October 24, 1983

STANDING FIRM IN LEBANON

INTRODUCTION

The multinational force (MNF) dispatched to Beirut to help end the violence that has claimed 100,000 Lebanese lives over the last decade has itself been engulfed in violence. On October 23, more than 200 American servicemen were killed in a suicide bombing of the U.S. Marine headquarters at the Beirut Airport. Minutes later a second terrorist attack killed at least 26 French paratroopers billeted nearby. Although a shadowy group calling itself the Islamic Revolutionary Movement claimed responsibility for the brutal bombings, the identity of the terrorists currently is unclear. What is clear is that these are the latest attacks in a war of attrition against the MNF, designed to wear down the will of Western powers committed to restoring the sovereignty and independence of Lebanon. There is only one appropriate response for the West: to stand firm.

A war-torn country the size of Connecticut, Lebanon is occupied by soldiers from eighteen foreign armies that control over half of Lebanese territory.[1] Each of these foreign armies

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[1] The Syrian and Israeli armies have staked out military enclaves along their own borders. The Syrians have allowed Iranian and Libyan troops to establish themselves in the Bekaa valley and Soviet advisers accompany Syrian troops in Lebanon. Soldiers from the United States, France, Great Britain, and Italy comprise the multinational peacekeeping force in Beirut. The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in southern Lebanon includes contingents from Fiji, Finland, France, Ghana, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Senegal and Sweden. In addition, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) controls terrorist/military units in northern Lebanon while Syrian-dominated Palestinian forces are grouped in the Bekaa valley.

was drawn into Lebanon because the Lebanese government was unable to extend its authority within its own borders. Few are likely to leave until the Lebanese government grows strong enough to regain control of its territory or until the country is partitioned along sectarian lines.

Lebanon is a crazy quilt of clannish ethnic and religious groups that historically have been suspicious and resentful of central government. Since the Lebanese civil war of 1975-1976 the central government's authority has stopped at the city limits of Beirut. The Lebanese Army splintered along sectarian lines and left Lebanon hostage to scores of militias, "liberation" groups, and street gangs that align themselves with foreign powers to gain advantage in the bloody internecine warfare. Lebanon's anarchy resulted in a Syrian occupation of half the country and two Israeli interventions aimed at blunting PLO terrorist operations.

American troops were dispatched to Lebanon as part of the multinational peacekeeping force in the wake of the 1982 Israeli intervention. Their mission was to facilitate the evacuation of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) forces from Beirut and to shore up the authority of the new Lebanese government. The deaths of over 200 American Marines in Lebanon focuses attention on the role of the MNF in general and the Marines in particular. Although the War Powers issue has been sidestepped through the prudent compromise reached by the Reagan Administration and members of Congress, American policy in Lebanon remains a subject of strong debate.

Restoration of an independent Lebanon is critical to the success of U.S. foreign policy for several reasons. An independent Lebanon would pose a barrier to the expansion of Syrian/Soviet influence in the Middle East. It also would provide a concrete example of the value of an American connection to uneasy Middle Eastern governments that have doubts about U.S. credibility. This would go far to reassure jittery Persian Gulf nations that the U.S. is willing and able to frustrate the Syrian/Soviet drive for hegemony. The reconstitution of a stable Lebanon would remove a major source of tension between Israel and Syria that could trigger another Arab-Israeli war. Finally, the reestablishment of a unified Lebanon would give American Middle East diplomacy a shot in the arm and clear the way for a possible negotiated resolution to the Arab-Israeli impasse. As long as Lebanon remains under the Syrian thumb it will remain an unstable entity, a major impediment to peace in the region, and a potential long-term threat to Israeli security.

At stake in Lebanon is first and foremost Lebanon's national sovereignty. Although sectarian squabbling sparked the latest outburst of fighting in September, Syria long has fanned the flames of internal Lebanese discord and exploited Lebanon's disunity in an effort to establish hegemony over the Lebanese. Syria is the chief enemy of the Lebanese government, the chief

threat to Lebanese sovereignty, and the chief obstacle to a negotiated solution of Lebanese problems. The United States should support strongly President Amin Gemayel's attempt to reassert government control over outlying districts. But before Lebanon can be reconstituted it must be reformed. Washington should encourage President Gemayel to seek a lasting reconciliation with disenfranchised Moslem groups to build a firm foundation for Lebanon's future. By regaining the loyalty of these disaffected groups, the Lebanese government can deprive Syria of its most dangerous fifth columnists--its Lebanese Shi'ite and Druze allies.

While pursuing the long-term goal of a political settlement, the U.S. in the short run must act firmly to contain the political damage inflicted by the October 23 terrorist attack. Hostile Lebanese factions and the Syrians must be disabused of the notion that the MNF can be forced out of Lebanon through intimidation. Washington should restate its unshakeable determination to back the Lebanese government's efforts to regain Lebanon's sovereignty. The U.S. should launch a relentless effort to identify and punish the group responsible for the attack on the Marines. A strong reprisal is necessary to restore Lebanese confidence in American power, deter future attacks on the MNF, and demonstrate that the American military presence in Lebanon is not a paper tiger.

Beyond this, the U.S. has three basic options in Lebanon: It can pull the Marines out, maintain them at their current level of strength, or reinforce them. Any action should be coordinated with U.S. allies in the MNF. A unilateral pullout would abandon Lebanon to Syrian domination and would haunt U.S. Middle East policy for years to come. By rewarding terrorism it would only encourage it. Also, the Marines have become a measuring stick of U.S. credibility in the Middle East. For these reasons the real choice in the short run is between maintaining the Marine contingent at its present size or expanding it. As long as the Marines are to be deployed merely as political symbols of international support for the Lebanese government, their strength should be maintained at current levels. More Marines would only add more targets. Additional reinforcements would be required only if the role of the MNF were to be expanded to include active patrols in support of the Lebanese army.

THE U.S. ROLE IN LEBANON

U.S. Marines entered Lebanon on August 25, 1982, as part of a multinational force including French and Italian troops deployed to oversee the evacuation of the PLO from Beirut. The Marines withdrew on September 11 without incident. President Reagan ordered the Marines to return on September 29 after Lebanese Christian militiamen, enraged by the assassination of President-elect Bashir Gemayel, massacred up to 2,000 people in the Sabra and Shatila Palestinian refugee camps. The MNF's new mandate was to help the Lebanese government restore order in Beirut and create an atmostphere of calm that would strengthen government authority throughout the country.

The MNF intervention, like previous Syrian and Israeli interventions, did not signal the end of civil strife but only the beginning of a new phase in Lebanon's tortured history. The eviction of the PLO from Beirut had altered the balance of power between the warring Lebanese factions. The Phalangist Party (Kataeb in Arabic), a Christian right-wing party that had allied itself with Israel, was the strongest faction, controlling the Maronite heartland north of Beirut. The other major sects--the Shi'ites, Sunnis and Druze--found their land occupied by the Israeli Army in the south or the Syrian Army in the north and east. Newly elected President Amin Gemayel's government, supported by the MNF, exercised tenous control over the Beirut area.

The Reagan Administration set three principal goals for U.S. policy in Lebanon: 1) the restoration of government authority in a united, independent Lebanon; 2) the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Lebanon; and 3) the provision of adequate security for Israel's northern border. The prime vehicle for restoring government authority was to be the strengthening of the Lebanese Army, which had disintegrated during the 1975-1976 Lebanese civil war. American military advisers were dispatched to retrain the Lebanese military, restore its shattered morale, and mold it into a cohesive multi-sectarian national institution capable of unifying the country. The army was expanded from 18,000 men in late 1982 to 32,000 in September 1983 and is planned to grow to 50,000 within a year. Although its growth in firepower has been impressive, its staying power remained an unknown element until its baptism under fire during the prolonged battle for the strategic village of Suq al-Gharb overlooking Beirut in September 1983.

While the Army's recent successes have instilled an invaluable esprit de corps, they also contain the seeds of prospective failure. Thus far the army's victories have come at the expense of Lebanese factions that historically have viewed the Army as a tool of the Maronite Christians. Although 60 percent of the enlisted men are Moslem, the officer corps is predominantly Christian, particularly in its upper echelons. If the Lebanese Army is to play a central role in reunifying Lebanon, then it must gain the trust of Lebanon's non-Christian groups. The United States should encourage the Lebanese government to elevate capable and patriotic Moslems into leadership positions within the Army as a means of allaying suspicions about the government and increasing its base of popular support.

The second goal of American policy--obtaining the withdrawal of foreign forces from Lebanon--also will be an uphill struggle. During the fall of 1982, Washington consigned the Lebanese problem to the back burner and pushed the September 1 Reagan peace initiative, which focused on the broader Arab-Israeli conflict. It was assumed that the two most powerful military forces in Lebanon--the Israeli and Syrian armies--would have less reason to remain as occupiers if the Arab-Israeli problems could be resolved through negotiation. Both Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and President Hafez Assad of Syria rejected the Reagan initiative,

however, and each sought to derail it at every opportunity. When Jordan's King Hussein made the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanon one of his conditions for participating in the Reagan initiative, Jerusalem gained a major incentive for stalling on negotiating Israeli withdrawal with Lebanon. King Hussein's other condition --obtaining a green light from the PLO--gave Syria additional incentive to thwart the flirtation of PLO pragmatists with the Jordanians and bend the PLO to its own will.[2]

After the Reagan initiative fell victim to Palestinian recalcitrance and King Hussein's equivocations, negotiations on the withdrawal of foreign forces from Lebanon began in earnest. In retrospect, the State Department can be criticized for: 1) failing to push through a withdrawal agreement before Syria strengthened its diplomatic position by force-feeding its defeated army massive quantities of modern Soviet-supplied weapons; and 2) taking the Syrian regime at its word when Damascus indicated it would withdraw when Israel did. Because Foggy Bottom assumed that Syria's withdrawal was assured once Israel agreed to withdraw, it brought American pressure to bear on Israel, giving Syria a diplomatic free ride.

The May 17, 1983, Lebanese-Israeli accord that paved the way for Israeli withdrawal therefore addressed only one side of the problem. Under the terms of the agreement the two countries jointly declared their common border to be inviolable, terminated the state of war that technically had existed between them since 1948, guaranteed that their respective territories would not be used as a base for hostile or terrorist activity against each other, and established joint security teams to patrol a security zone along Lebanon's southern border.[3]

Israel agreed to withdraw its armed forces from Lebanon after the PLO had left Lebanon, Israeli prisoners of war were repatriated, and Syria had agreed to withdraw.

Syria vehemently denounced the withdrawal accord, a predictable reaction given Syrian ambitions in Lebanon. Damascus had never reconciled itself to the 1920 establishment of Lebanon, never recognized Lebanon's sovereignty, and never established an embassy in Beirut. The Assad regime instead has pursued the vision of reconstituting the ancient borders of a "Greater Syria" that included what is now Lebanon, Israel, and the West Bank. These irredentist designs have generated friction with the Palestinians as well as the Lebanese, since Palestinians no more desired to become "southern Syrians" than most Lebanese desired to become "western Syrians."

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2 Syria strongly supported the opposition of PLO hardliners to the U.S. initiative, was suspected of abetting the assassination of PLO pragmatist Issam Sartawi in the spring of 1983, and aided PLO rebels against Yassir Arafat in the summer of 1983.

3 For the full text of the agreement see: New York Times, May 17, 1983.

Damascus rejected the May 17th accord because it stood in the way of Syrian hegemony over Lebanon. The Syrian Army assured Syria a central role on the Middle Eastern diplomatic stage; protected Syria's soft underbelly--the Bekaa valley--from a possible Israeli military thrust in time of war; and enabled the corrupt Assad regime to enrich itself through lucrative smuggling operations inside Lebanon.[4] Damascus also rejected the withdrawal agreement because it takes Lebanon out of the Arab-Israeli conflict and consolidates Lebanese-Israeli ties.

The Syrians hope to transform Lebanon into a confrontation state that would strengthen their position vis-à-vis Israel and enhance Syria's claim to leadership of the Arab world. Syria's patron, the Soviet Union, also would profit from the establishment of a Syrian-dominated Lebanon. Given the pro-Soviet sentiments of many Lebanese leftists allied to Syria, Moscow would gain another foothold in the Middle East and possible additional naval, air force, and missile bases. A pro-Syrian, pro-Soviet Lebanon would be another nail in the coffin of the Middle Eastern Pax Americana envisioned by the Reagan Administration. Moreover, it would pose a new and dangerous threat to Israel's security that eventually could lead to another war.

To frustrate Syrian/Soviet ambitions Washington must bolster the Lebanese government to the point where it can stand up to the Syrians. This will be a difficult task given Lebanon's past history.

LEBANESE POLITICAL FERMENT

Lebanon is one of the world's most complex ethnic/religious jigsaw puzzles. Lebanon's three million people belong to sixteen officially recognized sects that form an intricate mosaic of minorities spread throughout the country. The Lebanese mountains historically have been a refuge of last resort for minority groups persecuted in other parts of the Middle East. Most Lebanese sects were not part of the mainstream of their respective religions and were often discriminated against by co-religionists as well as non-believers. The Maronites, the largest of twelve Christian sects, fled to Lebanon from Syria at the turn of the 8th century. The Druze, believers in an heretical offshoot of Islam, were driven out of Egypt and sought refuge in Lebanon in the 11th century. The Shi'ite Moslems, relegated to a minority status in most other Arab states, dominate the lower rungs of the Lebanese economic ladder. Smaller numbers of Armenians, Kurds, Greek Orthodox Christians, and Nestorian Assyrians also fled to Lebanon for sanctuary. Because of the legacy of fear inherited from

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[4] The Bekaa hashish trade is estimated to have brought the Syrians $1 billion since 1976. The Syrians also operate an extensive auto theft operation in the parts of Lebanon they control.

previous generations, Lebanese sects have a siege mentality that makes them extremely suspicious of each other and the central government.

Under the Ottoman Empire, Lebanese sects maintained an uneasy coexistence. After World War I, France carved Lebanon out of the Ottoman Empire under a League of Nations mandate and created a protectorate in which pro-French Maronites were favored over Moslem minorities. In 1943, the Lebanese wrested independence from a prostrate France without the benefit of a lengthy struggle that could have unified the sects and molded a common Lebanese national consciousness.

The 1943 National Pact, the unwritten understanding between Maronite and Sunni political barons that narrowly averted civil strife, enshrined Maronite dominance by specifying that Lebanon's President would always be Maronite. Political power was apportioned among traditional elites according to the findings of the 1932 census. There were to be six Christians for every five non-Christians in the Lebanese parliament and civil service. The office of Prime Minister was reserved for a Sunni, the Speaker of Parliament was to be a Shi'ite, and the Minister of Defense a Druze. This system was more a division of the spoils than a balance of power. In practice, the Maronites were assured the lion's share of national power.

For several decades Lebanon flourished as the only Arab democratic state. Beirut's rising importance as a financial and mercantile center encouraged cooperation for the sake of mutual economic interests. The National Pact grew obsolete, however, due to changes in the demographic balance caused by Christian emigration from Lebanon and higher Moslem birthrates. The ruling Maronite families, determined to preserve their accumulated privileges, resisted the staging of a new census that could be used as the basis of a new power-sharing arrangement. A brief civil war was nipped in the bud by President Eisenhower's dispatch of 14,000 Marines in 1958. The United States was broker for an agreement between the contending factions under the slogan "no victors, no vanquished" that essentially preserved the status quo for more than a decade.

By the early 1970s the rising expectations of the burgeoning Moslem population eclipsed the capabilities of Lebanese national institutions. A critical change in the Lebanese body politic was the cancerous growth of a PLO "state within a state" in southern Lebanon. An estimated 400,000 to 500,000 Palestinians had taken refuge in Lebanon after the 1948 and 1967 Arab-Israeli wars. They became increasingly radicalized in the late 1960s and increasingly militarized because of the influx of large numbers of armed Palestinians expelled from Jordan after the "Black September" of 1970. The growing military power of the PLO led Lebanon's sects and political factions to build up their own militias.

Lebanon's foreign policy had been one of "strength through weakness." The central government had restricted the size of the Army to avoid involvement in the Arab-Israeli dispute and preclude a coup d'etat. The weak Lebanese Army, unlike its Jordanian counterpart, was incapable of reining in the PLO. The PLO acted as a catalyst to polarize Lebanese politics and reinforce sectarian cleavages. It undermined the authority of the government in clashes with the Army. It provoked Israeli retaliatory raids that underlined Lebanon's military impotence and precipitated a mass migration of southern Lebanese villagers--mostly poor Shi'ites--to a belt of shantytowns on the outskirts of Beirut. Alienated by urban poverty and the breakdown of their traditional society, these internal Lebanese refugees became a reservoir of recruits for radical leftist groups allied with the Palestinians.

Rising political tensions led to the establishment of more than forty private armies, each one dedicated to advancing the interests of a particular religious group, ideology, or clan. In April 1975 a chaotic civil war erupted, pitting a coalition of predominantly Moslem leftists called the National Front, which advocated the transformation of Lebanon into a secular socialist state, against a coalition of Christian rightists called the Lebanese Front, which defended the old order and sought to rid Lebanon of the Palestianians. Regional powers such as Syria, Iraq, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Israel, and later Khomeini's Iran contributed arms and money to favored groups. Lebanon became a microcosm of the Middle East itself, an area where regional powers jousted through proxies to give vent to Arab-Israeli and inter-Arab tensions.

Although the Lebanese Front initially had the upper hand in the fighting, stepped-up involvement of radical Palestinians decisively altered the balance of power in favor of the National Front. In the spring of 1976, Syria intervened on behalf of the beleaguered Christian/rightist Lebanese Front. Assad feared that if a PLO/leftist alliance gained dominance over Lebanon, Syria would lose control of the timing of future confrontations with Israel and would be open to attack through the Bekaa valley. The Syrian Army blocked a leftist/PLO victory and scaled down the intensity of the fighting, although chronic outbursts of fighting and terrorist activity continued. Up to 60,000 people are believed to have perished in the course of two years of fighting.

ISRAELI INTERVENTION IN LEBANON

Although Israel had reached a modus vivendi with the Syrians in post-1976 Lebanon, the PLO remained an active threat to civilians in northern Israel. A March 1978 PLO massacre of Israelis provoked Israel to launch a cross-border attack against PLO strongholds in southern Lebanon. Israel withdrew its 20,000 troops in June 1978 after agreeing to the formation of UNIFIL, a seven-nation peacekeeping force meant to halt PLO infiltration across the border. In addition, Israel turned over a slice of

Lebanese territory to the Christian/Shi'ite militia of Major Saad Haddad, one of Israel's closest allies in Lebanon.

The June 1982 Israeli military intervention, precipitated by the attempted assassination of the Israeli Ambassador to Great Britain by a PLO splinter group, originally was designed to strike a crushing blow at PLO bases in southern Lebanon. In the course of the operation, however, Defense Minister Ariel Sharon presented the Israeli cabinet with a series of faits accomplis and managed to expand the operation to the outskirts of Beirut, where the bulk of the PLO had gone. Sharon counted heavily on the cooperation of Bashir Gemayel, the young commander of the right-wing Phalangist militia, who shared Israel's goal of forcing the PLO out of Lebanon. Gemayel welcomed the opportunity to latch onto the coattails of the Israeli Army and expand the area controlled by his militia but held back from committing his forces against the besieged Palestinians, preferring to let the Israelis incur the human, economic, and world public opinion costs of forcibly expelling the PLO. By keeping the Israelis at arm's length, at least in public, Bashir Gemayel was able to realize his ambition of being elected President of Lebanon, although he never lived to take office.

Bashir's assassination on September 15, 1982 and the subsequent election of his brother Amin as President effectively ended Sharon's hope of cementing an Israeli alliance with a Phalange-dominated Lebanon. Amin Gemayel, who entered office with strained relations with his brother's Phalangist lieutenants, immediately distanced himself from Israel in an effort to cultivate the support of Lebanese Moslems and Arab states. Once Sharon had been removed as Defense Minister, Israel scaled back its goals in Lebanon and staged a limited military pullback in early September 1983 to reduce Israeli casualties and the economic burden of its presence in Lebanon. Israel, however, has announced its intention to retain this military presence as long as Damascus remains in Lebanon.

THE LATEST ROUND OF FIGHTING

The current round of fighting in Lebanon was triggered by a scramble to fill the vacuum left by the Israeli withdrawal from the strategic Chouf region, southeast of Beirut. When the Israelis pulled out on September 4, the Druze immediately sought to eject Phalangist militiamen who had moved into the Chouf, the Druze heartland, in the wake of the Israeli army in 1982. Walid Jumblatt, leader of Lebanon's 200,000 to 250,000 Druze, claims that this is a strictly defensive action motivated by Druze fear of massacres at the hands of their longtime Maronite enemies. Others are not so sure. The Gemayel government suspects that the Druze are driving toward Beirut to link up with rebellious Moslem militias in West Beirut. It points out that the Druze are being assisted in their campaign to "liberate" the Chouf by Syrian Druze drawn from the Syrian Army, the Lebanese Communist Party, and at least

one thousand Syrian-controlled PLO guerrillas. The Lebanese government is alarmed that the Jumblatt-led National Salvation Front, composed of Druze, Moslem, and Christian opposition figures, increasingly is dominated by the Syrians. Although there is no love lost between Jumblatt and Assad--Syria is believed to have engineered the assassination of Jumblatt's father--there is a growing danger that the Druze marriage of convenience with the Syrians will develop into a permanent relationship.

Jumblatt has warned that the Druze will never accept a Lebanese Army presence in the Chouf until a political understanding has been reached between the government and the Druze. Such an understanding apparently was reached in negotiations between the Gemayel government and Jumblatt in Paris in early September, only to be vetoed by Syria. The Druze offensive that followed was checked at Suq al-Gharb by the Lebanese Army, supported by the naval artillery of the U.S. Sixth Fleet. Once the steadfastness of the Lebanese Army had been demonstrated under fire, the Syrian-backed Druze agreed to a shaky ceasefire, undoubtedly discouraged from further probes by the increasing support that the Lebanese Army received from the multinational force.

During the ceasefire, Lebanon's 179th since 1975, Lebanon's various factions agreed to convene a national reconciliation conference aimed at creating a new power-sharing formula that would unite warring groups behind a government of national unity. Left to themselves, the Lebanese probably could work out an arrangement acceptable to all major factions. The Lebanese are exhausted from eight years of brutal turmoil and most fervently desire the restoration of civil peace. Syria does not. For a genuine reconciliation would weaken their leverage over their Lebanese allies.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

American Marines have become entangled in the ancient quarrels of Lebanese sects and the more recent struggle between Lebanon and Syria. The recent terrorist attack on the Marines reveals a shocking lack of security, particularly in view of the similar attack on the U.S. Embassy in Beirut last April. The first order of business is to reduce the vulnerability of the Marines, move all nonessential personnel offshore and give them more flexibility to defend themselves. The terrorist attack must be avenged as soon as the culprits have been identified and suitable targets chosen. The Lebanese are not likely to be reassured by a peacekeeping force that is not capable of protecting itself. At the same time, however, the U.S. must take care to strike only at the guilty parties. If the U.S. is to help rebuild a united Lebanon capable of withstanding Syrian imperialism, it must encourage national reconciliation and scrupulously avoid becoming identified with the interests of any single faction. Washington should convince President Gemayel of the absolute need for a government of national unity that is broad enough to give all minorities,

especially those that have functioned as Syrian proxies, a stake in Lebanon's independence.

As the Syrians and the Israelis discovered, there is no military solution that will unify Lebanon. No Lebanese group is strong enough to impose its will on the others. When one coalition grows dominant, dissenting Lebanese groups merely seek foreign support against their domestic rivals. When a foreign power grows dominant, dissenting Lebanese seek a counterbalancing foreign power. The only solution to Lebanon's problems is a negotiated settlement between contending domestic factions, culminating in the formulation of a new National Pact.

The Druze must be made to feel secure so they will leave Syria's embrace. The Phalangist militia, but not the Lebanese Army, should be withdrawn from the Chouf. This must be done soon, before Syria develops an unbreakable hammerlock on Walid Jumblatt. The Druze and the Shi'ites want a larger political role in determining Lebanon's future. Both the Maronites and the Sunnis will have to make concessions to accommodate these demands or the Druze and Shi'ites will continue to block the restoration of government authority and Lebanese sovereignty.

Washington should be talking directly to these minority groups to enlist their cooperation--not trying to woo Syria. Assad's unpopular Alawite regime has a vested interest in maintaining tensions in Lebanon to defuse domestic discontent and buttress Syria's claim on Arab leadership. Syria will never quit Lebanon until a united Lebanese front forces it to. Negotiating with the Syrians before reaching accommodations with Syria's Lebanese allies will only strengthen Syria's hold over these groups and prolong Lebanon's occupation.

CONCLUSION

The U.S. Marines are performing a thankless, but indispensable, task in Lebanon. As part of the MNF, they buttress the authority of the beleaguered Gemayel government, deter Syrian adventurism in Lebanon, and symbolize the Western commitment to Lebanon's sovereignty. The Marines should be kept in place until the Lebanese government grows strong enough to stand on its own feet. A premature withdrawal of the Marines would doom the Gemayel government and plunge Lebanon into Syrian-orchestrated civil strife that would dwarf the bloody terrorist attack on the U.S. Marines. A unilateral American pullout would open the door to increased Syrian and Soviet influence in Lebanon. It would devalue the credibility of American commitments elsewhere in the world, particularly in the eyes of Arab governments increasingly fearful of Soviet-Syrian hegemony. A decision to cut and run in Lebanon also would diminish any chance of a U.S.-brokered, Arab-Israeli peace. No other Arab governments would be likely to step forward to sign an agreement with Israel if Syria should succeed in bringing down Amin Gemayel's government for such an agreement.

In addition to being the chief enemy of the Gemayel government, Syria is the chief enemy of the MNF. President Assad is not likely to withdraw his army from Lebanon unless he is pressured strongly to do so. The only force capable of doing this is the Israeli army. Washington should work closer with Jerusalem in dealing with Assad. The wooing of Assad has only prolonged Lebanon's agony while producing meager results.

While the Marines should stand firm in Lebanon for the time being, Washington privately should make it clear to the Lebanese government that they are there only on a temporary basis. President Gemayel should be encouraged to form, as soon as possible, a government of national unity that would include leaders of the Druze and Shi'ite communities. President Gemayel would deprive the Syrians of their most important local surrogates by giving these dissident sects a greater stake in the survival of his government. Only a unified Lebanon has a chance of forcing a Syrian withdrawal from Lebanese territory.

If the Gemayel government does not move quickly to broaden its base of domestic support, the 1976 de facto partitioning of Lebanon probably will become irreversible. This would inevitably lead to the withdrawal of the MNF, for no Western government would continue indefinitely to shed the blood of its soldiers to reunify Lebanon if the Lebanese continued to shed their own blood to prevent reunification.

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APPENDIX

ARMED FORCES IN LEBANON

NAME	DESCRIPTION	STRENGTH (approximate)
Syrian Army	Entered Lebanon in 1976; occupies eastern half of Lebanon.	40,000 to 50,000
Israel Defense Force	Entered Lebanon in June 1982; withdrew to Awwali River September 4, 1983.	10,000 to 15,000
Palestine Liberation Organization	Umbrella organization for several independent groups. Fatah, the largest, is split by a rebellion supported by Syria.	10,000 in north, 1,000 rebels in Bekaa valley and Chouf Mountains. Some may have infiltrated south Beirut.
United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL)	Peacekeeping force in south since 1978.	7,000
Multinational Force (MNF)	Dispatched in September 1982 to support government	5,200 total: 2,000 French 1,600 U.S. 1,500 Italian 100 British
Lebanese Army	Now being trained by American advisers. Concentrated in Beirut and along coast to south.	32,000
Lebanese Front (Phalangist-dominated militia)	Right-wing, predominantly Maronite. Controls East Beirut and enclave to north.	12,000 when fully mobilized.
Progressive Socialist Party (PSP)	Druze dominated leftist group with ties to Syria and PLO. Concentrated in Chouf.	3,000 to 4,000.
Amal	Shi'ite militia concentrated in West and South Beirut.	2,000 to 3,000.
Muribitun	Predominantly Sunni Moslem. Nasserist-leftist movement. Concentrated in West Beirut.	2,000
Free Lebanon Forces	Predominantly Christian, pro-Israeli militia led by Major Haddad. Deployed along border with Israel.	2,000