups throughout the Arab world.

## **Sectarianism and the Internal Politics of Lebanon**

Lebanon, like many areas of the Middle East, has always been a place of great diversity, particularly religious diversity. Perhaps because of this religious diversity it has also been characterized as a deeply divided society. Yet, for much of Lebanon's history, both before its independence and after, different religious communities were able to live alongside one another in relative peace. Over time, Lebanon became a complicated mosaic of religious communities. Interactions between religious sects evolved throughout the years to reflect outside influence and the changing politics of the region. However, before 1975, when clashes took place between religious sects, they were contained and were most often produced by the manipulation of foreign powers. This is evidenced by the fact that smaller conflicts did occur – under the Ottoman Empire, the French mandate, and after independence in 1943 – but never escalated to the point of full-scale war until 1975. Sectarianism created the climate that made such a war possible, but alone did not instigate it. Thus, sectarianism was necessary but not sufficient to cause the outbreak civil war in 1975.

The significance of religious affiliation and distinct religious communities in Lebanese society dates back to the Ottoman period under the millet system, where communities within Lebanon were organized by religion and were permitted to govern themselves. Because Lebanese society was divided into confessional communities, religious communitarian identification became increasingly important (Picard 10). As Petran explains,

In the Ottoman Empire these communities became “states within a state.” Each community (known as a millet) was self-contained, with its own schools, personal status laws, courts, taxes, levies, and so on; the patriarch of each community collected the only tax owed the central government, the capitation tax. Ruling without interference from Ottoman authorities, patriarchs acquired over their co-religionists absolute social and political power (14).

Under such a system, religious communities were separate from one another and had little need to interact, and the communities within Lebanon were able, for the most part, to coexist. This began to change, however, as early as the end of the eighteenth century, when European powers began to use the idea of protection of non-Muslim communities as a basis for colonial penetration (Petran 14). France “protected” the Maronites, Austria the Greek Catholics, Russia the Greek Orthodox Christians, and England the Jews and the Druze. The bonds between the European powers and the sectarian leaders disrupted the coexistence of these minority communities with one another, with the Sunni Muslim majority, and with the Ottoman authorities (Petran 14).

The tension that the colonial protectorates caused between different religious minority groups was intensified on Mount Lebanon between the two most prominent sects – the Maronites and the Druze – when in 1843, the Ottomans divided the area into two districts, appointing a Maronite leader of one district and a Druze leader of the other (Vocke 9). In 1860, Maronite peasants rebelled against their Druze leader, inciting a conflict that resulted in the massacre of Maronite Christians on Mount Lebanon by the Druze (Petran 15). Subsequently, France, as protector of the Maronites, intervened, pursuing Druze forces into the Bekaa valley (Vocke 10). At that point, Mount Lebanon’s transformation into a “Christian entity” under European protection began. A colonial cooperative called the Special Regime was imposed upon Mount Lebanon in order to protect the Maronites from the Druze and the Ottoman officials (Petran 26). The Maronites on Mount Lebanon experienced certain privileges, such as exemption from military service, and were incorporated into the world capitalist market via the French. In addition, the Special Regime abolished the power of the ruling Druze feudal families, establishing an administrative council dominated by Maronites (Petran 26-27). The other

religious groups on Mount Lebanon – the Druze, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholics and the Shiites – were underrepresented on this council, solidifying Maronite authority over the region.

Although the Ottoman millet system separated communities by religion and placed religion at the center of government, politics and society, the sects within Lebanon coexisted relatively peacefully for much of the later part of the Ottoman rule. It was only when European powers began to interfere in the region that conflict arose between the differing religious communities. Even then, clashes never escalated beyond that of the conflict in 1860, which, although bloody, was resolved relatively quickly, lasting less than a year. By the end of the Ottoman period, the Maronites, with the help of the French, had become the dominant sect on Mount Lebanon. This Maronite dominance provided the basis for further preferential treatment under the French mandate, helping to lay the foundation for future sectarianism in Lebanon.

When the Ottoman Empire collapsed in 1918 after approximately four hundred years of rule, the French established a mandate over Greater Lebanon, which was demarcated for the first time and included Mount Lebanon, as well as land that had previously been considered part of Syria. During the rule of the French mandate, the religious leader of each sect became the official spokesman and governmental representative of the community. In addition, public posts and seats in the parliament of this new Lebanese republic were allotted on a sectarian basis, solidifying the system of sectarianism in government (Petran 30). Although each religious group had a representative in the government, it was clear during this period that the Maronites continued to receive the same preferential treatment that had been established under the Special Regime. The French were, in essence, using the Maronite community to assert their control, as the Maronites had always been closely linked to France and were most likely to act in France's best interest (Petran 16). In addition, a rivalry emerged between the Maronites and the Sunni

Muslims – two groups who had had little interaction before the creation of the state of Lebanon under the mandate (el-Khazen 37). The Maronites were the favored religious group and the majority on Mount Lebanon, but the Sunnis were the majority in Greater Syria, and were a significant religious group in Lebanon as well. Relations between the two groups were put to the test, and as el-Khazen says,

This was an unprecedented development and an equally unprecedented experiment at communal and political coexistence. For the two groups had not only divergent political outlooks, but also a radically different historical development both as rulers and ruled (37).

This rivalry between the Maronites and the Sunnis would appear again during the development of certain political parties in the years following Lebanese independence. When the French mandate came to an end in 1943, its governmental structures persisted, becoming the basis for the Lebanese system of government that lasted until the civil war.

Following Lebanese independence in 1943, an unwritten agreement was brokered between Maronite President Bishara al-Khoury and his Sunni Prime Minister Riyad al-Sulh, which would determine the political structure of Lebanon until the outbreak of the civil war in 1975. This agreement, called the National Pact, mandated that the president of Lebanon be Maronite, the prime minister be Sunni, the president of the National Assembly be Shiite, the deputy speaker of Parliament and the deputy prime minister be Greek Orthodox, the chief of staff be Druze, and that the ratio of Christians to Muslims in Parliament be 6:5. The allocation of these government positions was based on the population percentages calculated in the 1932 census (Ziser 58). In addition, the National Pact set out to establish Lebanon as a sovereign Arab nation. Al-Khoury, a Maronite with Western ties, and al-Sulh, a Sunni and known Arab nationalist, attempted to make compromises on behalf of their respective sects, which were, at

the time, the largest and most powerful religious groups. These compromises allowed for Lebanon to maintain ties with the West, but would not permit it to be used as a tool for further Western permeation and manipulation of the Middle East (Ziser 59). In addition, Lebanon was to remain independent from but cooperate with the rest of the Arab world. This meant that the Maronite population was not to seek Western intervention in Lebanese affairs, and Arab nationalists like al-Sulh, many of whom were Sunnis, were not to attempt to unite Lebanon with Syria or the rest of the Arab world. The intent of the National Pact was to unite the various religious sects in Lebanon, but at the same time recognize them as distinct. It created a unique Lebanese identity and attempted to establish a kind of communal balance. As Ziser says,

It combined political traditions which had prevailed in Mt. Lebanon and, more generally speaking, in the Ottoman Empire as a whole with characteristics of the modern, independent state – first and foremost the parliamentary system (58).

In this way, the National Pact seemed to be an ideal combination of the traditions of the past and the objectives of modern democracy, as well as a compromise between the political aspirations of the most prominent religious sects.

In the early years of the new independent Lebanese state, the complexity of Lebanese society became apparent in the growth of the major political parties, some of which developed along sectarian lines, but many of which represented the interests of multiple religious factions and developed out of secular ideals. The development of these political parties created the polarization of Lebanese society into two camps – the rightist and the leftist camps (Haley and Snider 4). The right was dominated by the Maronites, the major party being al-Kata'ib, led by Pierre Gemayel, and later the Free Nationalists or the National Liberal Party led by Camille Chamoun and established in 1958. The left encompassed many religious groups, notably the Druze, the Sunnis, and the Greek Orthodox Christians, and parties on this end of the political

spectrum tended to assert secular agendas. The major leftist parties were the Progressive Socialist Party, headed by the Druze leader Kamal Jumblatt, the Syrian Social Nationalist Party, founded and led by Antun Saadeh, a Greek Orthodox Christian, the Lebanese Communist Party, largely supported by the Greek Orthodox community, and the Arab Nationalist Movement, which was mainly comprised of Sunni Muslims (Haley and Snider 4). Although the rightist camp was dominated by Maronite Christians and the left by Druze, Sunnis and Greek Orthodox Christians, political divide represented more than religion. Many Muslim leaders and even some Arab nationalist parties supported the right at certain times, while a significant number of Lebanese Christians from a variety of sects supported the left (Haley and Snider 5). So while sectarianism did play a role in the development of these political parties, religion was not necessarily the dividing factor. Instead, the right came to represent those who sought to maintain the status quo, mostly the Maronite Christians who had acquired an elevated political and economic status, and the left came to represent those who sought to change the existing order (Haley and Snider 5).

The major political parties of the rightist camp – al-Kata'ib and the National Liberal Party – were established by Maronite leaders with Lebanese, and in particular Christian Lebanese, national sentiments, who sought to protect the status of Maronites in Lebanon. The Kata'ib party was founded in 1936 by Pierre Gemayel, who had participated in the 1936 Olympics in Berlin and had been impressed by the Hitler Youth and other paramilitary organizations in Europe which emphasized devotion to “God, Fatherland, and Family” (Petran 42). He returned to Lebanon and established al-Kata'ib in order to promote Lebanese nationalism. Al-Kata'ib claimed to be nonsectarian, however, its members and its officials were overwhelmingly Maronite Catholic and its political positions were the same as those advocated

by the Maronite community. “The Kataeb’s driving force has come from its promise to maintain this relatively privileged status, which was translated in the Kataeb lexicon into an inherent right integral to Christian security,” (Petran 43). The National Liberal Party, founded by Camille Chamoun at the end of his presidency, came to represent Lebanese nationalist and Maronite agendas similar to those of al-Kata’ib (Haley and Snider 33). The Maronites, although a large group in Lebanon, represented a minority in Greater Syria, which was dominated by Sunni Muslims (Abul-Husn 57). For this reason, assertion of Lebanese nationalism and the importance of maintaining the status quo that allowed for Maronite authority in Lebanon became one of the most important agendas of the rightist parties. As Charles Malik says,

The Christians of Lebanon cherish their freedom; they cherish their own mastery over themselves and over their destiny...In the rule of numbers they will soon be in the minority and that is what instills fears in their hearts (cited in Haley and Snyder 6).

For this reason the rightist political parties sought to maintain the political and governmental structures that would ensure Maronite power and security in Lebanon.

Unlike the rightist parties, dominated by the Maronite Christians, the major political parties of the left represented more of a variety of religious and sectarian groups. One of the first major leftist parties, the Syrian Social Nationalist Party, emerged in 1932, before Lebanese independence. The SSNP was founded by Antun Saadeh, a Greek Orthodox Christian who advocated for Syrian nationalism and the incorporation of Lebanon into Greater Syria (Petran 41). In addition, the party emphasized secularism and represented the interests of the middle and lower classes of rural Lebanon. Petran speaks of the party’s political agenda, saying,

This mission, especially its emphasis on secularism, articulated the orientation of a community – the Greek Orthodox – based in the context of geographic Syria and hence destined to permanent coexistence with a Muslim majority. Its anti-feudalist program accorded with the needs and hopes of rural middle and lower-middle strata that came to make up the bulk of Saadeh’s following (41).



In this way the party attracted a following that was religiously diverse, comprised mostly of Greek Orthodox and Sunnis, all of whom advocated for Syrian nationalism.

The next major leftist political party, the Arab Nationalist Movement, emerged after the end of World War II and in response to the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. This group, comprised mostly of Lebanese Muslims, the majority of whom were Sunni, and some Christians, emphasized pan-Arab ideals and the prospect of a unified Arab nation. Later with the rise of Gamal Abdel Nasser, the Arab Nationalist Movement allied with the Nasserites (Petran 46). Around the same time was the establishment of the Lebanese Communist Party (CPL), which drew most of its support from the Greek Orthodox community. The CPL focused on social problems within Lebanon and advocated for political reform and social awareness (Petran 46). The Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) emerged at this time also, founded by Druze leader Kamal Jumblat. The PSP and Jumblat put forth an agenda of progressivism and socialism as a means of social reform and in an effort to guarantee basic rights for the citizens of Lebanon (Petran 47). He was not opposed to the idea of Arab nationalism, but he saw Lebanese unity as a more important objective. Although the PSP was a product of the Druze community, it also attracted followers from other religious groups (Petran 48). What all of these leftist political groups had in common was the goal of social and political reform in Lebanon, as they were unhappy with the established political and governmental system and its ramifications in Lebanese society.

In the 1950s, the polarization of Lebanese society into the rightist and leftist camps was intensified by changing political regimes in neighboring Arab countries. With the rise of Gamal Abdel Nasser in Egypt and of Ba'athism in Syria and Iraq, Arab nationalism and pan-Arab movements were gaining strength throughout the Arab world. In the 1950s, many of the political parties on the left, some of which had previously advocated for Arab nationalism, began to

support Nasser and his pan-Arab agenda. Meanwhile, the Maronite-dominated parties on the right vehemently resisted the movement, fighting to maintain the current political structure in Lebanon (el-Khazen 105). In addition, the Suez War of 1956 caused a political split in Lebanon into pro-Western and anti-Western camps, the former mainly supported by the right and the later by the left (Petran 48). President Camille Chamoun, a right-wing Maronite, refused to break ties with the Western powers that had attacked Egypt during the war, angering Nasser and his supporters in Lebanon. Chamoun angered many Lebanese leftists further when it seemed as though he might join the Baghdad Pact, the agreement between pro-Western, anti-Soviet Middle Eastern regimes that was in opposition to the aspirations of pan-Arabism in Syria and Egypt (el-Khazen 104).

The tension between the largely pro-Nasser left and the supporters of Chamoun on the right came to a head in 1958, during what was later referred to as the 1958 crisis. In February of 1958, Syria and Egypt united under the rule of Gamal Abdel-Nasser to form the United Arab Republic, which was seen as an important step towards the formation of an Arab nation. The creation of the United Arab Republic “produced a heady climate of ascendant Arab nationalism among many Lebanese who were deeply offended by Chamoun’s now open anti-Nasserism,” (Petran 50). Meanwhile, President Chamoun’s lack of support for Egypt during the Suez crisis and his acceptance of the Eisenhower Doctrine were seen by many on the left as violating the neutral foreign policy agreed upon in the National Pact (Petran 50). In July of 1958, a rebellion against President Chamoun was staged. The rebels were comprised mainly of peasants, villagers, lower-middle class workers, progressives, and intellectuals (Petran 50). In light of the revolt, President Chamoun solicited the help of Maronite Christian militias, most notably the Kata’ib. The participation of these militias “gave the conflict a sectarian coloring, enhanced by Chamoun

himself, who realized he faced strong opposition and sought to incite Maronite fears that Christian Lebanon's independence was at stake," (Petran 51). In addition, Chamoun appealed to the United Nations Security Council for assistance, and the United States, under President Eisenhower, intervened to intimidate and quell the opposition. The United States withdrew soon after the independence and territorial integrity of Lebanon had been secured (Salibi 2).

The polarization of Lebanese society into rightist and leftist camps in the years following independence and during the changing regimes of the 1950s combined an element of sectarianism with diverging political ideologies to create a divide within Lebanese society. Yet the resulting conflict, the 1958 crisis, proved to be a well-contained struggle which was almost immediately quelled. In addition, the crisis was largely the result of the manipulation and influence of outside powers, with Egypt and Syria under the rule of Nasser affecting the political left, and the agenda of the Western powers affecting the right. Once again sectarian and political conflict was resolved before it had a chance to escalate to the point of civil war.

During the post-independence period of political polarization in Lebanon, the Shiites, members of one of the country's most important religious communities, were virtually absent from the political arena. This began to change in the 1960s, however, due to the presence of Palestinian refugees in the Shiite-dominated south, and the subsequent politicization of the Shiite community. The Shiites in Lebanon have always been a marginalized and often persecuted religious group. Under the Ottoman Empire they were not recognized by the Sunni rulers as a distinct religious sect, unlike the Christians or the Druze. They were therefore unable to govern themselves as a separate community under the millet system. During the French mandate, they continued to be neglected. As Abul-Husn says,

They were marginalized by their lifestyle and political culture, as well as by the neglect of the central government. They were basically a peasant society characterized by little social mobility...the Shiites were poor, exploited rural peasants; they were underrepresented politically and were the least-educated group in Lebanese society (37).

After Lebanese independence in 1943 and the establishment of the National Pact, the Shiites were finally incorporated into the system of government, yet they maintained their own separate culture and communalism. "Memories of persecution and suffering would not be abandoned in favor of the new national status, which offered little in the way of real material improvement," (Abul-Husn 38). They continued to live in poverty and without adequate education, as they did not possess the kinds of educational and social institutions that other religious communities had (el-Khazen 42). In addition, the Shiites remained politically isolated from the rest of Lebanese society, failing to identify with the Arab nationalist sentiments of the Sunnis and the Druze in the 1950s and 60s, and unable to relate to the concerns of the prosperous, elitist Maronite population.

The Shiite community in Lebanon was further influenced by the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, which created an influx of Palestinian refugees, many of whom settled in Shiite-dominated southern Lebanon. With the arrival of Palestinian refugees in the south, came Israeli incursions and violations of Lebanese territory aimed at the Palestinians. These incursions resulted in Shiite casualties and damage to Shiite communities, and in turn threatened their traditional lifestyles, prompting many to move to Beirut. Subsequently,

Three particular areas near Beirut quickly became transformed into vast Shiite-dominated suburb-slums. These areas of the city became the spawning grounds for activist political movements: first, the Communists and the Baathists, and later the Hezbollah and the Amal Movement (Abul-Husn 38).

The movement of many Shiites to the outskirts of Beirut incited the emergence of political mobilization and activism within the Shiite community. It was in the 1960s that this Shiite political mobilization began to materialize with force.

The political development that followed the migration of many Shiites to the suburbs of Beirut began in the 1960s with the social transformation of the Shiite community. At this time Shiite emigrant wealth began to have more of a visible impact on the community, educational levels were rising, and there was increased social mobility among the Shiite population (el-Khazen 42). In addition, political transformation began to occur as the traditional Shiite leadership became increasingly isolated from the rest of the community and failed to accurately represent the interests of the masses. In 1967 the Muslim Shia Higher Council was established to counter the feeling of Sunni dominance and hegemony over Shiite affairs which had been prevalent since the Ottoman period (el-Khazen 43). In this way the Shiite community finally gained a sense of influence and autonomy which other religious groups, primarily the Maronites, Sunnis and Druze, had enjoyed long before.

The most important source of political change, however, was the rise of a new Shiite leadership, beginning in the 1960s, with the influential Imam Musa al-Sadr at the forefront. Sadr worked to mobilize the Shiite community, to allow them to voice their concerns and change the status quo within an unequal and skewed political system (Abul-Husn 38). El-Khazen discusses his political influence, saying,

Sadr captured the social and political realities of his community and brandished a new and powerful political weapon: that of the deprived, al-mahrumin. The symbolism of al-mahrumin was an unprecedented 'unifying factor' for 'all the Shia', drawn from all social backgrounds... Empowered by the demographic expansion of the community and by regional disparities between the areas of the centre and those of the periphery, the issue of the deprived came to constitute the political platform of Shia communal politics in the 1970s (43).

In essence, Sadr used the disadvantaged political and socioeconomic position of the Shiite community to incite political movement and change. His influence altered the political landscape of Lebanon and laid the groundwork for the establishment of future Shiite political movements

such as Amal and Hezbollah in the 1970s and 80s. The increasing influence of figures such as Sadr and the political mobilization of the Shiite community created a highly destabilizing effect which further complicated the sectarian and political climates in Lebanon.

The sectarianism and the diverging political ideologies that developed in Lebanon from the Ottoman era to the post-independence period created an immensely complicated social and political environment in Lebanon in the years preceding the civil war. Yet it is important to note that alone, these factors would not have caused the outbreak of the war. This notion is supported by the fact that prior to 1975, clashes had occurred as a result of religious sectarian strife and conflicting political beliefs, but had never resulted in the enduring destruction and devastating violence of civil war. Sectarianism and the complicated political environment that it helped produce were necessary in creating the social and political climate that made the war in 1975 possible, however these elements in themselves were not sufficient to cause such a conflict.

## **The Development of Palestinian Militancy in Lebanon and its Effects on Lebanese Society**

The establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 and the subsequent war between Israel and its Arab neighbors has drastically affected the politics of the region in more ways than one. Probably the most important consequence of the creation of Israel and the 1948 Arab-Israeli War was the displacement of native Palestinians who either left as a result of the war or were forced from their land. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees fled from their homes and settled in neighboring Arab countries, namely Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. The presence and endurance of the Palestinians in Lebanon has been a particularly controversial issue since their resettlement, primarily in southern Lebanon, beginning in 1948. Refugee presence altered the country's already fragile social and political dynamics. This was further exacerbated by the events of the mid to late 1960s and early 1970s, with the establishment of the Palestinian Liberation Organization in 1964 and its rise to power in Lebanon in the years leading up to the civil war in 1975. The outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War in 1975 was the result of a combination of factors including sectarianism, political dynamics and divide, and outside influences, particularly the influence of the Palestinians. However, the growing military power of the Palestinians in Lebanon beginning in the late 1960s, and the emergence of Palestinian autonomy and military capability within the state of Lebanon following the Cairo Agreement in 1969 were the catalysts that set the war in motion.

During the Nakba, or "catastrophe" in which 780,000 Palestinians were forced or fled from the new state of Israel, approximately 200,000 refugees relocated to Lebanon (Abul-Husn 43). Throughout the mandate period, despite the demarcation of borders separating them from

one another for the first time, southern Lebanon and northern Palestine had maintained intimate social and economic relations. In the wake of the establishment of the state of Israel, because of these social and economic ties, most Palestinians of the northern Galilee region decided to resettle in southern Lebanon following their 1948 exodus. Also for this reason, the people of southern Lebanon were deeply sympathetic to the Palestinians and many made an effort to aid and shelter refugees (Siklawi 598). During their initial resettlement, the majority of the 1948 refugees were placed in refugee camps in the south that had been established in 1935 under the French mandate to accommodate Turkish and Armenian refugees. These camps were meant to be temporary, but became permanent for some, while others were transferred to camps across Lebanon beginning in 1950 and under the administration of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) (Haley and Snider 24-25). The large Palestinian refugee presence in Shiite-dominated southern Lebanon and the tendency of the Shiite population to identify with the refugees would significantly affect Shiite politics in Lebanon and the political mobilization of the Shiite community in later years.

When Palestinians arrived in Lebanon, the Lebanese government classified them by sect and class. Christian Palestinians gained Lebanese citizenship easily. During the presidency of Camille Chamoun in the 1950s, backed by other Maronite leaders, the majority of Christian Palestinians achieved naturalization (Siklawi 599). Middle class Muslims could also obtain Lebanese citizenship relatively easily if they had last names with Lebanese roots, or through the act of hiring and paying a lawyer. In general, middle class Palestinians were able to settle in Lebanon freely, and could obtain employment and civil rights much more easily than the majority of Palestinians who were members of the lower classes (Siklawi 599). Palestinians of the lower classes were unable to obtain Lebanese citizenship. Abul-Husn describes the failure of



the Lebanese and other Arab governments to grant citizenship to the majority of Palestinians, saying, “The Arab host countries denied the Palestinians legal assimilation on the grounds that permanent integration in the receiving states would compromise the ultimate aim of return to their homeland,” (Abul-Husn 43). In addition, “Local laws give Lebanon’s Palestinians a raw deal, reflecting fears that assimilating them could upset Lebanon’s own delicate sectarian balance, since they are overwhelmingly Sunni Muslim,” (“A History of the Hapless: Palestinians in Lebanon”). Accepting such a large group of Sunni refugees would have upset the fragile political and sectarian balance, threatening Maronite power and hegemony in Lebanon.

Denied citizenship, many Palestinian refugees lived on the land granted to them by the Lebanese government. This land, located not only in the rural south but also near major Lebanese cities such as Beirut, Tripoli, Sidon, and Tyre, in the agricultural and industrial areas, became the basis of the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. Most of the refugees living in the camps worked the land, providing cheap agricultural labor to local factories and industrial areas (Siklawi 599). Palestinian refugees living in the camps in Lebanon lived in harsh conditions with little to no civil rights.

They have no right to own property and no right to state schooling or medical care. They are banned from white-collar professions, and even from many unskilled jobs. A Palestinian may own a taxi, for example, but cannot legally drive it (“A History of the Hapless: Palestinians in Lebanon”).

Palestinian refugees living in the camps were essentially confined to menial jobs where they were exploited and received less than minimum wage. They were physically and socially excluded from the rest of Lebanese society, and as a result, began to develop their own social and cultural, and, beginning in the early 1960s, political institutions (Abul-Husn 43). The poverty that most of these refugees faced, coupled with their separation from the rest of

Lebanese society, provided the fodder for the future political mobilization and activism that emerged from the refugee camps.

During their initial resettlement in Lebanon, most Palestinians tried to stay out of Lebanese politics, focusing primarily on their own political and social issues. Yet their experience as refugees in Lebanon in the years following the Nakba had a significant impact on their social and political life, and with the establishment of the PLO in 1964, their self-awareness and political activism began to develop (Siklawi 600). In the early 1960s, a group of Palestinian activists began to emerge across the Arab world. These included Yasir Arafat, Salah Khalaf, Khalil al-Wazir, Faruq al-Qaddumi, Khalid al-Hassan, and other members of the emerging organization Fateh, which came to represent Palestinian objectives in the Arab world and became one of the most influential Palestinian organizations (el-Khazen 134). The Lebanese branch of Fateh, called *Filastinuna*, had its base in Beirut. The goal of this organization was to take back Palestine by means of an armed struggle (el-Khazen 134). Yet, despite the emergence of Fateh, and other Palestinian organizations, many Palestinians looked to outside leaders, namely Gamal Abd al-Nasser of Egypt, to champion their cause. The rise of Nasser and his ideas of Arab nationalism gave them hope for an Arab nation and the recovery of Palestine, and impacted their increasing political activity. Petran describes this, saying,

Initially paralyzed by the trauma of their uprooting, the refugees were electrified in turn by Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal, the 1957 U.S.-dictated Israeli withdrawal from Sinai, and the 1958 Egyptian-Syrian union. Many placed their hopes for recovery of Palestine on Nasser's Arab nationalism (Petran 76-77).

Many Palestinians believed that if Nasser succeeded in uniting the Arab world, Palestine would be regained by the Arabs and their national home would be restored. Yet in 1961 with the disintegration of the United Arab Republic, Palestinians lost hope in Nasser and his ability to

recover their homeland. It was at this time that Palestinians and Arab nationalists began to realize that a unified Arab nation was not easily achievable (el-Khazen 134). For Palestinians, this realization meant that they also could not rely on outside assistance from other Arab countries if they were ever to reclaim Palestine. Thus Palestinian political movements began to gain strength and numbers across the Arab world.

At the first Arab Summit Conference in Cairo in January 1964 the Arab governments, Lebanon included, “formally recognized the Palestinians’ right to organize and fight to liberate their land” (Petran 77). They authorized the formation of the Palestinian Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Liberation Army. However, although the Lebanese government representatives consented to the establishment of the PLO and the PLA, they insisted that the PLA have no bases or training camps in Lebanon. In addition, any Palestinian living in Lebanon who decided to become a member of the PLA would not be allowed to return to Lebanon (Petran 78). The participating Arab countries agreed upon Lebanon’s conditions because of Lebanon’s delicate political structure (el-Khazen 136). Although prohibited from doing so, Fateh began organizing and establishing secret cells in Lebanon in 1965, as it did in all Arab countries with large Palestinian refugee populations. On January 1, 1965, al-Fatah (the Palestine National Liberation Movement) made its first raid into Israel. “For Palestinians in Lebanese camps this date became the day ‘the revolution issued’ ... al-Fatah appeared to offer Palestinians a chance to take their future into their own hands, and so acquire a political existence,” (Petran 78). Palestinians across the Arab world were ignited with new hope for the recovery of Palestine, and saw groups like Fateh and the PLO as the means to achieve their redemption.

At the same time as Palestinians were beginning to assert their political identity and agenda in the Arab world, social tension was brewing in Lebanon. In May of 1961, a report was

conducted called the Institut de Recherche et de Formation en vue du Developpement (IRFED), which found that there was a substantial disparity between the living conditions in Beirut and the living conditions on Mount Lebanon (Petran 79). Mount Lebanon, predominantly inhabited by Maronite Christians, was significantly more affluent and enjoyed significantly better living conditions than those residing in and around Beirut. As mentioned earlier in chapter 1, with the influx of Palestinian refugees to southern Lebanon and subsequent Israeli incursions, many Shiites were forced to flee to Beirut to avoid further casualties and damage to their communities. These Shiites, many of whom were humble rural farmers, settled in the impoverished outskirts of Beirut. Likewise, many Palestinian refugee camps were located in the outskirts of Beirut, as they first appeared there after 1950 and the relocation of Palestinians to rural areas just outside major Lebanese cities (Siklawi 599). Beirut and its surrounding territories became home to many underprivileged and impoverished communities like the Shiites, the Palestinians, and other marginalized minorities such as the Kurds, providing a stark contrast to the prosperous Mount Lebanon.

With these findings came a new wave of social activism in the wake of Nasser's attempts at socialist reform and the break-up of the UAR, led by the political left and in particular by Kamal Jumblatt and his Progressive Socialist Party, the Communist Party of Lebanon, and the Arab nationalist movement (Petran 80). In turn, al-Kata'ib and its Maronite leaders attempted to maintain the status quo at all costs. Rather than recognizing the economic disparities between Beirut and Mount Lebanon and working towards socioeconomic change, al-Kata'ib and other rightists attempted to rid Beirut of the unsightly poverty that surrounded the city. In response to urban migration and the emergence of poor squatter communities on the outskirts of Beirut, al-Kata'ib demanded that these communities be removed or destroyed. Since the Maronite Church

owns much of the land in and around Beirut, the Lebanese government conceded, but also authorized the rebuilding of these communities, ultimately pleasing neither the left nor the right (Petran 80). In these years leading up to the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, tensions between the political far left and the far right arose in Lebanese society once again.

In June of 1967 conflict erupted once again between the state of Israel and its Arab neighbors of Syria, Egypt, and Jordan. Although Lebanon was not directly involved in the fighting, the 1967 war still had serious implications for the Lebanese. Those living in the south, mainly Shiites and Palestinian refugees, were particularly affected by the war, having experienced Israeli raids and other Israeli violations of Lebanese territory. The Lebanese Shiites and the Palestinian refugees seemed to share a common experience, as both groups suffered at the hands of the Israelis, who often destroyed their homes or kidnapped their loved ones (Petran 89). The common suffering of these two groups would prove important in the years following the war, when the Palestinian question would begin to create an even bigger divide in the Lebanese political arena. The most important consequence of the 1967 war, however, was the complete and utter defeat of the Arab countries by Israel. Additionally, the Arab governments were forced to surrender and to accept Israeli terms and the new Israeli borders. As Petran says,

The failure of the Arab governments to achieve any Israeli withdrawal whatsoever by diplomatic means radicalized the popular classes in all eastern Arab countries. The result was that, on the one hand, only the Palestinian resistance was left to carry on the national liberation war, and on the other, the conflict became to an important degree an internal class conflict in each Arab country. This was especially true in Lebanon (Petran 91).

With the defeat of Syria, Egypt and Jordan, Palestinians abandoned once and for all the ideals of pan-Arab politics that they had once put so much faith in. In addition, the 1967 defeat discredited the leadership and abilities of Ahmad Shukeiri, the first chairman of the PLO. Following the 1967 war, Ahmad Shukeiri was forced to step down, and the PLO was taken over by Palestinian

guerilla organizations (el-Khazen 135). The PLO's change in leadership had consequences for the Arab nations that bordered Israel and had large Palestinian refugee populations. In Lebanon, this new, more militant PLO leadership began to establish secret military training bases in the Lebanese refugee camps of Rashidiyeh, 'Ayn al-Helweh, Tal-Za'tar and Borj al-Barajneh (el-Khazen 136). The establishment of these training bases was in direct violation of the parameters set forth in the first Arab Summit Conference of 1964, and they would provide the basis for future Palestinian military operations and power in Lebanon.

The 1967 war had serious political implications for Lebanon, further polarizing an already divided society. The Maronite-dominated right saw, in the aftermath of the conflict, the opportunity to declare Lebanon as a neutral state unconnected to the rest of the Arab world, and to strengthen its ties with the West. The far left on the other hand, felt it important "to revise outdated institutions, to eliminate sectarian privileges, and to allow Lebanon to assume its national responsibilities in the Arab world," (Petran 96). Beginning in 1968, support for Palestinian guerillas in Lebanon became increasingly public and vocal. Representatives of the far left saw support for the Palestinian cause in Lebanon as a means to change the status quo and disrupt a system of government that did not accurately represent the interests of all Lebanese people. Many members of the left, composed of a wide variety of religious communities, namely Sunnis, Greek Orthodox and Druze, therefore supported Palestinian guerilla activity out of Lebanon. Druze leader of the Progressive Socialist Party Kamal Jumblatt emerged as an outspoken advocate for the Palestinian cause. Prominent religious leader Mohammad 'Ali al-Juzu, Sunni mufti of Mount Lebanon, formed a committee to collect funds for the guerillas (el-Khazen 137). Members of the far left were not the only supporters of the Palestinians in Lebanon. The Shiite community, a notoriously underprivileged and politically underrepresented

group, also saw Palestinian guerilla presence in Lebanon as a way to disrupt the current system of government and power. In addition, the majority of Shiites in Lebanon felt akin to the Palestinians and sympathized with their plight. In August of 1968, Ja'far al-Sadik, a Lebanese Shia cleric, received a fatwa, or ruling, from Najaf in Iraq authorizing the use of violence by the guerilla fighters against Israel (el-Khazen 137). This support by prominent Lebanese religious and political figures encouraged the guerillas to continue their raids against Israel from Lebanese territory, violating the wishes of the Lebanese government and threatening Lebanon's current political and social system.

In the summer of 1968, the number of guerillas infiltrating from Syrian territory into the 'Arqub region in south Lebanon was increasing. As a result, conflict began to occur between the guerillas and the Lebanese army, under the control of the Maronite president and often seen as a military tool of the right-wing government. In addition, clashes between the guerillas and Israel increased (el-Khazen 137). On June 14, 1968, the first significant attack on Israel by the PLO from Lebanese territory was launched. In retaliation, Israel conducted its first raid into Lebanon on October 30, 1968, targeting a Fateh encampment (el-Khazen 137). At this point, for the Maronites and other members of the far right who sought to maintain the current system at all costs, the problem was not only to stop the PLO and their guerilla fighters, but also to stop the mobilization of Palestinians in refugee camps across Lebanon. The PLO had started a movement in Lebanon that was not likely to be reversed.

By October 1968, confrontations between the Lebanese army and the Palestinian guerillas were becoming more frequent. On November 16, 1968, a meeting was held between representatives from the Lebanese army and representatives from the Palestinian organizations. The Palestinian officials asserted that their intent was to attack targets in Israel only, and that in

order to do so they needed to pass through Lebanon. The Lebanese army representatives responded by reminding the Palestinians of Lebanon's armistice agreement with Israel, and prohibiting future Palestinian infiltration into Lebanon for the purpose of attacking Israel (el-Khazen 141). From the point of view of the Lebanese army, Palestinian guerilla attacks from Lebanese soil were putting Lebanese civilians at risk of Israeli attacks and jeopardizing Lebanon's armistice with Israel. Yet despite attempts to prevent such attacks, in December of 1968, Israel launched a surprise attack on Beirut airport in reaction to the military operations of Palestinian guerillas attacking from south Lebanon (Vocke 35). The majority of Lebanon's civil aviation fleet was destroyed.

This first retaliation on Lebanese territory gave a foretaste of the problems raised by the new guerilla policy of the Palestinians, who were now operating from Lebanon without the consent or even the knowledge of the Lebanese army. Yet most of the victims of the first Israeli raids were Lebanese (Vocke 36).

The actions of the PLO and the Palestinian guerillas in Lebanon had succeeded in involving the Lebanese government in a conflict that it had tried so desperately to stay out of. Not only this, but now the Palestinian issue had become one that was inextricably tied to Lebanese internal politics.

The issue of Palestinian guerilla activity and Israeli retaliations in Lebanon greatly affected the inhabitants of south Lebanon, where the majority of the action was taking place. Because the inhabitants of south Lebanon were primarily Shiite, and because the Shiite community tended to sympathize with the Palestinians, by the end of 1968, Imam Musa al-Sadr emerged as a leading advocate for the Palestinian cause (Petran 98). He, like other Shiite leaders and prominent members of the political left, also saw support for the Palestinian guerillas as a way to break Maronite right-wing hegemony in Lebanon. In other parts of the country, the



Palestinian issue led to further conflict. On November 2, 1968, there were mass student demonstrations and other pro-Palestinian protests throughout Beirut, Tripoli and Sidon led by left-wing, mainly Sunni, Druze and Greek Orthodox demonstrators. Maronite student militias responded by attacking pro-Palestinian protestors, and subsequently, counter-demonstrations were led by Kata'ib and other rightist students. The death of a student in Tripoli led to a government ban on demonstrations and a cabinet debate on calling in the army. Yet while the government decided against military force, the private militias of al-Kata'ib and Camille Chamoun's Ahrar were undergoing training and receiving arms (Petran 98-99).

Tension between the right and the Palestinians, supported by the left, came to a head in April of 1969. Early in the year, President Charles Helou made it clear that he saw the Palestinians, rather than the Israelis, as the enemy. The Internal Security Forces (ISF), the government police force, began arresting Palestinians and their leftist supporters in an effort to cut the Palestinian supply line from Syria and destroy Palestinian militancy in the south (Petran 100). In mid-April 1969, the ISF attempted to arrest a group of commandos, returning from an operation in Israel, in the southern town of Bint Jbeil. The townspeople refused to hand over the commandos and the ISF in turn bombarded the town for three days before the commandos gave themselves up. On April 15, 1969, fighting broke out between the Lebanese army and infiltrating guerillas from Syria in the southern village of Deir Mimas. In the days following, additional clashes occurred between the Lebanese army and armed Palestinians in the villages of 'Odeiseh and Khiyam, resulting in several Palestinian casualties (el-Khazen 142). These incidents sparked protests and demonstrations across Lebanon. Leftist leaders like Jumblatt and members of other progressive and socialist parties called for others to join the resistance movement. On April 23, between 10,000 and 15,000 demonstrators gathered in a Muslim quarter of Beirut to march on

the city center and were met with armed opposition by the ISF, who attacked them with tear-gas grenades and hoses of hot water (Petran 101). The unarmed protestors were then fired upon by the ISF and the army forces. Local strikes continued for days following the initial protest, and finally the government was forced to impose a state of emergency. The growing support for the Palestinians by the left was paving the way for the Cairo Agreement and the arming of the PLO in Lebanon.

The situation in Lebanon worsened in the months following the April protests of 1969. The Lebanese Army and the ISF engaged in many violent clashes with al-Fatah and al-Saiqa, the Palestinian Baathist political and military faction, in late April and early May of that year. Both Syrian President Adnan Atassi and Egyptian President Gamal Abd al-Nasser were called upon by President Helou to mediate and curtail Palestinian military activity in Lebanon. Although Nasser was ultimately successful, hostilities ceased for only a short period of time (Petran 102). In August of 1969 Israel resumed its attacks on southern Lebanon, aiming at Palestinian commandos and Palestinian refugee camps. In the same month, the Lebanese army also resumed its attacks on Palestinian refugee camps, breaking into the Nahr al-Bared camp north of Tripoli. This attack, however, was unsuccessful. The refugees fought back and the Lebanese army retreated, and, in light of their success, Palestinians in other refugee camps went on to liberate themselves from army control (Siklawi 601). In October of 1969, the Palestinian guerillas took control of the refugee camps in Lebanon, and the Lebanese army resumed its attacks on the camps. Strong protests from other Arab countries, including Syria, Iraq, Libya, Algeria, and South Yemen, ensued (Petran 103). “Nasser indicated that the events were cause for concern for Arab public opinion and called upon Helou, to opt for dialogue and help end the crisis on the grounds that Lebanon was an integral part of the Arab nation,” (el-Khazen 159). President

Nasser asserted that it was his goal to reach an agreement that would be beneficial to all parties involved. By then, because the government was losing its control over the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, President Helou agreed to President Nasser's offer for mediation.

On November 2, 1969, the Palestinian delegation, including prominent Palestinian figures such as Yasser Arafat, 'Abdul-Razzak Yahya, Yasir 'Amru, Khalid al-Yashruti, Bilal al-Hasan, Abu Iyad, and Abu Sabri, arrived in Cairo and the discussion between the Palestinians and the Lebanese government began. General Boustany of the Lebanese army was in Cairo to represent the interests of the Lebanese government, which were mainly to preserve the sovereignty of Lebanon and to maintain the delicate political balance of the Lebanese government (el-Khazen 158). The Egyptians, in particular Egyptian foreign minister Mahmoud Riad, acknowledged Lebanon's fragile political structure but also asserted that the Lebanese still ought to take part in the Palestinian cause. The Palestinians said that they wanted freedom of military and political action in Lebanon, promising not to intervene in Lebanese internal politics and to respect Lebanese sovereignty (el-Khazen 158). On November 3, 1969, an agreement was reached. Initially kept secret from the public, the terms of the agreement eventually became widespread news (Vocke 36). The Lebanese government agreed to allow the Palestinian guerillas to maintain certain fortified positions in southern Lebanon from which to attack Israel, and renounced their right to police Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. The PLO and the various Palestinian guerilla organizations promised in return to keep the Lebanese army informed about all operations from within Lebanon and agreed not to carry arms outside the Palestinian refugee camps except in certain areas agreed upon by both parties (Vocke 36). The ambiguity of the terms outlined in the agreement and the absence of clearly defined areas from which the

Palestinian guerillas could operate would create future conflict between the Palestinians and representatives of the Lebanese government.

In the Lebanese political arena, the Cairo Agreement received both support and opposition. The left, particularly Kamal Jumblatt, the Sunni political establishment, and other leftist party members and politicians, saw the Cairo Agreement as a victory, as did the majority of the Shiite community. Allowing the PLO and the Palestinian guerillas to exercise such power in Lebanon would disrupt Maronite and right-wing hegemony. For this reason, the right, particularly the Maronite community and the Kata'ib party, was outright opposed to the agreement. Other members of the right, although less outright in their opposition, still viewed the agreement with suspicion and caution (el-Khazen 164). The situation became increasingly politically charged in 1970, when the Palestinian guerillas began to expand their control over areas outside the refugee camps, seen by the right as violating the terms of the Cairo Agreement. Throughout the year of 1970, a variety of agreements were brokered between the Lebanese army and representatives from the Palestinian guerilla organizations in an effort by the Lebanese government to keep the Palestinians in check. Yet, as el-Khazen points out, "These measures, however, did not make Palestinian interpretations of the Cairo Agreement any less divergent," (el-Khazen 165-166). By the middle of 1970, soon after the brokering of the agreement, it was, in essence, void.

By 1970, the PLO and other Palestinian guerilla organizations continued deploying arms outside of the refugee camps and thus coming into conflict with the Lebanese army. In March of that year, a serious confrontation occurred between the Lebanese army and the guerillas, beginning in the Maronite town of Kahhaleh and spreading to the outskirts of Beirut (el-Khazen 189). In the aftermath of the incident, the fighting spread to other areas of Lebanon. Because the

Lebanese army was, in the eyes of the Palestinians and the left, seen as a military tool for the Maronites and the political right, the confrontation that occurred between the army and the guerillas in March of 1970 led to further violence between the Palestinians and Maronite Christian populations in Lebanon. Fighting spread to the towns of Dikwaneh and Harit Hreik, both majority Maronite, and both located near Palestinian refugee camps (el-Khazen 189). Guerillas began to expand their military presence outside the camps and near these towns, setting up roadblocks and harassing passersby. In Dikwaneh, Palestinian guerillas raided a local Kata'ib Party office, and even went to such lengths as to kidnap the son of Maronite Kata'ib Party leader Pierre Gemayel (el-Khazen 189). Such confrontations between the Maronite population, particularly al-Kata'ib, and the Palestinian guerillas set the stage for future violence between the two, which would have a significant impact on the events that were considered the first triggers of the war in 1975 and the path that the war would take over the years.

In September 1970, events in Jordan significantly impacted the state of turmoil that was brewing in Lebanon. Like Lebanon, Jordan had, since 1948, had a large population of Palestinian refugees. After the 1967 war and the Arab defeat by Israel, the PLO and other Palestinian guerilla organizations had begun to establish a sound military presence in Jordan, coming into conflict with King Hussein and the Jordanian government, much like they had with the Lebanese government. The PLO began setting up military checkpoints, carrying arms throughout the country, and acting in such ways that challenged the authority of the Hashemite ruling family and King Hussein. King Hussein did not want to lose control over the Palestinians at a time when he was trying to negotiate with Israel to recover the West Bank, which was lost in the 1967 war (Siklawi 604). Thus, the king started a military campaign against the PLO in Jordan, using his army to keep them in check and under his control. On September 1, 1970, the Palestinians

responded with several assassination attempts on the king. A few days later, on September 6, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), a prominent Palestinian guerilla organization, hijacked Swissair, TWA, and BOAC airplanes and forced them to land in the Jordanian airport of Zarqa. The passengers were removed and the planes were blown up (Siklawi 604). These acts angered King Hussein, forcing him to declare martial law in Jordan. After almost a year of clashes between the Jordanian army and the Palestinians, the PLO was fully evicted from Jordan in July of 1971 (Siklawi 604). The significance of this for the Lebanon was that the country became the last military base from which Palestinian guerillas could operate against Israel, and the Jordanian branch of the Palestinian resistance movement migrated to south Lebanon.

In the aftermath of Black September, as the events in Jordan came to be called, south Lebanon had become “an enduring battlefield in the region,” (Siklawi 605). “The unpleasant events in Jordan exacerbated the situation inside Lebanon and expanded the PLO operational area rather than eliminating the problems between the Palestinians and the Lebanese authorities,” (Siklawi 605). The year 1972 was one of transition for the PLO, which had been divided and undermined by the events of Black September. Although the PLO was aware that the escalation of conflict in Lebanon would undermine their transition from Jordan to Lebanon, Palestinians did create minor troubles for the Lebanese government in that year (el-Khazen 194). In January of 1972, al-Sa’iqa attacked a Beirut office of the Lebanese ISF. In addition, the PLO continued its guerilla operations against Israel, and Israel retaliated by carrying out raids in the south and the Bekaa region. Although 1972 was a year of transition and minor skirmishes between the PLO and the Lebanese authorities, the following year would be one of complete chaos, beginning to set the civil war in motion.

During the year of 1973, a series of attacks were carried out by Israel against Palestinians in Lebanon that seriously disrupted the country's political balance. On February 21, 1973, the Israelis landed on the coast near Tripoli and attacked two Palestinian refugee camps, Nahr al-Barid and Baddawi, and the Lebanese army did nothing to stop them. Thirty-one civilians were killed and 60 more were injured (Siklawi 605). In April of 1973, Israeli commandos targeted the PLO in Beirut. Forty Palestinians in refugee camps in Beirut were killed, along with four Lebanese civilians. This operation, called the Verdun operation, also resulted in the assassination of three high-ranking PLO officials. In the aftermath of such attacks, the Lebanese army was seen as unwilling to adequately defend the Palestinians in Lebanon (Siklawi 606). This further deepened the political divide between the anti-Palestinian right and the pro-Palestinian left. The Maronites and the right saw the Israeli attacks as a chance to revise the Cairo Agreement and work to expel the PLO from Lebanon as the Jordanians had. The left-wing parties and the Palestinians demanded the resignation of the Lebanese government and President Franjiyya, who had, in their eyes, allowed for the Israelis to attack innocent Palestinians on their soil (Siklawi 606). Matters were made worse in March of 1973, when Palestinian guerillas attacked the Lebanese army post in the south, killing two Lebanese army soldiers. In May, three army soldiers were kidnapped by Palestinian guerillas (el-Khazen 206). In retaliation, the Lebanese army surrounded Palestinian camps on the outskirts of Beirut, arresting and detaining a number of Palestinians. Soon enough, fighting broke out between the army and the Palestinian guerilla forces. In light of such events, the Lebanese army's attitude towards the Palestinian refugee camps, which they viewed as headquarters for the guerilla organizations and the PLO, became significantly more ruthless (Siklawi 607). The Lebanese army and air force began shelling Palestinian refugee camps in and around Beirut, particularly the camp of Burj al-Barajina near

Beirut Airport. The attack on Burj al-Barajina caused damage to the Palestinians as well as to the Shiite communities that lived near the camp, deepening Shiite opposition to the right-wing Lebanese government (Siklawi 607). Similar clashes also occurred between the Lebanese army and the Palestinians in the south.

In May of 1973, an attempt at reconciliation was made once again with the Melkart Protocol, which was signed between Lebanese authorities and the Palestinian resistance. This agreement called for a return to the Cairo Agreement, and attempted to more clearly define the areas in which the PLO and the guerilla organizations could operate (Siklawi 608). Yet confrontations between the Lebanese army and the Palestinians continued. In July of 1974, al-Kata'ib and the PFLP fought a three-day battle in east Beirut, resulting in five civilian casualties. In September of 1974, hostilities took place between the leftist followers of Kamal Jumblatt and al-Kata'ib in the village of Tarshish (el-Khazen 224). Although only a few people were killed, this incident represented an increase in aggression between the right-wing parties and the Palestinian-supporting parties on the left. Such a climate precipitated the events of April 1975 that would set the civil war in motion.

On April 13, 1975, the leader of the Kata'ib party, Pierre Gemayel, was attending church in Ain Rummaneh, a Christian suburb of Beirut. It was at this time that Palestinian guerillas approached the church in two cars, opening fire and killing four Christians, among them, a prominent member of the Kata'ib party (Vocke 39). A few hours later, in retaliation for the attack, Christian militias stopped a bus in Ain Rummaneh carrying twenty-two armed Palestinians, shooting and killing all twenty-two of them (Vocke 39). These events, considered the first confrontations of the Lebanese Civil War, sparked clashes across the city of Beirut. The conflict soon developed into a religious one, with Palestinians, backed by Shiite, Sunni and



Druze left wing militia fighters, attacking Maronite and other Christian sections of East Beirut, and the right wing Kata'ib and Maronite militias attacking targets in Palestinian and Muslim-dominated West Beirut (Vocke 41). The war had officially begun.

The outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War in 1975 was the consequence of many factors, both internal and external, that had been developing in Lebanon since the Ottoman Empire and throughout the twentieth century. Yet it was the Palestinian factor that set all others in motion, aggravating and intensifying deep-seated tensions between political, social and sectarian groups in Lebanon. The refusal of the Palestinian organizations to accept their underprivileged social and political position in the wake of the creation of the state of Israel ignited a similar attitude in disadvantaged communities within Lebanon. This was the case for the Shiites in particular, who sympathized with the Palestinian plight not only because they too were victimized by Israeli aggression, but because they also found themselves marginalized within their own country. Members of the political left were also unhappy with the system of government and the political and social structures that prevailed in Lebanon. They felt that support for the PLO and Palestinian guerilla organizations could effectively disrupt the current Lebanese political structure and allow for change and the creation of a system that better represented their objectives. The political right in Lebanon, led by the Maronite Christian community, saw the Palestinian organizations as threats to their privileged position in Lebanese government and society. They feared, above all else, that a change in government would eliminate their power and leave them marginalized in a majority-Muslim region dominated by the culture of Islam. The increasing military power of the PLO and the guerilla organizations, inciting support from the Shiites and the left, and threatening the right, thus provoked aggression on both sides. The result

was the complete division of a society that was already divided, and a conflict that tore Lebanon to pieces, preventing peace and stability to this day.

## Conclusion

Since 1948, Palestinians have become synonymous with refugees. They are a national group with no nation, a group that has been denied basic human rights within the state of Israel and as refugees in other parts of the world. They are often depicted as a people with little to lose, and as a group that has often resorted to violence as a means of asserting that they will not be forgotten and will not stop fighting until they reclaim what is rightfully theirs. For many in the Arab world they are the embodiment of the lasting negative effects of the colonial period. They are an ideal representation of imperial exploitation, promised self-determination and then forced to endure further colonization and occupation. They are a constant reminder to the rest of the region of the enduring colonial structures within their own countries. For the Lebanese, their system of government, established at the time of independence in 1943 under the authority of the National Pact, had its roots in the French colonial system that had been instituted during the mandate period. This government solidified the system of Maronite power and hegemony in Lebanon that had gained prominence under French imperialism. For many sectors of Lebanese society, this system of government failed to provide adequate political and social representation. Although many groups, particularly the political left, had worked to change this system of government and power, it was the nationalist activism of the Palestinians in Lebanon in the 1960s and 70s that sparked more aggressive attempts to alter the status quo. The increasing military activity of the PLO and other Palestinian organizations during this period sparked strong responses from many political parties and religious groups on both ends of the political spectrum, deepening the divide in an already polarized society, and leading to the outbreak of civil war.

For hundreds of years, Lebanon has been home to many different religious communities. Under the Ottoman millet system, because individual religious communities were permitted to govern themselves, these communities rarely came into contact with one another. Following Ottoman rule, under the French colonial system, religious communities that had seldom interacted before were forced to cooperate under a new system of government that allocated positions based on sect. Although most religious groups had power and representation in Lebanese government under this new system, the Maronite community was by far the most powerful and enjoyed an elevated status in politics and society. Even after Lebanese independence in 1943, this system of government, and Maronite hegemony, prevailed. Thus, in the decades following independence, the political polarization of Lebanese society occurred, with Maronites on the far right, seeking to maintain the political and social system that would preserve their authority, and the far left, a significantly more diverse group, seeking to incite political and social change. This division in Lebanese society was exacerbated by the political and military action of the PLO and Palestinian guerilla organizations in Lebanon in the following decades.

The activities of the PLO and other Palestinian organizations in Lebanon in the 1960s and 70s had a pervasive effect on a fragmented society. For the Maronites, the Palestinian organizations posed the greatest threat to their prominent political and social position. As a minority within Lebanon and the greater Arab world, the Maronites feared that without supreme political power they would face marginalization in this majority-Muslim society. For many disadvantaged groups, such as the Shiites, and the leftist political parties, composed primarily of Sunnis, Druze and Greek Orthodox Christians, the political and military activity of the Palestinian organizations represented an attempt to eradicate lasting imperialist structures

throughout the region. Their nationalist activism inspired these sectors of Lebanese society to analyze and work to eliminate enduring colonial systems in their own society, particularly, the system of government that allowed for Maronite authority. Additionally, the political left and the Shiites saw their support for the PLO and Palestinian guerilla organizations as a way to disrupt the fragile system of government in Lebanon, and thus provide a means for reform. For many Shiites, their communal ties and close proximity to the Palestinians in south Lebanon provoked empathy for their plight, providing another incentive for Shiite support of Palestinian militancy in Lebanon. The result of these conflicting goals was the deepening of political, social and religious tensions, and ultimately the outbreak of one of the most violent civil wars the Arab world has ever seen.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of the most controversial and debated conflicts in our world today. It began as a consequence of Western imperialism in the Arab world and the creation of a state in Palestine without regard for the native Palestinian population. Often, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is only discussed in the context of its effect on Israelis and Palestinians, when in reality it has had significant and lasting effects on the entire region. The displacement of Palestinians and their relocation to other countries in the Arab world has vastly altered the political landscape of many Arab nations, including Lebanon, and has affected every political, social and religious group in the region. The violence of the Lebanese Civil War only represents a fraction of the violence that has resulted from the never-ending hostility between Palestinians and Israelis. When so many lives have been lost and so much destruction has occurred, questions of rightful land ownership are insignificant. Regardless of what each side believes it deserves, a resolution to this conflict must be reached. If not, the Arab world will

continue to know nothing but violence and chaos, and wars will continue to be waged in the name of justice and retribution.

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